Authentically Virtuous: Heidegger, Taylor, and MacIntyre
Bradley J. Thames
University of Notre Dame

For nearly 50 years now, Charles Taylor and Alasdair MacIntyre have been forging significantly parallel paths through the modern philosophical landscape. Often mentioned together in a range of diverse discussions, few can match the scope of their influence, reorienting debates not only in moral and political philosophy, but in many other areas besides.

One point of divergence however, is that of tone and attitude when it comes to the question of certain concepts that are significantly, perhaps in some cases uniquely, modern. While there are some, freedom most notably, and rights perhaps more implicitly, on which they have been more forthright in acknowledging their differences,¹ the notion on which I intend to focus this discussion is that of authenticity. Despite their shared criticisms of many of the forms that these notions take in modern discourse, Taylor has in general, to risk oversimplifying things, taken a rather more hopeful and favorable stance towards the possibilities of their coherent articulation, while MacIntyre has tended to see them more as symptoms of the kinds of incoherences and depravities

of the modern predicament. While their respective views regarding these concepts are, of course, multilayered and complex, and cannot be reduced to a positive or negative position, I do want to claim that I do want to claim that MacIntyre has neglected, to the detriment of his broader project, the possibilities inherent in a serious and charitable engagement of his ideas with the modern notion of authenticity as Taylor articulates it.

It might be easy to suppose that MacIntyre’s seeming lack of interest in giving substantial regard to the importance of this notion is its supposed intimate connection with the kinds of [*false] “emancipatory” themes he identifies with, for instance, the emotivist self. However, as I will discuss in a moment, Taylor’s articulation of authenticity, with which MacIntyre must be intimately familiar, rejects these connections. Perhaps, then, another way of explaining MacIntyre’s neglect of the notion of authenticity despite Taylor’s [*non-neglect] would be to consider their respective receptions of Heidegger, since he is, I would maintain, a major source of inspiration for Taylor’s own articulation of the concept of authenticity as well as the broader popularity of the concept in modern thought and practice. Thus, if Taylor has displayed a much more positive and open attitude towards Heidegger’s thought, then it stands to reason that he would embrace with more enthusiasm one of Heidegger’s key (if cryptic) themes. On the other hand, if MacIntyre were much more reluctant to countenance the merits of Heidegger, then such a key aspect of his thought might, we would think, remain unexplored. As their written records attest, of course, the antecedents to these hypotheticals are not at all in doubt: what little attention
MacIntyre has ever given to Heidegger has been almost wholly negative, while Taylor has written extensively of his indebtedness to Heidegger the philosopher (while acknowledging his profound reservations about Heidegger the man, a distinction we shall not dismiss as unimportant to this discussion even if we won’t pursue the topic here).

What I hope to illuminate in this discussion is two-fold. First, I intend to disclose the ways in which the Heideggerian notion of authenticity, especially as Taylor develops it, can be an important supplement to, extension of, and modification to MacIntyre’s account of the virtues and the human telos, and thus of virtue ethics more generally. Second, I hope to vindicate a claim about the relevance to, and affinity with, Heidegger’s thought and MacIntyre’s.

2. Heidegger and Taylor on Authenticity


3 To give a comprehensive account of either Heidegger’s or Taylor’s accounts of authenticity would obviously be a formidable task for a treatment of such relatively short length as this paper must be. Much will be left unexplained, undefended, and thus will stand, no doubt, in apparent or acknowledged contradiction to other dimensions of each of their work, especially Heidegger’s. With regard to both, and particular to Heidegger, in fact, we acknowledge that the account we give might not be one that he himself would recognize, much less endorse. But the aim is not to vindicate or explain Heidegger, Taylor, or MacIntyre as such, and especially not as thinkers whose various permutations stand in coherent relationships to all the others within their own thought. That’s a heavily disputed question in itself, of course. And as one who, like Taylor and MacIntyre, is heavily indebted to Heidegger’s reception through Gadamer; and since Gadamer vehemently maintained that the meaning of a text resides not with the author’s
In his *Ethics of Authenticity* and elsewhere, Taylor begins by describing authenticity as a modern moral ideal having to do in some general way with being “true” to oneself. He connects the rise of this ideal with the opening up of a sense of the self as having an “inner depth” that includes the potential of individual “originality,” and it’s this originality that the authentic individual strives to uncover and express in his or her life. The identity of the authentic person, that is, must in some sense be self-generated, in contrast to one that is determined with reference to society, conceptions of a natural or divinely-ordained essence or purpose, and the like. Call this the Herderian view, following Taylor’s attribution of many of its core elements to Herder.

We can already discern in this vague characterization the potential for a fundamental conflict between an ethic that takes authenticity as a supreme ideal and an Aristotelian ethic, given that the latter seems to be paradigmatic of the sort of conception of self that the authentic individual seeks to overcome. Whatever the complexities of and various divergences between Aristotelian notions of the self and its moral identity, a common thread must surely include a commitment to a notion of identity as socially embedded and to a notion of a human telos that is more and often other than a particular individual’s unique characteristics. For the Aristotelian, achieving the telos of a well-lived life necessarily involves extending one’s gaze beyond the

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5 See especially *The Ethics of Authenticity*, 28-29. By using this term, we imply no endorsement of Taylor’s reading of Herder, the evaluation of which would take us beyond the scope of this paper.
individual “man-as-he-is,” to echo MacIntyre’s locution,\(^6\) no matter how deeply one might have to dig into oneself to discover this “as-he-is”. Yet it appears that looking beyond oneself for the standards by which to measure a successful and flourishing life is anathema to the realization of authenticity, at least in the Herderian sense.

Taylor, of course, rejects this individualistic and subjectivistic construal of the ideal of authenticity. For one thing, in a powerful line of argument, he notes that the very promotion of authenticity as a moral “ideal” presupposes a standard that transcends whatever self-conceptions, values, and modes of life the individual happens to countenance. To say that one \textit{ought} to strive for authenticity is to claim for it a status as a human good, which status obtains regardless of whether the individual recognizes it as such. But this claim, then, depends upon the recognition that there exist goods and standards for human life that go beyond the self: “horizons of significance” in his words.\(^7\)

With this argument Taylor pushes the articulation of the ideal of authenticity closer to an Aristotelian framework, but it would be too quick to suggest at this point that he has situated the ideal decidedly within it. Before showing how the ideal can be understood as embodying an Aristotelian perspective, it might be helpful to once again consider it in a general, everyday sense, but a sense somewhat different than the Herderian characterization given above. When we employ the term “authentic,” we

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\(^6\) Alasdair MacIntyre, \textit{After Virtue}, 2\textsuperscript{nd} ed. (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984), 54-55.

often have in mind something like “genuine” or “real,” as opposed to, say, a forgery or a simulacrum. Consider, for example, what we mean when we speak of a painting as an “authentic Rembrandt,” a restaurant or dish as “authentically Mexican,” a doctrine or practice as an expression of “authentic Christianity,” or a passkey as “authenticating” a person’s identity as a legitimate user of a computer. According to these uses, the term “authentic” indicates the realization of some objective condition; specifically, to be “authentic” means to fulfill the conditions of being the sort of thing it purports to be, conditions that it could always potentially fail. Accordingly, we can say, roughly, that to be an “authentic” human is to fulfill the conditions of what it is to be human. Now insofar as authenticity is taken to be a normative ideal, “human” in this sense cannot be opposed to, say, “replicant,” as that which the Voigt-Kamff test is supposed to determine in Ridley Scott’s film Blade Runner. Rather, it is a kind of fulfillment or actualization of the potential inherent in the individual as already a member of a certain class of beings.

This is the sense, I think, in which the term is used in the Herderian characterization. If I fail in being “true” to some deep, original identity, that doesn’t mean that I am not, in some more general sense, “me.” It means that I fail to live in

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8 In the film, “replicants” are genetically engineered hominoids specifically designed for slave labor. They were designed to be virtually indistinguishable from humans in behavior and appearance unless one performed intricate tests that revealed certain emotional limitations built into their design. Whether such hypothetical creatures ought to be counted as humans is an interesting philosophical question in its own right (and one with respect to which I would stand in the affirmative). But in the world of the film they were close enough to normal humans for the question of their own humanity to be an interesting one, and yet were deemed not fully human, even in potential. It is this sense in which I am contrasting with the notion of authenticity as being a “fulfillment” of one’s humanity.
such a way as to fulfill, exhibit, or respect the inherent potential for originality that defines (under this view) what it is to be uniquely “me.” I also think that this is what Taylor, and Heidegger before him, have in mind in their (what I claim to be) non-subjectivist characterization of authenticity: given what are in fact the features and contours that circumscribe an account of what humans uniquely are, one can succeed or fail to fulfill, exhibit, or respect these in the way one lives one’s life, even though one remains, of course, “human” in a more general sense. But notice how closely this parallels Aristotelian eudaimonia. To fail to be eudaimon does not mean, of course, to fail to be, in a general sense, a rational animal or whatever. It means to fail to fulfill, exhibit, or respect the various aspects of what being a rational animal involves. And so I would offer the preliminary suggestion that authenticity and eudaimonia share a certain structure: in my self as it is given there are certain unique potentialities (whether “unique” means unique to myself as an individual, to human nature, or whatever, is not at issue here), and whether or not these potentialities are fulfilled, exhibited, or respected in the way I live my life marks the difference between living authentically or eudaimon, and not.

I’ve suggested so far that a proper articulation of the notion of authenticity – the understanding that, as I’ll explain in a moment, Heidegger and Taylor point us toward – reveals an inherently Aristotelian structure. The next step will be to consider what kind of characterization of human life the authentic life is supposed to fulfill, exhibit, or respect, and how this characterization relates to others in the Aristotelian tradition.
In *Being and Time*\(^9\) Heidegger attempts to elucidate the being of Dasein – his term for the kind of being that enquires after Being – as finite temporality. This has two crucial characteristics that I will briefly try to explain. First, as temporal, Dasein must be understood as “thrown-projecting,” which is to say that its being is such as to be constantly projecting an understanding of itself and its world from out of a given, inherited background. In Taylor’s terms, Dasein is continually “taking a stand” on the meaning and significance of its life and the world in the way that it thinks and acts, including both everyday and more momentous thoughts and actions.\(^{10}\) To put differently, to be human is to be concerned with what is significant about being human, and this concern is manifested in the way that one comports oneself towards the world of significance. This is more or less what it means, in more existential terms, to say that Dasein must “choose” itself: there are no compulsory modes of comorting oneself, for to be the sort of being that continually asks about Being means there is a kind of questionability to any determination of the answer, but we cannot avoid living according to some determination or other. Moreover, for our lives to be intelligible, whatever determinations circumscribe our lives must be drawn from the social and cultural world that we have inherited. We can affirm, modify, and reject this inheritance, but we cannot simply “create” ourselves without abandoning the very source of any kind of intelligibility to our lives.

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\(^{10}\) See *Sources of the Self*, 27ff.
Second, as finite, we can never obtain a complete, objective perspective either on the enframing background horizons of intelligibility or on the kinds of practical reasons, procedures, and conceptions that constitute intelligible projections. This is because, first, as providing a context of intelligibility, the background frameworks cannot be escaped in the way that would have to be presumed by an entirely disengaged perspective. In other words, to attempt to evaluate frameworks as a whole from a completely neutral, prejudice-free “view from nowhere” would be to undermine the possibility of any intelligibility to such an evaluation whatsoever. Moreover, the idea that we can determine some ideal procedure or principle that can remove the responsibility of the “augenblick” or moment of choice is something Taylor and Heidegger have both convincingly undermined.

Finally, Dasein’s finite temporality emerges out of Heidegger’s challenge to the priority of the subject in giving an ontological account of Dasein’s being by maintaining instead the priority of being-in-the-world. Dasein always already has an understanding of itself that is tied up with a world of significance prior to any conception of itself as rational, reflective, and the subject of experiences, and, importantly for our theme here, as having a unique inner dimension and depth marked out in distinction from the “outer” world. Taylor’s own appropriation of being-in-the-world follows Merleau-Ponty in putting greater emphasis than Heidegger did on the essential bodily dimensions of this idea about the inescapability of a kind of pre-reflective situatedness to any self-

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understanding we might have, but they share an opposition to an account of human experience and agency that seeks to circumscribe these in terms of a “subject/object,” “self/world,” or “inner/outer” dichotomy. The “world” is constitutive of the being of the individual subject, and this includes not just the natural world but the social as well, involving social mores, significant relationships, and one’s social heritage.

This is only a rough sketch if what is, of course, a much more complex and often confounding account of what we might call the “structural” features of human life. By “structural” we mean the transcendental articulations of human ontology as it actually is, regardless of what one countenances explicitly or implicitly in theory and practice.\(^\text{12}\) What’s important for our purposes is to consider the relationship that this structural ontology bears to authenticity as, so I shall claim, a thoroughly normative concept, which it would have to have for it to parallel Aristotelian *eudaimonia* in the way I have suggested.

3. Authenticity and Virtue

Heidegger was notoriously averse to recommending his account as implying or entailing an “ethics,” maintaining that ethics was one of those areas of enquiry, like psychology or anthropology, that was plagued by what he regarded as inadequate ontological presuppositions.\(^\text{13}\) Why he didn’t endeavor to remedy this problem remains a bit of a mystery (though there is no shortage of possible explanations). At any rate, I’m not concerned to offer a thesis that Heidegger himself would have endorsed, but

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\(^{12}\) I mean “transcendental” in the sense Taylor elucidates in *Philosophical Arguments*, 20-33.

\(^{13}\) Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 37.
rather to consider what the Heideggerian view might offer to those of us concerned to advance enquiry into the nature and significance of the virtues. With that caveat, I propose that we can understand Taylor’s articulation of the ideal of authenticity as appropriating the Heideggerian themes I outlined above to a more overtly Aristotelian ethical framework, and thus as contributing to a virtue ethics project such as the one MacIntyre develops and defends.

We noted above, following Taylor’s narrative, that “authenticity” as an ideal developed as indicating a mode of life that expresses one’s inner originality. Implicit in this idea is that of the individual as living for the most part according to the identity bestowed upon one by one’s heritage, culture, and society. The authentic person is the one that refuses such determinations in favor of what distinguishes him or her as a unique person. We then noted another sense of the word as indicating that the thing in question is “genuine” in the sense of fulfilling, exhibiting, or respecting those characteristics that are definitive for the sort of thing it purports or strives to be. We suggested that this need not be an all-or-nothing sort of conception, but rather one that indicates the kind of distinction between potentiality and actuality that has been a core feature of Aristotelian thought. To bring these two senses of authenticity together, then, we might say that the proponents of Herderian authenticity were on track in two respects. First, they recognized that there are modes of human life – indeed the most common modes – that fail to fulfill, exhibit, and respect one’s “true” being, without this entailing that the individual fails to be an individual or fails to be human in a more general sense. And second, that the modes of life that fail in this way are the ones that
prioritize in a certain respect the received, socially-established determinations of what it means to fulfill, exhibit, or respect one’s true being.

What does the qualification “in a certain respect” mean? This is where we can draw upon Heidegger for clarification. First, “one’s true being” refers to some kind of ontological account of what one is – the structural articulation of human life that I referred to earlier. The Herderian account presumes that “one’s true being” is something isolated, detached, and unique with respect to history and society. But the Heideggerian view that Taylor extends rejects this account in favor of one in which “one’s true being” must make reference to history and society. In other words, Dasein is being-in-the-world, which means that “one’s true being” is intertwined with a world of significance in the sense expressed above. That is, I cannot consider the significance of my life, as an individual with a certain “depth,” without considering the constitutive significance of my social and natural environment, including such elements as non-living things, other living things, and of course other people. If this is correct, then “authenticity” as the Herderian view would understand it is, ironically, inauthentic. It is inauthentic in that it rests on a view of human nature that is phenomenologically inadequate, namely one that takes the individual, as fundamentally distinct from its society and heritage, as the locus of existential significance. The Heideggerian view that Taylor appropriates, by contrast, considers society and heritage as indispensible to any conception of individual significance.
Nevertheless, the finite and projective dimensions of human existence preclude the possibility of any final and complete determinations of how one should live. This would include rules, procedures, norms, and accounts of human essence from which practical judgments would issue. Heidegger uses the term “das Man” to describe the social milieu in which we live out our lives, and one of the basic features of das Man is its tendency to occlude human finitude and the burden of taking a stand by imputing to social norms an absolute and authoritative status that they cannot possess. This temptation to deny human finitude manifests itself not just in the tendency to “follow the herd” and simply act as “one” acts, but also in the tendency to seek out and codify foundational normative principles. And so, much of the modern moral philosophy that MacIntyre so famously and forcefully critiques in his writings turns out to likewise be promoting a form of inauthenticity as well, given the Heideggerian account as we are interpreting it.

Taylor, in his own treatment of the notion of authenticity, argues that:

authenticity (A) involves (i) creation and construction as well as discovery, (ii) originality, and frequently (iii) opposition to the rules of society and even potentially to what we recognize as morality. But it is also true...that it (B) requires (i) openness to horizons of significance (for otherwise the creation loses the background that can save it from insignificance) and (ii) a self-definition in dialogue. ¹⁴

We can see now why authenticity would have these dimensions he describes if we are to understand it as the fulfillment, exhibition, and respect for the ontological structure of human life according to Heidegger’s analysis of Dasein. I hope, moreover,

¹⁴ Taylor, The Ethics of Authenticity, 66.
that it is apparent now that this account has a deep affinity with MacIntyres's virtue ethics. For instance, in his well-known characterization of the good life as a “quest,” MacIntyre confounds those who seek a more determinate and codified account of the human telos, maintaining instead that any particular conception of the good life must always be provisional, incomplete, and open to reinterpretation. A similar claim is made about traditions: a tradition that is closed off to further development, critique, and correction is stultified – “dying or dead.”¹⁵ Such claims bear significant resemblances to Heidegger’s distinction between maintaining an authentic relationship to the “heritage” and the inauthentic condition of having fallen into the leveling and distorting modes of das Man.

It might be objected that one crucial point of fundamental incompatibility between MacIntyre’s thought and Heideggerian authenticity, even if we accept the thoroughly normative interpretation I have given, is that the latter remains far too concerned with individuality and self-creation to be congruent with MacIntyre’s emphasis on the central importance of tradition, community, and social dependency to any practical understanding of the good. He suggests as much in a comparison of Heidegger and Edith Stein, fellow students of Husserl, approvingly writing that Stein “believes that Heidegger is not open to the possibility of being with others in such a way as to be with them, to share with them, in their anticipation of their death.”¹⁶ He shortly follows that with the claim that:

⁰¹⁵ MacIntyre, After Virtue, 222.
⁰¹⁶ MacIntyre, Edith Stein, 184.
Finite being can only be adequately understood as a gift that we have received and the same is true of those aspects of our finite being that make us free and self-determined. This conception of our lives as gifts is as central to Stein’s understanding of Dasein as it is alien to Heidegger’s.\footnote{MacIntyre, \textit{Edith Stein}, 185.}

If MacIntyre is right in his understanding of Heidegger, then it is not surprising that “authenticity,” as an ideal that embraces these supposed mistakes in Heidegger’s understanding of Dasein, would seem somewhat inimical to living well as MacIntyre conceives it.

I think that each of these interpretations is inadequate, though a thorough defense would require more space than I have here. Briefly, the claim about death pays insufficient attention to the distinction Heidegger draws between “death” as an existential notion, having to do with the finitude constitutive of Dasein’s being, and the end-of-life event to which the more everyday notion directly refers. We might say that the former emphasizes the \textit{limits} of dependency and community and the need for a kind of individual ownership of and responsibility for one’s life; but to radicalize this individual ownership in the way MacIntyre (and Stein) seem to do is to trade in a false dichotomy, to say nothing of neglecting the myriad ways in which Heidegger plays up the constitutive significance of “being-with” others to Dasein’s being. Moreover, it’s hard to reconcile MacIntyre’s suggestion that the “conception of our lives as gifts” is “alien” to Heidegger’s understanding of Dasein with Heidegger’s emphasis on the thrown character of Dasein’s being. Finally, one of Heidegger’s most significant accomplishments was his radical critique of the individualizing and subjectivizing thrusts
of modern philosophy, and so it’s hardly the case that we must associate the ideal of authenticity with any such conceptions of human life.

It is true, of course, that one could point to passages in Heidegger’s work, as well as aspects of his own life, that belie the defense I have offered, or that at least draw into question the compatibility of Heideggerian authenticity with the thought of MacIntyre and others within the Aristotelian ethical tradition. Moreover, we are not suggesting anything as audacious and incredible as the claim that there is unproblematic congruity between MacIntyre and Heidegger, or for that matter between MacIntyre and Taylor or Taylor and Heidegger. I do think, however, that it’s not incidental to this discussion that two of the most significant philosophers in the Heideggerian tradition – Taylor and Gadamer – staunchly defend the importance of society and community in their accounts of human life without taking themselves to be departing in any radical way from the central claims Heidegger puts forward.

Having said this, however, a question might be raised: why should Aristotelian virtue ethics bother with the notion of authenticity? What does this concept add or contribute to an understanding of human life as teleologically structured, of the virtues, and of other such concerns? I have suggested that we can understand authenticity as sharing the same kind of normative structure as Aristotelian *eudaimonia*, in that it indicates the kind of life that fulfills, exhibits, and respects the sorts of beings we are. I have also suggested that when we articulate what the authentic life involves along the lines that Heidegger and Taylor present, we end up with a picture that shares much of
the core elements of MacIntyre’s thought. Included in this picture is the importance of holding together the inescapability of inherited horizons of intelligibility with the continual need to re-question and re-appropriate those frameworks, the emphasis on finitude that necessitates each of these features and challenges the dominant modes of modern ethical thought, and the rejection of individualist and subjectivist construals of human agency and identity in favor of one that sees individual human lives as ineluctably situated within a world of significance.

But what, then, does “authenticity” as such disclose about those questions that talking in more classical Aristotelian terms would not? For one thing, if my analysis is plausible then it should open up the space for the language of the virtues that bears peculiar relevance to the modern world. I noted above the similarities between the notion of the authentic life and that of the good life as a quest. MacIntyre argues that successfully undertaking this quest requires the virtues both to understand “what more and what else the good life for man is,”¹⁺ as well as to avoid the kinds of temptations liable to distract one from the quest. It seems plausible to suppose that we can apply this same reasoning to the notion of authenticity as a teleological concept, and discern therein the necessity of countenancing certain virtues as necessary for, indeed constitutive of, authenticity. Looking back to Taylor’s description above, we can easily discern the need for courage, honesty, and open-mindedness. Moreover, although I won’t be able to clarify this, I would maintain that an account of temperance can be based in certain anti-instrumentalist themes running throughout Heidegger’s and

¹⁺ MacIntyre, After Virtue, 219-220.
Taylor’s writing. In short, just as MacIntyre argues that the virtues are necessary for sustaining practices, the quest for the good, and traditions, I would argue that we can give a similar account of why the virtues are necessary for authenticity, according to the account I have been defending.

If it is possible to give an articulation of the virtues that pays special regard to the ideal of authenticity, we might ask again: why should we think that we need to? Here I would lean on Taylor’s own motivations for giving this and other modern notions their due: namely, that they hold a central place as powerful moral ideals in our modern culture. Certain core features like responsibility for self, respect for individuality, the importance of self-fulfillment, and creativity, originality, and social critique, when divorced from the distortions of soft relativism, subjectivism, individualism, and the like, and maintained together with the inescapability of horizons and recognition of social dependency, can speak powerfully to the modern consciousness and help us avoid the trappings of “traditionalism” and modes of oppressive social conformity.

To neglect or avoid attempting to engage these ideals constructively is not just to miss out on the opportunity to have a role in shaping the forms that the practical manifestation and articulation of these ideals take, and thus relinquishing these manifestations and articulations to the more debased modes that Taylor, Heidegger, and MacIntyre all powerfully critique. It also runs the risk of obscuring or covering over certain ideals that hold powerful sway over us as sojourners in modernity. As Taylor once said in a discussion of After Virtue, focusing on the ideal of freedom,
We have to give these ideals a run for their money. And the need to try is made the more urgent by the fact that for many of us in the ‘Aristotelian’ camp, some facets at least of the ideal of modern freedom have great appeal. Indeed, one might suspect that there is virtually no one in the modern age who is not committed to some or other of its facets. Can one build an identity in the modern world which has not to some extent been shaped by this understanding of freedom?...What can/should be rescued of the moral vision which spawned the distortive meta-ethic?¹⁹

The “distortive meta-ethic” he refers to in the context of this quote is specifically the fact/value distinction, but it is safe to assume it includes any meta-ethic based in disengaged rationality, punctuality/instrumentalism, and atomism. His worry is that when we (legitimately) reject this construal of practical agency, we are led to suppose that we must reject those ideals which are commonly and historically justified on their basis. And doing so would have the cost of attempting to deny, or at least bracket, so much of what is integral to moral life and reflection as we in fact engage in it.

I have been trying to argue that this holds especially for the ideal of authenticity if we are willing to confront Heidegger – one of the major philosophical proponents of this notion – in a way that seeks to constructively enquire what powerful and legitimate contributions his thought might have to make to those “in the ‘Aristotelian’ camp,” something MacIntyre might have taken to greater task. Interestingly, as I mentioned early on, one thing that unites Heidegger and MacIntyre is their respective pessimism about the possibilities inherent in the discourse of modernity, as both seem to think that the concepts that pervade such discourse are too distorted, except perhaps at more localized and parochial levels, to be salvageable, particularly when such a discourse

takes seriously the kinds of pre-modern conceptions that maintain themselves in fragmented forms in the modern consciousness. Each in their own divergent way might fall into the mode of the “knockers” of modernity, in Taylor’s whimsical term. In forging a different path, Taylor may have learned a bit more from Gadamer – the student of Heidegger and frequent interlocutor of MacIntyre – and his instance that the possibilities for achieving common understanding, or a “fusion of horizons,” can never be declared closed.