

Second Philosophy

Led by	Sojourna Alexandre
Title	Are you Authentic?
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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to tonight's discussion here at Open Habitat with the grand challenge of 'Are you Authentic?'

My thoughts on the authentic thing...

The idea of authenticity, of living a life of genuine meaning, of being who you are, has its roots in the existentialist anxiety of the human condition.

We get thrown into this human existence and find that it is impossible to attain any absolute or rational meaning regarding our existence. We live in a void of meaning, it seems. and this causes some anxiety. Angst, despair, etc. We have to respond.

Some philosophers say we have to respond by creating our own meaning and validating it according to our own selves, our own genuine beliefs. We have to live our own lives. We have to be ourselves. This is called living authentically.

We have to choose a goal, believe in it, understand what it means to be it and live with passion and conviction. If that means, for example, to be a philosopher, the authentic philosopher would be concerned with what it means to be this particular and unique philosopher. What it means to be my own version of the philosopher and not the philosopher dictated to me by some other body. To become this philosopher with integrity, to make a commitment to being myself as the philosopher and not some chameleon philosopher.

OK, so. Tonight I just want to chat about this thing called authenticity. And I ask you, challenge you even, are you authentic? Give me your score from the authenticity test, and give me your knee-jerk reaction to this authenticity thing. Starting with the blue dragon and going clockwise.

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DISCUSSION:

Oswy: My score was 13. I reject Sartre's interpretation of authentic as incoherent. I will explain why later

Autumn: my score was 8, but several years ago I think it would have been much higher

Smoke: I did not do the test, but the general reaction I get from hearing things like "be who you are", "own self" etc make my neck hairs rise, from the implied essentialism and golden way....

Shingles: I got a 9, but I think that to 'need to respond' is wrong. I would only need that if I had a problem with the world being untruthful and bizarre. As it is I feel confident that I feel the world is intelligible enough for me to operate in. I would only need a grand principle if I needed something to rely on. I don't feel that I do.

Reflection: I had a 12, I think, but some of the items seem to be erroneously keyed, for example 3 and 4, seem to be reverse keyed ;-)

Marya: I am not certain how a higher score means less authentic when there's a question such as 'am I actively resisting' which gives a higher score than 'I am not resisting' - so I'm uncertain as to what that is about. Either way, my score was 8 though I find these sorts of tests to be not terribly accurate and limited - so I am not concerned either way. Also, I have some reservations about what authentic authenticity is :)

Monist: I also think that low scores are authentic for items one and two, but higher scores might be authentic for the other items.

Reflection: also it seems that authenticity might be conflated with naïveté in this instrument ;-)

Sojourna: Yes, good point Reflection, I'd like to know at the end of this discussion if authenticity is a valid notion beyond the silly little test. Not sure....

Simulat: I'm sort of embarrassed because I got zero - but I'm not very impressed by the angst that leads people to worry about whether they are authentic or not

Monist: Sojourna, can we be inauthentic?

Reflection: certainly the concept of authenticity seems very important and I think has to do with an honest personal quest in life, but it doesn't involve the rejection of norms per se, I may authentically agree with them

Sojourna: I'm impressed with the zero, Sim, must admit. Despite the naïveté of the test and score, that "means!" something

Simulat: it means that I'm a broke old hippie Sojourna :-)

Smoke: hippies are cute Sim

Simulat: young ones are :-)

Sojourna: Good point, Monist...let's get to that soon.

Sojourna: haah Sim, I'm following in your footsteps

Reflection: that suggests the test has good criterion validity, Sim

Steve: well; did not do test - Must say the concept authenticity comes from Heidegger's analysis of everydayness in which we all are inevitably caught up most of the time, facing death individuates us; we own Eigen, our existence

Dar: 8, I think concerning one's self with authenticity, and actively trying to buck norms to be authentic is a sure-fire way to be fake.

Sojourna: Ah, ok, Dar, yes interesting point - though Kierkegaard specifically says we have to do that. (I think).

Reflection: my revised score is 5 (I was being inauthentic relying on the test being scored as indicated by the test the first time)

Steve: not sure it is possible or desirable to live each moment as our last

Shingles: have to in order to.... what? Should always be the question, what is one achieving by doing that?

Patrick: I did not take your inventory so I am not sure how you are using authenticity, but if you mean is one's original I must admit that I am a synthesis of those things that I have read and my own reaction to them

Sojourna: Good question, Shingles. I think that the point the existentialists want to make is that in the absence of some universal, absolute meaning you can only ever depend on yourself to make meaning. We seem to value meaning and being authentic or true to what you are is one way of living this life, in fact, for the existentialists, it is the only way of living this life. Anything else is living in bad faith.

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Sojourna: So, with Shingles' point, shall we move onto question 2 - and I want to hear from Oswy?

Sojourna: Is it even actually possible to live authentically? Personal morality, responsibility and meaning-creation is the core of authentic living, and according to the existentialists the individual is ultimately alone in determining how to live their life in spite of all the external influences (culture, pace of living, technology - see Heidegger). One way of determining authentic action, is to judge whether you would act in a particular way, or desire something, or believe something, if no one else was around to influence you. So, can we live authentic lives?

Dar: yeah, and most of those existentialists were miserable as well - brilliant examples of the sort of life not worth living

Sojourna: Though I think I've found one that is admirable (Nikos Kazantzakis) - was admirable in any case

Monist: That thought experiment causes some ethical problems.

Sojourna: So, do we all know what we are talking about when we say the word authentic? In the existentialist sense anyway?

Monist: I wonder if many of our actions are importantly and authentically determined by consideration of others.

Shingles: yes

Reflection: right monist

Steve: as I was saying, not in Heidegger's sense. Heidegger uses it in a specific sense; not a personal sense

Reflection: being cultural creatures, on some basis it would be inauthentic to not acknowledge that simple fact

Sojourna: Steve, could you go again on the Heidegger thing - he was saying that we must find a goal and commit to it passionately? No?

Steve: a condition for being human in general

Steve: no, not so

Dar: for Heidegger, I thought authenticity was when the construction worker went to go smell flowers on lunch break

Steve: we are for him beings who question what it means to be; we all are and do so some extent

Marya: I think culture is simply the context that we use to find meaning in anything - since outside of any particular context, there can be no meaning - the culture that we are born into provides that context

Sojourna: Monist - you make a good point and I think being social beings does influence what we do, the point is, I think, to overcome the social pressure and work out what it is we are and be that.

Steve: we also are both inauthentic and authentic; they go together; it is a condition of being human

Dar: setting oneself up as a cultural is simply denying reality

Sojourna: Steve, ok, how are we both and how do we know when we are one and not the other?

Sojourna: Meanwhile, Oswy, you wanted to say something about Sartre and I'm keen on hearing it.

Marya: Agreed, Dar

Autumn: I think when I was younger I was much more inauthentic; as I have matured I have become more secure in myself, learned to trust in my own opinions and bow less to social pressure. So I think that how authentic someone is can change over time.

Steve: we live as everyday inauthentic beings for the most part absorbed in the "they" self. Das Man

Smoke: imo, we cannot be anything else then authentic ... you cannot be anything else then yourself ... unless you fix identity within a grand tale.

Sojourna: Dar - we need to talk more about what you are saying...

Steve: we do what everyone else does and engage in idle chatter; all of us most of the time; only when we face our own death

Sojourna: Smoke, I'm not so sure, I think being authentic needs a huge amount of effort, it's a form of becoming something, not being something that you already are or think you are

Steve: do we begin to "get it" that we are finite - death

Oswy: Soj I am agreeing with most of what Steve is saying. I have no problem with Heidegger - he seems more accurate than Sartre

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Monist: Smoke and I were talking before about not believing in free will - this poses a problem for the notion of authenticity.

Dar: if you take what you really are, and crush it to become something else, are you still you?

Smoke: ok Sojourna .. For that you do need to assume we are free rational subjects guided by our intentions...

Sojourna: Steve, yes, the death thing is the awesome fact that is supposed to wake you up. You realise in the face of death that your life has no greater meaning, not big meaning in the universal sphere of thing, so you have to go it alone

Marya: I think it's hard enough to define exactly who one is at times - usually it is dependent on situation and this could come back to personal identity

Shingles: that one is always that one, how could that ever be wrong?

Oswy: Soj I think you have answered the point with your previous question. There is in fact no way to distinguish the knowing of the authentic from the inauthentic. It is not knowable and therefore incoherent.

Sojourna: Yes, Smoke, guided by our intentions and not by some grand universal meaning out there.

Steve: not really Sojourna; only you can die your own death; no one can substitute for you

Sojourna: Oswy - the distinction is incoherent?

Simulat: I have no idea how a concept like meaning can get attached to something like a person - for me meaning is a property of language, not a property of people

Sojourna: Yes, Steve.

Steve: that is a wake up call if you are not facing and most of us are not most of the time

Smoke: lol Sojourna .. indeed, no such thing as teleological theory for reality with me .. but I do think our free will is an illusion within deterministic universe.

Sojourna: Simulat - but don't we crave meaning, hope for it? Want meaning, we are always seeking it, wanting to know what we do and say and believe has some sort of value?

Steve: nothing to do with meaning; or lack of meaning

Oswy: Soj, you cannot know when you are being inauthentic in Sartre's sense of the word. If it is not knowable then the whole concept becomes incoherent.

Simulat: not me Sojourna

Dar: when it comes to human life I think meaning is often confused with purpose

Steve: it is the meaning the meaning of ek-sistence

Sojourna: Smoke, yeah, was thinking about the free will thing too with this authenticity topic....

Sojourna: Sim? No meaning? No goals? No beliefs?

Shingles: yes we want to believe that 'truths' have some value. Because if we have valuable truths it is comforting, Sojourna et al.

Sojourna: Oswy, what is Sartre's sense of the word?

Sojourna: Shingles, yeah I think the quest for meaning is at times a feel-good thing. But is authenticity a comfort thing? Yes, maybe because it is the only way to face the anxiety one feels in the face of the universal void, etc, etc, death, etc.

Simulat: I have personal goals - but I don't think having a goal gives my life meaning - as I said - it seems to me that meaning is a thing relevant to communication - but a lot of people think that meaning is related to purpose - which I think is a confusion

Steve: Sartre talks about "bad faith" Sojourna

Oswy: Soj, he seems to believe we are thrown into a world that is absurd. In this world we start as nothingness and have to make choices to find our way. In fact we bring things into the world and we enter not a world that is absurd but is encultured. We make our way in that world. In Heidegger's sense we are located in a world.

Marya: Dar, can you give a brief definition of the difference between meaning and purpose?

Reflection: I would agree that purpose might be a better word for what we are talking about than meaning (if we are going to get picky about definitions here Sim;-))

Dar: meaning is what you get after deciphering something; purpose is an end for which a thing is

Simulat: The purpose of a statement is to transmit meaning. But if I have a goal, what meaning am I transmitting

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Monist: I wonder how authenticity might relate to dominance behaviour, considered from an ethological (study of behaviour) point of view.

Steve: Heidegger distinguishes ontic from ontological

Shingles: I dispute that it's the only way, one could simply drift along with the chaos of existing. Myself, I feel no anxiety over the void of meaning. Instead I find it beautiful, Sojourna, et al.

Steve: we are both in the world and within it

Sojourna: OK Oswy and Steve - isn't the quest for authenticity the proper response to this absurd condition of human existence? And the opposite of living in bad faith?

Steve: no

Monist: Is it possible for an alpha chimp to be inauthentic?

Autumn: Acting authentically is much more difficult when the things one needs to do to be authentic conflict with society's expectations. But this is not the case for everyone - some people can do what society expects and that is still authentic for them.

Oswy: Soj I don't think the world is absurd in the first place.

Steve: the quest to understand what it means to be is

Sojourna: Ah ok Oswy - I do.

Oswy: I think Sartre was just wrong about that

Reflection: so if we replace meaning with purpose, would it be accurate shingles to say that your purpose is to live life in a state of awareness and tranquillity?

Dar: the quest for authenticity, I think, is the perfect false response - oh, no, I'm not me.... how can I be me

Steve: true Dar

Sojourna: Dar - why do you say that?

Oswy: Soj We bring our genetic inheritance into the world. We enter a world of culture and then we make our own way. That is the human condition nothing absurd about that at all.

Dar: the moment you seek to be yourself you concede your not you

Shingles: I agree with Dar, it seems to be setting up another inauthentic set of principles. If its constructed by oneself then an intention is present, this confounds things, Sojourna et al

Steve: the absurd is a mathematical metaphor

Autumn: Well Dar, sometimes that is true, you are not you. Before I changed careers I didn't feel like I was me; I was doing what society expected, not what I wanted

Sojourna: The absurdity aspect I think is excellently understandable using Camus' Sisyphus metaphor - the pushing of the boulder up and down, we build homes, lives, meaning etc, only to die and for everything to be nothing. That is an absurd condition to be in.

Shingles: it could be, that's a rather beautiful statement of my position, Reflection

Steve: it means for example that arithmetic is incommensurable with geometry

Dar: not doing what you want to do and not being you are two different things

Reflection: it doesn't seem as though authenticity has very much to do, necessarily with how much one conforms to societal dictates (this would mean that the slave could have no authentic existence, for example which I would categorically reject)

Dar: if you weren't you, you would have been perfectly happy in that other job

Steve: so we do not have an exact number for the hypotenuse of a right triangle whose legs = 1

Sojourna: Dar, why is it fake to think about actually working towards being authentic? Why is thought and analysis wrong here?

Sage: Dar, 'you' can be more or less internally coherent, no? Is this not what authenticity means?

Oswy: Soj what is absurd about living life to the full in the situation you find yourself in. What else do you crave for?

Shingles: the mind, body and 'self' do not seem to behave coherently, Sage

Dar: I suppose you can try to learn who you are and work for that if there is some doubt

Steve: so analogously our possible knowledge is incommensurable with an absolute understanding of Being

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Sojourna: Well, if you are doing that Oswy, then you are responding authentically to the absurd condition of a meaningless life (in the big universal and absolute sense)

Steve: since we are finite

Shingles: perhaps that would be a completely intelligible universe, Oswy (what one would crave).

Sage: Shingles, I don't see your distinction there. Mind, body and self are the same thing in my opinion - the coherence issues occur between parts of the self

Dar: Sage brings up authenticity as internal coherence, that's an interesting notion

Shingles: ok, let's allow that through

Sojourna: It's in my notes somewhere, but I read that the authentic project is not about being who you are, as if you are some Platonic form that you must discover, but it is about becoming, it is a process of becoming...of understanding the meaning of what you are doing, what your goals are, etc.

Shingles: does the self behave coherently, Sage?

Sojourna: Sorry, that was for Dar....

Steve: who says that Sojourna?

Dar: I don't think we're platonic forms, I think we're processes

Sojourna: Let me find the ref, Steve

Shingles: the 'forms' are a problematic model

Sage: Shingles, certainly not always. But when and to extent that it does, I think it's fair to say we're being authentic.

Reflection: Soj, I really hope it doesn't require me to genuinely understand the meaning of what I am doing! ;-) (That's hard!!!!)

Sage: wait, I take that back

Oswy: I think the problem with Sartre was that he put forward a vision of the individualistic romantic hero of hedonism throwing off all constraints in a search for the authentic it attracted a lot of people in the post 1945 situation but now we have thought more carefully about it we see it is an unrealistic vision.

Shingles: so then we need a justifier to evaluate if we are being authentic or not. Why should it matter, Sage et al?

Sojourna: Steve, I think it is from the Stanford entry <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/existentialism/#2.3> - and I think it was Nehamas.

Sojourna: LOL Reflection, yes, it does!

Sage: to the extent that our actions increase our coherence, I'd say we are being authentic. Coherence is the effect, authenticity the cause imo.

Sojourna: Shingles, I don't think you need an external justifier, I think in the authenticity project you are on your own.

Oswy: Soj what do you mean on your own you are never on your own in the project of life

Sojourna: Also, consider this: Authenticity — in German, *Eigentlichkeit* — names that attitude in which I engage in my projects as my own (*eigen*)

Reflection: sage, does that mean that in our quests we do not progressively meet new conditions that create crisis and chaos which then leads to new synthetic resolutions?

Steve: the problem with this entry Sojourna; is that until we understand what we mean by "is" we do not understand what we mean by "I"

Shingles: so, one sets oneself this goal of 'authenticity' assuming that that one themselves is required to (required to by what I'm not sure) Then agonises over whether they are achieving it. I would simplify that by removing the quest for it, as I see no thing to be achieved by it externally, Sojourna et al

Reflection: so sage, cannot be authenticity, my act to embrace appropriate incoherence to the purposes of growth?

Dar: I agree shingles

Dar: I think the best response to the lack of absolute meaning is simply to accept the lack of absolute meaning and get over it.

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Sojourna: Oswy, I'm not sure it is satisfactory to depend on external bodies of meaning, culture, nation, religion, universe. Nothing comes back with anything satisfactory for you.

Sage: reflection, good question - one moment

Steve: so taking for granted that you know what you mean when you say I would be by definition according to Heidegger inauthentic and idle chatter

Sojourna: Dar - that is precisely the existentialist concern. So, how do live?

Dar: how we live

Shingles: we respond immediately to what presents itself I suggest, Soj

Sojourna: Steve - could you clarify that?

Steve: yes, Heidegger never uses the term I

Sojourna: Dar - I mean how do go on if there is no meaning? Don't you have to respond to the fact that there is no meaning?

Steve: Descartes said I am

Sojourna: OK, Shingles, so if you are responding in that way, are you living authentically?

Steve: Heidegger asks, what do you mean

Reflection: Soj, the meaning/purpose may be simply to live life with the most awareness and accuracy as one can

Dar: well, we can cling to meaning and make new meanings

Steve: if you don't know what 'am' means how do you know what 'I' means

Shingles: ok, before that question you asked Dar is answered, one should answer why meaning is so desirable, Soj

Sojourna: Reflection, ok, then that requires some reflection on living authentically.

Dar: or, we can get past this vacuous search for meaning and live

Sojourna: Yes, Steve...

Steve: yes?

Sojourna: OK - Shingles, you've moved us onto question 3!

Simulat: I'd like to know how 'meaning' can possibly be an appropriate word in this context

Sojourna: Why do we value being authentic, anyway? We do we desire to live authentic lives? What is wrong with being in-authentic, un-real and fake? What is wrong with being dishonest with or to ourselves?

Shingles: I might be, I might not be, but then, I don't concern myself with a quest for authenticity, so if it's not external I'm probably not. Then again neither am I in 'bad faith', Soj

Reflection: Soj, I might prefer terms like awareness and accuracy and suggest that responses that are both aware and accurate are also, always authentic

Sage: Reflect, The short answer, I think, is that in the process of making sense of any chaos we externalize the parts we don't understand, by finding some way to differentiate them from our identity in order to regain our sense of self. So viewed retroactively (which i think is the only meaningful way to view authenticity), the chaos that was in the self has been separated from it, increasing our coherence. No?

Dar: like authenticity has any meaning; the entire premise of seeking authenticity is in a response to the lack of meaning

Simulat: attaching meaning to a concept like "my life" is just plain a misuse of the word and so no wonder the discussion gets really convoluted and confusing

Sojourna: OK, Simulat, not sure why it doesn't...tell me...

Dar: so, creating this new search for meaning is farcical at best

Steve: the use of "I" is not existential; it is psychologistic

Sojourna: OK, Reflection....

Oswy: Soj Shingles and others. My description of what our concern should be is; Just get on With it. If you do then you are being as authentic as you could possibly hope to be there is no blueprint for authenticity.

Steve: our being hereness

Sojourna: Dar - isn't the authenticity response a response for individual meaning in the absence of universal meaning?

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Steve: or being here in the world of SL

Reflection: so if I understand you sage, you are saying that we work through the incoherence to recreate coherence at a higher level of awareness and accuracy?

Simulat: meaning is a concept that is relevant to communication Sojourna - ie - what is the meaning of a statement. But my life is not a communication

Sojourna: Is that groovy with everyone then? Just get on with it? You mean, like just live instinctually?

Dar: yes, it's a crutch for not getting over the confusion that life should have meaning

Steve: Heidegger would say that meaning has us; we do not have meaning

Sojourna: Simulat, ok, I see what you mean, but still, haven't we been brought up with this meaning thing? What the point of this? The point of that? Why get married? Why have kids? Etc

Sojourna: Simulat do you agree with Steve/Heidegger?

Shingles: no, just don't recreate your own enculturation, having rejected one's culture's enculturation. What that would be is recreating a problem ones already solved, Soj

Sage: reflection, well it's a higher level of coherence imo, because it accommodates more of existence. I don't know you mean by 'accuracy' (accurate with respect to what?)

Oswy: Soj I don't think it is an instinctual response to your situation. It could be a reasoned response depending on where you are at.

Sojourna: And hey, we all forgot Socrates - the unexamined life is not worth living - is an examined life the same as an authentic life?

Reflection: Sage, accuracy to reality

Sojourna: OK, Oswy, will the reasoned response be based on some sort of value judgement? Etc?

Dar: well, as Hitler is probably the most examined life of the past millennia, certainly he would then be the blueprint for authenticity, don't you think?

Simulat: There seems to be no purpose to existence - I make up my own projects but that's just because I'm alive and that's what living things do - I've never understood the despair that so many feel at the prospect of no purpose - and I consider that despair to be a good reason to not teach people that there is a purpose - it leads to terrible disappointment when the truth is discovered

Sojourna: If so, Oswy, isn't this reasoned response then in line with the existentialist response of seeking meaning via living authentically

Steve: not examined by others

Reflection: sage, another way of saying this, is that I'm sure you are not suggesting that I should seek to avoid dissonance with my personal beliefs and ideologies for example?

Shingles: ouch, Dar

Oswy: Soj, first I don't think all the existentialists are singing from the same hymn sheet. Sartre and Heidegger are not.

Steve: Socrates meant a conscious life in the sense that Jesus and Buddha were conscious

Dar: singing from the same hymn sheet would be unauthentic

Teleo: My interpretation of authenticity is being the author or your own entity.. Human being for Heidegger was based on what we do and how we do it. e.g. without having first a good description of the Human Being one could not know how to obtain authenticity because, one would not have a framework on which to know either way. One facet of Heidegger's work was showing how we can not even *Be* without in some way -consciously or otherwise- first being part of a real normative background. He called this background *The One*. If we do not even perceive that the background is real and in what ways it defines us then, our own entity is led and we are not leading our own entity - thus we are not then, the author or our own entity.

Dar: don't the existentialists rail against Jesus and Buddha as sacrificing life instead of embracing it?

Oswy: Second the values you may seek are to be found in the fact that you are a human and living in a culture. You may accept them you may challenge them. its up to you to examine your motives and position and like Socrates to examine your project form time to time.

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Marya: Authenticity can 'mean' something to someone in the right context - but we cannot presume that there is some overall, objective thing called meaning out there somewhere that we must adhere to nor that there is an objective authenticity along the same lines - so, as for why we are inclined towards wanting to be authentic, well, perhaps that is relative to the way that we deal with other people and/or how we relate to other people and how they perceive us. So in this sense, what is wrong with being fake? Well, moral questions aside, what's wrong with it is relative to whether it affects us or others positively or negatively. Could be as simple as that.

Reflection: agreed Sim, about people being conditioned to believe that they must have a cosmologically anchored meaning/purpose, although I would imagine that cultures do this because people as a group need it, rather than as an invention of cultures across the globe over time

Shingles: If one will pose any principle as a universal (authenticity being one) I don't see how it would fail to be anything other than 'bad faith' as the term has been used. Plus I find it rather ridiculous one would seek universals

Sojourna: Teleo, that's well said.

Steve: Nietzsche was in competition with Socrates, Jesus and Buddha

Sage: reflection, not entirely. Coherence in my sense always refers to a coherence between experiences, beliefs and dispositions. It doesn't make sense to talk about coherence of beliefs in the absence of experience imo, which I think is what you were suggesting

Steve: in a contest of who was the most conscious

Sojourna: Marya, nice point.

Steve: this contest is not always kept in mind when he talks against them; they were his worthy opponents

Sage: Marya, I think authenticity is a real and important attribute, i don't know what you mean by objective, as usual, though :)

Reflection: Sage, no I wouldn't suggest that. Perhaps we are talking about words here

Marya: lol yes, Sage - an argument for another time perhaps

Oswy: Marya I think you are right. I think there is a duty upon us to give an account to others say friends of what we are why we behave in certain way that seems true to us.

Shingles: this word 'truth' is bandied around in psychological fields; I don't see that as appropriate

Sage: But I think I agree, Marya, that authenticity is essentially just an equivalent name for things that affect us positively - but in the long-run, viewed in hindsight.

Sojourna: We have been chatting for an hour and I think we could probably continue for another, or more. Could we just collect our thoughts a little? Have we reached any conclusions? Gained any insight? Do you believe the human condition is absurd? Have you experienced existential angst? What is your response? Is authenticity incoherent?

Shingles: It's absurd but that's not a problem, I think we're all agreeing on that, perhaps

Dar: I don't think authenticity itself is incoherent; I just think seeking it is

Oswy: Our condition is only absurd from a God perspective since I don't believe in Gods I am happy with it.

Reflection: yes

Shingles: well, perspectivism is about the most ridiculous thing I can imagine, Oswy

Steve: well depends on using it in everyday sense as here for the most part or understanding it as a philosophic term in the context of an exposition

Sojourna: Well, I'm interested in both Steve and I think the everyday and the philosophical are one and the same...?

Steve: nope; can't be

Sojourna: hmm

Autumn: In my opinion achieving authenticity is more of a journey than a goal. I may never be truly authentic but I'm trying to work toward it

Steve: as we see with this word

Sojourna: Yes, I'm getting the idea (from the little reading I've done) that it is a process, Autumn.

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Reflection: in the final analysis philosophy should (like other forms of seeking knowledge) clarify the everyday, sometimes it does, and sometimes it doesn't

Steve: means something different in the context of Heidegger's text Being and Time and short of looking at the text we can not appreciate it's meaning there

Oswy: Autumn I would go along with what you say.

Sage: Dar, I think it's coherent in the sense that the word conjures up specific notions of aligning oneself to avoid internal conflict, which is a useful way of orienting one's goals imo

Shingles: one is, the quest for authenticity (if itself or the quest for it is credible) would only seem to make sense if it meant having enormous curiosity about oneself's nature and actively experimenting with ones own behaviour you trial ones observations

Steve: here we can say whatever any one wants about the term

Sojourna: I think you are right about avoiding internal conflict, Sage.

Sojourna: I don't think we've strayed too much from how the term is used by the philosophers, though Kierkegaard's use might well differ from Heidegger's. Or from Camus', which is probably the most popular use.

Steve: not sure where he uses the term (Kierkegaard) Sojourna? Or Camus? Popular is different

Oswy: Soj I agree there is a an accepted sense of how the term authentic is used by the Existentialist group as a whole ie how the term has come to be understood and that is what we have debated tonight.

Steve: it may be a term used to speak about them or their thought, based on a misinterpretation of Heidegger

Sojourna: Just checking my notes

Steve: yes Oswy

Sojourna: I'm trying to locate who first used the term. Might be something to discuss on the Facebook group discussion board

Dar: in the existential sense, seems to me that it would be Heidegger, just considering the timeline

Sojourna: Yes, I think it would be good to clarify some of these points

Oswy: The issue of the Existential dilemma is more than just a study of Heidegger. It did capture the public imagination in many areas and still does to a certain extent. So I think we can say we can debate it in a philosophical fashion even if we deeply disagree with it as I do.

Sojourna: Yes, Oswy, true.

Steve: eigentlich -authentic is Heidegger

Shingles: the only issue I take with it is this profound use of 'anxiety' at the meaninglessness. Why do we need the comfort of truths and meaning to happily exist and thrive?

Dar: I think the anxiety comes from the expectation of some sort of meaning or stable state of accomplishment that prevails in a lot of cultures

Shingles: yes, a human inspired concept, I'm just questioning how valid it is to expect that, Dar

Dar: the purpose of life is X, so upon obtaining X, you win

Dar: oh, I agree that it's a false expectation

Shingles: I suspected u did

Dar: i think the root of that dissonance is the discord between expectation and reality

Shingles: the Buddhists put it as 'Existence is suffering; the cause of that suffering is desire' - which is their noble truth

Dar: that's their first and second noble truth,

Shingles: but personally, I embrace that suffering to better myself in this incarnation

Marya: a tad over dramatic Shing. Don't you think? :p

Shingles: me or the Buddhists?

Marya: lol the Buddhists

Dar: well, existence is suffering is perhaps an overly blunt way of putting it

Shingles: they spotted something with those two noble truths I think tho Marya

Sage: I think there's some truth in that. As long as you don't consider suffering or desire bad things that should be eliminated =)

Shingles: Most western philosophy plays down the role desire plays (except our old buddy Nietzsche of course)

Second Philosophy

Dar: I think it would be more accurate to say that occurrence is constantly changing, and that our desire to avoid painful occurrences and to keep pleasant occurrences produces suffering

Sage: hmm good point Marya, I don't feel like I suffer very much lol... but I certainly think I exist... =D

Marya: I don't know Shing - I just find it to be one of those statements that is a little out of context - over dramatic for effect perhaps but most definitely not entirely, accurate in my opinion

Teleo: Sartre's view on existential angst was a subjectivist reading of Heidegger, I am not sure about Camus but I know that he and Sartre are usually taken together. Heidegger interpreted from a subjective position leaves no way out for the individual except via the self. So, Camus view would square with this because, absurdity in his view was inescapable and paradoxical at core. Heidegger's view is much more group Human centred and I tend to agree with him on this. So in his terms authenticity are obtainable. Being inauthentic was an effect of not having an understanding of how *being* is and how it operates. One becomes then, lost in what He called the *they*. I suppose this is what he interpreted Nietzsche's notion of slave mentality to be.. But of course, Heidegger had a full structural understanding of Being. No philosopher had even engaged with *Being* until Heidegger did.

Dar: all is dhukkha can be interpreted in ways quite different than all is suffering

Sojourna: Teleo, seems you and Steve know Heidegger quite well, hope you can join the discussion on the Facebook group discussion board and enlighten the rest of us.

Shingles: one could phrase it as every sensory stimulus is a stressor to solve that existence = suffering formula, but it have to be would very complex to work, Marya

Teleo: well Sage does too... though we haven't gone at it for a few weeks..

Dar: I don't even know what Heidegger's being is - certainly not the same as i consider being

Shingles: what is Dar's phrasing of 'being'?

Dar: I don't think I've found a way that works - to me being is simply the case itself, 'what is', truth.

Shingles: my suggestion is through definition. Example: a 'road' is a road because it is used as one, no account of its atomic make up constitutes its roadness. So on one level we have atoms and forces complying with the 'laws of physics', but on a more human level we have humans ascribing objects with their being natures, Dar et al

Sage: Shingles, nicely put. Very Heideggerian =)

Shingles: yes, "Egghider" was very astute - I know, I'm losing an e somewhere

Sage: lol

Sojourna: hahaha

Teleo: Dar, Dreyfus made this point on Being , which I think reveals something interesting... It possibly denotes the difference between Subjectives rationals and none-subjective ones too.

Teleo: everything outside our *own being* does not *depend* on *us* or our being* to be intelligible or to put it another way, being, depends on us but *beings* don't.

Sage: right Teleo

Dar: I don't see being as a predicate

Sage: Dreyfus interpreted that beautifully imo

Dar: show me one thing without being so that I might draw a contrast and distinguish it

Teleo: nods Sage

Shingles: doesn't that statement argue being as a predicate, Dar?

Dar: sort of the point shingles

Teleo: a cat

Dar: a cat is a representation of a set of things

Teleo: if a cat yawns why do we yawn too Dar?

Shingles: ah, it IS a predicate, but it isn't for a thing would never be without its being. Concise if not cryptically put

Dar: I've never experienced that

Teleo: well if a human does then we have been shown to do so also - similar idea

Shingles: because it's instinctual, Teleo

Second Philosophy

Dar: seems to be an aspect of pack dynamics last I watched anything on it ... signalling it's almost bedtime

Sojourna: haha

Teleo: heh

Dar: think my main beef with Heidegger is that he says he's going on about being, which makes it seem metaphysical, but he's really going on about occurrence, specifically psychological occurrence, and never gets to anything about metaphysical being, and that's great if its your bag, but its not mine

Shingles: well, Egghider sort of begs that perspectivism is unavoidable, which misses something

Teleo: understanding reality is the bag of philosophy imo... Metaphysics are a way of doing that also but they can go far out. I tend to think a solid foundation on how we work is needed to keep everything in good perspective

Dar: I like simple foundations and logic, that works for me

Shingles: why do we need a foundation, again, Teleo? Just remind me

Teleo: it's all pretty interesting from my perspective Dar..

Dar: Teleo's bag is the way the human mind works

Teleo: not Minds.. just us really..

Dar: ok then

Sojourna: Yeah, that would be cool and also time etc.

Dar: I don't really get his bag, but I think its kewl

Shingles: I'm really curious about this, myself, so why would you say we need a foundation, Teleo?

Dar: I could try answering that shingles, then Teleo could correct me, lol

Shingles: it just seems like a given, that we'd need one. I want to know why

Teleo: I didn't really even want to like Heidegger, I was just sick of hearing all that ready at hand gobbledygook and having no clue as to what was being said, so I checked him out.. I was actually quite shocked at what a remarkable piece of work he did...what I mean is, you would not expect to fix a car without a manual and apart from His massive philosophical knowledge...a manual is in fact what he produced - that sort of thing - that's what I mean by foundation

Shingles: like an approach (manual, procedure, I guess)?

Dar: well, method is very important in philosophy

Teleo: kind of Shing. You have to go through it really.. My words won't do it justice

Shingles: of course, Dar

Dar: I subscribe to the standard Cartesian method of finding subjective certainty then applying solid logic to see where it goes

Dar: I really don't understand Heidegger's method, but as his interest seems to be something different than mine, I think its appropriate he has a different method

Teleo: He was only certain of one thing regarding Being though Dar.. that was *thinking8 itself... you can't really build much out from that it seems to me, because everything apart from *thinking* was as he noted, uncertain..

Shingles: well my approach breaks down to: step 1; what is one trying to achieve? Step 2; what is one's method to attempt to achieve this? Step 3; is it going to work?

Shingles: step 3 takes ages - comparatively

Teleo: I think btw.. You can do what you want... you can use any old dovetailed logic, as long as you can get something working that is useful... the point is, none of us would be able to do that without each other, so philosophically we need a good solid story and a strong background reality to hang all this on.

Patrick: I read over the transcript while I was waiting for the internet to come up. Did the group reach a consensus on authenticity?

Dar: I don't think there was a general consensus - still an interesting discussion. Some thought authenticity or the search for authenticity pretty much inauthentic; while others saw authenticity as a process of making a life of coherence or something like that

Patrick: Can I offer an analogy and see if I am following your meaning of authenticity? In education, a test is said to have validity if it measures the correct information accurately. it is said to have reliability if it does that

Second Philosophy

consistently. It seems you are saying that ones espousing a philosophy is like validity, consistency in following it is authenticity?

Teleo: I would say the validity depends if you are accurately describing reality Pat, even more so in a philosophy, so I would say *yes* to most of that Pat but *no* to *consistency in following*

Patrick: In that case I am really struggling to get a handle on authenticity as used in a philosophical vernacular?

Dar: in the context of this discussion, i think authenticity was spoken of in the contest of existential angst, in finding that there is no absolute meaning of life, authenticity or living one's life for one's own reasons, is a solution they offer

Teleo: imho.. Philosophy seeks to interpret the world. you can of course invent any framework for the interpretation *but* if there is no foundation in reality then you won't be able to grasp the full impact of looser interpretive tools..

Teleo: so authenticity could *in those terms* only be intelligible against a background investigation into reality

Patrick: Another words the metaphor you use to interpret your existence is only as good as that metaphor can be extrapolated

Teleo: not sure what you mean Pat. I think in many ways, how we function in the world is not metaphorical.. e.g. if you put your tongue out at a 5 hour old newborn, they will also put out theirs, so that would seem to me to indicate no metaphor for intelligibility at that primary level..

Shingles: isn't that stimulus-response with v minimal conscious interference in that example, Teleo?

Teleo: I guess interference in the way you mean it, would not be a working world pattern at that level Shing..

Patrick: but the metaphor comes in explaining why he/she sticks it out

Teleo: it comes later - around 2 years

Shingles: okay, I just mean to restate that its different levels, you and Patrick are looking at it from

Teleo: yes - that is what I was trying to emphasize too, Shing

Shingles: oh good

Teleo: you would need a plausible example of none metaphor to do that.. so the baby is a good one

Teleo: of course we do use metaphor - I am not denying that

Shingles: well, if one admitted the statement 'non-mature humans are not humans' then Patricks point becomes unaffected

Teleo: and what does that tell us, Shing? Would you say?

Patrick: it seems to me that science and philosophy both build models to explain and models begin with metaphors

Shingles: that grander questions only descend upon humans in a state of maturing or maturity, I would say, Teleo

Teleo: sure.. I would agree with that, Shing

Shingles: do they Patrick?

Teleo: and also science does use metaphor yes, that is stated

Patrick: It then seems to follow that both refine viable metaphors and discard ones that fail to explain what they are suppose to

Patrick: science and philosophy that is

Vajra: What's the answer? To the question about authenticity? : -)

Dar: imo: if you're seeking authenticity you've conceded your inauthentic and cant reclaim it until you stop seeking it.

Sage: Vajra, my claim was that authentic acts were the ones that (over time) increased the coherence of the self, both internally and in relation to the environment.

Vajra: ah... coherence = consistency, plus...?

Sage: coherence imo is between beliefs, dispositions and experiences.

Templeton: My definition of authenticity goes along Reich's lines. Emotional self sufficiency and identification and approval of your unbroken self - I think authenticity is a full self-identification with your feelings/emotions. When there are no aspects of your self you hate/dislike. I don't think authentic people need necessarily be unusual or trailblazers, or eccentric, or rebels.

Second Philosophy

Sage: Templeton, I don't think we ever get to quite that state, but i think that's consistent with the general direction i see =)

Vajra: interesting one, too Temp. Probably a common conception that authenticity means eccentricity

Templeton: I think you can get to that state, Sage. Well, very close

Templeton: I think authentic people can be quite ordinary

Sage: Templeton, I think we can get to that state in a specific context, but then we stumble on some unexpected broader context and everything goes in disarray and we need to figure things out again. That's how growth should happen imo.

Teleo: I would only add though Sage that – reality - is what should be cohered to. if for instance, Being makes itself intelligible or is intelligible to us then, that is what would be real. Authenticity could only gain coherence/intelligibility on the basis of reality. Authentically.

Vajra: Is there a feeling associated with e.g. performing an authentic action?

Templeton: Okay, Sage, that may be right. I was just stressing the aspect of the unbroken self - the identification with your emotional "equipment." That is large independent of outside changes

Templeton: Yes, Vajra, that feeling is called "satisfaction."

Sage: I partly agree Templeton :) I think that when we're in disarray it feels somewhat broken, but that if we are acting authentically we then build up a new way of looking at it that makes sense of the disarray and re-interprets it into a larger self that includes the former self. And so we create a new interpretation in which it's unbroken, because being broken is a process of interpretation imo

Sage: but there's a sense in which it was broken due to our lack of that interpretation earlier

Templeton: Well, I see brokenness/inauthenticity as basically leading two contradictory interior lives. (Or maybe more). The typical example would be the person who leads the "life of Christ" or the life a "role model" makes him lead.

Templeton: It breaks your self into a part which does the ruling and a part which needs to be ruled and governed

Vajra: yes, Temp

Templeton: Basically, you then come to my understanding of ethics. I think ethics is ALWAYS a way of being inauthentic

Templeton: Well, my view of the world interlocks on all levels . . .

Marya: that's awesome Temp - that sounds right to me but I have a question - what happens in a situation where there are conflicting emotions?

Teleo: I am as dubious as hell about ethics but, it does include others, and some understanding of human Being as a single entity as well as an individual entity always seems, nowhere to be seen

Templeton: Without wanting to be glib, Marya, that would be covered by my understanding of how pleasure works. If you identify yourself with the pleasure principle, then the more pleasurable of the emotions should win out and you can identify with it. That does not mean that you might not feel sorry about what you lose in cases where you have to make hard choices - but you can identify yourself with the choice you make.

Vajra: ... seems like an authentic self could have conflicting emotions, and that it would be authentic to acknowledge the conflict

Templeton: Right, exactly, Vajra

Marya: aye, I see what you're saying

Templeton: In fact, a fully feeling individual MUST feel many conflicting emotions - especially in this world

Teleo: Amen to that

Marya: yes, that does make sense

Templeton: But the hallmark of authenticity is that you still can identify with your choices. And as I said, that does not mean you have to be an extraordinary person

Vajra: okay... I would say it was the hallmark of personhood - identifying with choices

Marya: yes, in that whatever that choice is, it is still yours and not based on an outside influence

Vajra: but I guess just different language for same thing

Can't a choice be free or authentic even if it is influenced by the outside? What if I need information from others?

Second Philosophy

Teleo: mmm except that does not explain the outside influences and the fact that we are all beings that identify with each others being.

Templeton: I think healthy personhood is very close to authenticity

Marya: No that's not what I mean Vaj - I mean not based on an objective opinion on what you 'should' feel or do is

Vajra: okay, Mar

Marya: maybe objective is the wrong word - but something that does not come from you - not being very clear I know

Vajra: yes, well "coming from you" is the very concept that is being examined I suppose : -)

Marya: yep :)

Vajra: or "coming from oneself" I mean

Teleo: if you get happy and excited then I may well get happy and excited too.. there is surely a larger story than the self, is what I mean

Templeton: That's exactly the point. If the self is broken then "coming from oneself" comes from more than one source . . .

Vajra: Yes, Teleo, nothing inauthentic about that it seems, at least not necessarily

Marya: wouldn't that be more a matter of being able to influence others? It doesn't have to mean that what you are being influenced by is necessarily a bond with another person, but rather a similarity - seeing that we are the same species

Teleo: right Vajra, that is well put, there is nothing that can be said to be inauthentic about those phenomena..

Vajra: It seems like there might be several kinds of bonds we may feel; the responding to which needn't be inauthentic

Teleo: nods

Vajra: no more than your half of a dance

Marya: if they're based on emotion then it is difficult to call them inauthentic yes

Teleo: yes, and that is really my starting position.. I don't start from a subjective self..

Vajra: A dance can be expressive and artistic and so in that way seems possibly an expression of authenticity, self or whatever, yet we do dances with other

Teleo: and that is possibly why Art is taken as the highest endeavour

Vajra: Is authenticity of any value? Or are we assuming that it is of value?

Marya: mmm, I would agree that a dance can be expressive, just as art is but when you say 'and yet we do dances with one another' do you mean inauthentic behaviour?

Vajra: I meant authentic, Mar....

Marya: in the sense that we respond to each other

Vajra: yes, Mar

Templeton: I think authenticity is superbly pleasurable. That's enough to justify it. Unfortunately, you won't know that until you are half way authentic. And you can't explain to people how they would feel if they would feel different. So you can't make people be authentic.

Vajra: that's a good one to remember "you can't make people be authentic" (Vajra admonishes herself)

Teleo: my point is that, when any philosophy does not include these realities -such as dance etc- then you have a philosophy that is none inclusive in its configuration, so it would not be a Human philosophy in that sense - though it may have some great uses.

Templeton: Let's not forget opera . . .

Marya: sure, I can see what you mean

Teleo: heh

Marya: lol, and opera

Vajra: So the value of authenticity is that it is supremely pleasurable, Temp? Okay, I can go with that. The key to happiness is being you, is that what we are saying?

Teleo: I think it needs qualifying with that fact that it must also accord to reality, even if the reality experienced is good or bad, or pleasurable or unpleasurable etc.

Second Philosophy

Vajra: On the Temp/Sage view: do both of you say that authenticity involves the construction of a self. Or do you say the self is already there and authenticity involves a matching of the self? Matching actions to the self that is

Templeton: Yes, Vaj, that is what I was saying - being an unbroken you. The self grows out of your emotional equipment and its being "in contact" with reality. Without a well working reality principle, you can't have pleasure anyway

Marya: I'm not sure I can answer that one Vajra, mainly because I'm not sure there is a whole self as such - I think the self is made of various parts influenced by both nature & nature - and I think in many ways it is possible to change that self and so take pleasure in different things

Templeton: People always think I stand for immediate gratification of all urges. Nothing could be farther from that

Templeton: Who changes your self, Marya?

Marya: you do

Teleo: If a child grows into an authentic environment the, the child would emerge with authentic re-enforcements as opposed to in-authentic re-enforcements., so actually, I have just clicked as to why authenticity is a major social and political football..

Vajra: yes, Mar, good thought... I think that's what was behind my question.

Templeton: But who does the changing? Are you assuming there is some "Captain" of your self?

Marya: Oh heck no, Temp

Vajra: are you assuming that Temp?

Templeton: No

Templeton: I assume the exact opposite, but Marya's comment led me to that question

Vajra: why, Tel, the football?

Marya: I think as I said, that the 'self' is made up of many parts and those parts can change and it is up to the individual to change that - I think thinking about things for long enough can make that happen

Templeton: Okay, it's tricky

Marya: but no, I don't think there's any controller :D

Templeton: Thanks

Teleo: because the game of capitalism requires certain behaviours to persist...for its survival... authentic behaviours would lead to its central value system to be jettisoned.

Vajra: wow yes - for sure, at least the "capitalism" we know, with all the attendant social structures current (may not be necessary to capitalism as such) but perhaps would... I heard a great talk by Pinker last night

Teleo: yeah?

Vajra: partly about how embedded in bits of language are perhaps outdated preconceptions of how people are expected to interact with each other, just as there is a folk physics that is mostly erroneous that is embedded in language. Parallel situation.

Teleo: mmm interesting, folk physics, heh

Vajra: So much inauthenticity - just think of shopping malls

Teleo: I will have to have a listen to that Vajra, or read

Vajra: a read, I suppose Teleo. Probably The Stuff of Thought, (think that's the title)

Marya: I was just thinking, if people really are stupid, shallow etc and they take great satisfaction in doing stupid, shallow things, then they are perhaps being authentic after all

Teleo: lol

Marya: just the words capitalism and shopping mall set that one off

Teleo: nods heh

Vajra: oh yes, Mar... I should hope for an account of authenticity that explained why such acts could NOT be authentic... but it would be difficult no doubt

Vajra: I'm not sure that what you guys have told me so far excludes those cases... but maybe it does... but I will have to study... maybe Teleo's emphasis on reality helps here?

Teleo: I can repost my first post that was to speak to that Vajra

Second Philosophy

Teleo: My interpretation of authenticity is being the author or your own entity.. Human being for Heidegger was based on what we do and how we do it e.g. without having first a good description of the Human Being one could not know how to obtain authenticity because, one would not have a framework on which to know either way one facet of Heidegger's work was showing how we can not even *Be* without in some way -consciously or otherwise- first being part of a real normative background. He called this background *The One*, if we do not even perceive that the background is real and in what ways it defines us then, our own entity is lead and we are not leading our own entity, thus we are not then, the author or our own entity.

Vajra: I suppose that a key issue is as you imply, whether we must learn to be full persons, or whether it would develop correctly in a social vacuum or in any social context whatsoever. You seem to be saying that it would not

Teleo: right - It is the subjectivist starting point that I have a problem with - I don't think that is real

Sojourna: Teleo, what do you mean by the subjectivist starting point?

Vajra: yes, thank you. That seems very important to be clear about.

Templeton: I don't think it is as subjectivist as we thing. I will go out on a real limb, here, but I think the subjectivism is dragged in by the inauthentic

Teleo: rationalising from the inside out as opposed to all at the same time, including outside in, Soj

Teleo: yes I agree Temp - that would square

Sojourna: ok thanks Teleo, not sure what I think

Templeton: Has it ever occurred to you, if you read philosophers, novelists, poets, starting with Plato, or so - how over all times they seem to be easily accessible, just like they were thinking with your own brain? Especially the higher their level. While low level writers seem to "belong to their time"

Marya: so basically Heidegger is saying 'context of what it is to be human = The One' - so you start from humanity and not from the individual's perception of their own self?

Teleo: right Mar

Templeton: I mean, it seems to me that I could just go down to the corner and talk to Plato as if he was one of you . . .

Teleo: we take the whole of existence.. from birth initially as a single entity, none differentiated

Marya: It may sound odd coming from me seeing how little I know - but yes Templeton, I do know what you mean

Sojourna: I think Heidegger is saying that you have an idea of yourself within a historical context

Vajra: I think that is a function of extent of self knowledge, Templeton - it is an interesting phenomenon

Templeton: Basically I think the core of people is the same over all times and places

Teleo: well I know that Heidegger spoke about historicity Soj, I think it was little like Hegel's view but with His own understanding of Being at its base

