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Authentic Life in *Sein und Zeit*

What is an authentic life? Can an authentic state of Dasein be understood by other Dasein? These ontical-existentiell questions naturally arise in the reading of Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit*. Concrete and practical examples are wanted because Heidegger defines authenticity as an ontological-existential idea whose root is ontical-existentiell. If it had no bearing on the practical and pre-ontological life that each of us must lead, philosophy would have no import.

In this paper, I will approach questions on authentic life, the answers to which Heidegger does not himself supply. The first question posed here, what constitutes authentic life, should be grasped through a focus on authentic understanding. Some researchers have applied the dichotomy between authentic and inauthentic not only to the understanding of Dasein's ownmost possibility but also as a means of using equipment or solicitude. However, according to Heidegger, the only understanding of such a possibility can be authentic or inauthentic. Noting this enables us to conclude that authentic life has its origins in the forceful choosing by Dasein of its ownmost possibility. As to whether other Dasein can understand another's authenticity, we can begin to respond to this question as follows: when Dasein in authentic state tells other Dasein the collapse of familiarity, the authentic state of Dasein can be understood by the other Dasein. Of course, Dasein that is told of a crucial experience of another Dasein does not always understand the full import. However, there remains space for encouraging other Dasein to understand what authenticity is and even to face its ownmost possibility; thus, Dasein can be given back "care" by other Dasein.

Here, it will be shown that actions that are based on an authentic understanding in a broad sense can lead to authentic life and allow other Dasein to encounter anxiety or become authentic.

1. Life based on authentic understanding

It is commonly acknowledged that Heidegger uses the contrasting terms authentic and inauthentic when referring to certain ontological-existential ideas about Dasein. In particular, understanding (*Verstehen*), which is a part of Dasein's disclosedness, is judged according to these terms (*SZ*, 146). Thus, what we consider an authentic life, should be based on authentic understanding. In this section, inauthentic and authentic understanding will be examined. Then, the difference between a life based on inauthentic understanding and a life based on authentic understanding will be discussed. In other words, I will show how each action in Dasein's everyday life has to do with understanding.

1-1. Inauthentic understanding

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In the everyday use of something ready-to-hand, Dasein understands itself in terms of its world (cf. ibid.). For example, Dasein that uses a hammer can understand itself as a carpenter. Even if Dasein is not employed or is living off of others, it may implicitly understand itself as user of one tool or another, such as a PC, a couch or clothing. Understanding itself in this way means that Dasein is able to be represented by someone else (*SZ*, 242). Naturally, there are many carpenters or users of PCs in the world, so Dasein simply as a carpenter or as a user of certain tools cannot be identified as Dasein having its own uniqueness. Therefore, for it to understand itself in terms of its world is to regard itself as the They (*das Man*)[1]. Heidegger calls this way of implicit self-understanding an inauthentic one. While readers of the first part of *Sein und Zeit* normally do interpret inauthentic understanding in this light, but later passages in the work throw this interpretation into doubt and recharacterize it as a misreading or as inaccurate at best.

1-2.　Authentic understanding in a narrow sense

Heidegger characterizes authentic understanding in terms of Dasein's ownmost possibility, namely death. Of course, Dasein may remain a user of some tools, while at the same time being the only one who can die as that Dasein. No one else can take on another Dasein's death; there are no proxies here.

In this self-understanding, Dasein loses familiarity with the world. It encounters unfamiliarity with the world in anxiety (*Angst*).

> On the other hand, as Dasein falls, anxiety brings it back from its absorption in the 'world'. Everyday familiarity collapses. Dasein has been individualized, but individualized *as* Being-in-the-world. Being-in enters into the existential 'mode' of the "*not-at-home*". Nothing else is meant by our talk about 'uncanniness'.[2]

Everyday familiarity consists in and dealing in or using tools (*SZ*, 67). In its inauthentic state, Dasein is able to use tools and feel at home; in contrast, however, Dasein understands the authenticity in the feeling of anxiety as being not a user of something and being deprived of familiarity with the world. That is, Dasein, while it is absorbed in using tools, does not understand its individual and ownmost possibility, its death, but Dasein that is not absorbed in this familiarity with the world can understand that.

Let us take a step back from this discussion of authentic understanding. If such authentic understanding cannot lead Dasein to use tools, Dasein is, in that state, no

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[1] This point will be examined more closely in what follows.
[2] *SZ,* 189.

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longer within-the-world. However, Dasein, of course, cannot help being in the world: Being-in-the-world is a structural and a priori characteristic of Dasein (*SZ*, 53). In fact, Dasein begins to understand itself on the basis of its mortality while it is using tools: reading books, putting on glasses, having hammers.

Here, the necessity of regarding authentic understanding as that understanding that allows Dasein to understand its ownmost possibility explicitly. With the exception of the particular situations, such as academic or theoretical study, Dasein in everydayness, generally understands itself implicitly in terms of familiarity with the world. Heidegger insists that the authentic, or constructional or essential, understanding lies behind the everyday understanding. Authentically understanding means turning our eyes explicitly to the construct of Dasein that is generally forgotten and from which Dasein withdraws. Therefore, when Dasein understands its death and the impossibility of being represented in it, explicit and authentic self-understanding appears through Dasein, while Dasein also remains a user of tools. In creating authentic understanding, Dasein is, as it were, just part of a thinking existence that does not try to use any tools, which is to say that it is not a user of tools any longer.

1-3.   Authentic understanding in a broad sense

The authentic life should also be discussed. It has been noted that Heidegger uses the terms authentic and inauthentic mainly in reference to Dasein's self-understanding. Related to this, it is possible to consider that the life that is based on authentic understanding is an authentic life. There may be a problem, however, in that as previously mentioned, Dasein in authentic understanding makes no attempt to achieve any practical goals or to use tools consciously. How can this difficulty be overcome?

Here, to deal with this problem, authentic understanding must be interpreted more broadly. We have seen that it does not matter what tools Dasein is using when it comes to understand itself authentically. This is why we consider that such understanding might not appear to be compatible with action. Thus, authentic understanding could be misinterpreted as impractical understanding, which would have no effect on concrete action in everydayness. To avoid this misinterpretation, it is necessary that the understanding in acting or using tools can be also authentic. Authentic understanding in a narrow sense may mean facing anxiety and losing the ability to act, but in a broader sense, this means simply using tools under the influence of nullity (*Nichtigkeit*) of Dasein. To be sure, Dasein must always already be an implicit user of tools, so that even in a narrow sense, Dasein is a user of tools accompanied by an understanding of its own mortality, but these two modes of use do differ. The latter, that is, authentic understanding in a broad sense, is supported by explicit knowledge of its ownmost possibility, such that when Dasein is in the authentic state in the wider sense, it continues to use tools with knowledge founding

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each implicit purpose of its life.

Thus, authentic understanding in a narrow sense must be focused on a relatively short moment in the confrontation with anxiety, while the broad sense of authentic understanding is focused on the continuous self-understanding in leading everyday life. Taking into account these two types of authentic understanding, it is possible to explain how Dasein achieves an authentic life. First, Dasein in everydayness has no concern with its ontological-existential structure and its mortality, being absorbed in familiarity with the world and maintaining inauthentic understanding. Next, if Dasein becomes conscious of its own structural and inevitable mortality, it aquires feelings of anxiety. In the collapse of everyday familiarity, a temporary authentic understanding appears. Dasein here is at a loss, facing anxiety, so the importance of its use of tools fades against its ownmost possibility of its death. Heidegger describes this as follows:

> But in anxiety there lies the possibility of a disclosure which is quite distinctive; for anxiety individualizes. This individualization brings Dasein back from its falling, and makes manifest to it that authenticity and inauthenticity are possibilities of its Being. These basic possibilities of Dasein (and Dasein is in each case mine) show themselves in anxiety as they are in themselves—undisguised by entities within-the-world, to which, proximally and for the most part, Dasein clings.[3]

Then, Dasein that has come to be in charge of its existence, that is to say, to want to have acquired a conscience (SZ, 288), has authentic understanding in a broad sense. On the other hand, Dasein that does not decide to take its own responsibility and attempts to avoid its fate, fails to achieve authentic understanding in the broad sense. In sum, Dasein that has achieved authentic understanding in the narrow sense may not have it in the broad sense. Thus, only Dasein in the authentic state in the broad sense is leading an authentic life. This understanding which daily life is based on, does not disappear even when Dasein is using tools.

1-4.   Reconsideration of inauthentic understanding

Even in the broad sense of authentic understanding, however, Dasein continues to understand itself as a user of tools. This fact prevents us from interpreting the use of tools by Dasein as inauthentic. Here, then, we can no longer use the term inauthentic for the Dasein's understanding in terms of the world. A reconsideration of the nature of inauthentic understanding is needed here. While unfamiliarity with the world

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[3] *SZ*, 190-191.

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appears in the narrow sense of authenticity, Dasein can remain a user of some tool. For instance, after all, even for Dasein that is limited to the narrow sense of authenticity, that is, in facing anxiety, understands itself implicitly as a wearer of clothes or glasses, or as a carpenter. Where everyday familiarity collapses, nevertheless, Dasein potentially understands itself to be nothing but a user, as long as it remains Being-in-the-world. Hence, whether Dasein in fact understands itself inauthentically or authentically, and whether it understands itself authentically in the narrow sense or in the broad sense, Dasein remains a user of tools and always regards itself as an agent in the world.

We should distinguish two types of self-understandings for the better interpretation of Dasein's daily action; namely, we should divide self as the user from self as the mortal being. The former is characterized by the self-understanding as a user of tools, which remains constant and mostly implicit. It is part of the general and universal structure for Dasein. In addition, this structure cannot be changed, so Dasein must continue to use tools. If Dasein were to cease this, it would mean that it was no longer alive in the world. We should not take self-understanding as a user of tools as in itself an indication of inauthentic understanding. The self-understanding as mortal, by contrast, can change from inauthentic to authentic, and the reverse is also true. Further, the authentic understanding is not rigid, meaning that there is an authentic self-understanding in a narrow sense and that in a broad sense. In a broad sense, especially, it has no conflicts with the self-understanding as a user of tools because Dasein can continue to use tools while maintaining an understanding of its mortality. Dasein, for example, can be a carpenter who uses a hammer, a drill, and a blade, while understanding itself as Being-toward-death.

We must elaborate, then, the relationship between the self-understanding as a user of tools in itself and inauthentic understanding or authentic understanding in the narrow sense. This relationship is explained by falling (*Verfallen*).[4] Briefly, when Dasein exhibits the self-understanding as a user of tools to the self-understanding as being mortal, this termed inauthentic understanding. *Authentically*, there is no substitute for a Dasein because that Dasein is the only one that can die as it. *Inauthentically*, however, simply being in the world, in other words, just using something makes Dasein understand itself the way that another Dasein may; Dasein unconsciously understands itself as the They. While a carpenter is unique and not an alternative to other Dasein, implicitly considers itself the basis of the world; this means that Dasein in its everydayness understands itself as a user of tools in general who has no uniqueness, much less authentic understanding. Another carpenter is not

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[4] *SZ*, §38.

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necessarily this Dasein. In this way, the self-understanding as a user of tools has a great influence upon the inauthentic self-understanding as being mortal, causing inauthentic understanding. The influence of the self-understanding as a user of tools is named *falling*, by Heidegger. It must of course be noted that the self-understanding as a user of tools in itself is not termed inauthentic because Dasein includes such a structural understanding that never changes from inauthentic one to authentic one. The self-understanding as a user of tools simply causes inauthentic understanding. Consequently, this understanding does not become operational when Dasein becomes anxious, but it just fades and hides behind anxiety. In its feeling of anxiety, while Dasein is still using tools, it loses familiarity with the world.

Now, we are prepared to account for different self-understandings. In the following section, what changes from inauthentic state to authentic state are examined, as is how an existentiell change can be conveyed to other Dasein.

2. Authentic state understood by other Dasein

We have examined and interpreted inauthentic and authentic self-understandings, which do not come into conflict with daily action; we have also discussed the nature of authentic life for each Dasein. However, these discussions have only covered Dasein in the first person. A sort of solipsism[5] is essential to the analysis of Dasein, although authentic Being-with (*Mitsein*)[6] also be admitted. According to Heidegger, it is possible for Dasein to become the conscious (*Gewissen*) of other Dasein.[7] In this section, we examine what changes in the authentic understanding there are, in a broad sense. Though this examination, we can learn what is conveyed from authentic Dasein to other Dasein. Next, the appearance of the authentic being-with appears will be focused on. Thus, what it is to give care back to other Dasein authentically, is made clear. This conversation will grant the answer to the following question: can the authentic state of Dasein be understood by other Dasein?

2-1. What changes in the authentic understanding in a broad sense

There are no criteria for judging whether another Dasein is in an inauthentic state or in an authentic one. This is, as already noted, both Dasein's inauthentic understanding of itself and its auhetentic understanding of itself in the broad sense exist in the world; that is, they are users of tools. For that reason, we cannot distinguish what Dasein is in an authentic state or not by just observing them or simply communicating with other Dasein. It is natural not to be able to distinguish them because each Dasein is always a user of some tools. This is why the self-understanding as being mortal does not appear

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[5] *SZ*, 188.
[6] *SZ*, 118.
[7] *SZ*, 122.

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on a practical level. How can Dasein in authentic understanding be distinguished from Dasein that is not?

As being a user of tools, certainly Dasein cannot be distinguished, but in terms of they facing anxiety, it is possible for us to know whether Dasein has an authentic understanding or not. Whether Dasein feels anxious or not can be conveyed to other Dasein through language. In short, the self-understanding as being mortal appears not in the daily activities but in the sharing of this feeling with other Dasein. The criterion for judging this, is the mood (*Stimmung*) [8] : what changes in the authentic understanding in the broad sense is feeling. Changes in mood, which cannot be seen in the use of tools, causes modification in self-understanding and a discontinuity of influence from the self-understanding as a user of tools to the self-understanding as being mortal. This is how we can distinguish between inauthentic and authentic understanding.

2-2. Telling the collapse of familiarity in anxiety

Thus, the point is what Dasein that feels anxiety tells other Dasein. If one reads *Sein und Zeit* obediently, he or she regards the opportunity to become anxious as what is triggered somehow by nothing, that is, by what is not an entity or event within the world.

Anxiety can arise in the most innocuous situations.[9]

Here, the word can (*kann*) sould be noted. This auxiliary verb allows anxiety to be interpreted as mood, which can arise in fatal or extraordinary situations. Some readers consider that Heidegger mentions innocuous situations, to indicate that it is only in such situations that anxiety can arise. It is useful, of course, to note the similarities between the most innocuous situations and the world itself that appears in anxiety. However, the auxiliary verb should not prohibit us from regarding anxiety as a mood that can arise in situations of danger, such as war or disaster. This is because events in the world also bring Dasein to understand the world itself or its own mortality because such ontological understanding can have a root in the ontical-existentiell.[10] Of course, the concrete, specific situation may not *always* cause a given ontological understanding, but it *can* cause it.

It should be noted that Dasein that feels anxious tells other Dasein of experience not only on the ontological-existential level, where anxiety can arise somehow in the most innocuous situations, but also on the ontical-existentiell level.

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[8] *SZ*, §29.
[9] *SZ*, 189.
[10] *SZ*, 13-14.

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Thus, anxiety can be spoken of on the basis of events that happen to Dasein in the world. This means that telling of specific situations in which a mood has changed, namely in which Dasein has come to understand itself authentically, is more impressive and serious than telling that how a mood has somehow changed in the most innocuous situation. The former narrative allows other Dasein to grasp more easily that the first Dasein understands itself authentically. To give care back to other Dasein can be done authentically, therefore, also by telling of the experience of specific events that make other Dasein feel anxious. This forms part of the authentic life of being-with.

Conclusion

What the authentic life consists in has been reviewed. First, it was noted that the authentic life and the practical life can be led without mutual conflict because self-understanding as a user of tools is compatible with self-understanding as being mortal. The point is authentic understanding can be divided into two senses. It is also important that the self-understanding as a user of tools itself is not inauthentic, but just has influence on the latter. These interpretations enable us to think of authentic life. Further, it was found that the authentic life is led through authentic being-with. When Dasein speaks of its own specific experience, authentic Dasein is understood by others, and this makes authentic coexistence possible.

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Self-understanding
(mutual competitive)

self-understanding as a user of tools

· unchangeable

· the structure of Being-in-the- world

· the character most normal users of tools have implicitly

self-understanding as being-mortal

· changeable

influence ("falling")

influence ("falling")

inauthentic one
· almost everyday self-understanding

authentic one
in a narrow sense
· during feeling anxious
in a broad sense
· rare everyday self-understanding