

**A Life in the 'Own' Self:
A Critical Account of Heidegger's Concept of Human Authenticity
with Special Reference to *Being and Time***

A B S T R A C T

Our thesis is a study on the notion of authenticity with special reference to Heidegger's magnum opus, *Being and Time* (1927) in the background of existentialism. It studies the ontological notion of authenticity from the perspective of life as it is daily lived out and the many practical aspects of it.

Strangely, Heidegger claims that his book is pure ontology without having anything to say on the art of living, while all the time dealing with the existential analysis of the human reality. According to him humans play out their existence in three modes which can be termed authentic, inauthentic and everyday. Of these, the everyday mode is merely a state of undistinguished inauthenticity. So humans, we may safely say, exist either authentically or inauthentically.

Inauthenticity may be broadly characterized as the human tendency to shirk their hermeneutic responsibility of answerability towards their own being. Heidegger's fundamental presupposition is that to understand and interpret its own Being and to take issue with the question of its Being is a human prerogative. This way humans alone are privileged to enquire into the broader question of Being qua Being. Inauthenticity, in simple terms, is selling off this responsibility of ontological answerability in preference to an unquestioning social existence, engrossed into the world of work, into the world of people and the numerous requirements of the project of living.

Since humans are fundamentally questioning beings the possibility of authenticity is ontologically their primordial possibility. Even while being steeped into inauthenticity as understanding beings humans come face to face with angst which actually is an encounter with nullity. They become aware that they are *not* being true to themselves, they are *not* going to prolong their existence indefinitely, they are *not* fortunate to choose all the possibilities they have, they are *not* able to change their past, etc. Owning one's self up in the face of this anxiety may be called authenticity. Humans are called to own themselves up in their conscience, the content of which is termed 'guilt'. Guilt is nullity pure and simple. Caught up in ontological guilt, we realize that we are finite and contingent creatures and upon the background of our own death, it becomes clear to us what our true possibilities are other than our final possibility of ultimate nullity. In this clear-sightedness if we want to transform our lives we need to *resolutely* own up our selves and make radical choices. We ourselves are the guides to this choice-making activity. To be authentic is to clear-sightedly face up to one's responsibility for what one's life is adding up to as a whole. However, since our lives are entangled with our community's existence, authenticity also involves seizing on the possibilities of our shared "heritage" in order to realize not only our individual but also our community's "destiny."

The structure of our dissertation is simple and direct. We have six chapters. In the first chapter entitled "Introduction", we have placed the whole movement of a search after authentic self in the tradition of Socrates by calling it a philosophy that strove to establish a link with life, before coming to the statement of the problem

and justification of the thesis. The second chapter is entitled “A Prelude to Heidegger’s Concept of Authenticity: Historical Setting and Preliminary Notions.” Here, we place Heidegger’s notion of authenticity within the existential movement and introduce his philosophical background for writing on the concept of authenticity in *Being and Time*. The third chapter explores the First Division of *Being and Time* where a picture of the everyday, inauthentic man emerges. This chapter is entitled “Authenticity and Everyday Dasein: Preparatory Analysis.” The fourth chapter, “Authenticity and Temporality: Primordial Analysis”, explores the Second Division of *Being and Time* where the picture of the authentic man who resolutely anticipates his death emerges. This chapter points out the salient features of Heidegger’s notion of authenticity. The fifth chapter is entitled “Heidegger’s Concept of Authenticity in *Being and Time*: A Critique.” This chapter presents a critical appraisal of Heidegger’s notion of authenticity embodied in *Being and Time*. While upholding the ideal of authenticity as the only way out of the chronic socially protected inauthenticity of modern man, we have made ample attempt to point out the many aspects of this notion as pictured in *Being and Time*, which require a reappraisal. Overall, our study will guide us to a picture of authentic human being who is authentic to himself and constructively social. In the last chapter entitled “Conclusion” while winding up the findings of the thesis, we have also made a pointer towards the absence of a spiritual perspective in *Being and Time* and its fallout. Heidegger himself, was fond of violent interpretation of other philosophers’ texts. Certain amount of violence may be now required to free the authentic individual of *Being and Time* from a theoretical cage.

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