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# Authenticity as Compassionate Being in the World

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# **Authenticity as Compassionate Being in the World**

by

Rosemary Season

A culminating thesis submitted to the faculty of Dominican University of California in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Humanities.

San Rafael, CA

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## Advisor's Page

This thesis, written under the direction of the candidate's thesis advisor and approved by the department chair, has been presented to and accepted by the Department of Graduate Humanities in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Humanities. The content and research methodologies presented in this work represent the work of the candidate alone.

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**Abstract**

This paper will present a thesis on what it means to be authentic in the world and how a person can cultivate an authentic being. I will argue that being authentic leads to a healthier self that lives her life to its fullest potential and how being authentic will result in a more compassionate and ethical self.

## Introduction

What it means to be an authentic being is a complex and long debated topic in philosophy. A very simplified definition of authenticity is “the idea that some things are in some sense really you, or express what you are, and others aren't” (Varga & Guignon, 2014). Humans are born with certain core elements to their being and these are the foundations of the authentic self. According to Rousseau humans are born with two basic core elements: desire for survival and compassion for other living things. When humans began settling into sedentary groups these core elements became clouded by cultural influences. Survival moved away from simply providing for that which sustains the body and helps ensure safety and reproduction to the perceived need to amass unnecessary “comfort” goods. Likewise, compassion, empathy, for all living things has mutated into a desire for dominion over nature and feelings of indifference, prejudice and hatred for humanity at large. With compassion buried under or distorted by cultural scripts written into human lives, individuals engaged in faulty thinking about themselves that Sartre described as “bad faith” (Sartre, 1984). Bad faith is a relationship with the authentic self that exists when an individual denies or suppresses the facticity of a core element of her being: compassion. In short, she lies to herself about her self.

Heidegger recognized the pervasive pressure these cultural scripts have on individuals to conform to cultural and societal norms that distort the core elements of an individual's self. These scripts, or the “idle chatter of the they” as Heidegger labels them, is not an overtly oppressive force but rather it is the collection of ideas and oughts that are covertly enforced through societal pressure to conform. Individuals necessarily exist within a community of individuals and can continue to be “beings-in-the-world” that



cohabitate with the “they” without sacrificing their authenticity by becoming *Dasein*. The literal translation of *Dasein* is “being there” and for Heidegger a *Dasein* is a “being for which its own being is an issue” (Heidegger, 1995). In other words through the notion of being mattering to an individual she comes to realize her role in shaping her being while living in the facticity<sup>1</sup> of the core of her humanness; her compassion. The concept of having a core of humanness and that core being compassion will be examined and explained in chapter one.

Nietzsche also states that an individual must step away from the influences of “they,” or the “herd” as he refers to it, in order to be an authentic being. Rather than being suffocated with the values and rules imposed by others that serve to restrain the power to create, Nietzsche’s *Übermensch*, the “Overman,” steps away from the “herd” and says “Yes!” to life. This shifts perspective away from not doing something because it is wrong or evil to do to choosing to do what is good simply because it is good.

Compassion is at the core of authenticity and the only way for an individual to be an authentic being is to step away from the “they,” the “herd,” that have distorted this basic element of humanness and say “Yes!” to choosing good simply because it is good. This will create a more ethical and compassionate society because being authentic strips away cultural scripts that are the source of humans being uncaring or indifferent, prejudiced and cruel to the self as well as others. Every individual has a personal responsibility for what their lives are adding up to and to being authentic. This will create a society of

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<sup>1</sup> Facticity is a Sartrean concept that states there are certain unchangeable facts about every individual. Sartre uses the example of freedom to express this concept: “the facticity of freedom is the fact that freedom is not able to not be free” (Sartre, 1984).

individuals who express their lived compassion for themselves and others and thus affect a positive change in the condition of the life humans are moving through now.

In chapter one I will unpack the concept authenticity. I will argue that humans are not born a blank, pliable lump of human clay that is formed and shaped solely by the sociopolitical environments they experience throughout their lives. I will further argue that humans are born with an innate core to their humanness and that core is compassion. Furthermore, because compassion is the core of humanness, compassion is also the seat of the authentic self. In chapter two I will lay out the pathway to becoming an authentic being. In this chapter I argue that from the moment an individual is born sociopolitical scripts are written into her life that define roles she is to play and these scripts continue to be written throughout her life. While not all of these scripts are necessarily detrimental to the individual self, the core of humanness and the seat of the authentic self, compassion, is often buried under the duties and roles of the scripts that others have written into the individual's life. This chapter examines how to sift through these scripts in order to realize the impact they have had on the individual's intrapersonal perspective of her self and her relation to the world of beings she lives in. This chapter then calls an individual out to choose to choose to engage in the activity of stepping out of the averageness of the status quo so that an individual can get back to the seat of the authentic self, compassion, while still remaining a being being-in-the-world that coexists with other beings. In the final chapter I will explain why being an authentic being matters. I will argue that every individual is responsible for what their life is adding up to and getting back to the core of their humanness and the seat of their authentic self can and will create a more fulfilled and meaningful life.

## Chapter 1 What is Authenticity?

In this chapter I will examine the concept of authenticity, what it is and what it isn't. To begin to get a handle on what authenticity is I will open with a few definitions that will serve as a launching point to understanding what it means to be an authentic human. Merriam-Webster dictionary defines authentic as being "true to one's own personality, spirit, or character" (2016). We can also get an idea of what authenticity is from *Hamlet*: "this above all: to thine ownself be true, and it must follow, as the night the day, thou canst not then be false to any man" (Shakespeare, 1603). A very simplified philosophical definition of authenticity is "the idea that some things are in some sense really you, or express what you are, and others aren't" (Varga & Guignon, 2014). But what does it mean to be "true and really you?" Is there a preexistent self that gets buried somewhere along life's way that needs to be sifted out in order for an individual to be authentic? Or does life carve out an authentic self from a blank lump of human clay? If so, how authentic could a self be if it was the sole creation of someone other than the individual to whom the self belongs? The self is a tricky creature and trying to concretely identify it can be like trying to nail Jell-O to a tree, but there are concrete elements at the core of a self that are the result of an individual's unique biological and genetic make-up. These elements do not constitute the totality of the authentic self but they are the foundations upon which an individual creates her authentic self.

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A person is not born a blank lump of pliable human clay that culture molds into a self. Nor is a person's self solely determined by their unique genetic and biological make up. A self comes to be as the result of culture and genetics and biology, nature *and* nurture. Each person is endowed with specific genetic and biological tropes that are the basic building blocks for the self and the specific behavioral propensities of that self. The key word here is propensities. The idea that humans are "hard wired" with certain behaviors and personality traits in such a manner that they are incapable of behaving otherwise is a deterministic fallacy. If human behavior was 100 percent genetically determined we would be robots that were only capable of behaving according to the data written onto our biological hard drive. As *Blank Slate* author Steven Pinker states "the idea of 'biological determinism'—that genes cause behavior with 100 percent certainty—and the idea that every behavioral trait has its own gene, are obviously daft" (Pinker, 2002). Pinker goes on to address genetic propensities when he quotes Richard Dawkin's who states "a gene . . . *increases the probability* of a behavior compared with alternative genes at that locus . . . [and] *some* behavior must be affected by *some* genes" (Pinker, 2002). For example, if an individual's genetic history includes family members who are hot headed and stubborn that individual is more likely to be predisposed to exhibit these same traits. However, these traits are genetic propensities not guarantees of behavior; this particular individual can choose to be otherwise. None the less these traits are a part of an individual's unique set of genetic tropes and the building blocks of her personality, her self, her authentic self.

An individual cannot rid herself of these genetic tropes. She may deny that some, or even all, of these tropes exist because she feels that they will reflect negatively on her

when she is under the gaze of others or because she feels that some tropes, such as hotheadedness and stubbornness, have the potential to cause harm to others. If she chooses to engage in the activity of denying the elements of her unique genetic tropes she is lying to herself about her self and because she is a conscious being, she is also aware that she is lying to herself even though she may further deceive herself by denying this awareness. Sartre defines this activity of self-deception as being “bad faith” (Sartre, 1984) and it is the antithesis of authenticity. Let’s unpack this starting with lying, specifically self-deception.

The individual engaging in the activity of self-deception is a deceiver, a liar. Sartre describes the liar as being “a cynical consciousness affirming truth within himself, denying it in his words, and denying that negation as such” (Sartre, 1984). The only way an individual can deceive herself is if she is aware of the truth. If she states a falsehood out of ignorance of the facts she is not a liar nor is she seeking to deceive herself or anyone else. She is simply uninformed or lacking knowledge in the area of the falsehood she spoke of. It is only through her knowledge and awareness of that knowledge that she can be the deceiver. As Sartre states “it follows first that the one to whom the lie is told and the one who lies are one and the same person, which means that I must know in my capacity as deceiver the truth which is hidden from me in my capacity as the one deceived” (Sartre, 1984). Therefore, because an individual cannot lie about which she does not know or is aware of, the only way that she can lie to herself about the facticity of her genetic tropes is if she is aware of the existence of these tropes.

That leads to the next point. How is it that an individual is or has the capacity to be aware of her tropes or anything for that matter? She has the capacity for self-

awareness because she is a thinking, conscious being and “the being of consciousness is consciousness of being (Sartre, 1984). Because “consciousness is always conscious *of* something,” a conscious being is necessarily conscious, aware, of its self (Sartre, 1984). In other words “I am therefore I think” (Dreyfus, 1991). Being aware of the physical material self, the body, is a “present-at-hand<sup>2</sup>” (Heidegger, 1995) sensory activity. The senses are readily available for an individual to examine and experience her material being. She can see yellow jaundice in her eyes, she can feel the pain of a headache, she can taste the bile of sickness, she can smell the sticky, sweet odor of her menstrual blood, and she can hear herself breathing. These particular sensory experiences are manifestations of the physiological functions of the material body that enable one to be aware of and experience the bodily systems that we know are operating within us but are usually not fully aware of their functioning until something goes awry. The point is that the material body of a self can be readily known. Being aware of genetic tropes is a bit more slippery than being aware that one has a brain because they feel pain.

There is no blood test, MRI, CT or PET scan to identify a genetic trope and as stated above, there isn't a specific gene for each specific trait and/or behavior. So how and/or where do we find and identify these crafty little tropes? They are found in history, specifically familial history. More than one mother has rolled her eyes and explained the shenanigans of her child to her friends and family with the statement “he gets that from his father's side,” and this pithy little statement holds much genetic truth. If an individual looks back at the history of behavior in her family she will discover patterns of behavior that are consistent from generation to generation. These behavioral patterns, and some

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<sup>2</sup> Present-at-hand can be understood as observing something and only being concerned with the bare facts or the raw materials of the thing being observed.

would extend this to include religious and political ideology, are the genetic tropes of this specific familial line. These heritable propensities for certain behaviors and even ideologies have been observed in well documented twin studies. These studies show

that identical twins, whether separated at birth or not, are eerily alike (though far from identical) in just about any trait one can measure. They are similar in verbal, mathematical, and general intelligence, in their degrees of life satisfaction, and in personality traits such as introversion, agreeableness, neuroticism, conscientiousness and openness to experience. They have similar attitudes toward controversial issues such as the death penalty, religion, and modern music . . . identical twins are far more similar than fraternal twins, whether they are raised apart or together; identical twins raised apart are highly similar; biological siblings, whether raised together or apart, are far more similar than adoptive siblings. (Pinker, 2002)

All of this shows that the genetic history of related individuals creates similar traits in the members of a specific genetic line and it is through this shared genetic history that we are able to identify the tropes of an individual. If dad, uncle and grandpa are/were hot headed and stubborn there is a high probability that their offspring will share these same traits, these same genetic tropes. In the case of adoptive children, their tropes can be identified by what they are not, by traits they do not share with the family members they were raised with. As members of a specific kinship line marry out genetic propensities will shift as a result of new genetic material being added to the mix. This change means that the basic building blocks of the self will continue to drift farther apart from individual to individual. The granddaughter of an identical twin will have less genetic similarity with her grandparent than her grandparent's twin does. With an ever changing genetic landscape is it possible that there are universal genetic tropes present in all humans across

space and time? Are there tropes that are not only at the core of an individual self, but also at the core of humanness?

The diversity of human beings is staggering. We live across almost every geographic region on the globe in nation states that range from theocracy, communist, totalitarian to democratic republics and numerous cultures exist within each nation state. People from all regions of the planet and from all walks of life have migrated to the U.S. and brought their cultural identities and religious traditions with them. Because of this, the U.S. has long been thought to be a “melting pot” that coalesces this vast array of different cultures into a single American culture. However, it would be more accurate to think of the U.S. as a tossed salad with each group retaining its cultural identity while existing in the same geographical and political space. Evidence of this can be seen in the recent creation of “dashed” Americans: Native-American, African-American, Mexican-American, Asian-American and so on. These dashed cultures are made up of individual people who each have their own unique personalities, physical characteristics, physical and mental capacities, and familial genetic lines. From the top down we become more and more diverse but we are all human beings. I like to think of human diversity as being like ice cream; a limitless variety of flavors but it’s still all ice cream. Despite the vast array of differences in human beings we are remarkably similar in culture and behavior. Anthropologist Donald Brown spent years studying human universals and through exhaustive research he compiled a list of 372 “universals of human behavior and overt language noted by ethnographers (see appendix). [However] it does not list deeper universals of mental structure that are revealed by theory and experiments” (Pinker, 2002). It is the deeper universals that are at the core of humanness, that are the authentic



self of every human across space and time. While the discussion thus far has focused on genetic tropes this will be expanded onto the social tropes and the sociopolitical scripts written into an individual's life that so greatly shape her life and intrapersonal perception of her self.

According to Rousseau all humans across space and time have two innate virtues: self-preservation and pity/compassion. Self-preservation is simply the intrinsic imperative to stay alive and perpetuate the species. As Loyal Rue states, "nothing matters if there is no life" (Rue, 2000). The imperative to stay alive may appear to open the door to committing atrocities against our fellow humans in order to pursue our egocentric need for survival and bring about rampant Social Darwinism. However, as Rousseau states an individual's imperative for survival is coupled with an

innate repugnance to seeing his fellow men suffer. I do not believe I have any contradiction to fear in granting the only natural virtue that the most excessive detractors of human nature was forced to recognized. I am referring to pity. A disposition that is fitting for beings that are weak and as subject to ills as we are; a virtue all the more universal and all the more useful to man in that it precedes him in any kind of reflection, and so natural that even animals sometimes show noticeable signs of it . . . [we are] forced to acknowledge man as a compassionate and sensitive being . . . [because] *nature, in giving men tears, bears witness that she gave the human race the softest hearts* (Rousseau, 1992).

At our very core humans are compassionate beings and our intrinsic nature is to "*do what is good . . . with as little harm as possible to others*" (Rousseau, 1992). Therefore, the authentic self of every human across space and time is a compassionate self. This is evidenced in the fact that the human species still exists. If humans were not at their core compassionate we would not have cared for our sick and wounded, buried our dead, and collectively worked to keep each other alive through sharing the spoils of hunting and

gathering and providing protection from predators, the elements as well as from other groups of humans. Despite all of the horrendous acts we have committed against each other, the human species still exists because we are in fact concerned for the well-being of our fellow human beings. As Rousseau stated above humans do in fact have an innate repugnance to seeing another living creature suffer, but as I will argue in the next chapter, this core of compassion can and does often become buried under the sociopolitical scripts that are written into the lives of individuals.

Now that we know what an authentic self is we can come to recognize and understand how we come to be an inauthentic self. As stated above, Sartre defines inauthenticity as bad faith, as a person deceiving herself about her self. Sartre goes on to explain that “one does not undergo his bad faith; one is not infected with it; it is not a *state*. But consciousness affects itself with bad faith” (Sartre, 1984). Bad faith is faulty thinking and it comes in two forms: over exaggeration of transcendence and over exaggeration of facticity. Transcendence is the ability to step outside of the self, take perspective on the self and give meaning to the self. It’s the activity of an individual taking a long, hard look in a mirror and truthfully examining that self that is her without measuring her self by societies or someone else’s yard stick and then giving her own meaning to her own self: “I am a compassionate being”. However, she can also use this self examination as an over exaggeration of transcendence and lie to herself by saying “I am not what I am” (Sartre, 1984). For example, she is a soldier and as such is trained to use certain interrogation methods on prisoners in order to gain information thought to be of benefit to the army which she serves. These interrogation methods may include actions that grey the line between coercive tactics and torture and brutality. As a compassionate

being she would necessarily be opposed to brutalizing another human being because, as Rousseau states, she has an “innate repugnance to seeing [her] fellow men suffer” (Rousseau, 1992). She would be lying to herself if states that her military training has her so deeply conditioned to dehumanizing and brutalizing prisoners of war in order to advance the military position of the army in which she serves that she has transcended her core humanness and thus is no longer capable of being compassionate. It is this faulty thinking and then her acting on this faulty thinking that affects her consciousness with bad faith.

The second type of bad faith is an over exaggeration of facticity. Facticity is an individual understanding that her being is constituted of all that she is and all that she is not (Sartre, 1984). For example, when she looks at her physical body in a mirror she may know that she *is* 49 years old and she *is not* 25 years old. If she takes a more introspective look she will know that she *is* innately compassionate and that, unless she is a sociopath, she *is not* innately sadistic. These are concrete facts about her self that she cannot change; they are a part of her facticity. An over exaggeration of facticity is stating “I am what I am and that is all that I am” (Sartre, 1984). In looking at the example of the soldier above, she moves, behaves and dresses like a soldier and therefore believes she is a soldier when in fact she is not. What she is is an innately compassionate being playing the role of a soldier; it is a performance. If she believes that she is a soldier and as such cannot transcend the training and conditioning that orders her to carry out acts of brutality, she is claiming that she does not have the choice to refuse to carry out these acts of torture. In short she thinks she is a soldier and therefore she cannot choose to act otherwise. She is denying the facticity of her ability to transcend the role of a soldier so

that she does not have to make the decision to oppose following orders that deny her “innate repugnance to see [her] fellow man suffer” (Sartre, 1984). Once again it is her faulty thinking that has affected her consciousness with bad faith and led her to deceive herself about the character of her compassionate self, her authentic self.

Compassion is at the very core of humanness; it is the authentic self all of humankind across time and space. It can be argued that there are rare exceptions to the innateness of compassion and it is displayed in individuals that present with such a severely abnormal psychopathology that they are incapable empathy or remorse. However, is it possible that these rare individuals do in fact have the innate capacity for compassion but that it is so buried in their psychopathology that it is almost impossible to tap into? If not, then the authentic self of these rare individuals is indeed sociopathy. That is a question/idea I will leave to neuroscientists and mental health researchers to consider. Suffice it to say that in the overwhelming majority of human beings across time and space compassion is at the core of humanness and is the seat of the authentic self.

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While I embrace the concept of Sartrean bad faith I have presented above as well as the pervasive pressure of Heidegger’s “they” and the numbing power of Nietzsche’s “herd”<sup>3</sup> as to what can heavily influence an individual away from being authentic, where I differ from my philosophical companions is that they do not argue for compassion as being the core of humanness and therefore the seat of authenticity. My definition of

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<sup>3</sup> Heidegger’s concept of “the they” and Nietzsche’s concept of “the herd” will be fully examined and unpacked in the following chapters.

authenticity is grounded in compassion as being at the core of human being-ness and as such we cannot be an authentic being unless we fully realize that this is our facticity. Being authentic sounds simple enough; be compassionate. However, humans already are compassionate and we cannot become that which we already are. Being an authentic being is an activity grounded in non-faulty thinking, it is an individual's choosing to be that which she is and that which she is not. If an individual were an island this activity would be a simple undertaking because there would be nothing to distract, pressure or influence her to be otherwise. She can simply let her self be. However, we live in a world filled with families, communities, cultures, societies and nation states that exert enormous pressure and influence on an individual to follow the social controls set up by these political entities and in some cases, rise up and oppose them. These complex webs of external influences and controls shape the thinking and behavior of an individual and she cannot isolate herself from the social and political world she lives in. In the next chapter I will discuss how an individual can be a member of the various social and political entities she lives in and experiences and still achieve returning to being the being which she already is; compassionate and thereby authentic.

## Chapter 2    How do we get back?

From the moment an individual is born and declared to be a girl or a boy a script is being written into her/his life. In the last decade concepts of gender and sex have become socially and politically controversial. Questions ranging from how many genders there are to whether or not gender is innate, a socially constructed performance, or a combination of both to should transgender individuals be able to use the bathroom of the gender/sex they identify with, and many more abound in the gender debate. These are fascinating and complex issues deserving of much study and discussion but for the purposes of this paper I will defer to the traditional gender/sex binary of male/boy/man and female/girl/woman with the caveat that this should not be considered to be an endorsement of this binary. With that aside, the assignment of a male/female sex is the first of many scripts written into the life of an individual and these assignments set a child on course to be taught a socially conditioned gender role that is understood to be a direct correlate with the sex she/he was assigned at birth.

Once the child is brought into the natal home her familial script begins to be written. The familial chapter is titled child-girl-daughter-granddaughter-sister-niece-cousin and this girl must learn the roles written in each of these kinship scripts. These scripted roles determine her place in the political structure of the familial hierarchy. Religious scripts that mark the girl as Muslim, Christian, Jew, Buddhist, or any other of the myriad of religious traditions being practiced during the time and space she occupies as well as agnostic or atheist are woven throughout this familial political structure. Agnostics and atheists are included in religious scripts because they take a posture towards religious and God ideologies and therefore are involved in religious scripting. In

turn state political and economic systems scripts are tightly woven throughout these various religious scripts which are all entrenched in the particular culture this girl is a member of. This girl is now scripted as child-girl-daughter-granddaughter-sister-niece-cousin-religion/non-religion-conservative/liberal/other-culture. These are some of the first scripts she carries with her in her encounters with and experiences of the sociopolitical environment outside of her natal home.

Throughout her life the girl's scripts continue to become more numerous and more complex. By the time she is in high school her scripts can include but are not limited to child-girl-daughter-granddaughter-sister-niece-cousin-religion/non-religion-conservative/liberal/other-culture-friend-enemy-other-girlfriend-sexuality-student-classmate-woman. The older she gets and the more encounters and experiences she has with her cultural, sociopolitical environment the more complex and numerous her scripts become. Layer by layer these scripts authored by others work to shape her interpersonal and public relationships, police the manner in which she enacts these scripts and serve to remind her of the social responsibility she has to fulfill the duties defined in these scripts. She cannot avoid nor escape the activity of these scripts being written into her life by others because she is a being fully enmeshed in "being-in-the-world", not next to it or outside it" (Dreyfus, 1991) and she has been, is and will continue to be "always already with other beings . . . [in an] always already world which [she] shares with the others" (Heidegger, 1995).

While her unique genetic propensities toward certain behaviors will influence how she reacts and responds to this complex web of scripts and their authors, she will none the less be tightly wrapped up in them and they will groom her thinking in the

perceptions she has of her self. She therefore “must define [her self] in terms of the social roles that require certain activities . . . she is at the mercy of factual events and objects in [her] environment. ‘[She] has been delivered over to beings which [she] needs in order to be able to be as [she] is’” (Dreyfus, 1991). Furthermore, “an ‘intra-worldly’ being has being-in-the-world in such a way that it can understand itself as bound up in its ‘destiny’ with the being of those beings which it encounters within its own world” (Heidegger, 1995). She is, like all humans, caught up in a web of interpersonal relationships that have great affect on her intrapersonal perspective of her self. Through her scripts she is taught that in order to get along in the sociopolitical environment she lives in she has to go along with the status quo. The status quo is a product of the history of generations of humans that have worked to create a sociopolitical system that establishes social control, guards against the elimination of the political unit of government and in most cases, provides some form of protection for its citizens.

For Heidegger the status quo is understood as “the dictatorship of the ‘they’” and it unfolds in an inconspicuous and unascertainable manner. “We take pleasure and enjoy ourselves as *they* take pleasure; we read, see, and judge about literature and art as *they* see and judge; likewise we shrink back from the ‘great mass’ as *they* shrink back; we find shocking what *they* find shocking. The “they,” which is nothing definite, and which all are, though not as the sum, prescribes the kind of Being of everydayness” (Heidegger, 1995). The “they” is not a person or even people, but rather a pervasive concept, an ideal, of how the world should best operate on a daily basis in order to achieve the goal of social order. Individuals are subtly and sometimes coercively moved by the “they” to neither utterly fail nor zenith; individuals are moved to averageness as a means of social



control. This is reminiscent of a November 1985 episode of the television series *The Twilight Zone*. In “Examination Day,” Dickie Jordon is required to report to a government testing facility on his twelfth birthday for mandatory IQ testing. Dickie is an intelligent boy who is confident he will easily pass the test and this confidence creates tremendous fear in Dickie’s parents. When he arrives at the testing facility Dickie is given a medicine that will ensure he is answering the examiners questions truthfully. Dickie does very well throughout the testing, too well. After hours of waiting his parents are contacted by the government agency and given Dickie’s test results. Dickie’s IQ exceeded the legal limit and he was executed (Lynch, 1985). Had Dickie been privy to the true nature of the test and been able to lie about the facticity of his capacity for intelligence he would have lived. In Dickie’s fantasy television world the “they” celebrated averageness and assassinated excellence. Averageness, ignorance and untruth are the way of the “they.”

Let’s suppose that Dickie did lie and was able to convince his examiner that he was of average intelligence. The story would then read Dickie lives, flash to elated parents embracing their son, enter Rod Serling with happy ending monologue, cue iconic theme song and exit stage right. Or would it? If Dickie was privy to the nature of the examination and was able to convincingly lie about his intelligence he would have to continue in that lie for the rest of his life lest he be found out and executed. After years of practicing this lie Dickie may eventually forget the true capacity of his intelligence and go on to forget that he has forgotten (Guignon & Pereboom, 1995) thus becoming both the deceiver and deceived and thereby lapse into bad faith (Sartre, 1984). Bad faith lends itself well to the “they” in that it creates a path to “leveling down” . . . the possibilities

of Being” (Heidegger, 1995). In Dickie’s world this leveling down is done in order to cull out individuals with above average intelligence to hedge their control over the masses. Marx would suggest that this is culling excellence from the proletariat herd is done in order to propagate an averageness that will foster a resignation in laborers to “live only so long as they find work, and who find work only so long as their labour increases capital . . . Hence, the cost of production of a workman is restricted, almost entirely, to the means of subsistence that he requires for maintenance, and for the propagation of his race” (Marx, 1983). In other words, averageness lived in the lives of the working class fosters a resigned posture toward mediocracy and a numbing of an individual’s creative powers that in turn creates little resistance to the oppression of the “they” of capitalism, the bourgeoisie.

Averageness is a great weapon in the arsenal of the “they.” It creates a space for an individual to complacently drift along with the status quo rather than exert the effort to take a stand on her authentic self. The rub here is that an individual can be complacently drifting without seeing the water upon which she is floating much like the way a fish does not see the water in which it swims. The only way a fish could come to know the water is in its absence. In the same way an individual will not be aware of her complacency within the status quo of the “they” until something causes her anxiety about her current state of existence. It is only through anxiety that she can begin to see the water on which she floats and where that water is taking her. Anxiety is what discloses her ability to no longer be at home in the familiar, scripted world of the “they.” For Heidegger anxiety is what shakes the complacent drifter awake and

takes away [her] possibility of understanding [herself], as it falls, in terms of the ‘world’ and the way things have been publically interpreted. Anxiety throws [her] back upon that which it is anxious about – its authentic potentiality-for-Being-in-the-world. Anxiety individualizes [her] for its ownmost Being-in-the-world, which as something that understands, projects itself essentially upon possibilities. Therefore, with that which [she] is anxious about, anxiety discloses [her] *as Being-possible*, and indeed as the only kind of thing which it can be of its own accord as something individualized in individualization. (Heidegger, 1995)<sup>4</sup>

Anxiety no longer allows the individual to try to understand her self vis à vis the scripts that have been written into her life and it opens her eyes to the authentic potential that had been previously untapped while she floated complacently on the waters of the “they.”

It is at this point of anxiety that an individual is faced with the decision to choose to choose to take a stand. In his commentary on Heidegger’s *Being and Time* Hubert L. Dreyfus states Heidegger’s position on what it means to exist when he states “to exist is to take a stand on what is essential about one’s being and to be identified by that stand” (Dreyfus, 1991). As I am arguing, what is essential about one’s being is the core of their humanness and the seat of their authenticity: compassion. Heidegger didn’t believe in human nature or an essence of humanness. Heidegger believed that existence precedes the essence of humans and that the essence of humans lives in its existence (Heidegger, 1995). However, because genetic tropes do exist in all humans and these tropes are the propensities to behave in certain ways, there is a core humanness that is the seat of authenticity and that seat is compassion. This may seem to flirt with the border of determinism but as stated above humans do not come into the world as a blank lump of

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<sup>4</sup> I have taken some liberties with the above passage from Heidegger’s *Being and Time* by substituting the feminine pronoun (in brackets) for *dasein*. The reason being is that within the context of the paragraph it grammatically makes sense to do so. It also places a particular individual within the framework of being a *dasein*. The literal translation of the German *dasein* is “being there” and for Heidegger a *dasein* is a “being for which its own being is an issue” (Heidegger, 1995). Anxiety is the catalyst for a being to issue its authentic being; its *dasein*. This concept of *dasein* will be discussed in greater detail later.

humanness that culture, nature, shapes and molds into a self. Human behavior and the self are the result of biology and genetics and the influences, learned beliefs and behaviors that the sociopolitical environment writes into the lives of individual humans; the self is the result of nature *and* nurture.

Choosing to choose is an active posture towards shaking off the Novocain that averageness infuses into the everyday life of an individual. Conversely, choosing not to choose is a passive laying down which allows situations and controls to freely happen to; it is the posture of a victim and a liar. The victim supposes that she has been acted upon and has no agency to stop or avoid actions wrought against her self. This is a lie she tells to herself about her self so that she can excuse herself from the activity of returning to her authentic core. But in an individual's choosing not to choose to engage in being an active agent for-her-self, she is in fact choosing to unrestrictedly allow the "they" to continue to pervasively numb her will to be engaged. She is choosing to surrender rather than take a stand for-her-self. The activity of choosing implies the ability of an individual to freely exert her will to effect change. How much, if any, free will does an individual really have? The answers that have been postulated generally, but not exclusively, fall into three camps. The first camp claims that free will does not and cannot exist. The proponents of this camp are to some extent backed by staunch biological determinism that suggests humans are hard wired to behave in very specific ways and as such they cannot choose to be other than that which nature has wired them to be. This can be taken to an extreme to mean that a man who rapes women cannot be held accountable for his actions because he is hard wired to rape and therefore cannot choose to be otherwise. The second camp holds that free will absolutely exists and this camp is heavily backed by religious traditions that

subscribe to the idea that humans were created by a god and that this god imbued humans with free will. The idea here is that god gave humans free will so that they could choose to follow god of their own volition; god wants willing volunteers not puppets. The third camp takes a middle road and this is the camp I want to focus on. As discussed above every human has a specific biological and genetic make-up that gives that individual the probability of and capacity for having a certain set of behaviors, traits and abilities. Think of it as an individual's personal buffet that is neither moral nor immoral and filled with options to create a self. The key is that only the items in this particular buffet are available for a particular person to create a self. For example, an individual's biological and genetic buffet includes the capacity for a certain level of intelligence and "there is now ample evidence that intelligence is a stable property of an individual, that can be linked to features of the brain, that is partly heritable among individuals" (Pinker, p. 150). How much of an individual's particular capacity for intelligence she puts to use and what she does with that intelligence is a matter of her exercising her free will to choose how she will create her self within the confines of the facticity of her capacity. In other words, she does not have free will over the capacity of the intelligence she possesses but she does have free will in how she will put that capacity to use. This middle ground of free will, of choosing, is where humans exist within their biological and genetic facticity (Season, 2016).

It is in the choosing, the doing, that an individual can be an authentic *Dasein*, "a being for which its own being is an issue" (Heidegger, 1995). The doing is an individual choosing to take "a public stand . . . on itself – on what it is to be this *Dasein* – by way of its comportment" (Dreyfus, 1991). This stand is a mode of standing on, of owning up, not

a stand against, not a raging against the machine. If *Dasein* rages against her machine she is taking a negative posture towards the world in which she is a being in rather than focusing on the positive project of taking a stand-on-herself-for-her-self. At the end of her rage she would still be existing in her averageness because she failed to address the condition of her averageness. She would simply be wasting much energy with a negative posturing towards standing against rather than making a positive choice to stand-on-herself-for-her-self. The motivation for *Dasein* choosing to stand-on-herself-for-her-self is to do what is good and beneficial for her. *Dasein* does not make this choice because a different choosing or choosing not to choose is bad; she is choosing to stand because it is good. It is a posture towards choosing that which is good and beneficial not out of fear or concern that the other option(s) is bad or wrong but because a different choice is good. Think of this choosing as going to the produce section of a grocery store and choosing to buy an apple instead of a banana not because choosing the banana is bad in some way but simply because the apple will taste good (Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality*, 1998b). This posture towards choosing is an individual's "owning up [to] *Dasein*'s authentic way of being and seeming to choose while disowning, *Dasein*'s inauthentic way of being (Dreyfus, 1991). The disowning is not a negative posture in choosing but rather is an afterbirth of choosing to own up. The question her is own up to what?

In taking a stand-on-herself-for-her-self, *Dasein* is owning up to her "potentiality-for-Being" (Heidegger, 1995). Her potential is not something she has to manufacture within her self nor is it something that can be given or taken away by others. As Heidegger states "*Dasein* is not something present-at-hand which possesses its competence for something by way of an extra; it is primarily Being-possible. *Dasein* is in

every case what it can be, and in the way in which it is its possibility . . . The Being-possible which is essential for *Dasein*, pertains to the ways of its solicitude for Others and of its concern with the “world,” as we have characterized them; and in all these, and always, it pertains to *Dasein*’s potentiality-for-Being towards itself, for the sake of itself’ (Heidegger, 1995). This suggests *Dasein* owning up to herself as a future project, as posturing herself toward a future activity in which she will activate her capacity to be authentic. This future activity of *Dasein* is a movement back to the core of humanness that has been buried under the sociopolitical scripts of the “they;” back to compassion. The movement is initiated with *Dasein* being aware that “in spite of the leveling power of the [they] there are possibilities in [her] past that can be taken up and repeated in such a way as to resist leveling” (Dreyfus, 1991). In order to get back to her core of authenticity *Dasein* must move, must act, must take a stand-on-herself-for-her-self.

So how does an individual go about taking a stand in the real world of everydayness? Marx calls for the proletariat to unite and revolt against the bourgeoisie, violently if necessary. But in doing so the proletariat is quite likely to become the new bourgeoisie and continue the cycle of oppression that results from a ruling class controlling the means of production and separating the creativity of the worker from that which she has created (Marx, 1983). Nietzsche suggests an individual step out and away from the herd of the “they” and become the *Übermensch*, the Overman (Nietzsche, 1978a). The *Übermensch* is this-worldly and stands in stark contrast to “those who speak . . . of other-worldly hopes! Poison-mixers are they, whether they know it or not. Disposers of life are they, decaying and poisoned themselves” (Nietzsche, 1978a). The *Übermensch* takes the posture of saying “Yes!” to life, to fully living in the now life as

opposed to “the icy ‘no’ of disgust at life (Nietzsche, 1998b). The *Übermensch* steps out and away from the “I will nots” of what it understands to be the most neutering force of humankind: religion, specifically Christianity.

Nietzsche blasts Christianity as a disgrace to humanity because it promotes powerlessness and weakness as virtues and misery and suffering as blessedness when he states:

we weak ones are simply weak; it is good if we do nothing *for which we are not strong enough* – but this harsh matter of fact, this prudence of the lowest order, which even insects have (presumably playing dead when in great danger in order not to do ‘too much’), has, thanks to that counterfeiting and self-deception of powerlessness, clothed itself in the pomp of renouncing quiet, patiently waiting virtue . . . This kind of human *needs* the belief in a neutral ‘subject’ with free choice, out of an instinct of self-preservation, self-affirmation, in which every lie tends to hallow itself . . . [and makes possible] that sublime self-deception of interpreting weakness itself as freedom. (Nietzsche, 1998b).

He goes on to state “what actually arouses indignation against suffering is not suffering in itself, but rather the senselessness of suffer; but not for the Christian, who has interpreted suffering an entire secret salvation machinery” and furthermore that Christians “tell me that their misery is a distinction and election from God, that one beats the dog one loves the most . . . this they call blessedness (Nietzsche, 1998b). Nietzsche’s answer to an individual stepping out of this “herd” is for her to move herself as far as possible away from the “herd” to atheism whose “perfect and final victory . . . might free humanity from this entire feeling of having debts to its beginning, its *causa prima*” (Nietzsche, 1998b).

However, what Nietzsche fails to address is that completely removing oneself from the tenets of Christianity is rather impossible to accomplish due to the influence it



has had on economics and moral and political philosophy in the West. Christianity and Christian people are so tightly threaded through the sociopolitical everydayness that it is impossible for an individual to remove herself from this herd unless she takes on the life of a hermit that has positioned herself as far from human contact as possible. Even then she may still find herself confronted with the saintly missionary who seeks to bring God to the mountain. An individual can still take a posture towards life that vibrantly says “Yes!” to living to her utmost potential with the understanding that humans are always already a being being-in-the-world that coexist with other humans and therefore she must still grapple with the sociopolitical and religious influences of this herd of the “they.” In short, a being being-in-the-world cannot go full *Übermensch*.

So what does what does an authentic being who has stepped away from the Novocain of the “they,” taken a stand-on-herself-for-her-self, and said “Yes!” to living the now life while remaining a member of a polity of beings being-in-the-world look like? She is calmly courageous and highly invested in the creative project that is her self. She has carefully examined, and continues to examine, the scripts that have been written into her life and measured them against the facticity of her being, against the core of her humanness. She may find that her compassion has been partially, in some cases quite deeply, buried under some of these sociopolitical scripts and this realization will initiate anxiety in her. How she responds to that anxiety will determine if she takes a stand on her innate compassion or if she denies her facticity by either choosing not to choose to stand or lies to herself and states she is so conditioned by her sociopolitical environment that she cannot be otherwise. Choosing to take a stand on-herself-for-her-self takes courage because she must look deeply into her self to realize the fault in her thinking that she is

other than compassionate and then engage in the activity of getting back to the facticity of her compassionate core, to her authentic self. Taking a stand-on-herself-for-her-self is not shouting to from the rooftops or holding a press conference to inform the “they” that she is no longer going to participate in the cult of averageness. When an individual takes a stand-on-herself-for-her-self she simply and peacefully takes a “yes” posture towards life and lets herself be her authentic self, her compassionate self: yes-let-be. The yes-let-be is an activity not a destination and a return to the authentic self not a becoming. She is free to be and to express her innate compassion.

**Chapter 3 Does it matter?**

The last question to answer is, in our everyday, work-a-day lives does any of this matter? It's all well and good to have ontological discussions that stimulate deep thinking about the nature of human life. But, what difference could it make or benefit could all of this deep thinking have in the real life of the man working at McDonalds or the soldier in a prison camp in Afghanistan? Is there anything in these pages that can be practically useful? If not, then all of this deep thinking is not worth the paper it is written on. So let's put the nuts to the bolts. Every human's life deeply and profoundly matter to them. As such humans have a basic need to be content with the condition of their lives and to find, create is far more accurate, meaning in their existence. There is no secret recipe or magic formula to accomplish this; it takes work, sometimes very hard work. It is much easier to just float along in average everydayness and live in quiet resignation hoping to grab a slice of happiness once in a while. A great mass of people spend their lives singing along with the legendary Joe Walsh:

*I'm just an ordinary average guy  
My friends all are boring  
And so am I  
We're just ordinary average guys  
We all lead ordinary average lives  
With average kids  
And average wives  
We all go bowling at the bowling lanes  
Drink a few beers  
Bowl a few frames  
We're just ordinary average guys  
And every Saturday we work in the yard  
Pick up the dog doo  
Hope that it's hard  
Take out the garbage and clean out the garage*

*My friend's got a Chrysler  
I've got a Dodge  
We're just ordinary average guys* (Walsh, 1991).

For some of the populations of this large mass of people this is bliss and they have created meaning and contentment in their lives. For some they have happily fulfilled their utmost potential and have made their way back to their core compassionate self. Let's start by taking a look into the life of the man who works at McDonalds.

Bob gets up every morning at 5:00am and takes the bus to McDonalds to work the breakfast shift. Most of Bob's customers are regulars and he has taken the time to get to know them. For instance, he knows that James is married and his wife has recently been in the hospital with pneumonia. He also knows that James likes an extra syrup with his pancakes and, when his wife accompanies him for breakfast, James likes an extra plate so he and his wife can share the order of pancakes. Mary is an elderly woman that comes in every morning at 8:15 for coffee and Bob knows she likes three ice cubes in her coffee to cool it off a bit. Bob also knows that Mary's husband died four years ago and that she lives on a small fixed income. Every morning Bob takes the time to chat with Mary and on several occasions has comped her cup of coffee just to bring a smile to her face. Bob is happy to serve others and compassion is a daily lived experience for him. Bob does not focus on what he is not able to do but instead he chooses to focus on what he can do and he does his utmost to use whatever capabilities he has in order to live a fulfilled life. That is not to say that Bob's life is all sunshine and rainbows. He has difficult times in his life just like everyone else and has moments when it is difficult for him to exhibit his core of compassion. But overall Bob is a happy guy who thinks honestly about himself and the condition of his life. Bob is able to accomplish this thinking because he has returned to

the core of his humanness; his compassion. Care should be taken here. Bob cannot think an authentic self into existence but rather because he exists he can therefore think honestly about himself and avoid bad faith.

Conversely, Bob's coworker Jane feels that working in the kitchen at McDonalds is beneath her and she is bitter about the present condition of her life. She often becomes sullen when Bob makes a special order for his regular customers and makes this known by slamming microwave doors and muttering insults under her breath. Jane feels that she deserves better in life and that it is unfair that she has to work at what she considers to be a demeaning job just to make ends meet. Instead of engaging in her capabilities and working towards realizing her utmost potential Jane convinces herself that life has somehow been unjust to her, that she is a victim of a series of unfortunate events that have shaped her life. As such she feels no reason to exhibit compassion to others because she feels that no compassion has been shown to her. Jane's lie to herself about the condition of her self and her imagined victimhood is what has made her bitter and discontent with the condition of her life. This has nothing to do with working as a fry cook at McDonalds; Jane could just as easily feel this way if she were a lawyer or a college professor. It is Jane's lie to herself that is the source of Jane's bitterness and discontent. But Jane can be otherwise if she chooses to do so. In order for Jane

to become authentic, she must first accept the fact that she is ultimately *responsible* for what her life is adding up to. If she faces up to her finitude and takes responsibility for her own existence, Heidegger thinks, she will achieve a level of clear-sightedness and intensity that was lacking in inauthentic everydayness. If she grasps the fact that everything she does is contributing to defining her life in its entirety, she can be led to acknowledge the fact that she is responsible for taking hold of her

existence and giving it a coherent shape of her<sup>5</sup> own making (Dreyfus, 1991).

If this were a television court drama a lawyer would be leaping to his feet screaming “objection!” at this last statement. How could a prisoner of war possibly be responsible for what his life is adding up to? The POW did not choose to play the role of a prisoner or the environment that he is forced to exist in but he does have a choice in how he responds to the conditions of his captivity. This is not to suggest that a POW should just pull himself up by the bootstraps and skip merrily through the prison camp. What is often seen in prison camps is a bonding together of POWs that creates an emotional and mental support system whose foundation is compassion. This is not simply making the best of a bad situation because the corporeal aspects of the POW’s captivity do not change; the POWs cannot choose their way out of a prison camp. What the POWs can choose to do is work together to survive and the only way that this cooperative effort can be made is through compassion. Compassion in action is a powerful force in the lived human experience and it is the ultimate expression of saying “Yes!” to life. Compassion in action is an activity for the right here, right now. The POW does not demonstrate compassion to his fellow prisoner in hopes of a future reward in an afterlife that does not exist. The POW demonstrates compassion to affect a positive difference in his life now because now is when he needs it the most. In the environment of a prison camp compassion may be the only agency a POW has and this agency not only helps keep him alive it also helps keep his fellow prisoners alive. So yes, a POW is ultimately responsible for what his life playing the role of a prisoner is adding up to.

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<sup>5</sup> I have once again used the feminine pronoun here because within the context of the paragraph it grammatically makes sense to do so.

The man playing the role of a cashier at McDonalds and the man playing the role of a POW are both being authentic beings being-in-the-world through engaging in the lived activity of lived compassion. Through their lived compassion each man has created fulfillment and meaning in his life. Bob creates meaning in his life through serving others and making them feel as though they matter, that someone is interested in them as a person not just an order of pancakes or a cup of coffee. He has created purpose and meaning in his life through his lived experience of demonstrating compassion to others. Bob has taken responsibility for what his life is adding up to and has created a coherent shape to his existence through honest thinking about his self and the lived experience of his core humanness; compassion. Likewise the man playing the role of a POW has also taken responsibility for what his life is adding up to in the confines of a prison camp. In the horrific conditions of the prison camp the POW has engaged in honest thinking about his self and the corporeal condition of his physical being. Stripped of everything but his humanness, the POW has only the core of his being, his compassion, to assist him and his fellow prisoners in survival. The reciprocal relationship of compassion established between these men is a powerful source of agency for these men who have in all other ways been disenfranchised and dehumanized by their captors. In both cases it is the lived experience of compassion that has created meaning in and given purpose to the lives of these two men who exists in radically different environments.

Conversely, the fry cook's lack of lived compassion and the lies she has told to herself about her self have shackled her to a cage of bitterness of her own design. She is being an inauthentic being being-in-the-world through her faulting thinking about her self and by choosing not to choose to take action in-her-life-for-her-life. She is the sole

creator of her miserable existence. This brings us back to the question of this chapter: does being a being-in-the-world that is engaged in the activities of honest thinking and lived compassion matter? Yes, yes it does. And furthermore, does all of this have a practical application in the everyday lives of everyday people? Again, yes it does. The authentic expression of lived compassion matters because it creates a more fulfilled life that has meaning which in turn brings greater happiness and chances of survival to the givers and the receivers.



## Conclusion

How different would our everyday world look if humans worked at being authentic beings being-in-the-world? Human life is so often driven by sociopolitical and economic ambitions that the core of humanness gets buried under sometimes centuries-old scripts that continue to be written into people's lives. These scripts define roles that often tell us averageness is our lot in life, that it is unwise to choose to be otherwise; just go with the flow and leave the big brain stuff to the qualified few. How many brilliant minds have been buried underneath the "go with the flow" script written into their lives? Over the course of history religious scripts, specifically Christianity and Islam, have written script into trillions of people's lives that command them to deny their now lives and instead live their lives preparing for an afterlife that does not exist. According to a Washington Post article it is estimated that by 2050 there will be over 2.9 billion Christians and 2.7 billion Muslims inhabiting the earth (Tharoor, 2015). That is a total of over 5.6 billion people who will be standing firm on a doctrine that states they will be "getting more life by denying life" when what they are really doing is "preserving their immortality rather than their lives" (Becker, 1975). What would it look like if humankind lived their lives for what can be done in their individual lives today? To quote the legendary John Lennon

*Imagine there's no heaven*

*It's easy if you try*

*No hell below us*

*Above us only sky*

*Imagine all the people*

*Living for today (1971).*

Would violent crime run rampant because people would recklessly carpe diem? No. There will always be consequences to our actions and we will always be responsible for these consequences. Violent crime is heavily influenced by ghetto living conditions, rampant drug use, the fracture of the natal family unit and poverty. Despite these incredible obstacles an individual can choose to be otherwise and it is through this choosing that positive changes can be made in inner cities and areas of extreme poverty one person at a time. Is this choosing and this doing easy? No. It will take tremendous courage and determination to step away from the “they” that have written scripts of dogged oppression into the lives of hundreds of thousands individuals and create a more fulfilled life with meaning and a purpose other than breeding the next generation of drug addicts and welfare families. Courage should not be mistaken for a reckless fearlessness in action; this has a tendency to get a person dead rather than free from the ghetto. One of the best and simplest definitions of courage I have come across came from the Duke: “Courage is being scared to death and saddling up anyway” (Wayne, c1970). People will also have to stop believing the lie that has been perpetuated from generation to generation; the lie that states they cannot be otherwise. They can be otherwise and their doing prove to be quite contagious.

Living for today is taking a posture of saying “Yes!” to the possibilities of the life we are moving in right now. In the above example of the ghetto, this “Yes!” would affect positive change in the everyday lives people when and where they need it the most. Evangelical missionary movements in ghettos work to bring comfort and the promise of a better life in a different life to people who have been demoralized by the condition of

their lives. These missionaries glorify the suffering of those who live in ghettos as being unto the salvation of an immortal soul and a test of the blind faith they are required to have in an invisible man. But in their day to day live nothing changes. With that said I also must give credit where credit is due because most, if not all, religions do preach showing compassion to fellow human beings. Where they lie in error is in believing that this compassion comes from an otherworldly source and in doing so they are denying the power an individual has within herself to affect positive and powerful change in her life and the lives of others. Christianity does a further and more harmful injustice to humankind through the dogma of original sin which claims that there is no good thing within humanness, that humankind is born going to hell. This dogma has Christians groveling at the feet of an invisible man begging forgiveness for crimes they have never committed. The concept of original sin is like bringing up charges against an individual and finding him guilty of robbery because his grandfather committed robbery forty years ago. Can you imagine the outrage that would follow such a judgment?

At the core of their humanness people are basically good because compassion is that core. An individual who is being an authentic being being-in-the-world does so by thinking honestly about herself and the potential that her self has. Authenticity cannot stop at thinking however, authenticity is in the doing. It is an activity of honest thinking put into action through the lived experience of compassion, taking responsibility for the condition of one's life and choosing to choose to move in life transcending the lies perpetuated by ourselves about our self while embracing the facticity of our being. Be it, live it, own it. This won't create a utopian society that floats along a river of bliss. The concept of utopia may very well be the ultimate mandate of averageness of the "they"

and smother an individual's potential for brilliance and creativity. What being an authentic being being-in-the-world does do is give individuals the power to create a self based on the foundation of their facticity of compassion and this in turn will positively affect all those they come in contact with. An individual letting herself return to the core of her compassionate self takes work, courage and personal responsibility that not all are willing to engage in, but those who do will create a more fulfilled and meaningful life for themselves. Say "Yes!" and let be.

### Appendix

“This list, compiled in 1989 and published in 1991, consists primarily of ‘surface’ universals of behavior and overt language noted by ethnographers. It does not list deeper universals if mental structure that are revealed by theory and experiments, it also omits near-universals (traits that most, but not all, cultures show) and conditional universals (‘If a culture has trait A, it always has trait B’). A list of items added since 1989 is provided at the end” (Pinker, 2002).

abstraction in speech and thought	classification of body parts
actions under self-control distinguished from those not under *control	classification of colors
aesthetics	classification of fauna
affection expressed and felt	classification of flora
age grades	classification of inner states
age statuses	classification of kin
age terms	classification of sex
ambivalence	classification of space
anthropomorphization	classification of tools
antonyms	classification of weather conditions
baby talk	coalitions
belief in supernatural/religion	collective identities
beliefs, false	conflict
beliefs about death	conflict, consultation to deal with
beliefs about disease	conflict, means of dealing with
beliefs about fortune and misfortune	conflict, meditation of
binary cognitive distinctions	conjectural reasoning
biological mother and social mother normally the same person	containers
black (color term)	continua (ordering as cognitive pattern)
body adornment	contrasting marked and nonmarked
childbirth customs	sememes (meaningful elements in language)
childcare	cooking
childhood fears	cooperation
childhood fear of loud noises	cooperative labor
childhood fear of strangers	copulation normally conducted in privacy
choice making (choosing alternatives)	corporate (perpetual statuses)
classification	coyness display
classification of age	crying
classification of behavioral propensities	cultural variability
divination	culture
	culture/nature distinction

division of labor  
 division of labor by age  
 division of labor by sex  
 dreams  
 dream interpretation  
 economic inequalities  
 economic inequalities, consciousness of  
 emotions  
 empathy  
 entification (treating patterns and relations  
 as things)  
 environment, adjustments to  
 envy  
 envy, symbolic means of coping with  
 ethnocentrism  
 etiquette  
 explanation  
 face (word for)  
 facial communication  
 facial expression of anger  
 facial expression of contempt  
 facial expression of disgust  
 facial expression of fear  
 facial expression of happiness  
 facial expression of sadness  
 facial expression of surprise  
 facial expressions, masking/modifying of  
 family (or household)  
 father and mother, separate kin terms for  
 fears  
 fears, ability to overcome some  
 feasting  
 females do more direct childcare  
 figurative speech  
 fire  
 folklore  
 food preferences  
 food sharing  
 future, attempts to predict  
 generosity admired  
 gestures  
 gift giving  
 good and bad distinguished  
 gossip  
 government  
 magic to increase life  
 customary greetings  
 daily routines  
 dance  
 death rituals  
 decision making  
 decision making, collective  
 directions, giving of  
 discrepancies between speech, thought, and  
 action  
 dispersed groups  
 distinguishing right and wrong  
 diurnality  
 grammar  
 group living  
 groups that are not based on family  
 hairstyles  
 hand (word for)  
 healing the sick (or attempting to)  
 hospitality  
 hygienic care  
 identity, collective  
 incest between mother and son unthinkable  
 or tabooed  
 incest, prevention or avoidance  
 in-group distinguished from out-group(s)  
 inheritance rules  
 insulting  
 intention  
 interest in bioforms (living things or things  
 that resemble them)  
 interpreting behavior  
 intertwining (e.g., weaving)  
 jokes  
 kin, close distinguished from distant  
 kin groups  
 kin terms translatable by basic relations of  
 procreation  
 kinship statuses  
 language  
 language employed to manipulate others  
 language employed to misinform or  
 mislead  
 language is translatable  
 language not a simple reflection of reality  
 language, prestige from proficient use of  
 law (rights and obligations)

magic to sustain life	law (rules of membership)
magic to win love	leaders
male and female and adult and child seen as having different *natures	lever
males dominate public/political realm	linguistic redundancy
males more aggressive	logical notions
males more prone to lethal violence	logical notion of "and"
males more prone to theft	logical notion of "equivalent"
manipulate social relations	logical notion of "not"
marking at phonemic, syntactic, and lexical levels	logical notion of "opposite"
marriage	logical notion of "part/whole"
materialism	logical notion of "same"
meal times	magic
meaning, most units of are non-universal	numerals (counting)
measuring	Oedipus complex
medicine	oligarchy (de facto)
melody	one (numeral)
memory	onomatopoeia
metaphor	overestimating objectivity of thought
metonym	pain
mood- or consciousness-altering techniques and/or substances	past/present/future
morphemes	person, concept of
mother normally has consort during child-rearing years	personal names
mourning	phonemes
murder proscribed	phonemes defined by sets of minimally contrasting features
music	phonemes, merging of
music, children's	phonemes, range from 10 to 70 in number
music related in part to dance	phonemic changes, inevitability of
music related in part to religious activity	phonemic change, rules of
music seen as art (a creation)	phonemic system
music, vocal	planning
music, vocal, includes speech forms	planning for future
musical redundancy	play
musical repetition	play to perfect skills
musical variation	poetry/rhetoric
myths	poetic line, uniform length range
narrative	poetic lines characterized by repetition and variation
nomenclature (perhaps the same as classification)	poetic lines demarcated by pauses
nonbodily decorative art	polysemy (one word has several related meanings)
normal distinguished from abnormal states	possessive, intimate
nouns	possessive, loose
services)	practice to improve skills
	preference for own children and close kin (nepotism)

reciprocity, negative (revenge, retaliation)	prestige inequalities
reciprocity, positive	private inner life
recognition of individuals by face	promise
redress of wrongs	pronouns
rhythm	pronouns, minimum two numbers
right-handedness as population norm	pronouns, minimum three persons
rites of passage	proper names
rituals	property
role and personality seen in dynamic interrelationship (i.e., *departures from role can be explained in terms of individual personality)	psychological defence mechanisms
sanctions	rape
sanctions for crimes against the collectivity	rape proscribed
sanctions include removal from the social unit	reciprocal exchanges (of labor, goods, or sexual regulation includes incest prevention)
self distinguished from other	sexuality as focus of interest
self as neither wholly passive nor wholly autonomous	shelter
self as subject and object	sickness and death seen as related
self is responsible	snakes, wariness around
semantics	social structure
semantic category of affecting things and people	socialization
semantic category of dimension	socialization expected from senior kin
semantic category of giving	socialization includes toilet training
semantic category of location	spear
semantic category of motion	special speech for special occasions
semantic category of speed	statuses and roles
semantic category of other physical properties	statuses, ascribed and achieved
semantic components	statuses distinguished from individuals
semantic components, generation	statuses on other than sex, age, or kinship bases
semantic components, sex	stop/nonstop contrasts (in speech sounds)
sememes, commonly used ones are short, infrequently used ones are longer	succession
sense unified	sweets preferred
sex (gender) terminology is fundamentally binary	symbolism
sex statuses	symbolic speech
sexual attraction	synonyms
sexual attractiveness	taboos
sexual jealousy	tabooed foods
sexual modesty	tabooed utterances
sexual regulation	taxonomy
tools for cutting	territoriality
	time
	time, cyclicity of
	tools
	tool dependency
	tool making
	two (numeral)



tools to make tools  
 tools patterned culturally  
 tools, permanent  
 tools for pounding  
 trade  
 triangular awareness (assessing  
 relationships among the self and two other  
 people)  
 true and fake distinguished  
 turn-taking

tying material (i.e., something like string)  
 units of time  
 verbs  
 violence, some forms proscribed  
 visiting  
 vocalic/nonvocalic contrasts in phonemes  
 vowel contrasts  
 weaning  
 weapons  
 weather control (attempts to)  
 white (color term)  
 world view

### Additions Since 1989

anticipation  
 attachment  
 critical learning periods  
 differential valuations  
 dominance/submission  
 fairness (equity), concept of  
 fear of death  
 habituation  
 hope  
 husband older than wife on average  
 imagery  
 institutions (organized co-activities)  
 intention  
 interpolation  
 judging others  
 likes and dislikes  
 making comparisons  
 males, on average, travel greater distances  
 over lifetime  
 males engage in more coalitional violence  
 mental maps  
 mentalese  
 moral sentiments

moral sentiments, limited effective range of  
 precedence, concept of (that's how the  
 leopard got its spots)  
 pretend play  
 pride  
 proverbs, sayings  
 proverbs, sayings--in mutually  
 contradictory forms  
 resistance to abuse of power, to dominance  
 risk-taking  
 self-control  
 self-image, awareness of (concern for what  
 others think)  
 self-image, wanted to be positive  
 sex differences in spatial cognition and  
 behavior  
 shame  
 stinginess, disapproval of  
 sucking wounds  
 synesthetic metaphors  
 thumb sucking  
 tickling  
 toys, playthings

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