

# Heidegger, Education and the ‘Cult of the Authentic’

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*Within educational philosophies that utilise the Heideggerian idea of ‘authenticity’ there can be distinguished at least two readings that correspond with the categories of ‘weak’ and ‘strong’ utopianism. ‘Strong-utopianism’ is the nostalgia for some lost Edenic paradise to be restored at some future time. Here it is the ‘world’ that needs to be transcended for it is the source of our inauthenticity, where we are the puppets of modernist-capitalist ideologies. ‘Authenticity’ here is a value-judgment, understood as something that makes you a better person. The ‘inauthentic’ person is simply deceived. ‘Weak-utopianism’ is recognising the forces for change in the ‘everyday-immanent’ where we do not look to overcome the world but own it as ‘heritage’. ‘Authenticity’ here is an ontological choice, a modification of inauthenticity, not its opposite. The ‘cult of the authentic’ relates to the ‘strong utopianism’ where ‘authenticity’ has become fetishized, harking back to a purer, pre-modern state, untainted by the ideals of the Enlightenment and ethos of capitalism. ‘Authentic education’ is the overcoming of our environments and socio-historical contexts, opening up new horizons of meaning. The radical notion of freedom that this implies, where one is free from rather than free in the realisation of constraint, may also be another dividing line between the ‘strong’ and ‘weak’ readings, which lend themselves to a Messianic narrative. It will be argued that if ‘authentic education’ is understood through a ‘strong utopianism’ it actually re-enforces those very same dystopian ideals they look to overcome as characterised by ‘enframing’.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

It is only recently the philosophy of Martin Heidegger has started to receive some attention in the area of education studies (Huebner, 1963, 1967, 1974, 1999a–d; Pinar, 1975; Dwyer *et al.*, 1988; Peters, 2002; Pike, 2003; Tubbs, 2004; Magrini, 2010, 2011, 2012). Some have put this scarcity down to the complexity of his thought, whilst others due to the correlation between his

philosophy and Nazism (Peters, 2002). Heidegger, however, seems to polarise thinking in more than one sense. From where he places in the philosopher's pantheon, as either one of the 'greatest philosophers of our times' (Guignon, 1993a, p. 1), or just a 'muddle-headed obscurantist' (Searle, 2000, p. 71), to the antagonisms within his thought where:

... he blends together points of view generally regarded as irreconcilably opposed. Thus, we find Kierkegaardian passion combined with a commitment to systematic rigor, a Romantic concern with individual fulfillment together with a Hegelian communitarianism, a deep respect for German Idealism along with a hardheaded realism, and an awareness of the historicity and finitude of life (Guignon, 1993a, p. 2).

One of the antagonisms this article would like to bring out is the duality that can be read into education as Heideggerian 'authenticity' and 'inauthenticity'. It will be argued that if certain features of Heidegger's philosophy are exaggerated we get a 'strong utopianism', where 'authenticity' is the fulfilment of personal goals, a transcending of how the world would like us to be making ourselves *better*. Guignon calls this the 'existentialized Heidegger' (1993b, p. 215). If, however, we pull back and see those internal forces (e.g. everyday/ immanent; utopian/ transcendental) not as 'irreconcilably opposed', but as necessitating one another we can deliver something closer to an 'everyday utopianism' (Gardiner, 2006, p. 1). What is meant by 'everyday utopianism' is not:

... an ideal society located in some romanticized past 'Golden Age', or in some distant imagined and perfected future understood in a 'blueprint' or 'social engineering' sense, but as a series of forces, tendencies and possibilities that are immanent in the here and now, in the pragmatic activities of daily existence (Gardiner, 2006, p. 2).

'Everyday' or 'weak utopianism' fits with 'authenticity' not as 'value-judgement' but as an *ontological* choice. Here we do not become 'authentic' by rejecting the world and embracing some other system of values and traditions, but by taking the old ones on as 'heritage'. What I have termed the 'cult of the authentic' relates to the 'strong utopianism' where 'authenticity' has become fetishized and cult-like, harking back to a purer pre-modern state, untainted by the ideals of the Enlightenment and ethos of capitalism. Here 'authentic education' is the overcoming of our environments and socio-historical contexts, opening-up new horizons of meaning to potentially infinite possibilities for being. This movement from an initial state of potential being, to the limitations capitalist-modernist forces place on us, to re-discovering 'authentic' being via education, fits a kind of messianic narrative, or at least can descend into pseudo-religious aphorism (Löwy 1980; Sayre and Löwy 1984; Wolin 1993, 2001). 'Authenticity' as an ontological choice cannot be taught, assessed, or instructed, as what it means to be 'authentic' differs for each of us. Even if it were the same it is

an internal ontological choice we make in either owning or disowning our being; it is not something that may be discerned from questioning, observation or assessment. Ultimately, it will be argued that ‘authentic education’ as understood through a ‘strong utopianism’ (i.e. transcendence of our own possibilities by emphasising the temporality of the individual at the expense of the social-historical relation) is to in fact re-enforce those very same dystopian ideals it looks to overcome (i.e. modernist/ capitalist-consumer/ instrumentalist conceptions of education).

## HEIDEGGER, MODERNISM AND EDUCATION

The everyday use of the term ‘authenticity’ tends to mean ‘real’, ‘genuine’ or ‘true’, and ‘inauthentic’ as ‘fake’, ‘fraud’ or ‘impostor’ (Heidegger, 1962, pp. 211–220). We understand these terms as being more value-judgements than neutral descriptions, where there is something inherently better about ‘authenticity’ than ‘inauthenticity’. These words ringing in post-capitalist, secularised ears fit the discourses offered by self-improvement and educational philosophies that wish to liberate the individual from the constraints of their own socio-historical limitations; to establish a utopia of being as limitless potential, where we are free to be whatever we want, unconstrained by the values of instrumental or calculative thought prized by modernist ideologies. This type of ‘strong-utopianism’ is for Tubbs (2004) education ‘transduced into a fetishism of authenticity as all possibility’ (2004, p. 70). What is being opposed in ‘strong utopianism’ are what Heidegger calls the affects of ‘enframing’ (Heidegger, 1978a). ‘Enframing’ is an attitude towards ontological difference (the difference between being and beings), where we can only understand being in terms of beings (Pattison, 2000). This allows us to quantify being in use-value, performativity, or functionality. This in turn leads to ‘inauthentic’ modes of existence as we learn to view everything in terms of those ideals of the Enlightenment, ‘objectivism’, ‘positivism’, ‘naturalism’ and ‘rationalism’. For many of the early critics of modernism these ideals had led to a cultural and spiritual crisis in Europe (Gardiner, 2006, p. 14). It is these same ‘crises’ that appear to be the target of ‘authentic’ education, to stop people becoming ‘passive recipients of trivia’ (Bonnett, 2002, p. 231), or just ‘flexible raw materials in the service of the world’s technological system’ (Peters, 2002, p. 16), and to defend an education that ‘runs the ever present risk of degenerating into a form of curriculum-making where technicalization and hyperrationalization dominate’ (Magrini, 2011, p. 133). The suggestion is that ‘authentic education . . . is a more primordial form of knowledge, or *better* understanding’ (Magrini, 2012, p. 4), some long lost realm of connectedness with the Earth or fundamental being which allows us to transcend those affects of ‘enframing’. ‘Authenticity’ as an opposition to modernist ‘enframing’, then, is not only ethico-politically desirable, but in stating its desirability we have a method of assessment, subordinating one system of education over another. ‘Authenticity’ here is the emergent creation of one’s life as a

work of art (Lukács, 1971) that is not only knowable, but also teachable as a kind of 'counter-education' as seen in Huebner (1999b) or Smeyers (2002).

However appealing the 'authentic/ good' 'inauthentic/ bad' dichotomy is to us, this is not necessarily how Heidegger meant it. Moreover, his concerns with 'enframing' and the 'essence of technology' are not to be interpreted as anti-science or technology either (Pattison, 2000, pp. 2–3). Yet if we couple this to an agenda that sees the modernist world as ultimately corrupting, debasing 'authentic-being' into 'inauthentic automations', and that this may be combated through 'authentic' education/ learning/curriculum, we find the basis for a 'strong-utopian' reading. What marks a 'strong' from a 'weak' utopian reading is the relationship those dichotomies of 'authentic/inauthentic', 'everyday/utopian', 'immanent/transcendental', 'individual/social', have to one another. The weak 'everyday utopianism' is a 'series of forces, tendencies and possibilities that are immanent in the here and now, in the pragmatic activities of daily existence' (Gardiner, 2006, p. 2). Whereas a strong utopianism is a future ideal state modelled through nostalgia for a long-lost 'Golden Age'. 'Nostalgia' here can range from the romanticisation of the past (Lukács, 1971), an exaggerated account, to its simulacra (Baudrillard, 1994)—events that do not exist (as only the 'real' can exist which is what is absent). Löwy (1980) identifies this wish to restore some long lost Edenic paradise as part of a Messianic impulse, which is what results if we fetishize 'authenticity'. That is to overcome the historical-social forces that give us our possibilities for being-authentic (strong utopianism), rather than embrace those same forces as agents for change in the here-and-now (weak utopianism).

So what is Heideggerian 'in/authenticity'? This is the relationship we have with our own being. How we are is either chosen (authentic—in ownership of death) or not chosen, where we simply do what everyone else is doing (inauthentic—wilful ignorance of death). Whilst it might appear that being 'authentic' is the preferable way-to-be, what it means to be 'authentic' is personal to each of us and so cannot be defined in advance (Large, 2008, p. 38). We cannot say what it is to live authentically as it will differ for each of us. As long as we 'own' our choices given to us by the specific possibilities open to each of us in our 'average everyday existence' we are then 'authentic' (Heidegger, 1962, p. 69). This, however, cannot be determined from the 'outside', objectively, factually, as that would be to treat our possibilities for being as a list of properties. Only the individual knows if they 'really' are *x* (a father, a teacher, happy, in love . . . etc.). Those possibilities are conditioned, however, by the existing concrete socio-historical context. I cannot 'authentically' choose to be a 'Pharaoh' or 'alchemist' as those possibilities are not meaningfully open to us. They belong to another socio-cultural time when those ways-of-being had genuine meaning. Guignon (1993b) notes that 'authenticity' as free, open self-interpretation, unconstrained by socio-historical conditions becomes self-defeating (Guignon, 1993b, p. 223). 'Choice', which is central to the Heideggerian notion of 'authenticity', becomes a redundant feature, as a scenario where all choices are possible removes any sense in which

'choosing' is meaningful. All options become the same, interchangeable. Next, the terms of 'authenticity' and 'inauthenticity' will be discussed and how they relate to the social in the form of '*das Man*'.

### **'THE-THEY': AUTHENTIC AND INAUTHENTIC BEING**

In *Being and Time* (1962) Heidegger argues that 'being-with-others' can transform into 'being-among-one-another', where one goes from being 'authentic' to 'inauthentic'. Heidegger's use of the term 'authentic' in German is an appropriation of the term *eigen*, an adjective meaning 'own,' 'strange,' or 'peculiar'. *Eigen* gave rise to the word *eigentlich* meaning 'real,' 'actual,' or 'truly'. This is closer to the Anglophone use of the term 'authentic'. Under this reading we can have a person that is truly or really their self. 'Authenticity' from the Greek root *autos* is closer, however, to what Heidegger means by *eigentlich*. *Autos* originally meant 'done by ones own hand' (Inwood, 1999, pp. 22–23). 'Authenticity' and 'inauthenticity' here do not correspond with 'genuine' and 'false', as is common to its English usage, for one could be falsely authentic or genuinely inauthentic (Heidegger, 1962, p. 146). Authenticity is only a modification of inauthenticity, something immanent in our average everydayness (Heidegger, 1962, pp. 383–432). Between these two readings of 'authenticity' is a binary between 'true' and 'false' (along with all its moral implications), and it as an augmentation of everydayness we can pull out the 'strong-weak utopianisms' latent within.

Our ability to 'choose' or 'own' ourselves comes by certain possibilities being meaningful. These are not private possibilities, as potentially everyone has the ability to own or ignore them in the same way. 'Inauthenticity' arises when we live our lives in constant comparison with others, where we are concerned with what we perceive other people to be. Heidegger says that in our anxiety to either be similar or different to other people we become dependent on upon them. This is not on any one person in particular, but on others in general, '*das Man*' or 'the-they' (Heidegger 1962, pp. 153–168). '*Das Man*' refers to people in the generic sense, a hypothetical being or faceless crowd. For Heidegger our normal state is to become like '*das Man*' and refrain from standing out. As part of 'the-they' we are like everybody else, in our opinions, hobbies, beliefs and so on, we go from 'being-with' to 'being-among' one another. The fifteen pages that Heidegger devotes to developing the idea of 'inauthenticity', are for Bonnett 'among the more familiar and accessible elements of Heidegger's thinking' (Bonnett, 2002, p. 230). For this reason, the author suggests, they are also some of the easiest to misuse depending on whether one is reading from a 'strong' or 'weak' utopian position.

Heidegger says that 'authentic' and 'inauthentic' modes of being are neither good nor bad but are simply how we are. Whilst the terms associated with 'inauthenticity' seem negative to Anglophone ears (fallen, fleeing, forgetting) they serve only to highlight our average, ordinary state (Øverenget, 1998, p. 238). A possible problem here is the interpreting of

*Dasein*'s fallen-ness or fleeing as a 'psychological state' (ontic) and not an attitude or mood that is without intention (ontological) (Carman, 2000, pp. 13–28).

Heidegger says that 'authenticity' and 'inauthenticity' do not 'express any negative evaluation' (1962, p. 211) or imply 'a 'fall' from a purer and higher 'primal status' (1962, p. 220), a kind of secular fall from grace (Dreyfus, 1991; Carman, 2003). Indeed, Heidegger points out that any generalised critique of the 'great mass' is itself a work of 'the-they' (1962, p. 164). However, under the 'strong' reading we understand 'in/authenticity' as a value-judgment, in the way that we might distinguish an 'authentic' painting from a fake. This analogy is disingenuous for we already know what it means to be a 'Picasso' or 'Rembrandt'; there are objective criteria we can list that enables us to tell 'real' from 'fraud' here. 'Authentic-being' is unlike a painting as it cannot choose or own itself in the way that I can. If I choose, however, not to do this, this does not make me a bad person. 'Inauthenticity' is not a defect of the weak-minded, but instead a necessary structure of our existence as self-interpreting entities that cannot help but interpret themselves in terms of what is around them. Self-understanding here is a constant work in progress, which never reaches completion, as it is not the sort of thing that has an end-point (Mulhull, 2005, p. 210). Self-understanding is a form of interpretation, which is always preceded by activities that make certain possibilities meaningful. So the point is not that we cannot have self-knowledge, as any entry point is always accompanied by presuppositions, but that we should bring these presuppositions to bear on our inquiries. Once a conclusion is reached we then start over with a deeper understanding, reformulating our presuppositions spiralling deeper into the hermeneutic circle (Heidegger, 1962, pp. 194–195).

### **STRONG-UTOPIANISM AND THE EXISTENTIALIZED HEIDEGGER**

Gardiner's (2006) work identifying 'utopian' readings within Marxist thought, looking at the relationship between the 'everyday/ utopian' and the 'immanent/ transcendental', and the Messianic impulses that accompany their stronger variations are, I will argue, present in those educational philosophies that invoke 'in/authenticity' as a value-judgment. The story here is that due to the corrupting affects of 'enframing' (Fitzsimons, 2002) from the modernist-capitalist world people are just 'flexible raw materials in the service of the world's technological system' (Peters, 2002, p. 16). Education that takes its vision from 'enframing' creates a bias in curriculum philosophy towards 'positivistic thought' (Huebner, 1999a, p. 225), where we have an 'education that lives in the shadow of positivism' that 'runs the ever present risk of degenerating into a form of curriculum-making where technicalization and hyperrationalization dominate' (Magrini, 2011, p. 133). 'Authentic' education as a response then becomes dependent upon certain notions of 'inauthenticity' that have people bound by hegemonic forces, by the capitalist consumerism of 'the-they', dulling

us into inauthentic modes of being, which can be ‘protested against’ or ‘countered’ via education (Huebner, 1985; Bonnett, 2002).

Whilst there are notorious difficulties with Heidegger’s work, it can still remain the case that if certain features of his philosophy are exaggerated or framed as such, those same tendencies that Guignon identifies as part of the ‘existentialized Heidegger’ (1993b, p. 215) and what Gardiner (2006) distinguishes as versions of utopianism, can be brought to bear on educational philosophies that invoke ‘authenticity’ as a moral state, as a *better way-of-being*, and the corrupting influences they look to overcome.

Putting aside the critical reception of Heidegger in modern analytical philosophy, the central notions of ‘authenticity’ and ‘enframing’ that we have been discussing come from different periods of Heidegger’s work. Whilst they both still deal in fundamental ontology Grene argues that by the time Heidegger started to address ‘community’ and ‘authenticity’ he began to abandon the philosophical structure of his early philosophy (cited in Woessner, 2006, p. 37). There is a strong case for the ‘authenticity’ of the early Heidegger as amoral, but arguably there is a shift in his later writings. For some the matter is not so clear cut as Rees (2009) argues that Heidegger’s descriptions of ‘being-with-others’ in *Being and Time* moves between the neutral and ethical (2009, p. 30). Criticisms of Heidegger’s amorality or lack of an ethics as prescribed in *Being and Time* (1962) are prominent (Buber, 1937; Jonas, 1964; Levinas, 1991; Löwith, 1993). The general critique is that Heidegger’s grounding in fundamental ontology leads to an indifference to ‘others’, where an egocentric focus on one’s own being gives no prohibitions of social ills towards others (Vogel, 1994). Indeed, this seems all the worse when one reflects on Heidegger’s involvement with Nazism (Wolin, 1993), or the ‘unthinking of science’ and his ambivalence towards the Rhine hydroelectric power station and death camps (Heidegger, 1978b; Rockmore, 1992).

Whilst these are all well-documented problems within Heideggerian philosophy, if we look to those educational theorists that hope to utilise Heideggerian ideas we tend not to find any deep exegesis of Heidegger scholarship, but a vague engagement with ‘the underlying spirit of some aspects of his thinking’ (Bonnett, 2002, p. 230). This would be difficult even if we could ask Heidegger directly; however, most encounter Heidegger’s thought second- and third-hand, spread mainly by political immigration or traveling academics, such as Marjorie Grene, Hans-Georg Gadamer, Herbert Marcuse, Hannah Arendt and J. Glenn Gray. Then there were religious publishers who sponsored some of the earliest translations of Heidegger’s texts, also giving Heidegger an entry point through the theology departments of Universities (Woessner, 2006, p. 22).

Guignon (1993b) argues that Heidegger’s initial filtration through the French existentialists resulted in an ‘existentialized’ version that became the object of study (Guignon, 1993b, p. 215). So the Heidegger of Sartre, Camus, de Beauvoir, as then read by psychologists, such as Boss, Binswanger, and May also inherit those same ‘existentialized’ features. Here there seems to be some overlap with Gardiner’s (2006) ‘strong utopianism’ and the attributes of the ‘existentialized Heidegger’. For

Guignon (1993b) there is an 'overemphasis on being-towards-death and the radical freedom it imparts living in relation to it as 'authenticity' (Guignon, 1993b, pp. 215–223). This 'radical' sense of freedom conceals the fact that one cannot live unconstrainedly, so greater appreciation of the socio-historical must be given, where our existence is only meaningful against a 'co-happening' of a 'community of people' (Heidegger, 1962, p. 436).

One of the central characters in bringing Heidegger to bear on education has been Dwayne Huebner (Pinar, 1992). He 'brought the traditions of existentialism, phenomenology, and theology to the curriculum field, and this contribution is of serious consequence' (Pinar, 1975, p. 209). Huebner is a philosopher, religious educator and founder of the curriculum re-conceptualist movement. His reading of the mystics preceded his route to Heidegger, via thinkers such as Sartre, Piaget, and Tillich (Huebner, 1999d, p. 448–449). Huebner audited John MacQuarrie's seminars on Heidegger, himself a theologian, philosopher, and co-translator of one of the most popular versions of *Being and Time* (1962). Huebner's main use for Heidegger was the role of language, but in essays such as *Language and Teaching* (1999b) he appears to use language as synonymous with Heidegger's 'being-in-the-world'. It is our relationship to language that hides or reveals the world to us: 'for the most part, when we teach we are in the world with others by way of language' (Huebner, 1999b, p. 144).

Education for Huebner is an existentialized process,

... that which we seem is not what we are for we could always be other. Education is the openness to a future that is beyond all futures. Education is the protest against present forms that they may be reformed and transformed (Huebner, 1985, p. 463).

'Transformation' here was by way of language, where we should be critical of the positivistic discourses of learning outcomes and objectives, and instead focus upon the temporal nature of beings. For Huebner the scientific trend in the curriculum demonstrates a 'dependence on psychological language or the language of other behavioral scientists,' which creates a bias in curriculum philosophy favouring 'positivistic thought' (Huebner, 1999a, p. 225). Whilst language can mask the being of things, it is not the same as 'being-in-the-world'. Language is one of the ways we relate to the 'world' (as part of the ready-to and present-at-hand), but is not how we are *in* the world. 'Authenticity' here has nothing to do with language, as this would be to make it propositional or part of some representational schema, which would be to conceive of it in terms of things (beings). Whilst traditional philosophy is preoccupied with the 'logos' as either representing or constructing reality, ultimately it was this conception of philosophy that Heidegger was challenging.

So what exactly is 'authentic' and 'inauthentic' education? How does it lend itself to 'strong' and 'weak' variations of utopianism in response to what it means to be in/authentic in Heidegger's philosophy?

Heidegger tells us that to be human is to seek 'inauthenticity', or distraction from the fact that someday we are going to die. 'Authentic' and



'inauthentic' here are not things that can be discerned from the 'outside' by observation, but are only relevant to the individual and their relationship with their being. Heidegger states the conditions for authenticity mean living in relation towards one's death, but this not for other people to decide, as one's life and death is always 'mine' (Heidegger, 1962, p. 67). Thus, it is only *Dasein* that can be 'authentic', so the notion of an 'authentic' curriculum or education seems completely removed from Heidegger's sense. People can be 'authentic', but systems cannot, nor can they induce 'authenticity', or qualify someone for it. Yet for some of those educational theorists that use Heideggerian ideas, such as Magrini (2011), there are 'moments of authentic discovery' and 'authentic context' in which learning happens (Magrini, 2011, p. 133). Dwyer *et al.* (1988), tells us that 'authentic' education can have 'students progress to the point where they are no longer bound, to a considerable extent, by the possibilities which their own tradition offer' (1988, p. 146). The weaker sense of this is that the possibility for breaking with tradition is immanent in the 'everyday', 'in the pragmatic activities of daily existence' (Gardiner, 2006, p. 2). However, the stronger sense is that we have to escape our own traditions in order to become 'authentic'; the implication here is a detachment from the socio-historical conditions of 'the-they'. Yet, Heidegger tells us that,

. . . authentic Being-ones-self does not rest upon an exceptional condition of the subject, a condition that has been detached from the 'they;' it is rather an existentiell modification of the 'they' (Heidegger, 1962, p. 130).

The 'strong' and 'weak' utopian readings that Gardiner (2006) extracts in Marxist thought, appear to have some overlap with Guignon's (1993b) reading of 'authenticity' in the 'existentialized' Heidegger. Here the 'strong' sense is the ability to overcome tradition, bringing about self-interpretation *despite* 'the-they'. The 'weaker' sense is 'authenticity' that is only possible (meaningful) *because* of 'the-they'. It is the 'stronger utopian' reading of 'authenticity' that has individual possibilities as a transcendence of 'the-they', a rising above the crowd. Here the world is the very thing we have to overcome. Heidegger, however, says that authenticity is not about transcending a herd mentality, as we are necessarily part of the 'they-self'; instead it is about living one's life as a coherent totality. 'Authenticity' here is not the opposite of 'inauthenticity', but actually comes from it (Large, 2008, p. 90). To think that a possibility can be realised outside of 'the-they' is a consequence of the 'strong' reading, which ironically adopts an attitude consistent with 'enframing', the very thing 'authentic' education is looking to counter. 'Enframing' allows people to interpret themselves in line with technology. The 'ethics of technology' embraces categories of the infinite such as 'progress', 'productivity', and 'development'—always aiming forward to an indefinite point; a future utopia of pure unconstrained human potential, or 'authenticity as all possibility' (Tubbs, 2004, p. 70). This has its singularity in a 'superman' who can exist independent of 'the-they'. This also inculcates a

radical notion of freedom, where we are *free from* constraint rather than *free in* the realisation of constraint. This distinction is critical to the existential ethic, and what it means to be 'authentic' for Heidegger. 'Inauthenticity' is to conceive of oneself as free from constraint as this is a handy fiction where one does not have to think too hard about how to live. We simply follow out those parodies of rebellion or self-discovery that are accessible within our culture. Where to really own a choice is to own the limitations of that choice, and not to be in denial of it, for there are some things you could never be, which a condition of 'the-they'. The inauthenticity of 'the-they' and the authentic individual are not alternate beings, but are mutually dependent forms of self-interpretation, inseparable and indistinguishable from each other (Heidegger, 1962, p. 259). 'The-they' is the source of all our possibilities, authentic and inauthentic. To not acknowledge this or try and live in spite of it is to lack any coherent notion of possibility (Guignon, 1984, p. 333).

One of the conditions Heidegger gives for being authentic is the transforming of 'tradition' into 'heritage' (Heidegger, 1962, pp. 435–6). That is, going beyond the categories and concepts that are presented to us as 'tradition' and seeking their undistorted understanding in history which is available, but concealed by tradition. *Dasein* then takes on these primordial ways of understanding as its own and uses them as a way of being-towards-itself. The 'authenticity' disclosed in *Being and Time* (1962) is not exclusively about the individual, but is a communal act aimed at retrieving the enduring aims and ideals of *Dasein*'s historical past in the form of 'heritage' (Caputo, 1987, p. 88). So we do not look to overcome our circumstances, fight against, or protest the situation, but it is a resoluteness in the situation as 'authentic-being' which means we at the same time 'inherit and choose' our own possibilities (Caputo, 1987, p. 88). Heidegger uses the terms 'fate' and 'destiny' (1962, p. 436), but as with the 'strong' reading this is not a predestined outcome over which we have no control, but instead is only available to the 'authentic' who can seize upon such opportunities and embrace 'fate' as 'authentic historicity' (1962, p. 437). The loaded terms of 'fate' and 'destiny' do lend themselves to the religious impulse within Heidegger's work which culminates in his infamous rectoral address speaking to a 'chosen' people and the transformative experience of national identity (Wolin, 1993).

Part of the structure of the 'utopian' readings distinguished by Gardiner (2006) looks at how the dualities of the 'everyday/immanent' and the 'utopian/transcendental' relate. One way this applies to those educational philosophies inspired by Heidegger is the relationship between the 'temporal/ abstract' and 'social/ concrete'. After the initial attempt by Kant to root the underlying structure of human existence in temporality, Heidegger appropriated Kant into his own account, identifying two sorts of time as 'existential' and 'categorical'. The typical understanding is that in order to have 'existential' time one must be in 'categorical' time already. For Heidegger the situation was exactly other way around. Categorical time (abstract, discreet, empirical) only exists because we are already in the world through existential time (lived towards/away from death). Our

possibilities for living authentically towards or inauthentically away from death is a public one and so has to take on board the social context within which the temporality/authenticity distinction receives its meaning. Guignon (1993b) argues that the ‘existentialized’ Heidegger of the ‘strong-utopian’ variety focuses solely on the temporal aspect of existence exaggerating the more individualistic/subjectivist experiences of *Dasein*. This interpretation he claims is also found in the expressionist psychologies of Boss, Binswanger and May in the ‘core value of modern individualism: freedom understood negatively as freedom *from* constraints’ (1993b, p. 223). Rockmore (1995) also sees this focus on the subject as part of the structuralist approach exemplified in Piaget’s developmental theory (1995, p. 57). This interpretation of ‘authenticity’, which dwells on the temporal at the expense of the socio-historical context, is turning towards ‘strong utopianism’. For when the social is overlooked in favour of the temporal it is easy to define ‘authenticity’ as personal goals or being ‘true’ to one’s self as if ‘inauthenticity’ is about self-deception, or not achieving full personhood (Guignon, 1984).

It is when we detach ‘authenticity’ from its socio-historical context that it is not only in danger of deforming into pseudo-religious aphorism or self-improvement rhetoric, but it also fulfils the very thing that these critical theories of education seek to counter from the threat of modernism. Tubbs (2004) notes that in these more utopian readings ‘Heidegger’s educational odyssey through being is traduced into a fetishism of authenticity as all possibility’ (2004, p. 70), which is symptomatic of the ‘cult’ status it entertains. If the account of learning, teaching or education is this ‘authenticity as all possibility’ then it is expressive of a ‘strong’ utopianism. Here, educational philosophies set up humanity as the puppet of capitalist-hegemonic forces, where people can only achieve ‘authenticity’ by combating or opposing those modernist corrupting influences. Gur-Ze’ev (2002) seems to endorse this view where,

... modern education is part of this process of dismantling the possibilities for self constitution, of life as unconcealment. Instead life becomes a concern and response to the call of instrumental, calculated thinking and its fabrication (Gur-Ze’ev, 2002, p. 74).

This is not to say that counter-education cannot take place or is not needed, but that the conditions for its possibilities are located, in the ‘weaker’ utopian sense, in the immanent ‘everyday’. The stronger form would be the ability to transcend our traditions rather than own them as ‘heritage’, which is to contest and open up the *meaning* of events, not narrow or close them down.

The ‘strong utopian’ version then has teaching/learning/education as ‘authentic’, which in some way issues forth ‘authenticity’ in the person receiving it. ‘Authentic’ education is in some way better than ‘inauthentic’ education, presumably producing better people. What creates ‘inauthenticity’ for the ‘strong’ reader is an education that shares in the discourses of modern-capitalist Enlightenment ideals, where positivism,

objectivism, rationalism and individualism (enframing) are the means by which people self-interpret. It is these conditions that people take on which need to be challenged and overcome. This can be done by promoting the 'authentic' person, by concentrating on the subject, who has the potential for infinite possibilities, to be whatever they want and not be confined or constrained by the limitations of what 'the system' dictates. The implication is that the person has a 'true' authentic way-of-being that they are prevented from living. Unfortunately, the pupil who authentically wants to be a chemist or engineer may be discouraged, as their life project seems to mirror the parody of 'the-they' which 'strong-utopian' reading encourages.

The idea that we may be born 'pure' (as potential), corrupted by those modernist discourses into 'inauthenticity', but can be saved through 'authentic' education is part of the Messianic narrative that underlies the 'strong-utopian' vision here, where 'authentic' being was part of some long-lost Gaia communal-state or is harking back to what I have called the 'cult of the authentic'.

Next, I will show where some of these 'strong' utopian impulses can be found in educational theories that use or invoke the philosophy of Heidegger, and how one must be careful when speaking with the authority of 'authenticity'.

## AUTHENTIC AND INAUTHENTIC EDUCATION

The 'authentic/ good' 'inauthentic/ bad' dichotomy is a powerful one. What threatens here is a nihilistic modernity that 'levels everything and reduces humans to flexible raw materials in the service of the world's technological system' (Peters, 2002, p. 16). This keeps people in an arrested state through 'normalizing education' (Gur-Ze'ev, 2002). Huebner (1963, 1967, 1974, 1999a, b, c) argues that 'inauthentic' education is propagated by the notion of the ontological being subordinated to the epistemological, by assessment that is future-orientated, where expected learning outcomes are premised on a notion of temporal stability. This version of 'authentic' education, however, is at odds with Cuypers' and Haji's (2008) definition, which requires certain ends to be achievable (2008, p. 78).

It is not hard to see how these Heideggerian explorations enter education. Looking to *Being and Time* (1962) we see his critique of the Western predilection for 'thematizing', and 'calculative thought', all which were expressions of a 'mathematical projection of nature' (Heidegger, 1962, p. 414). The 'later' Heidegger would extend these critiques in *The Question Concerning Technology* (1978a) and *What Calls for Thinking?* (1978b) where the 'physical theory of nature prepares the way not simply for technology but for the essence of modern technology' (Heidegger, 1978a, p. 303). This, however, is not intended to be anti-technology or science (Pattison, 2000), but is about an attitude we have towards ontological difference. The irony is that any system of 'authentic' education based on overcoming the 'essence of technology' (enframing) rather than taking it on as 'heritage', is an act of 'enframing' itself. Also, to think in terms of 'good'

and ‘bad’ as applied to ‘authenticity’ is itself ‘inauthentic’, yet this seems to be implied in educational theories. Magrini tells us that,

... authentic learning, which as opposed to learning grounded in abstraction and generalization, is a more primordial form of knowledge, or better, understanding through which students and educators interpret the world in meaningful ways (Magrini, 2012, p. 4).

And that ‘inauthentic’ education is

... concerned with knowledge that is both instrumental and of a distinct variety, namely, logical-rational-scientific, and education that lives in the shadow of positivism runs the ever present risk of degenerating into a form of curriculum-making where technicalization and hyperrationalization dominate (Magrini, 2011, p. 133).

Here we get a *better* understanding through authentic education, which runs the risk of *degenerating* into the hyper-rational. These would seem to imply more than a mere description, but a value-judgement between the two. Inauthenticity can also permeate the very organisation of educational institutions.

[S]chools are exemplars of inauthentic existence, and we can see it in many of their practices, such as the emphasis on rote memorization and unreflective praise of contemporary norms, as contributors to the development of a pervasive in-authenticity (Dwyer *et al.*, 1988, p. 146).

Here it is the education system itself that blinds us to the ways we could be. Basing educational reform on Heidegger’s philosophy where ‘authenticity’ is sought over ‘inauthenticity’, to preserve our being from the ravages of the ‘world’s technological system’ is all part of the ‘strong’ version. Any attempt to dominate one system with another, educational or otherwise, is an occurrence of the ‘essence of technology’. To say that system *a* is ‘inauthentic’ and system *b* is ‘authentic’, producing better understanding or people, is to reproduce the very metaphysics one is looking to overcome.

For Thomson (2001) ‘authentic’ education is ‘revolutionary’ (2001, p. 254). This metaphor may also mark a dividing line between the ‘strong’ and ‘weak’ utopian readings of Heidegger. If the metaphor is one of ‘revolt’ against the system or world, where the ‘authentic’ individual is like the rebel, free to be whoever they want to be, then we have strayed into the self-parody of ‘the-they’. If the metaphor is one of ‘revolving’ where we move away from ourselves only to come back to where we were, transforming in the process, we are closer to Heidegger’s ‘hermeneutic circle’. Those that write about ‘authentic’ education as revolution in the ‘rebellious’ sense play straight into those messianic impulses within ‘strong’ utopianism. ‘Authenticity’ here is a rejection of peer pressure, anti-authoritarian, remaining true to one’s self no matter what. This ‘I’ that

resists the world or can have access to the 'true' me, Heidegger says, is the fallout of Cartesian dualism, left from the 'residues of Christian theology' (1962, p. 223). Here we can be separate from the world and exist not because of it, but in spite of it. Gur-Ze'ev (2000) seems to accentuate this underlying Messianic impulse when he says that authentic education is 'the possibility of transcending from unauthentic to authentic life' (2000, p. 5). We also get a flavour of this in Magrini when he writes: 'the inauthentic view of education embraces the status-quo [. . .] and in no way represents the emancipatory move' of authentic learning (Magrini, 2012, p. 16). What exactly a person who has achieved 'authenticity' looks like, however, cannot be tested for or assessed. It is not something that is open for other people to comment on or coached towards like a personal trainer. 'Authenticity' in the 'weaker' sense is not moral but ontological. I can either own or disown my existence but this does not make me a better or worse person, as the potential for 'authenticity' comes from 'inauthenticity'. It has been noted how Kierkegaard's and Heidegger's notions of authentic existence are very similar (Hall, 1984). Kierkegaard tells us that one cannot tell a Christian from a non-Christian purely by asking about their beliefs. To be a Christian is to act and live as a Christian, and not just memorising facts about Christianity (Kierkegaard, 2006).

What are the consequences of the 'strong' utopian reading? Bringing together the threads of authenticity as morally preferable to inauthenticity where we become 'better' or 'proper' people as a result, exaggeration of the temporal individual over the socio-historical as free *from* rather than free *in* realisation of constraint, where the potential for 'authenticity' comes from a transcendence of conditions rather than an immanence within those conditions. Ultimately, the affects of 'enframing' as made concrete by modernist/Enlightenment ideals of 'positivism', 'objectivism', 'rationalism' and 'individualism' are the sources of 'inauthenticity' for those educational theories guided by a 'strong' reading. All these threads brought together are what I term the 'cult of the authentic'.

With this 'strong' utopianism, however, there is an internal contradiction between 'authenticity' as 'pure possibility' *in spite* of 'the-they' and the 'inauthentic-being' that results from the affects of 'enframing'. As has already been noted, 'authenticity' is not the sort of thing that can be instructed or written into a curriculum. Secondly, 'authenticity' as a *moral* as opposed to an *ontological* choice is to be engaged 'inauthentically' with it (Inwood, 1999, p. 24). Thirdly, to try and achieve 'authenticity' outside the possibilities of 'the-they' or our own socio-cultural environments (*free from* constraint) is to maintain the metaphysics of those calculative, hyper-rationalised educational philosophies that they seek to overthrow. For in order to achieve an 'authentic self' that is no longer conditioned or limited by the possibilities of 'the-they', one must meaningfully entertain the idea that one can exist a-socially or a-historically. Yet, this is exactly where the 'essence of technology' wants to take us. Only technology can progress for its own sake, striving towards no particular goal, only looking to replicate the system in a circularity of unlimited possibilities. To be endlessly open to infinite possibility is to be completely removed from fundamental

ontology. For our death is the terminus and originator of our own authentic possibilities for interpreting ourselves. Authenticity is how we take up pre-given possibilities in relation towards our own deaths, whereas, infinite open possibility is to try and escape this situation. Again, this motif of escaping death or transcending from ‘inauthentic’ to ‘authentic-being’ via a revolution or deconstruction of our own traditions is part of this Messianic narrative, a kind of secular ascension. If we are, however, free from constraint in this way, this becomes antithetical to an ethical process of learning. Here ‘we are all masters, we are pure Being, we are authentic contingency, “we” have no other . . . and we are no longer learning’ (Tubbs, 2004, p. 72). A major concern is that if the ‘strong’ version takes hold we may have very well-intentioned educators speaking with the authority of authenticity, predetermining how people should be on the strength of a pastiche or parody of the ‘in/authentic’, as generated by ‘the-they’, the very thing they look to combat.

## CONCLUSION

It has been argued that there are at least two impulses within those educational philosophies that invoke the Heideggerian idea of ‘authenticity’. I grouped these through what Gardiner (2006) called ‘strong’ and ‘weak’ utopianism and the relationship between the ‘everyday/transcendental’ and ‘utopian/immanent’. I concentrated on the ‘strong’ variety and what this means for our reading of Heidegger and ‘authenticity’. Not only is ‘authenticity’ a transcending of the socio-historical conditions that bind us, our aim here is to be *free from* those constraints, free from ‘the-they’—to be ‘true’ to who we are. ‘Authenticity’ here is morally preferable to ‘inauthenticity’. It is *better*. Guignon (1993b) argues that this ‘strong’ variation has come to us via an ‘existentialized’ Heidegger through Sartre, Camus, de Beauvoir and potentially into education through the subjectivist psychologies of Piaget, Boss, Binswanger and May. The ‘existentialized’ Heidegger exaggerates the temporal individual over the socio-historical, again placing them in antagonism, competing for ‘authenticity’. ‘Weak’ utopianism on the other hand is not about transcending our socio-historical traditions, but is about owning them by bringing about the forces for change immanent in the everyday (Gardiner, 2006, p. 2). ‘Authenticity’ is not about rising above or detaching from ‘the-they’ but in the transforming power of our average everyday mode of existing. ‘Authenticity’ is not the opposite of ‘inauthenticity’ but is its modification; each is necessary for the other. Moreover, ‘authenticity’ is not a *moral* but *ontological* choice. It cannot be assessed, measured or instructed. It is also argued that the sort of radical freedom from constraint that is sought in the ‘strong’ reading is to want to exist a-socially and a-historically. The potential for ‘authenticity’ under the ‘weak’ reading can only occur if one exists in relation towards one’s death which is to be temporal, but also it has to come from a public space of meaningful possibilities (what it means not to be). The ‘strong’ version in which people transcend their own public possibilities, becoming free to be

whatever they want, bringing us closer to our 'true' authentic natures, is part of a Messianic narrative that runs through Heidegger, but is exaggerated in the 'strong' form into what I have called the 'cult of the authentic'.

A concern that is echoed by Heidegger scholars is that when 'authenticity' takes on a moral guise, telling people how they should be, it is done from an inauthentic position of authority. History here is quite clear on what happens when people follow an ideal or gain a sense of superiority concerning how one should be, oppressing other diverse ways-of-being. It is this situation 'authentic' education seeks to avoid, with the ravages of modernity favouring the language of positivism and imposing an agenda of capital worth or productivity on being (Huebner, 1963, 1967, 1974, 1999a–d). The outcome, however, of an educational philosophy that invokes, as Bonnett says, the 'spirit' of Heidegger without attending to the more difficult or contradictory aspects of his work leads to a strengthening of those very aspect of modernity they seek to challenge (Bonnett, 2002, p. 230). The difficulty of interpreting Heidegger here only accentuates the seemingly 'more accessible' aspects of his work, which thus become some of the easiest to misuse. It is the 'cult' status that 'authenticity' has gathered through some of the 'stronger' utopian readings of Heidegger's work and the familiarity to our ears of what it stands for, which means we do not have to think too hard about it; these being the first tell-tale signs of inauthenticity and being in the presence of 'the-they'.

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