RH: Authenticity, deliberation and perception

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Authenticity, deliberation and perception: on Heidegger’s reading and appropriation of Aristotle’s concept of “*phronêsis*”

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Abstract: At crucial junctures in the development of his concept of ‘authenticity,’ Heidegger discusses at length Aristotle’s concept of ‘*phronêsis*’; and there is a widely-held suspicion that those discussions shape that development. The present paper examines that suspicion in the light of an apparent tension in Aristotle’s texts between understanding *phronêsis* as a perceptual capacity and understanding it as a deliberative capacity. Bronwyn Finnigan has argued that some influential, recent Heideggerian scholarship on this topic emphasises the perceptual and downplays the deliberative, and there is evidence in Heidegger’s texts that might suggest he does too. The present paper, however, offers an alternative to this perceptually-focused reading, which I call ‘the all-things-considered judgment reading.’ It understands the exercise of *phronêsis,* and the authenticity which Heidegger models upon it, as deliberative feats, accommodates the evidence thought to support the perceptually-focused reading, and avoids philosophical objections that the latter reading’s understanding of *phronêsis* invites.

Keywords: *Phronêsis*, Aristotle, Heidegger, authenticity, deliberation, perception

1. *Phronêsis* as Perceptive and/or Deliberative

Heidegger[[1]](#endnote-1) discusses *phronêsis* at length at crucial junctures in the development of his concept of authenticity;[[2]](#endnote-2) and the suspicion that that development is indebted to those discussions is widely held. The present paper will examine that suspicion in the light of a broader difficulty that seems to be inherent in Aristotle’s texts: an apparent tension there between understanding *phronêsis*—as Bronwyn Finnigan has recently put it—as both a “perceptual capacity” and a “deliberative capacity.”[[3]](#endnote-3)

Finnigan identifies what she sees as a decided preference in what is at least “some recent Heideggerian scholarship”[[4]](#endnote-4) on this topic to emphasise the perceptual and downplay the deliberative, offering as an example Hubert Dreyfus’ understanding of *phronêsis* as the subject “simply *seeing* the appropriate thing to do and responding without deliberation.”[[5]](#endnote-5) There are indeed plenty of other examples that one might offer. William Blattner claims that, for Heidegger, “*phronêsis* is the ability to *see* what a situation requires”—”to respond … immediately to the normative demands of the situation.”[[6]](#endnote-6) Taylor Carman describes the “subtle feel” that authentic Dasein has “for the particular demands of the situation and how to deal with them,” which renders her comparable to “the *phronimos* who can simply *see* the right ethical moves to make”;[[7]](#endnote-7) and Sacha Golob proposes that “authentic Dasein simply sees in a phronetic or quasi-perceptual manner what it ought to do.”[[8]](#endnote-8) In what follows, I will call such an approach “the perceptual-phronetic reading of Heideggerian authenticity,” or “the perceptual reading,” for short.[[9]](#endnote-9)

In what follows, I will present an alternative to the perceptual reading, one which accommodates the deliberative alongside the sources of inspiration upon which the perceptual reading draws. Section 2 sets out those sources, section 3 raises a concern about the reading they inspire, and sections 4-5 sets out my alternative. Sections 6-8 and 10 show how the latter accommodates the evidence that section 2 marshals, with section 9 interrupting that work to examine how my reading copes with the charge that section 3 levels at the perceptual reading. Our discussion will lead us to reflect—if only briefly—on the role that authenticity plays within the project that Heidegger sets for *Being and Time*, that is, on what John Haugeland called “the foremost exegetical question” that the bookposes: given that “the aim of the work as a whole is to ‘reawaken the question of the sense of being’ ... what is all that ‘existentialism’ doing in there?”[[10]](#endnote-10)

Before beginning, a few words on the limits of this paper’s ambitions. My principal focus here will be on how Heidegger reads Aristotle’s discussion of *phronêsis* and how that then might inform his understanding of authenticity: so I generally set aside the question of whether his reading is right. A full presentation of how I read Heidegger’s discussion of authenticity also lies well beyond the scope of the present paper. In what follows, I concentrate on how the reading I offer accommodates the features of Heidegger’s texts that inspire the perceptual reading; and, in the process, interpretations will emerge for key concepts in Heidegger’s discussion, including “guilt,” “conscience,” “resolution,” “the concrete situation of action,” “reticence,” and “being-a-whole.” In the final section of the paper, I also touch briefly on another key concept—“Being-towards-death”—and its relationship to Heidegger’s concept of “guilt.” But I do so in indicating a limit on how much light one can hope to shed on Heidegger’s discussion of authenticity by focussing solely on his appropriation of *phronêsis*. A *full* account of that discussion must consider further influences upon his thought, as I have argued previously elsewhere.[[11]](#endnote-11)

2. The Appeal of the Perceptual Reading

This section gathers together under five rough headings some of the evidence which might seem to support the perceptual reading:

* 1. *Resolute Openness to one’s Concrete Situation*

The authentic distinctively display what Heidegger calls “*Entschlossenheit*”: this term is naturally translated as ‘resolution,’ but also seems to allude to a form of openness—an *Ent-schlossenheit*, an un-closedness—where, as the passages from Blattner and Carman illustrate, what the authentic are open to is “the ‘concrete situation [*konkreten Situation*]’ of action” (*SZ* 302). As we will see, the latter notion is a recurrent theme in Heidegger’s discussions of *phronêsis*—arguably originating there[[12]](#endnote-12)—and it contrasts with a depiction of “*das Man*” as “know[ing] only the ‘general situation [*allgemeine Lage*]’” (*SZ* 300). Such openness, with its connotation of passivity or receptivity, might be taken to imply that authenticity is fundamentally perceptual in character.

* 1. *Silence—as Reticence and Conscience’s Call*

“*Verschwiegenheit*”—”reticence” or “keeping silent”—is another distinguishing feature of authentic Dasein. Heidegger says little about this concept in *Being and Time*,[[13]](#endnote-13) and mentions it only twice in the run up to that book’s canonical presentation of authenticity (at *HCT* 268 and 279). But it finds an echo in Heidegger’s infamous concept of “the call of conscience,” which “*discourses solely and constantly in the mode of keeping silent”*:

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What does the conscience call to him to whom it appeals? Taken strictly, nothing. The call asserts nothing, gives no information about world-events, has nothing to tell. (*SZ* 273)

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What gives added importance to this theme given our present concerns is that the best known remark of Heidegger’s which ties *phronêsis* to a concept from the repertoire using which he articulates authenticity concerns “conscience”: with *phronêsis*, Heidegger claims, “Aristotle has here come across the phenomenon of conscience” (*PS* 39).

* 1. Phronêsis *as* Umsicht*, and Other Perceptual Metaphors*

The term that Heidegger uses as his own German translation of *phronêsis* is ‘*Umsicht*’[[14]](#endnote-14)—literally a form of sight (*Sicht*) and a term typically rendered in English as ‘circumspection.’ Heidegger also turns to other perceptual metaphors in describing authenticity, such as the moment in which resolute openness is achieved being an “*Augenblick*”—a “blink of the eye” or, as Macquarrie and Robinson render it, a ‘moment of vision.’[[15]](#endnote-15)

* 1. *The Absence of a Substantial First-Order Ethic*

The absence of any substantial first-order ethic in Heidegger’s work is one reason why decisionist readings have been popular, despite the familiar criticism that the “pure choices” that they depict the authentic as distinctively making seem arbitrary, ones over which “I may as well toss a coin,” as Iris Murdoch puts it.[[16]](#endnote-16) A strength of the perceptual reading is that it offers an alternative way of accommodating that absence, an alternative that allows the reality of substantive “normative demands”—”the appropriate thing to do” and “what [Dasein] ought to do.” The form that those demands take is “what a situation requires”: they are “particular demands of … situation[s],” calling not for endorsement of some broader moral outlook—of the sort that Heidegger does indeed fail to specify—but for perception.

* 1. *The “Secondary” Status of Deliberation*

The perceptual reading chimes with a broader downplaying in Heidegger’s work of reflection and the propositional attitudes: one of Blattner’s reasons for adopting his reading, for example, is that “Deliberation is a decidedly secondary phenomenon for Heidegger, … rather than a basic form of Dasein’s activity.”[[17]](#endnote-17) One might also gather under this heading, the observation that Heidegger provides no systematic account of how the authentic deliberate, which might be taken as evidence that he thinks that they do not deliberate; and Heidegger’s few remarks mentioning rules, norms and maxims—which one might envisage as informing a deliberator’s reflections—link these to inauthenticity rather than authenticity, as we will see below.

3. Doubts about the Perceptual Reading

So why not embrace the perceptual reading? Finnigan sees the perceptual reading as necessarily depicting Heidegger as a rather poor reader of Aristotle. The evidence that suggests that Aristotle sees *phronêsis* as a perceptual capacity she summarises as follows:

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A certain degree of exegetical support might be derived from Aristotle’s claims that *phronêsis* is concerned with particulars (*NE* 1141b14), where “particulars” are identiﬁed as the proper object of perception. Aristotle also claims that *phronêsis* is concerned with the “last thing,” where the last thing is both “what is done” (*NE* 1142a24) and the “object of perception” (*NE* 1142a30). Finally, … Aristotle describes *phronêsis* as the “eye of the soul” (*NE* 1144a30). (Finnigan, “*Phronêsis* in Aristotle,” 679)

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Such evidence is “controversial,” however, Finnigan argues, because it clashes with “a much more extensive and systematically related set of claims that push against” a perceptual reading, “claims centr[ing] on a conception of *phronêsis* … as a deliberative capacity that is inextricably related to ‘rational choice.’”[[18]](#endnote-18)

But why should readers of Heidegger care? For many, the notion that Heidegger is not the most scrupulously faithful reader of earlier philosophers would not exactly be news, not least in light of his own explicit and infamous insistence that “every interpretation needs to use violence” (*KPM* 138). Nor must advocates of the perceptual reading think otherwise. Blattner, for example, anticipates Finnigan’s criticism when he insists that “Heideggerian resoluteness cannot be equivalent to Aristotelian *phronêsis*, for as Aristotle famously states, ‘we say this is above all the work of the man of *phronêsis*, to deliberate well.’”[[19]](#endnote-19) So, *phronêsis* has a place here, Blattner argues, but Heidegger “adapts it … to his own thinking.”[[20]](#endnote-20)

A reason still to care, however, is that the perceptual reading lumbers Heidegger with an implausible and unattractive view. Finnigan proposes that such a reading aligns Heidegger with a particular camp of analytic neo-Aristotelians, a prominent member of which is John McDowell. Sophie-Grace Chappell has attacked this camp for identifying *phronêsis* with a mysterious “knack for choosing right,” the question of the wisdom of such choices being met with a “lofty refusal to tell us anything much … beyond that they are whatever superior men (or, occasionally, women) tell us they are.”[[21]](#endnote-21) Chappell sees this view too as the upshot of such readers failing to do justice to Aristotle’s depiction of *phronêsis* as “a form of *reasoning*.”[[22]](#endnote-22) We will encounter later reason to doubt whether these claims do justice to McDowell’s reading. But they do point to a concern that the perceptual reading of Heidegger raises.

The evidence that section 2 sets out may inspire the suspicion that Heidegger too valorises Chappell’s strong, silent and ultimately unaccountable type: along with Heidegger’s insistence that the life of the inauthentic is that of the “hubbub [*Lärm*]” of “idle talk [*Gerede*]” (*SZ* 271, 315),[[23]](#endnote-23) one can hear more than a hint of Chappell’s “superior man” in, for example, Heidegger’s proposal that “the person who is silent can ‘let something be understood [*zu verstehen geben*]’ more authentically … than the person who is never short of words” (*SZ* 164).

But this, I think, underplays the difficulties that the perceptual reading faces: seeing in the authentic a lofty refusal to answer for their judgments is unduly flattering, because there seems little reason to think that they have reasons for those judgments, reasons that they are loftily keeping to themselves.[[24]](#endnote-24) The perceptual reading seems to leave the authentic oddly inarticulate about the judgments they make: they “simply see … what [they] ought to do” (Golob, quoted above). The perceptual reading need not rule out their having some narrative to relay about their judgments. But if they do, it will be—as it were—by accident: there is no obvious account that the reading suggests of how such narratives and the reasons they might contain connect to such judgments, which are a “simple seeing” of one’s situation performed “immediately and spontaneously” “without … deliberation, decision-making or discursive thought.”[[25]](#endnote-25)

Indeed we have reason to wonder whether, in this particular respect, the perceptual reading leaves the authentic in a significantly better position than decisionist readings after all. According to the former, the authentic see, whereas, according to the latter, they choose; but for neither account is there anything that the authentic might say to others in explanation or justification of these responses or—for that matter—keep loftily to themselves. As Ernst Tugendhat articulates the criticism of decisionism mentioned above, authentic existence is a life of arbitrary choices in that these choices are “not made in the light of reasons”;[[26]](#endnote-26) but the same can be said of the judgments made by the authentic as the perceptual reading understands them.

Accounts can be offered, of course, of the reliability of perception as a source of knowledge, citing general features of an agent by virtue of which they have prima facie entitlement to claim that *p* on the basis of it perceptually seeming to them that *p*. Similarly, the perceptual readings we are discussing suggest that the authentic agent’s “simple seeing” is tied to broader features of their lives. Dreyfus proposes that it is “only after much involved experience, [that] the learner develops a way of coping in which reasons play no role”;[[27]](#endnote-27) and Blattner and Carman link the need for vision of one’s concrete situation to appreciation of “the ineradicable vulnerability of life,”[[28]](#endnote-28) “the inherent fragility and vulnerability of my world and my identity.”[[29]](#endnote-29) Golob too talks of a “link which Heidegger postulates” between an appreciation of certain “existential facts … about thrownness, death, anxiety, etc.” and a “phronetic capacity for choice in particular factical situations”; but he sees the weakness of that link as “a significant, internal problem for Heidegger’s account of authenticity.”[[30]](#endnote-30) My concern is that such linkages—real or merely postulated—do not provide reasons for the particular conclusions to which the particular acts of “simple seeing” in question give rise.

The alternative, “deliberation-friendly” reading that I will offer attempts to free Heidegger’s account of authenticity from this predicament while retaining the belief that his appropriation of the concept of *phronêsis* crucially informs that account. The deliberative is anything but a marginal topic in Heidegger’s discussions of *phronêsis*: “*bouleuesthai* is the way to carry out *phronêsis*,” this being a form of “self-debate [*Mit-sich-zu-Rate-Gehen*],” “a discussing” (*PS* 98, 99).[[31]](#endnote-31) “To action itself pertains deliberation” (*PS* 98); it “belongs to action that it *proceed by way of deliberating*”; and alongside “resolving,” “deliberating” constitutes “the how of action” (*BCArP* 128). What I offer below is an interpretation of Heidegger’s understanding of authenticity—and the appropriation of *phronêsis* that I believe it does indeed involve—which accommodates such thoughts alongside those that encourage the perceptual reading.[[32]](#endnote-32)

4. A Sketch of an Alternative: the All-Things-Considered Judgment Reading

A key assumption for my alternative reading is—in the words of another important neo-Aristotelian whom we have already encountered—that “practical worthwhileness is multi-dimensional.”[[33]](#endnote-33) As Heidegger puts the point, “*For our being, … no unique and absolute norm can be given*” (*BCArP* 126). Instead our predicament would seem to be that we must weigh in each situation in which we find ourselves multiple, competing normative demands to which we are subject to establish which matters most *here and now*. What I will call the All-things-considered Judgment Reading—or AJR for short—identifies willingness to make such decisions with Heideggerian authenticity.

We can find support for the AJR in, for example, the distinctive concept that Heidegger labels ‘guilt,’ which he explains by reference to two of what he calls ‘nullities [*Nichtigkeiten*].’ According to the first, “in existing as thrown,” “*Dasein* constantly lags behind its possibilities” (*SZ* 284): what Heidegger seems to mean by this is that Dasein always finds itself located in—“thrown” into—a particular context with a particular range of options for action.[[34]](#endnote-34) But I will focus here on the second “nullity”: the fact that “Freedom … *is* only in the choice of *one* possibility—that is, in tolerating one’s not having chosen the others and one’s not being able to choose them” (*SZ* 285). As a result,

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Every action is at the same time something marked by guilt. For the possibilities of action are limited in comparison with the demands of conscience, so that every action that is successfully carried out produces conflicts. … Insofar as I am at all, I become guilty whenever I act in any sense. (*WDR* 169)

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For us finite creatures, the “demands of conscience” outstrip “the possibilities of action,” so we must assess which of these demands is *overall* the most important in each situation in which we find ourselves. Authentic Dasein answers a “*summons*” “to its ownmost Being-guilty” (*SZ* 269)—to these facts of its finitude—by taking on that need for decision, the need, I suggest, for all-things-considered (ATC) judgment.[[35]](#endnote-35)

Key to our present concerns is that the roots of this outlook lie in Heidegger’s reading of Aristotle on *phronêsis*. *Phronêsis* guides action in the light of an understanding not of particular goals—of “what sorts of things promote health or strength, for instance”—but of “the good life in general,” “living well in general,” as Terence Irwin renders this passage (*NE* 1140a 25-31[[36]](#endnote-36) In Heidegger’s words, the *phronimos* acts not “in relation to particular advantages … which promote Dasein in a particular regard” but with regard to how Dasein should act “as such and as a whole [*als solchen im Ganzen*]” (*PS* 34). Such action is performed not merely to meet the requirements associated with occupying particular roles or of achieving particular purposes, but instead because it is judged best ATC.[[37]](#endnote-37)

The following section will explain how the AJR understands what is perhaps the core characteristic of authenticity—the feat of “being-oneself [*Selbstsein*]” through which an agent “lets its ownmost Self *take action in itself*” (*SZ* 268)—and extend the case for thinking the roots of these ideas lie in Heidegger’s appropriation of *phronêsis*,as the basis for this explanation lies in one of his discussions of that very notion.

5. Making All-Things-Considered Judgments as Being-Oneself

There Heidegger asks what it takes for us “as hearers [to] take [a] speaker to be *himself* bearing witness to the matter that he represents”—to judge “that the speaker speaks for the matter *with his person* [*mit seiner Person*]”; in settling this, Heidegger depicts a speaker who recommends an action on the grounds that it is conducive to the achievement of some particular end (health or strength, we might insert here, using Aristotle’s examples); “yet … the hearer can notice in the course of discourse that the speaker does not bring himself to say what is best” (*BCArP* 112). “In the counsel he delivers,” this speaker “holds back what his *phronêsis* makes available to him”—“puts at his disposal [*die er aus seiner* *phronêsis* *heraus verfügt*]”: “He is satisfied with presenting … a serious proposal, though not the best” (*BCArP* 112). As a result, the hearer “withdraws his trust from the speaker,” because the latter “screens his own position” (*BCArP* 112).

But why? There is no suggestion that the speaker does not believe what he is saying—for instance, that he is merely reporting the opinions of others; rather, in his counsel, he “recommend[s] something as *sumpheron*”—conducive to some particular end—“that he believes is *sumpheron*” (*BCArP* 112). But, nonetheless, we can follow up this counsel by asking him “Yes, but what do *you* think ought to be done?” That which the speaker has said so far does indeed leave indeterminate what one might call “his own view.” The same follow-up question would not seem to make sense, however, were he instead to “bring himself to say what is best”: there would be something akin to Moore’s paradox in following up such a statement with “… though that is not what *I* think ought to be done.” “[P]resenting … a serious proposal, though not the best,” leaves room for such a further clause: such a speaker “does not say everything” and it may be the case that “he knows still more” (*BCArP* 112). But if the speaker “bring[s] himself to say what is best,” then there is no such room and he “presents himself in what he says” (*BCArP* 112).

My suggestion is that the inauthentic person too fails to “present himself” in the judgments that he makes because he does not “bring himself to say what is best.” The suggestion is not that he lies about—and in that sense, hides or “screens” from others—what he thinks is best. Rather he hides from others *and from himself* by being unwilling to settle what is best, failing to *address* the question that is *phronêsis’* theme. Only through a readiness to deploy his capacity for *phronêsis* does “the bursting forth of the acting person as such” (*PS* 103) take place, does a person truly 'act from out of himself” (*BCArP* 123). It is through the same willingness, I suggest, that the authentic person “lets its ownmost Self *take action in itself*” (*SZ* 268, quoted above).

To develop this thought, let us note how Heidegger describes unwillingness to apply this capacity in his accounts of *phronêsis* and of authenticity. Such willingness “cannot at all be taken for granted” because it requires “*constant struggle against a tendency to concealment residing at the heart of Dasein*”: Heidegger identifies this as a “tendency to be concerned” “with things of minor importance [*nebensächliche* *Dinge*]” (*PS* 36-37). The predicament is not that we are all constantly struggling not to become stamp-collectors, train-spotters or Rawlsian grass-counters,[[38]](#endnote-38) but rather that we fail to concern ourselves with the *best* possible action that our situation makes available. This is to be “a slave of circumstances and of everyday importunities” (*PS* 89); it is to “take easy refuge in … the supposedly indispensable resolution” of “some pressing mundane task or other” rather than “gaze directly and concernfully at life” (*PIA* 92).

We hear these same themes in Heidegger’slater characterisations of the inauthentic. Such a person “understands himself in terms of those very closest events and be-fallings which he encounters … and which thrust themselves upon him”; he “abandon[s] [him]self to whatever the day may bring,” “cling[ing]” to “what is proximally at [his] everyday disposal,” “distracted by”—”*entangled* in,” “lost in”—“the objects of [his] closest concern” (*SZ* 410, 345, 195, 338, *HCT* 281). Inauthentic Dasein has “not authentically chosen” but instead has “allowed itself to be chosen by whatever it [has] immersed itself in,” to be “lived by whatever it happens to be occupied with” (*CTR* 50, 45). (We will return to the phenomenology of this condition in the next section.)[[39]](#endnote-39)

As indicated above, a full explanation and defence of this understanding of Heideggerian authenticity is beyond the scope of this paper and, in what follows, I concentrate on showing how it accounts for the features of his texts that inspire the perceptual reading. Sections 6-8 will argue that the claims that section 2 gathers under headings (1-3) are at least equally—and when examined more closely, arguably more—apt as phenomenological descriptions of the deliberative capacity that the AJR proposes authenticity is; and sections 10-11 will argue that the absences identified under headings (4-5) do not reflect (implausible) denials on Heidegger’s part that the authentic deliberate, and that there are normative demands upon us about which we might talk intelligibly in general terms. Rather they reflect the nature of his interest in authenticity: that which the perceptual reading would have Heidegger deny are matters from which—in light of his interests—he must abstract.

Let us begin then with an interpretation that our reading offers of (1), the authentic agent’s “openness to the concrete situation,” an interpretation that will also help us understand other features that Heidegger ascribes to the situation of action with which the authentic engage.

6. Openness to the Situation as Concrete, Whole and Particular

“[T]he task” of *phronêsis*, Heidegger tells us,is to “uncover … the concrete situation” (*PS* 102). But the AJR provides an understanding of such “uncovering” which can also accommodate its being a deliberative feat. The AJR understands this “openness” as a responsiveness not just to the particular aspect of my situation that would strike a holder of office *a*, the pursuer of goal *b*, the adherent of norm *c* or project *d*, but instead a responsiveness to all of those aspects at once and to the need to adjudicate between them. I am capable of such responsiveness—and indeed it is demanded of me if am to be open to my life in all its normative multi-dimensionality—precisely because I may *be* not only the holder of office *a*, but also the pursuer of *b*, as well as the adherent of *c* *and* of *d*.

“The concrete” here then is the multi-dimensional. One’s concrete situation is one’s situation in all its many aspects—its relevance to the many offices, goals, and other “advantages” that make up our multi-dimensional lives; and there is no particular reason to think of “openness” to this concretion as any less a deliberative process than a perceptual one. It is an openness to our many thoughts on our situation and a readiness to weigh these one against each other; and this may be very much a deliberative, and indeed reflective, process. *Phronêsis* “disclos[es] the concrete individual possibilities of the Being of Dasein”—the many courses of action that its situation makes available—with a view to uncovering “what is best among th[ose] possible actions” (*PS* 96, 95).

The inauthentic person, on the other hand, is blind to that concretion, as our earlier description of the phenomenology of his condition shows. The “*tendency to concealment”* to which he succumbs is one in which he closes his mind to the question of “what is best among the possible actions” that his concrete situation affords; instead he “abandons himself to” “the supposedly indispensable resolution” of “some pressing mundane task or other.” To be able to “take easy refuge in” such an “object of closest concern”—to be “lived by whatever he happens to be occupied with”—requires at the same time that he blinds himself to his broader, concrete situation: he “immerses” himself—”loses himself”—”in the object of [this particular] concern,” taking the way that the world presents itself to that concern—that task—to simply and exclusively *be* the world*—the* world, *the* facts. So, as Heidegger says, all “other possibilities” are “levell[ed] off,” “crowded out” or “closed off” and what remains—the world understood through the “mundane task” in which the inauthentic person loses himself—“becomes the ‘real world’”: “Blind for possibilities,” inauthentic Dasein “retains and receives the ‘actual’ that is left over” (*SZ* 195, 391). This “dimming down of the possible as such” (*SZ* 195) leaves us then with a “general situation,” a situation subsumed under the demands of a “particular advantage” and stripped of its concretion, its many other aspects that might invite action and call for ATC judgment.

This construal of the concretion of the situation of action also helps us understand two further features that Heidegger ascribes to it, its particularity and—first—its wholeness. The *phronimos* “act[s] in the full situation within which [she] act[s]”—in light of “the situation in the largest sense” (*PS* 101); she does so, according to the AJR, because her readiness for ATC judgment makes of her situation a whole—an openness to all “the demands of conscience” that she encounter there. In line with Heidegger’s identification of authenticity as itself a way of being-whole and inauthenticity as a form of “dispersal” or “fragmentation,”[[40]](#endnote-40) readiness to judge one’s situation as a whole is my being responsive as a whole: not merely *as* a teacher, *as* a husband, *as* a socialist, etc., but as the concrete individual that I am that is all of these things.[[41]](#endnote-41) Only by being ready to judge my situation as a whole can I act on what one might call *my* own view of what should be done: to turn to the most florid of Aristotle’s invocations of the perceptual, only then, one might say, is the “eye of the soul” itself open—when I look for myself.

We also have a vivid sense of why the situation of action is a particular. *Phronêsis* is “concerned with the *eskaton*” (*NE* 1142a26-28), Finnigan’s ‘last thing’ and, as Heidegger glosses it, “the outermost in the sense of the momentary individual this-there [*des jeweils einzelnen Dies-da*]”: “*Phronesis* is the beholding of a this-here-now [*das Erblicken des Diesmaligen*]” (*PS* 112, 109). Those who are only open to “general situations” cannot take in the concrete situation since the challenge in doing so is appreciating the multiplicity of demands that such a concrete situation embodies. “[The] situation is in every case different,” because “The circumstances, the givens, the times, and the people vary”; “what I want to do varies as well”; “action, in its very sense, is in each case different”—”according to circumstances, time, people”—as demands that were most important in one are trumped by others in the next.[[42]](#endnote-42)

Heidegger extends this approach to other themes in Aristotle’s ethics. For example, “*maintaining the mean*,” rather than being the expression of an “ethics of a meagre averageness,” is “seiz[ing] the moment as a whole,” “the entirety [*Gesamtheit*] of [one’s] circumstances”; just as the AJR depicts authenticity, such a “maintaining” involves a weighing of the many different demands that we encounter in that moment—”the right apportioning” “[i]n relation to this manifoldness of being-determinations” that we encounter there (*BCArP* 121, 128, 115, 126, cf. 114) in determining what is best.[[43]](#endnote-43) Section 8 will return to these themes when examining Heidegger’s remarks that specifically address the relation of perception—*aisthêsis*—to *phronêsis*.

7. Silence and Conscience Revisited

The worry that the AJR over-intellectualises authenticity can arise in multiple ways, but many rest on understandings of ATC judgment that caricature it and which we have little reason to think Heidegger would share.[[44]](#endnote-44) I will consider here one version of that worry, in responding to which I will introduce themes that will then allow us to understand the authentic person’s *Verschwiegenheit*—their reticence. The version of the charge in question is that the AJR may seem to stress reflective judgment at the expense of affective openness to one’s situation.

This accusation rests upon a very un-Heideggerian conception of the place of affect in our deliberative lives.[[45]](#endnote-45) Heidegger insists that, through affect, “Dasein is disclosed to itself *prior to* all cognition and volition,” “outlin[ing] in advance” how Dasein has “already submitted itself [*sich schon angewiesen*] to having entities within-the-world *‘matter’ to* it” (*SZ* 136, 137)*.* As different translators have put it in articulating his key concept of “*Befindlichkeit*”—which also first becomes prominent in his Aristotle lectures[[46]](#endnote-46)—Dasein always finds itself already affectively disposed towards—affected by, attuned to—its world. But “it is just as everyday a matter for Dasein not to ‘give in [*nachgibt*]’ to such moods”—to “evade,” rather than “allow itself to be brought before,” “that which is disclosed” (*SZ* 134-35). From this perspective, to be open to my situation in its concretion—its normatively multi-dimensional character—is then to acknowledge the many emotions that it elicits from me; it is to acknowledge how—through these emotions—my situation matters to me—“speaks to me,” one might say—in multiple ways, whether I wish to acknowledge them or not.

Heidegger specifically talks of “*Verschwiegenheit* *als eine Weise der Befindlichkeit*”—of reticence as a way of finding ourselves affected, touched, moved,

the world around us mattering to us; and what comes with such reticence is “a genuine and rich disclosedness of the world” (*HCT* 268), an openness—I suggest—to all the “demands of conscience” that one’s concrete situation poses and all the possible actions they would solicit. To be open in this way is, one might say, a readiness to judge *rather than pre-judge* one’s situation:

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Reticence … gives precedence to being, prior to all talk about it and counselling over it, and this precisely in concerned preoccupation and being with one another. Genuine ability to hear comes from such reticence, and genuine being-with-one-another constitutes itself in this ability. (*HCT* 268, cf. *SZ* 165)

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As indicated above, there is without doubt in Heidegger a suspicion that what offers itself as deliberation may simply be chatter, *Gerede*, “idle talk.” It is also another facet of our “tendency to be concerned” “with things of minor importance”—rather than with what is best—that we act and think in ways in which we have simply become accustomed to act and think, “cling[ing]” to “what is proximally at [one’s] everyday disposal,” “chosen by whatever [one has] immersed [one]self in.” This is a tendency to “fall back behind” oneself (*SZ* 264), to become “set in [one’s] ways” (*PIA* 96), “clinging to whatever existence one has reached” (*SZ* 264). Then our talk can indeed be said to be “idle” because, “entangled” in the “minor,” we are blind to “the ‘heart of the matter’ [*auf die Sachen*]” (*SZ* 127).[[47]](#endnote-47)

From this perspective, the reason that “the person who is silent can ‘let something be understood [*zu verstehen geben*]’ more authentically … than the person who is never short of words” is that the latter speaks *too soon*—fails to hold his tongue—rather than remain open to his situation in all its “genuine and rich” concretion. “*As something that keeps silent*, authentic *Being*-one's-Self is just the sort of thing that does not keep on saying ‘I’,” voicing what have become its habitual concerns; instead, “in its reticence,” it “‘*is*’ that thrown entity as which it can authentically be” (*SZ* 323), an entity with a range of possible actions before it and to which it is open, a range which its inauthenticity would instead “dim down.”

When authenticity brings Dasein “back into the stillness of itself,” this is indeed then a readiness to stop talking; it is readiness to interrupt on-going conversations into which—”behind which”—I have fallen, an openness instead to the possibility that what have become my habitual concerns may not matter most in the situation in which I now find myself: it is to “not keep on saying ‘I’” but instead to “give[] precedence to being.” In *PS*, Heidegger describes the stranger in Plato’s *Sophist* as challenging Theaetetus” assessment of the issues they are exploring by making an “appeal[] to [his] conscience to see for himself whatever is under discussion”; the stranger asks Theaetetus “whether he has said ‘yes’ and ‘Amen’ … merely out of habit, or whether he has … had the matter itself in view, and has made it present [*vergegenwärtigt*] to himself, before he voiced his agreement” (*PS* 280). The stranger is asking Theaetetus whether he has “fallen back” behind himself, whether—”never short of words”—he has pre-judged his concrete situation rather than giving it precedence.[[48]](#endnote-48)

This passage from *PS* is one of Heidegger’s few mentions of conscience prior to *Being and Time* and we also now have a construal for the latter’s remarks on “the call of conscience,” and, in particular, its silence. According to the AJR, and in line with a familiar enough understanding of conscience,[[49]](#endnote-49) to answer that call is to apply one’s capacity to determine what is best. Such a call “asserts nothing, gives no information about world-events, has nothing to tell” (*SZ* 273, quoted above), because it calls on us to apply our own capacity to judge: it is an “appeal” to the agent “to see for himself.” The call “gives the … ear nothing to hear which might be passed along in further retelling” (*SZ* 277) because it is precisely not instructing us how to act, but calling on us to settle for ourselves what must be done ATC. To return also to “resolution,” the authentic can be said to distinctively exhibit this feature in the two senses that Heidegger seems to wish to evoke in using the term, ‘*Entschlossenheit*’: the authentic person is resolute in being true to her own judgment—in the sense that she is ready to deploy her capacity to judge for herself—but her being so is a form of openness—*Ent-schlossenheit*—towards her concrete situation, a readiness to judge what is best there.

William Lyons has recently proposed that “the classical Christian account of conscience” is “a *cognitive* account of conscience,” one of “a voice”that delivers“message[s] about right and wrong conduct.”[[50]](#endnote-50) From this perspective, Heidegger’s “call” can seem to have been “emptied of persuasive or morally admirable ethical content.”[[51]](#endnote-51) The AJR spares him this charge and, interestingly, the account of the difficulty of ATC judgment with which this section opened also suggests a kinship to views expressed by central Christian thinkers. In a passage that greatly influenced later discussion of conscience, St Paul states that, “When God judges the secrets of human hearts,” “[t]heir conscience is called as witness, and their own thoughts argue the case on either side, against them or … for them.”[[52]](#endnote-52) The openness that authenticity calls for is openness to one’s situation as a whole, which is openness to all one’s thoughts and feelings about it, so as to settle what must be done, determining one’s own view of what is best: as Calvin insists, “conscience … does not suffer a man to suppress what he knows within himself, but pursues him till it brings him to conviction.”[[53]](#endnote-53)

8. *Phronêsis* as *Umsicht* and *Übersehen*

In offering an alternative to the perceptual reading, the two previous sections also help to account for the naturalness of allusions to perception in discussion of authenticity, the appropriateness of perceptual metaphors in capturing the difference in “horizon” in light of which the authentic—and the *phronimos*—live. Let us turn now to Heidegger’s own use of perceptual metaphors in characterising *phronêsis* and, in particular, itsrendering as‘*Umsicht*.” This will also be an appropriate point at which to consider the remarks that Heidegger makes when he himself specifically addresses the relation of perception to *phronêsis*.

‘*Umsicht”* is a term with a complex role in Heidegger’s early work, with its use as a translation of *phronêsis* in *BCArP* and *PS* contrasting with a rather different—and better known—use in *HCT* and *SZ*, where it refers to “the kind of sight which guides the genuinely concerned use” of the *Zuhanden* (*HCT* 195). But a proper appreciation of the significance of its earlier use depends, I think, on recognition of two features that it shares with the later.[[54]](#endnote-54)

Firstly, Heidegger’s later use of *Umsicht* represents a complex dialectical move within his pursuit of a broader project which is, at least in part, of Aristotelian inspiration: the distinguishing of “the multiplicity of the various possibilities of *aletheia,*” the different modes of being that entities exemplify and the different and corresponding “ways human Dasein disclose[] entities” (*PS* 13, 15). In pursuing this project. Heidegger identifies and challenges two symbiotically-related prejudices: the “priority of the present-at-hand in traditional ontology,” and a similarly-baleful “priority” assigned there to “pure beholding [*puren Anschauen*]” (*SZ* 147, cf. 171). Against this, he argues for recognition of, for example, the *Zuhanden* and their manifesting themselves to us through “concerned use.” In Aristotle’s words, here, “where [these] objects differ in kind,” “the part of the soul answering to each is different in kind” (*NE* 1139a9-10).

But making such a case is not, of course, easy. As any good hegemony should, the prejudices that Heidegger wishes to challenge have a place set aside for the phenomena that might seem to challenge them, a setting-aside that will protect their “priorities.” Those in the grip of these prejudices will concede that “concerned use” of the *Zuhanden* may, of course, result in entities showing themselves to us—for example, in the involvement of measuring tools in the sciences, in the undeniable “praxis” that “theoretical research” involves; but “all [such] manipulation in the sciences is merely in the service of pure observation [*reinen Betrachtung*],” which “regulates all [such] ‘procedures’ and retains its priority” (*SZ* 358). Or so the hegemony insists.[[55]](#endnote-55)

In pressing his case then, Heidegger must respond to this counter-punch too. He responds by arguing that our “dealings with equipment” (*SZ* 69) are in their own right truly revelatory of entities and are not *mere* “manipulation”—*mere* “procedures”—in the service of what his opponents identify as the only *real* revelation of entities, “pure observation.” But given the very domination of that prejudice, how can one articulate this response? Heidegger’s tactic is to insist that “dealing with equipment” embodies “not a blind activity”—at best “in the service of” the supposedly *true* seeing that is “pure observation”—but instead “has its own kind of sight” (*SZ* 69)—namely, *Umsicht*—revealing its own domain of entities, the *Zuhanden* in their *Zuhandenheit*.

This is, of course, a fraught move: pointing out other “kinds of sight” to challenge the “priority” of “pure beholding.” But in saying that these others are forms of “sight” too—are also the revelation of how things are—Heidegger’s aim is clearly to get us to think again about what “sight” and “the revelation of things” *are*, and the influence upon our understanding of the latter of simplistic perceptual metaphors. So, when Heidegger introduces his later use of ‘*Umsicht*’ in *HCT*, he insists that “[s]eeing here is not restricted to seeing with the eyes nor is the term in this usage related primarily to sense perception”; “[r]ather seeing is here used in the wider sense of concerned and caring appresentation” (*HCT* 274). Our predicament has been that sight has come to provide the model for all that understanding is, with all other activities through which we comprehend entities—but which fail to fit that model—appearing then “blind.” Heidegger’s response is to say, “No, these other activities have sight too, but their own kind of sight, which your fixation on sight has made”—dare he say it—“invisible.”

So in using a perceptual metaphor here in identifying “concerned use” as a distinctive way in which entities show themselves, Heidegger is specifically identifying a form of understanding that Western philosophy’s fixation on the perceptual has obscured. I suggest that we should also consider the perceptual connotations of Heidegger’s earlier rendering of *phronêsis* as *Umsicht* with—dare *I* say it—circumspection. It is an instance of a broader effort to uncover unrecognized ways in which unrecognized aspects of the world show themselves to us: only through concerned use do the *Zuhanden* show themselves and one’s situation in its concretion—*as* a whole—shows itself only if one is authentic. This too is a kind of “sight” revelatory of its own distinctive kind of “object,” though this *Umsicht* is not “related primarily to sense perception” either.[[56]](#endnote-56)

A second feature which suits this term for the above dialectical role and which, I believe, links the earlier and later usages of *Umsicht* is the term’s capacity to suggest a form of understanding that requires precisely appreciation of a broader context: the different “kinds of sight” that Heidegger wishes us to appreciate are—in both cases—a “seeing” or “looking *around*,” an *Um-sicht*. This is a feature of the term that translators have flagged up in both the earlier and later settings,[[57]](#endnote-57) and Heidegger does indeed seem to want to capture this resonance in his uses of the term. So, we encounter a *Zuhanden* entity “not by looking at it and establishing its properties, but rather by circumspection [*Umsicht*] of the dealings in which we use it” (*SZ* 73)—by ‘looking around” the entity in grasping it through our mastery of its context of use. Similarly, in the earlier use Heidegger makes of *Umsicht*, he characterises the “seeing” that distinguishes the *phronimos* as “looking-around oneself [*Sichumsehen*] in the world”: in the deliberating that characterises the *phronimos*, “I take a look around myself” [*sehe ich mich um*]” (*BCArP* 130, 44). The distinctive understanding that comes with *phronêsis* is an appreciation of one’s situation as a whole, something attained not by those of us who fixate only on those “very closest” tasks which thrust themselves upon us, but by those who “look around” themselves at the multiple acts available to them.

Heidegger’s own explicit comments on the relation of perception—of *aisthêsis*—to *phronêsis* echo these thoughts, two striking themes emerging there. Firstly, Heidegger tells us, the deliberation of the *phronimos* “ends in an *aisthêsis*”; here deliberation “comes to an end,” a “halt,” a “stand still”: “it goes no further” (*PS* 110, 108, 109, 111). So this *aisthêsis* is what we find at the end of a deliberative process. Secondly, that in which this process issues is a *unified* overview of one’s concrete situation in its multi-dimensionality: “in *aisthêsis*, I see the whole of the state of affairs, the whole of streets, houses, trees, people, and precisely in such a way that this *aisthêsis* at the same time has the character of a simple ascertaining [*schlichten Feststellen*]” (*PS* 110). Putting these two themes together, Heidegger presents *phronêsis* as a process that yields a unified grasp of one’s situation as a whole:

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In deliberation over the situation in which I am to act, I finally touch upon the simple grasping [*schlichte Erfassen*]of the determinate state of affairs on hand, the determinate circumstances, and the determinate time. (*PS* 110).

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“[I]n this *Augenblick*”—this “moment of vision”—”I survey”—”*ich übersehe*”—”the concrete situation of action” (*PS* 114); “*Phronêsis* … is an *aisthêsis*, i.e. ultimately a simple, overall view [*schlichtes Übersehen*] of the moment,” “the true safekeeping [*Verwahrungsweise*] of the moment as a whole” (*PICA* 135); and to return to our discussion of “the speaker [who] does not bring himself to say what is best” but “holds back what his *phronêsis* makes available to him,” we see there too the explicit identification of *phronêsis* with *Umsicht* and the agent who fails to acquire that perspective as one who “*does not have an overview of what is at stake* *as a whole* [übersieht die Sache night ganz]” (*BCArP* 112).

Such *Umsicht*—such an *Übersicht*—is “*aisthêsis* in the broadest sense of the word,” Heidegger says; but it merits application of this term because we see our concrete situation here as we may see a simple geometrical shape: we “see [it] at one stroke” and not “resolved … into more elementary figures” (*PS* 110, 111, cf. 112 and *NE* 1142a28-29). It is only in arriving at such a unified taking-in of one’s concrete situation as a whole—in such an *Augenblick*, a single “blink of the eye”—that a person decides “what is best,” and can 'act from out of himself.”

9. Is All-Things-Considered Judgment a Mysterious “Knack”?

At this point, I wish to break for a moment from my efforts to explain how my reading accounts for section 2’s evidence and return to the charges of section 3: in light of criticisms of interpretations of *phronêsis* that reduce it to a mysterious “knack,” it seems only fair to assess whether the AJR fares any better. How indeed—one might ask of ATC judgment—does one *do* it? We have already heard that, “*For our being, … no unique and absolute norm can be given*” (*BCArP* 126); and Heidegger renders *NE* 1104a6-9 as follows,

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There is no *paraggelia*[set of instructions], something like a universal military field order, an a priori ethics, by which humanity becomes better *eo ipso*. Everyone must have, for himself, his eyes trained on that which is at the moment and which matters to him. (*BCArP* 123)

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Although sections 6-8 have suggested an alternative to reading the latter perceptual metaphor as indicative of a “simple seeing” or indeed a decisionist “pure choice,” Chappell’s worry might still seem to resurface here: if there is no decision procedure—no *paraggelia*—to guide our ATC judgments, must not the authentic—as David McNaughton puts the point—instead “blankly ‘intuit’ what to do … or else make an arbitrary judgment”?[[58]](#endnote-58)

It can seem almost a defining professional commitment of ours as philosophers to strive to find a decision procedure that might guide this process.[[59]](#endnote-59) But the assumption that a *paraggelia,* a “blank,” “simple seeing,” and straight-forward arbitrariness are the only alternatives seems to rest on too crude a conception of rationality; and denial of a *paraggelia* seems to leave plenty of room for what one might still call “deliberation” and “reasoning,”[[60]](#endnote-60) as we see in the work of some analytic neo-Aristotelians. McDowell, for example, proposes that “the perceptual concept mark[s] a point at which discursive justifications have run out,” although “‘Don’t you see?’ can often be supplemented with words aimed at persuasion”; a particular case might be subsumed under “general considerations” or aligned with other examples, though these “generalizations will be approximate at best, and examples will need to be taken with the sort of ‘and so on’ that appeals to the co-operation of a hearer who has cottoned on.”[[61]](#endnote-61) The vehicles of such “persuasion” are recognizably forms of deliberation over just what one’s situation *is*: over whether it is one in which—say—one’s obligation to one’s family should trump those to one’s friends, one’s duties as an employee outweighing one’s ambitions as an artist, etc. Such considerations “will fall short of rationally necessitating acceptance of their conclusion in the way a proof does”;[[62]](#endnote-62) but seeing that as reason to “cast doubt on their status as arguments”—”that is, appeals to reason”[[63]](#endnote-63)—would seem to presuppose the commitment to a decision procedure that I suggested above seems too crude a conception of rationality.[[64]](#endnote-64) What McDowell offers here seems to me to capture what making ATC judgments is actually like.[[65]](#endnote-65) It is not the tossing of a coin or a “blank ‘intuition’”—a “simple seeing”;[[66]](#endnote-66) rather, it is a deliberative process that requires—in McNaughton’s words—”discernment, sensitivity and judgment.”[[67]](#endnote-67)

But what such a view does entail, however, is that there may not be much that one can say of a general and substantive nature about how we make ATC judgments. By way of comparison, McDowell argues that

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[I]t is a strength of Aristotle’s thought … that he says so little in general terms about the workings of deliberation with a view to doing well. It shows his immunity to the temptation to suppose there ought to be something on the lines of a *method* for arriving at right answers to deliberative questions of the interesting kind. (McDowell, *The Engaged Intellect*, 52)

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Heidegger too notes that Aristotle’s discussion of phronetic deliberation is principally a specification of what it *is not*, its “delimitation against other possible modes of disclosure” (*PS* 104). So it is not *episteme*, or *techne*, or “sureness of instinct,” or “readiness of mind,” or “opinion” (*PS* 104-6, cf. *NE* 6.9, 3.3, and 1140b2); it is not about the past, about what cannot be otherwise or is impossible for us (see *NE* 1139b6-7, 1140a31-32, cf. 1141b11-12 and 3.3); and what we are left with are conclusions such as that “excellence in deliberation will be correctness with regard to what conduces to the end of which practical wisdom is the true apprehension” (*NE* 1142b33-35)—in other words, the relevant kind of deliberation is that which reveals what is best and in the right way.[[68]](#endnote-68) A craving to say more may be—for us philosophers—a *déformation professionnelle*. But, as Aristotle says, “the accounts we demand must be in accordance with the subject-matter” and “about some things it is not possible to make a universal statement which will be correct”; in particular, “the matter of practical affairs are bound to be of this kind”: with questions concerning such matters, “there are no fixed answers” (*NE* 1104a3-5, 1137b12-19).[[69]](#endnote-69)

As a good Aristotelian then, Heidegger could himself have endorsed such a view. But does he? As indicated, to expect evidence for that in the form of the presence in his work of a substantial and systematic account of deliberation would be to misunderstand the view, as it entails that there can be no such thing. But his endorsing it does help us make sense of a certain specificity in remarks in *Being and Time* that—should that specificity be overlooked—might lead an advocate of a perceptual reading to see the invocation of maxims, norms and rules—McDowellian “general considerations”—as the way of the inauthentic.

In these remarks, Heidegger does indeed associate inauthenticity with the desire for maxims to live by. But they are of a conspicuously special sort: “unequivocally calculable maxims [*eindeutig verrechenbaren Maximen*]” (*SZ* 294). This seems to find echoes in his depiction of fantasies of “Dasein’s existence” that “subsume” it “under the idea of a business procedure that can be regulated,” and of life as justified by a balancing calculation: as “something that gets managed and reckoned up,” a “reckoning up [of] ‘guilt’ and ‘innocence’ and balancing them off” (*SZ* 289, 292):

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The common sense of the “they” knows only the satisfying of manipulable rules and public norms and the failure to satisfy them. It reckons up infractions of them and tries to balance them off. (*SZ* 288)

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To my ear at least, this does not sound like an attack on deliberation as such but instead on a debased kind of deliberation, a kind informed by a fantasy of what is involved in determining what must be done and one which expresses less a pursuit of that aim than a desire to justify oneself in the eyes of others, by reference to *handlich*—manipulable but also convenient, manageable—rules and *öffentlich* norms—norms our compliance with which might be expected to spare us censure.

What Heidegger has in mind in such remarks then, I believe, is just the kind of fantastical decision procedure—a *paraggelia—*that would spare us the distinctive challenge of ATC judgment—a “regulated” “business procedure” of “reckoning up” and “balancing off” by reference to “unequivocally calculable maxims,” rather than a process of “discernment, sensitivity and judgment.”[[70]](#endnote-70) But to believe a *paraggelia* is a fantasy is not to believe that such judgment is therefore non-deliberative. Indeed to insist that it must instead be a “simple seeing” would seem to be precisely another way of turning one’s eyes away from what “seeing for oneself”—”training” one’s “eyes” on “that which matters” here and now—takes. That is a readiness to stop and think seriouslyabout one’s situation as the actual, concrete situation that it is: as David Wiggins puts it in one of his discussions of *phronêsis*, this is “the torment of thinking, feeling and understanding that can actually be involved in reasoned deliberation.”[[71]](#endnote-71)

10. On the Absence of an Ethic, the “Secondary” Status of Deliberation and the Project of *Being and Time*

This penultimate section of the paper will complete the work of accommodating within the AJR the evidence that section 2 presents.

One might think that, in itself, Heidegger’s rejection of a *paraggelia* provides an explanation of the absence of a first-order ethic in *Being and Time*. But that seems a questionable step: believing that there are general things to say about what is generally right and good—even if there are a multiplicity of such general things that need saying—seems consistent with believing that there is no *paraggelia* that would mechanically determine what here and now is best. Indeed that would seem to be Aristotle’s position.[[72]](#endnote-72) Instead I think the absence of such an ethic and deliberation’s status as “a decidedly secondary phenomenon for Heidegger” are a reflection of what interests him about authenticity, *phronêsis* and ATC judgment.[[73]](#endnote-73)

In the context of the project that he sets for *Being and Time*, that interest lies not in the results of such judgments—so what is, in fact, best here and now—nor in the particular “demands of conscience” that our situations present, nor, in any fine-grained way, in the processes we go through in settling which of these matters most (such as adducing McDowellian “general considerations”). Rather Heidegger’s interest lies in conditions that must be in place for any such judgment to be possible. In particular, he argues that the openness to one’s situation as a whole that the authentic achieve requires at the same time a *temporal* openness—the former synchronic openness requiring a diachronic openness too—and the importance of that lies in the part it promises to play in the broader projectof *Being and Time*.

The challenge of making ATC judgments arises for any finite agent, irrespective of how their concrete situation happens to move them. A consequence of this is that whether I perform morally admirable acts when I exercise *phronêsis* depends on the range of ways of “mattering” to which I have “already submitted” and the range of actions those ways invite: as Heidegger puts it, “*phronêsis* … is not itself autonomous” in that, through it, “we are not thereby led to act better morally if we are not already good” (*PS* 115, cf. 114), any more than through our being energetic, determined, or imaginative.[[74]](#endnote-74) The multiple ends to which I am drawn may be admirable or deplorable; and I may or may not draw them together in a judgment of what ought to be done here and now, of what—in my eyes—is best here.[[75]](#endnote-75) The former is a matter for a first-order ethic; but Heidegger’s concern is with the latter.

The specificity of his focus also explains why, in a sense, deliberation is indeed “a decidedly secondary phenomenon for Heidegger”: it is not that authentic agents do not deliberate but that what interests Heidegger about their deliberation is the way that they deliberate and conditions that must be in place for deliberation of that kind to be possible. His concern is, one might say, not with the content of the authentic person’s deliberation but with its form, that more “basic form of Dasein’s activity” in which the authentic person draws together into one conversation the many ways in which her concrete situation moves her, a meeting that the inauthentic never convene in failing—so to speak—to convene themselves. What matters here is less what one sees than the breadth of one’s horizon, with the inauthentic agent myopically “dimming down” other possibilities in his “*entanglement*” in “objects of closest concern.”

As mentioned, and as we will discuss again briefly below, Heidegger sees this difference in the synchronic horizons to which the authentic and inauthentic are open as underpinned by their openness to different diachronic horizons, ATC judgment presupposing a distinctive openness to time. The ultimate end that this claim serves in the context of *Being and Time* is that this further “horizon” that the authentic intend promises to be a “horizon for any understanding whatsoever of being” (*SZ* 1), by reference to which “different ways of being” can be grasped as “ways of *being*” (*BPP* 176). This would be a “horizon” against which the many different kinds of entities that we encounter and the many different states of affairs in which they figure would be gathered together at once or, to use an expression of Ruth Chang’s, “on the same page.”[[76]](#endnote-76) It is for this reason, I suggest, that authenticity matters to the project Heidegger sets for *Being and Time*, ATC judgments being those in which I consider not merely some of the entities I encounter and the claims they make upon me, but all of those entities and all of those claims at once. As we are finite agents, such judgments obviously do not gather together all entities, possible or actual. But these judgments are, nonetheless, “being-unifying” judgments: in their disclosure of “concrete situations,” diverse kinds of reasons for acting—epistemic, moral, aesthetic, prudential, religious, political, etc.—and, hence, the diverse kinds of entities that those reasons concern, present themselves “on the same page.” Heidegger’s ambition then becomes to understand how such judgments are possible, identifying the form that openness to “concrete situations” as wholes, and as such, takes. He comes to believe that such judgments are “a possibility open only to those living entities which can understand time” (*BCAnP* 229); so Heidegger then takes in *Being and Time* “the problematic of Temporality as [his] clue,” his “provisional aim” being “the interpretation of *time* as the possible horizon for any understanding whatsoever of being” (*SZ* 39, 1).

To return then to Haugeland’s “foremost exegetical question” about *Being and Time*, that is “what … all that ‘existentialism’ [is] doing in there.” If my reading is correct, key to that “existentialism” is a willingness to make of one’s situation a whole in an ATC judgment. But given his broader philosophical ambition, Heidegger not only will but *must* abstract from concrete conceptions of what is good and right, and from any concern with particular “general considerations” that might guide particular episodes of phronetic deliberation: that broader ambition requires the “bracketing” of such matters because it aims to identify a structural feature that all such deliberation shares.

11. Further Questions and Further Influences

Clearly *much* more needs to be said—not only about the project that Heidegger sets for *Being and Time* but also about the notion of authenticity with which the previous section proposed it is linked.[[77]](#endnote-77) My concerns in this paper have been limited: I have defended the claim that Heidegger’s appropriation of the concept of *phronêsis* shapes profoundly his understanding of authenticity*,* but also argued that we ought not to understand authenticity, therefore, as first and foremost a perceptual feat, as others who have made the first claim have proposed. The evidence that may seem to support that proposal is better accounted for by a more deliberative understanding of that feat, an understanding which also, I believe, has greater philosophical plausibility.

But to say that Heidegger’s understanding of authenticity is shaped profoundly by his appropriation of the concept of *phronêsis* is not to say that it isshaped exclusively by that appropriation. Indeed the origins of that understanding predate the studies of Aristotle that I have examined here and a passage in *BCAnP* explicitly identifies the need to go beyond Aristotle if we are to understand the distinctive temporality of authenticity. When the *orekton*—the desired—in its many forms is gathered together in the decisions that the exercise of *phronêsis* yields, this issues in actions that are expressive of judgments of our own; agents can then “understand[] the *orekton* as the basis of their action and the motive of their decisions [*Entschlusses*]” (*BCAnP* 229). But such “genuinely chosen”—*eigentlich entschlossener—*”action,” which contrasts with inauthentic Dasein’s “allow[ing] itself to be chosen by whatever it [has] immersed itself in,” “is a possibility open only to those living entities which can understand time”; and, Heidegger declares, “Aristotle does not clarify the extent to which time makes something like this possible” (*BCAnP* 229). To give no more than a hint of why this might be the case—and of the different temporal “horizons” that distinguish the authentic and the inauthentic—I will end this paper with a sketch of one of the further ideas that informs Heidegger’s understanding of authenticity: “Being-towards-death.” In presenting it, I will also address objections that the discussion of “guilt” and its two “nullities” that I offered above may invite.

If we take Heidegger’s second nullity simply to articulate the fact that we always find ourselves in a particular, finite, social, historical and cultural situation, then this observation may seem anodyne. Similarly, Golob has claimed that the first nullity—the fact “that in taking any particular path one will have to forgo others”—is surely “of comparatively little interest.”[[78]](#endnote-78) With both, Heidegger may seem to be making an awful lot of fuss about very obvious truths about our finite human existence; moreover, they would seem to be inescapable truths, which poses a problem concerning Heidegger’s discussion of “guilt.” He insists that “I become guilty whenever I act in any sense,” indeed “Insofar as I am at all” (*WDR* 169, quoted above). “*Every* action is … marked by guilt,” he observes, and “not in the sense that [the agent] commits this or that blunder [*Fehltritt*]” (*HCT* 319, italics added). But if so, the proper response to this “guilt”—which Heidegger calls authentic Dasein’s answering a “*summons*” “to its ownmost being-guilty” (*SZ* 269)—cannot be a matter of escaping it. But what then is it? My proposal, in line with the broader reading offered here, is that it is readiness to judge one’s situation ATC. But why is that the proper response?

To see why, and to see why it distinctively embodies an acknowledgement of the above seemingly anodyne facts of our finitude, we need to look more closely at the improper response, inauthenticity, and the way in which it expresses a rejection of those facts. But to see this, we need to go beyond the ideas with which Aristotle provides Heidegger and note a further key feature of inauthenticity: its characteristic attitude to another aspect of our finitude, death.

Freedom would *not* be “the choice of *one* possibility,” and “tolerating one’s not having chosen the others” (*SZ* 285, quoted above), *if* one could make up for rejecting the latter by still being able to act on them; “the possibilities of action” would not be “limited in comparison with the demands of conscience” *if* one could meet later the demands one does not meet now. But such freedom from “guilt” would be secured then only if one condition were to be met, namely, that “[t]here is still plenty of time” (*CTR* 69). Heidegger contrasts authentic “anticipation” of—*Vorlaufen*, meaning literally “running ahead towards”—death (*SZ* 305) with inauthentic “pushing away and suppressing [of] ‘the thought of death’” (*PICA* 118), which he characterises as the insistence that “Death certainly comes, but not right away” (*SZ* 258). The inauthentic person “pushes away … into the realm of postponement” “the indefiniteness of death”—”the possibility that it can come at any moment”—which Heidegger identifies as death’s “sting” (*WDR* 167, *HCT* 317, cf. *SZ* 253, 255 and *HCT* 315).

A denial of what one then call our “diachronic finitude”—the possibility of death—here facilitates a denial of our synchronic finitude—our inability to be in two places at once that Heidegger’s “guilt” identifies. “*Every* action is … marked by guilt,” by our failing to meet those normative demands upon which we decide not to act; and this is an inescapable fact of our finitude. But one can dream of escaping it by dreaming that such failures can be made good in time. There will be no harm in “fall[ing] back behind” myself—in allowing myself to be “lived” by “the objects of [my] closest concern” even if they turn out to be “things of minor importance”—because whatever needs I fail to meet now—indeed fail to recognize now in failing to attend to my concrete situation in all its aspects—I can meet one day: “there is still plenty of time.” But, of course, I cannot, because there is not. To truly acknowledge that fact—to “anticipate” and “*endure* [aushalten] the possibility of death” (*WDR* 168, cf. *SZ* 261 and 262)—is instead to be ready to address and decide amongst the multiple demands we face, judging what is best here and now: “running forward anticipatorily [towards death] means choosing” (*WDR* 168).

These ideas explain, I believe, Heidegger’s description of inauthenticity as something like a dream of indeterminacy: in this condition, “all doors are open” and “everything is within [Dasein’s] reach” (*SZ* 177, 178). Inauthentic Dasein “float[s] unattached” and “uprooted,” “everywhere and nowhere” (*SZ* 170, 173). “*[N]ever dwelling anywhere*” (*SZ* 173), it rejects the need to confront the situation in which it finds itself, because it allows itself to believe that it can meet whatever demands that situation makes upon it, whatever they may have been. Authentic Dasein does not—because it cannot—meet all the demands that its situation makes on it; but it is open to those demands and to that fact—answering the “*summons*” “to its ownmost being-guilty”—while inauthentic Dasein is not. The latter’s “*flight in the face of death*” (*HCT* 316)—its “forced absence of worry about death” (*PICA* 119)—is a flight then from “guilt” too, a dream that there need be no such unmet demands, no need to address and decide amongst them, and no need for freedom to be “only in the choice of *one* possibility.”

Where do we find in Aristotle this vision of a dream of infinitude, of never needing to resolve the multiple normative demands that one experiences in one’s concrete situation in a singular, unifying judgment of which matters most and which will go unmet? We do not.[[79]](#endnote-79) The roots of this vision lie elsewhere: in Heidegger’s reading of St Paul and St Augustine and, in particular, their understanding of the proper Christian relationship to the *parousia*, the end of our earthly life that “comes like a thief in the night” and for which we must “keep awake and sober.”[[80]](#endnote-80) Or so I have argued elsewhere.[[81]](#endnote-81) *Still* much more clearly needs to be said, filling out the account sketched earlier and the further ideas adduced here in order to take in “ambiguity,” “curiosity,” “anxiety” and yet further notions using which Heidegger articulates his vision of authenticity. But I hope to have given some sense here of how an appropriation of *phronêsis* informs that vision too, and of how that appropriation should be understood, though also an indication in this last section of where ideas of quite a different provenance must play a part.[[82]](#endnote-82)

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1. References to works by Heidegger and Aristotle use acronyms given in the bibliography. References to *Being and Time* use the pagination of the German original (*SZ*), given in both available English translations. In what follows, I diverge on occasion from the cited English translations of Heidegger’s works. Generally I follow the translations of Aristotle published in Jonathan Barnes’ *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, but I also draw on Terence Irwin’s version of *NE*. Citations of *NE* and *EE* include either the standard pagination or book and chapter numbers. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Thisbegins with 1922’s *PICA*, where we find reflections on death, falling, publicness, averageness, absorption, curiosity, and a clear anticipation of *das Man,* alongsidean extended discussion of *phronêsis* (see *PICA* 129-30 and 134-36)*.* Other key documents in the development of Heidegger’s account of *Eigentlichkeit* are *CT* and *CTR*, the writing of which coincides with further extended discussions of *phronêsis* in BCArP (see pp. 111-15, 123-30, 169) and, at greatest length, in *PS* (see pp. 33-41, 93-120). [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Bronwyn Finnigan, “*Phronêsis* in Aristotle,” 676, 679. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. Finnigan, “*Phronêsis* in Aristotle,” 674. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. Hubert Dreyfus, “Overcoming the Myth of the Mental,” 51, quoted at Finnigan, “*Phronêsis* in Aristotle,” 676. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. William Blattner, “Authenticity and Resoluteness,” 332. [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. Taylor Carman, “Authenticity,” 291. [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. Sacha Golob, *Heidegger on Concepts, Freedom and Normativity*, 243. [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. There is a large literature on how Heidegger may have appropriated the notion of *phronêsis* (for references, see Denis McManus, “Vision, Norm and Openness”) and—not least for reasons of space—I here confine my attention to only a small part. [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
10. John Haugeland, *Dasein Disclosed*, 188, 44. [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
11. See, in particular, McManus, *Heidegger and the Measure of Truth* and “Being-towards-death and Owning One’s Judgment”. [↑](#endnote-ref-11)
12. See, e.g., *PICA* 118 and 134. [↑](#endnote-ref-12)
13. See, e.g., *SZ* 273, 277 and passages quoted below. [↑](#endnote-ref-13)
14. Cf., e.g., BCArP 111, 178, *PS* 15, 16 and 33. [↑](#endnote-ref-14)
15. McManus, “Vision, Norm and Openness” discusses another relevant metaphor: Heidegger’s depiction of “the *aletheuein* of *phronêsis*” as allowing man “to become transparent [*durchsichtig*] to himself” (*PS* 36). [↑](#endnote-ref-15)
16. Iris Murdoch, *The Sovereignty of Good*, 8, 91. [↑](#endnote-ref-16)
17. Blattner, “Authenticity and Resoluteness,” 332. [↑](#endnote-ref-17)
18. Finnigan, “*Phronêsis* in Aristotle,” 679. [↑](#endnote-ref-18)
19. Blattner, “Authenticity and Resoluteness,” 332, quoting *NE* 1141b9-10 [↑](#endnote-ref-19)
20. Blattner, “Authenticity and Resoluteness,” 332. Cf. Carman’s proposal that Heidegger’s concept of “resolution” is “inspired by but not identical with Aristotle’s account of *phronêsis*” (“Authenticity,” 291) and Dreyfus’ that “fully authentic” Dasein “goes beyond … the Situational understanding of the *phronimos*” (“Could Anything be More Intelligible than Everyday Intelligibility? Reinterpreting Division I of *Being and Time* in the light of Division II,” 167). [↑](#endnote-ref-20)
21. Sophie-Grace Chappell, “The Variety of Life and the Unity of Practical Wisdom,” 145, 149. [↑](#endnote-ref-21)
22. Chappell, “The Variety of Life,” 145. [↑](#endnote-ref-22)
23. Cf., e.g., *CTR* 22, *HCT* 269 and *SZ* 167 and 168. [↑](#endnote-ref-23)
24. Cf. Dreyfus’ proposal that, “when asked why he did what he did,” the possessor of the “kind of expertise” that “practical wisdom is” “may be at a loss to reconstruct a reasoned account of his actions because there is none” (“Overcoming the Myth of the Mental,” 52, 54). See also n. 63 below. [↑](#endnote-ref-24)
25. Finnigan, “*Phronêsis* in Aristotle,” 674, 694. One might draw parallels here with objections raised against reliabilism in epistemology. See, e.g., Laurence Bonjour, “Externalist Theories of Empirical Knowledge.” [↑](#endnote-ref-25)
26. Ernst Tugendhat, *Self-Consciousness and Self-Determination*, 216. [↑](#endnote-ref-26)
27. Dreyfus, “Overcoming the Myth,” 53. [↑](#endnote-ref-27)
28. Blattner, “Authenticity and Resoluteness,” 325, [↑](#endnote-ref-28)
29. Carman, “Authenticity,” 291. [↑](#endnote-ref-29)
30. Golob, *Heidegger on Concepts*, 244, 245. [↑](#endnote-ref-30)
31. Cf. *PS* 35, 104, 107 and 111. [↑](#endnote-ref-31)
32. What may seem to be an objection to any reading of this broad form is that there is mention in *PS* of ‘*eigentliche phronêsis*,’ as one might infer from this that, for Heidegger, there can be ‘*uneigentliche phronêsis*.’ But, for three reasons, I think this inference is, to say the least, questionable. Firstly, the expression, ‘*eigentliche phronêsis*,’ is used in *PS* precisely once—at *PS* 102 (p. 149 of the relevant volume of the *Gesamtausgabe*), where a subsection title reads “*Die euboulia als eigentliche phronêsis*.” Secondly, the point being made in that subsection title seems to be that genuine *phronêsis*—real *phronêsis*, one might say—is at least in part a form of deliberation. So, as with quite a lot of uses of ‘*eigentlich*’ in *PS*, it is not that clear that Heidegger means this expression here in his “technical” sense, that is so prominent in *Being and Time*, rather than in the more mundane German sense of “genuine” or “real.” Certainly the translators of the English version often read these uses in this latter way and do so in the particular case under discussion. Thirdly, the subsection titles are not Heidegger's own, but were instead provided by the editor of the volume of the *Gesamtausgabe* in which the lecture series is published. [↑](#endnote-ref-32)
33. John McDowell, *Mind, Value and Reality*, 41. [↑](#endnote-ref-33)
34. N. 72 touches again on this first “nullity.” [↑](#endnote-ref-34)
35. One might object that there seems little reason to think that, in the course of ordinary life, we are incapable of making ATC judgments, yet Heidegger associates inauthenticity with what he calls ‘everydayness.’ (See, e.g., *SZ* 129: “The Self of everyday Dasein is the they-self [*Man-selbst*], which we distinguish from the authentic Self.”) But as n. {} will discuss, we need to be cautious about identifying “everydayness” and ordinary life, and to specify clearly what we mean by “ordinary life.” A referee for the journal has also questioned whether the authentic can be understood as distinctively open to the possible need to judge ATC, on the grounds that the inauthentic are surely open to the possibility of ATC judgment to some extent; and n. {} will return to that concern. [↑](#endnote-ref-35)
36. See p. 89 of Irwin’s edition, and cf. 6.2 1139 b1-4. [↑](#endnote-ref-36)
37. On this construal of what “living well in general” is, see n. 41 below. [↑](#endnote-ref-37)
38. See John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice,* 432. [↑](#endnote-ref-38)
39. To return to the issue n. {} raised, there is at least one sense in which any plausible account of Heideggerian authenticity would seem to need that feat to take place within “ordinary life.” For example, one might contrast “ordinary life” with engaging in peculiar practices that one has invented for oneself or unearthed from history, as Dreyfus occasionally seems to suggest when he talks about the authentic as engaging in “*marginal practices*,” “alternative possibilities [that] do not make good, average, everyday sense but rather seem old-fashioned, trivial, or meaningless” (*Being-in-the-World*, 329). But a view of this sort is unappealing in lots of ways, not least in depicting the authentic as—to use an expression of Charles Guignon’s—“odd ducks” (“Authenticity and the Question of Being,” 15), pursuing kookily eccentric practices. If we are to avoid such a view, then the authentic must instead live in “ordinary life” in the sense that they engage in much the same socially-constituted, shared practices—like being a daughter, a mother, a teacher, a truck-driver, etc. etc.—in which the inauthentic engage, the difference being that they must do so in a different way. For the account I have offered, the authentic do indeed occupy the same roles and pursue the same goals as the inauthentic; but the former are being ready to draw the many demands of their multiple roles and goals together in ATC judgments, whereas the latter are “lived by whatever [goal or role they] happen to be occupied with” at the time. Such a view is consistent with thinking that *generally*, in our ordinary, everyday lives, we live inauthentically: generally, we are not ready to make such judgments, and so generally—though not necessarily or always—our ordinary, everyday lives are inauthentic. (We also have the basis here, I believe, for a resolution of well-known interpretive difficulties that Heidegger’s discussion of *das Man* raises—in particular, the fact that some of Heidegger’s remarks about *das Man* seem to identify essential properties of Dasein as such and others properties specific to inauthentic Dasein. For further discussion, see McManus, “*Das Man.*”) [↑](#endnote-ref-39)
40. See, e.g., *SZ* 233, 235, 371 and 390. [↑](#endnote-ref-40)
41. As the following paragraph discusses, we are like the situations in which we find ourselves in being concrete particulars: hence, the remark from BCArP 126 quoted above is in full, “*For our being, characterised by particularity, no unique and absolute norm can be given*.” [↑](#endnote-ref-41)
42. Hence, Heidegger sees the work of *phronêsis* in guiding action in light of “living well in general” as that of determining “what is best here and now.” The “in general” points not to the *phronimos* deploying—in Sarah Broadie’s words—a “blueprint of the good [that] guides its possessor in all his deliberations” (*Ethics with Aristotle*, 198); rather the “in general” contrasts what is overall best with what would be best for the achievement of particular goals. [↑](#endnote-ref-42)
43. Should this seem a very idiosyncratic interpretation of the “mean,” it appears to me to have some similarities to Anselm Müller’s in his identification of a “multi-dimensional” mean (see his “Aristotle's Conception of Ethical and Natural Virtue: How the Unity Thesis sheds light on the Doctrine of the Mean”). [↑](#endnote-ref-43)
44. Another version of the worry echoes a question that readers of Aristotle face: must Heideggerian authentic action—like Aristotelian virtuous action—stem from “a conscious, first-personal activity of decision-making” (Finnigan, “*Phronêsis* in Aristotle,” 692)? In response, the same resources available to Aristotle would seem to be available to Heidegger. For example, Sarah Broadie proposes that ‘deliberation’ in Aristotle really refers not to a psychological process but to the structure of reasoned explanation which is at least potentially present in the rationale of the agent's response’ (*Ethics with Aristotle*, 79, cf. 80). Similarly, McDowell talks of “a shape to the way the agent is minded … that becomes explicit in actual courses of deliberation” (*The Engaged Intellect*, 36 n. 14, cf. p. 49). Heidegger himself seems to hint at least at such a view when he identifies deliberating well with “the concrete way of actualizing [*Vollzugsweise*] the *legein* immanent in *phronêsis*” (*PICA* 135). It also should be borne in mind that ATC judgments do not start—as it were—from scratch but from within an on-going engagement with one’s situation. As Heidegger says, the “being-in” of our Being-in-the-world “means primarily *being familiar with* [*vertraut sein mit*]” that world (*HCT* 158): as Dasein, one “already knows how matters are arranged” and “do[es] not live simply in the instant” (BCAnP 170). [↑](#endnote-ref-44)
45. In McManus, “Affect and Authenticity,” I discuss in greater detail this charge and the response I sketch here. [↑](#endnote-ref-45)
46. See, e.g., BCArP 38-39 and 167-69. [↑](#endnote-ref-46)
47. There is a sense in which a person who is concentrating on the pursuit of one particular goal or the fulfilment of one particular role may engage in what we might perhaps call ‘ATC judgment,’ in that such pursuit and such fulfilment will often involve the weighing and evaluation of competing imperatives. Being a good mother, for example, is not adherence to a single normative demand but the balancing of many: protecting one’s child while allowing them to explore their world, acknowledging their wishes while also imposing one’s own assessment of what is best for them, etc. etc. Deliberation confined to such demands will be inauthentic all the same if it rests upon a “dimming down” of all others to which the agent—as also an occupant of other roles and a pursuer of other goals—is subject; it will be “idle talk” if the agent is “clinging” to, and “losing herself in,” the deliberative issues that some “mundane task or other” raises, rather than being willing to “gaze directly and concernfully at life” as a whole (*PICA* 92, quoted above). [↑](#endnote-ref-47)
48. There are remarks in which Heidegger might seem to suggest that the *phronimos* must subject her life constantly to ATC judgment, to “decision at every new moment” (*PS* 120, cf. also BCArP 128-29). But this may seem to impose a very heavy—perhaps unbearable—burden, as then would authenticity, if my reading is to be believed. Such a view being philosophically implausible is not evidence in itself for thinking Heidegger did not hold it; and it is a view which might be traced in some important influences on his thought. (See, for example, *PRL*’s discussion of “the fundamental sense of Christian existence” as one of “constant insecurity” and “perpetual and radical concern” (*PRL* 97, 73), upon which section 11 touches briefly below.) But I think the authentic person’s openness to her concrete situation is better interpreted—as I have done so here—as a readiness or willingness to subject her situation to ATC judgments, an openness to the need to make such judgments rather than her constantly making them. Such an openness is to the possibility that what must be done in one’s present situation—what is best here and now—might call for one to go beyond what has become one’s customary way of living, an openness to the possibility that one is “falling behind” “whatever existence [one] has reached” (*SZ* 264, quoted above). To return to the referee’s question that n. {} mentioned, if we imagine extreme enough circumstances—say, the death of a close friend—surely anyone—the inauthentic included—would be brought up from their “immersion” in their “closest concerns,” failure to be so seeming indicative rather of a kind of mental illness. But Heidegger—as I read him—could endorse that claim and still think that generally we are not open to such a need but are instead “immersed,” “sleep[ing] through [our] existence” (BCArP 53, cf. 55). This lack of readiness for ATC judgment—the fact that it *takes* extreme circumstances to elicit it from us—is our inauthenticity. [↑](#endnote-ref-48)
49. Cf. Aquinas’ understanding of *conscientia* as the capacity to apply one’s knowledge of “the first practical principles” to particular acts (*Summa Theologica*, First Part,Question 79, Article 12). [↑](#endnote-ref-49)
50. William Lyons, “Conscience – An Essay in Moral Psychology,” 481. [↑](#endnote-ref-50)
51. Paul Strohm, *Conscience*, 104. For another version of this charge, cf. Richard Wolin, *The Politics of Being,* 41, 65. [↑](#endnote-ref-51)
52. Romans 2: 15-16. [↑](#endnote-ref-52)
53. John Calvin, *On God and Political Duty,* 42. [↑](#endnote-ref-53)
54. The rough periodization I give here is precisely that: rough. Illustrating the complexity mentioned, there are, e.g., what might be heard as echoes of what I am calling the “earlier” use of *Umsicht* at *HCT* 274, an anticipation of the “later” use at BCArP 250 (and cf. 44), and *both* uses on display in *PICA*: see, e.g., the “later” use at *PICA* 115. I suspect that we see here Heidegger struggling—in presenting Aristotle’s texts—with a difficulty that he himself has bequeathed to his own readers: that of finding adequate translations for difficult terms in difficult philosophical texts. [↑](#endnote-ref-54)
55. This hegemony also conjures up misleading understandings of the feats that it lionizes—“observation” and “beholding”—as I discuss in McManus, *Heidegger and the Measure of Truth*. But I set that concern aside here. [↑](#endnote-ref-55)
56. Needless to say, should the advocate of the perceptual reading see in Heidegger’s choice of *Umsicht* as a rendering of *phronêsis* evidence that he saw the latter as a “simple seeing,” she must also explain why his later use of the term does not make of our “concerned use” of the *Zuhanden* a “simple seeing” too, which it surely is not. [↑](#endnote-ref-56)
57. See Macquarrie and Robinson’s n. 2 on p. 98 of their translation of *SZ* and Robert Metcalf and Mark Tanzer’s rendering of the term at, e.g., BCArP 130. [↑](#endnote-ref-57)
58. David McNaughton, “An Unconnected Heap of Duties?”, 446. [↑](#endnote-ref-58)
59. Cf. Chappell’s complaint that “the doctrine of the mean … does not provide us … with any worthwhile decision procedure” (“The Variety of Life,” 146). [↑](#endnote-ref-59)
60. There might even be room for something called ‘normative theory,’ to the extent at least that this is not committed as such to achieving a *paraggelia*. See n. 71 below. [↑](#endnote-ref-60)
61. McDowell, *Mind, Value and Reality*, 29, 65, 67. [↑](#endnote-ref-61)
62. McDowell, *Mind, Value and Reality*, 65. [↑](#endnote-ref-62)
63. McDowell, *Mind, Value and Reality*, 65. [↑](#endnote-ref-63)
64. Dreyfus seems to succumb to such a “deductivistic prejudice” (McDowell, *The Engaged Intellect*, 46) when he claims that, “according to Aristotle, since there are no rules that dictate that what the *phronimos* does is the correct thing to do in that type of situation, the *phronimos* … cannot explain why he did what he did” (“Could Anything be More Intelligible,” 162). In “Vision, Norm and Openness,” I discuss further the role that this “prejudice” seems to play in decisionist readings of Heidegger and some other forms of perceptual reading, though I now have doubts about the positive account that that piece offers of how Aristotelian themes may have inspired Heidegger’s discussion of authenticity. [↑](#endnote-ref-64)
65. I say this despite the fact that McDowell himself rejects the notion that we might understand Aristotelian phronetic deliberation as “an ‘all things considered’ kind of reasoning”; he understands the latter as that “in which some weight is given to all the independent goods that are in the offing, and a verdict is reached that somehow combines all their claims”; whereas the former “is controlled by nobility … and is not deflected by the claims of other goods” (*The Engaged Intellect*, 55, cf. 73). But I think that McDowell here succumbs to a simplistic caricature of ATC judgment: it seems well within our ordinary understanding of such judgment that, through it, we may come to think that some considerations should bear no weight: they have been considered and—in McDowell’s terms—“silenced” by others. (See, e.g., McDowell, *Mind, Value and Reality*, 17, and, for criticism of this aspect of McDowell’s reading of Aristotle, see Anthony Price, *Virtue and Reason in Plato and Aristotle*, ch. 2.) [↑](#endnote-ref-65)
66. On the intuitionist alternative, cf. Heidegger’s insistence that the difficulty of knowing the good “does not mean … [that it] is a ‘mystery’” revealed by “some kind of enigmatic faculty of intuition, a sixth sense or something of the kind” (*ET* 81). [↑](#endnote-ref-66)
67. McNaughton, “An Unconnected Heap,” 446. [↑](#endnote-ref-67)
68. Cf. *NE* 1142b21: “excellence in deliberation [is] that which tends to attain what is good.” [↑](#endnote-ref-68)
69. Aristotle does suggest that “proportion is the measure” where “exchanges are not of the same for the same”: for example, “how is a cobbler to have dealings with a farmer unless one equates the work of the two by proportion?” (*EE* 1243b31-33) But one would surely struggle to extract a *paraggelia* from that proposal. There is also, of course, “the practical syllogism.” But its significance is moot. Price proposes that the syllogism articulates the upshot of deliberation: it “specifies the content of [the] choice” that the agent makes, “spell[ing] out what the agent is choosing, for the sake of what, and how his ways or means derive from his end” (*Virtue and Reason*,236). But if so, the syllogism captures only a small part of the deliberation that leads to that upshot. (For Price’s account of such deliberation, see *Virtue and Reason*,209-35.) Chappell too gives the practical syllogism prominence but stresses that such a syllogism will have to be accompanied by “the consideration that ‘Nothing else is relevant besides these factors’” (“The Variety of Life,” 155); and, for the Heideggerian reading, that is where the action is. Significantly perhaps, given our present concerns, Heidegger does not seem to attach great importance to the practical syllogism, discussing it only briefly at *PS* 103, 106 and 109. [↑](#endnote-ref-69)
70. Aristotle himself at times identifies phronetic deliberation with “calculation” (*NE* 1139a5-15). But whatever construal we offer for those remarks will have to be consistent with his also believing that “there are no fixed answers” with questions of conduct (*NE* 1104a4-5, quoted above). [↑](#endnote-ref-70)
71. David Wiggins, *Needs, Values, Truth*, 237. [↑](#endnote-ref-71)
72. See, for example, his giving for the virtues “character sketches of their possessors” (McDowell, *The Engaged Intellect*, 45). See n. 59. [↑](#endnote-ref-72)
73. There are puzzling points at which both Aristotle and Heidegger may seem to identify deliberation as specifically providing *instrumental* insight—into *means* to unquestionable ends. Relevant Aristotelian texts here are *NE* 1112b12-13 and 1144a6-8 though, for objections to their instrumentalist construal, see Wiggins, *Needs, Values, Truth*, ch. 6. Heidegger too—as Steven Galt Crowell notes—can “seem[] to conceive deliberation as instrumental reason” (*Normativity and Phenomenology in Husserl and Heidegger*, 290) in one of the most notable appearances that ‘*Überlegung*’ makes in *SZ*. At *SZ* 359, Heidegger proposes that “[c]ircumspection … is subordinate to the guidance of a more or less explicit survey [*Übersicht*] of the equipmental totality of the current equipment-world”; “[i]n one's current using and manipulating, the concernful circumspection which does this ‘surveying’ [*die ‘übersichtliche*’ *Umsicht*], brings the ready-to-hand closer to Dasein, and does so by interpreting [*in der Weise der Auslegung*]what has been sighted”; and this, he tells us, “we call ‘deliberating [*Überlegung*].’” It is difficult to know quite what to make of the brief passage to which these comments belong: the manner in which Heidegger introduces ‘*Überlegung*’ there seems to assign to it something like a technical sense—but he then swiftly sets the term aside and notably does not put it to such use in other works of the period (such as *HCT* or *L*) or elsewhere in *SZ* (see, by way of contrast, the use he makes of the term at, e.g., *SZ* 240 and 357)—and one tempting thought is that Heidegger here simply cannot quite resist the word-play of allocating this term as a label for *übersichtliche Auslegung*. But I will offer a more positive construal of the passage in n. 73. [↑](#endnote-ref-73)
74. This suggests a way of thinking about the passage *SZ* 359 which n. 72 cites. We could see its claims as stressing that deliberation always arises in the face of ways in which we have “already submitted … to having entities within-the-world *‘matter’ to*” us, ways “behind” which—as guilt’s first “nullity” mentioned above articulates—we finite creatures “constantly lag” (see *SZ* 137 and 284 quoted above): in line with this thought, Heidegger goes on to claim at *SZ* 359 that *Überlegung* operates only against the background of an “*Übersicht* … of the totality of relevance within which factical taking care *always starts out*,” an understanding which “throws light on the actual *factical position of Dasein in the surrounding world* taken care of” (italics added). We might see a similar thought at work in Aristotle too when he observes that “deliberations … involve a starting-point,” as—“[i]f we are always to be deliberating”—“we shall have to go on to infinity”; deliberation “deal[s] with acts to be done,” and they are chosen from amongst those “things [that are] in one’s power” (*NE* 1144a31, 1113a2-3, 1112b27). We may also see here the basis for a response to the objection that the very idea of ATC judgment raises a cousin of the so-called “frame problem”: is there an *end* to the considerations one must bear in mind such that we might actually perform an *all-things*-considered judgment? One widely recognized aspect of Heideggerian “guilt” is that it identifies the “demands of conscience” that we face not only as multiple but also as a given, finite set. [↑](#endnote-ref-74)
75. Cf. Jonathan Bennett, “The Conscience of Huckleberry Finn,” 124: “The problem of conscientiousness can arise as acutely for a bad morality as for any other.” [↑](#endnote-ref-75)
76. Ruth Chang, “Putting Together Morality and Well-Being,” 119. [↑](#endnote-ref-76)
77. I have taken some steps towards doing so in McManus, “Being-towards-death and Owning One’s Judgment,” “Heidegger and Aristotle on Reason, Choice, and Self-Expression,” “On a Judgment of One’s Own,” and “Ontological Pluralism and the *Being and Time* Project”. [↑](#endnote-ref-77)
78. Golob, *Heidegger on Concepts,* 237. [↑](#endnote-ref-78)
79. We can, however, see the ideas described informing Heidegger’s reflections on Aristotle. For example, Heidegger describes the existence of those who refuse the task of exercising *phronêsis*—of “being resolved that a matter be done”—as “*non-concrete* [*unsachlich*]” (BCArP 97, 177). Such an agent “is non-concrete in relation to himself,” manifesting

    “a certain *indifference concerning being*,” “a certain disinterestedness [*Gleichgültigkeit*]” (BCArP 177, 100). [↑](#endnote-ref-79)
80. 1 Thessalonians 5: 3-7. [↑](#endnote-ref-80)
81. See, in particular, McManus, “Being-towards-death”. [↑](#endnote-ref-81)
82. For helpful comments on earlier versions of this chapter and on work upon which it draws, I would like to thank William Blattner, Taylor Carman, Filippo Casati, David Cerbone, Ursula Coope, Steven Galt Crowell, Daniel Dahlstrom, Guy Elgat, Francisco Gallegos, Sacha Golob, Martin Hägglund, Gabrielle Jackson, Stephan Käufer, Elselijn Kingma, Leslie MacAvoy, Conor McHugh, Samantha Matherne, Adrian Moore, Dermot Moran, Stephen Mulhall, Mark Okrent, Graham Priest, Aaron Ridley, Joseph Rouse, David Suarez, Joseph Schear, Matthew Shockey, Iain Thomson, Jonathan Way, Daniel Whiting, Edward Witherspoon, Kate Withy, Fiona Woollard, and two anonymous referees for the journal. [↑](#endnote-ref-82)