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Being Moved: Heideggerian Authenticity and Wolf's Nameless Virtue

by

David Joseph Gray

Under the Direction of Sebastian Rand, PhD

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

in the College of Arts and Sciences

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ABSTRACT

Susan Wolf proposes that there is a virtue of character we all dimly recognize but cannot put a name to, a virtue that involves living with an expectation and a willingness to take responsibility for more than what one is rationally on the hook for. For Wolf, recognizing this virtue helps explain why we should feel moved to offer up our time and resources to help resolve the problems we become entangled with by accident. In this thesis, I argue that her account of the nameless virtue does not go far enough and thus does not do justice to her “irrationalist” impulse but that we can look to Heideggerian authenticity in order to make the requisite changes while preserving her core sentiment. So, I present an interpretation of authenticity that focuses on reticence, anticipation, and resoluteness in order to develop a better model for assessing her moral luck cases.

INDEX WORDS: Anticipatory Resoluteness, Authenticity, Martin Heidegger, Moral luck, Nameless virtue, Reticence, Susan Wolf

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2022

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by

David Joseph Gray

Committee Chair: Sebastian Rand

Committee: Eddy Nahmias

Electronic Version Approved:

Office of Graduate Services

College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

August 2022

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to the memory of my grandfather, Joseph Block, to my mother, Cyndi Block-Hessler, and to his ancient bottle of J&B we shared there at the end.

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I wish to thank first my advisor, Dr. Sebastian Rand, whose guidance pushed me to stand more firmly in the open, encouraged me to persevere against doubt, and challenged me to think and write ever more carefully, more humbly, and more meaningfully. Your questions, your suggestions, your historical insights, but most of all your compassion were crucial to my completing this project.

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1 INTRODUCTION

There exists a nameless virtue—a virtue with which we are all intimately if ambiguously familiar, a virtue akin to generosity and the willingness to take responsibility for more than what we are on the hook for. It is a virtue whereby we make ourselves available for the benefit of other people and one that directs us to go carefully through the world, to act with an appreciation of the unpredictable and uncontrollable forces that surround us. This is Susan Wolf's thesis in "The Moral of Moral Luck" (Wolf 2001). Although we sometimes find ourselves implicated in problematic situations through sheer chance and so are not blameworthy in the way that requires us to atone for or repair whatever harm has come about, still, in these situations, we may be called upon to display that nameless virtue and to lend our hand in setting things right.

Wolf thinks we should be moved by what she calls an irrational impulse to go beyond what rational calculations entail, but her account of what it would mean to be moved in this way comes up short in several respects. Indeed, Wolf acknowledges that her account leaves many questions open and calls out for further refinement, so the purpose of this thesis is in part to aid in that refinement. When we develop Wolf's account in a way that does justice to that irrational impulse, we should find ourselves talking about Heideggerian authenticity, and gaining an appreciation of the central features of authenticity should give us a framework with which to better understand the proper responses to Wolf's moral luck cases.

So, the goal of this thesis is threefold: in §2, I present a conceptual analysis of Wolf's nameless virtue and address some ambiguities in her account of it in an effort to develop a more refined sense of what she has in mind. Then, in §3, I argue in defense of an interpretation of Heideggerian authenticity that bears the same essential character as that virtue. And finally, in §4, I directly address how thinking in terms of authenticity allows us to make better sense of

Wolf's intuitions surrounding moral luck cases and affords us a fuller sense of what people's appropriate reactions to such events should be. I then briefly consider whether authenticity is rightly conceived of as a virtue before concluding in §5 with some general remarks about the problem of moral luck in general and what I think it would take to 'solve' it.

2 WOLF AND THE MORAL OF MORAL LUCK

In her essay, “The Moral of Moral Luck,” Susan Wolf wants to make sense of those situations in which “how good or bad we are and how much praise or blame we deserve . . . is significantly determined by factors that are beyond our control.” More specifically, Wolf wants to know whether luck in “how things turn out” can affect one’s moral status. Should two truck drivers who are just alike in all the relevant ways—their general alertness while driving, their skill level, their maintenance of their vehicles, and so on—be judged differently if one of them happens, by sheer accident, to run over and kill a child?¹ “The question,” Wolf says, “is whether those whose acts *actually* lead to serious harm deserve the same treatment and the same judgments as those who, but for fortune, *would have* caused as much damage” (2001: 5, emphasis added).

To resolve this question, Wolf identifies a “nameless virtue” (2001:13ff). Wolf says that it would not be right to blame the driver who accidentally hurts a child any more than we would blame the one who (only luckily) causes no harm, but that we should expect the unlucky driver to exhibit that virtue by taking responsibility for the event in a way that goes beyond what she objectively deserves. The moral of moral luck, as Wolf sees it, is that luck in the way things turn out sometimes prompts us to exhibit this nameless virtue, and our moral appraisals of people in these cases will be a function of whether or not they exhibit it—and not simply a function of whether or not they live up to whatever concrete obligations they may be said to have (2001: 15).

In the following sections, I bring the nameless virtue more clearly into view, and then refine our conception of that virtue in order to resolve some ambiguities and tensions that exist in Wolf’s account of it. In the end, I argue that the conception of the nameless virtue we ought to

¹ “Moral luck” is a term introduced by Bernard Williams in his essay of the same name (1981). Wolf’s example of the unlucky truck driver mirrors the “lorry driver” example that Williams uses, but because I am here concerned with Wolf’s thesis alone, I follow her examples specifically and use her terminology.

endorse closely resembles Heideggerian authenticity, a concept I then address more thoroughly in §3.

2.1 The Nameless Virtue

Return to our example of the truck drivers, with one addition: Wolf asks us to assume that each is guilty of some minor degree of negligence (e.g., perhaps each has put off inspecting their brakes for a little longer than is advisable) (2001: 5). In other words, the driver who made it home without incident has definitely committed some minimal amount of negligence that could have contributed to harming an unlucky child, and the unlucky driver—the one who actually hit the child—is definitely guilty of having contributed to the accident, but not to any unusual or extraordinary degree. Now, Wolf thinks that there are two general approaches that are commonly taken when assessing the moral status of these drivers.

What she calls the rationalist position holds that “equal recklessness deserves equal blame” (2001: 6). That is, because each driver put themselves in the position where they could cause this kind of harm, they should each be blamed accordingly. According to this position, the fact that in ordinary practice we only actively go after one of the drivers is a matter of factors not directly tied to the responsibility as such. That is, both drivers are guilty of the same thing and to the same extent (i.e., of having neglected their brakes), but we only go after the unlucky driver because her negligence clearly contributed to a harmful outcome. According to the rationalist, we should not judge the unlucky driver any differently than the lucky one; they have the same moral status (2001: 6-7). Conversely, what Wolf calls the irrationalist position holds that the unlucky driver deserves more blame because of this simple observation: that driver ran over a

child while the other did not.² The undisputed fact of having brought about the harmful outcome just is the factor that saddles that driver with responsibility (2001: 10).

As Wolf sees it, the irrationalist fails to appreciate the significance of a driver's intentions. A driver who hits someone by accident should not be held accountable to the same extent as the one who does so intentionally. Yes, we can imagine that the driver's negligence was a significant causal factor, but given that she did not maliciously neglect her vehicle, that she did not intend to hit the kid, and that (we must assume) she would have kept her brakes better maintained if only she knew her neglect would actually lead to such an outcome—in light of these things, we cannot say that she *hit* the kid, where “hit” connotes malice or especially willful neglect. Instead, we should say that she failed to maintain her vehicle, which undermined her ability to successfully avoid the child as he fell into the road.³ Wolf thinks that tempering our assessments in this way accords better with our intuitions: people often wish to lessen the guilt that unlucky drivers feel by emphasizing the ordinariness of their slight negligence and the accidental nature of the event.

But Wolf thinks the rationalist does not get it fully right, either. Wolf argues that while the unlucky driver should temper the blame she assigns herself, we should nevertheless expect her to feel worse than her lucky counterpart. It would be unusual (or as Wolf puts it, “positively eerie”) for the two drivers to feel just the same as each other (2001: 6). Just as the driver who made it home without incident should never think that they are suddenly on the hook for a

² “Rational” and “irrational” are Wolf's terms. “Irrational” is a negatively charged way of talking about that position, but Wolf insists the term is only used to clearly juxtapose the two views (2001: 6).

³If we assume that the driver did have malicious intentions, then the issue becomes complicated. As Wolf's discussion of the nameless virtue (which will be detailed in just a moment) should imply, the driver who has these kinds of malicious intentions is already severely morally compromised. Still, the question is whether she is any different, morally speaking, from the same driver who fails to hit the kid strictly by chance, so it seems that Wolf's analysis would generally still apply. Relatedly, how that driver in fact responds to being called to task for their malice can be understood to express their virtuous character (or their lack of virtue, as the case may be).

tragedy they did not help to bring about but merely could have, we should be troubled by the unlucky driver who steps out of her vehicle, reflects on the ordinariness of her negligence and the prevalence of luck, and then concludes that she has nothing further to do with the child laying beneath her car (2001: 12).

Now, we might question whether anyone fully endorses either of these rather extreme approaches. Nevertheless, we can understand Wolf's exposition to present two competing impulses that her virtue is meant to unify. On her view, the so-called rationalist is right in that equal fault deserves equal blame (i.e., we should blame each driver for their negligence and for their intentions), but the irrationalist is right in that the unlucky driver should take responsibility "beyond what a rationalist assignment of liability would demand." According to Wolf, we ought to understand what we do and who we are "in an expansive rather than a narrow way," and one should "accept contingency in the determination and assessment of who [one] is" (2001: 13-14). In other words, we should think of ourselves as beings who live in the midst of forces importantly beyond our control—other people, significant luck—but we should understand those uncontrollable forces and the circumstances they result in to bear on who we are and what we ought to do.

If in the course of our projects we inadvertently contribute to bringing about some harmful event, we should understand ourselves to be sufficiently entangled in the situation such that we should be motivated to seek to make amends or to repair the harm we contributed to. Indeed, Wolf says that to act otherwise reflects a problem with one's "psychic health." We ought to approach life in this way not just out of a benevolent concern for the well-being of others, but

because part of what it takes to be a healthy human being on Wolf's view is to appreciate oneself as "thoroughly in-the-world." She explains:

To form one's attitudes and judgments of oneself and others solely on the basis of their wills and intentions, to draw sharp lines between what one is responsible for and what is up to the rest of the world, to try in this way to extricate oneself from the messiness and the irrational contingencies of the world, would be to remove oneself from the only ground on which it is possible for beings like ourselves to meet (2001: 14).

In other words, if a person does not take her interests to be entangled with the interests of other people, then she cannot claim to be living in genuine society with others. Allowing our self-concepts to be significantly informed by other people and by circumstances beyond our control is integral to being a fully developed person. So, when we find ourselves suddenly thrown into (un)lucky, unforeseen, unintended, and problematic situations, we should feel called upon to step more meaningfully into those situations, responsive to the concerns of the others involved. To respond to chance in this way is to exhibit the nameless virtue and indicates not only that one is a good person (in the ordinary evaluative sense) but also that one is healthy, well-adjusted, and sane.⁴ Incorporating the nameless virtue into our discussions of moral luck, Wolf says, reflects "a morally conscientious approach to life, as well as a humanly conscientious approach to morality"

⁴ Wolf does not explicitly address sanity in "The Moral of Moral Luck," but she does make this interesting comment in her essay "Sanity and the Metaphysics of Responsibility" (Wolf 1987): "The desire to be sane is thus not a desire for another form of control; it is rather a desire that one's self be connected to the world in a certain way—we could even say it is a desire that one's self be *controlled* by the world in certain ways and not in others" (1987: 55, emphasis original). The connection between psychological health and the inborn desire to be beholden to the concerns of others appears to be long-standing in Wolf's work and integral to her conception of the human being.

(2001: 18) and should take us some way toward resolving the problems that moral luck poses: yes, luck can bear on our moral status, but that is because we actively allow it to do so.

2.2 Refining the Nameless Virtue

It seems to me that by introducing the nameless virtue, Wolf moves the moral luck conversation forward in several ways. In a general sense, the nameless virtue pushes our discussion of responsibility away from the idea that people merely are (or become) *beset* with moral obligations toward the idea that responsibility is something that people create or actively take on by their own accord. Relatedly, the idea that taking on responsibility in this way is integral to human being certainly paints a picture of a much more richly involved way of living than the one that results from a rigidly rational worldview. Wolf's discussion also helps explain what seems to me like a reasonable intuition about moral luck cases: on the one hand, we want to temper our blame (and our anger, resentment, etc.) with an appreciation of the unintentional nature of accidents, but we will also be disturbed if an unlucky person is not moved to do something about the harm they inadvertently contributed to. Focusing our moral assessments on people's readiness or ability to willingly deepen their engagement with the people around them strikes me as a dignified (and dignifying) approach to morality, and it suggests that our responses to moral failings should often aim at cultivating just that kind of disposition in people, rather than attempt to calculate some kind of strictly punitive or remunerative measure.

All that said, Wolf's account of this phenomenon is not entirely satisfying. Some of its aspects remain ambiguous, and it is not always clear how we ought to understand what it would take for an act to count as exhibiting this virtue. Indeed, Wolf offers that her proposal "calls for further refinement" and raises questions that must be answered before the problem of moral luck

can laid to rest (2001: 15). This being the case, I will now examine two of the most compelling features of Wolf's virtue in an attempt to get a better of sense of what she is after. In doing so, I hope to gain some clarity regarding what this virtue's character is and how it can inform our evaluations of real cases. Where I think Wolf's views are ambiguous, I try to resolve them, and where her discussion strikes me as incomplete, I attempt to fill it out in a way that improves upon her observations while preserving her core sentiments as I understand them.

2.2.1 Taking Responsibility Beyond Liability

The most significant unresolved tension in Wolf's account of the virtue has to do with her notion of taking responsibility beyond what one is justly assigned, and the key issue I want to address here is what that 'beyond' is supposed to entail. In ordinary situations, as when somebody breaks a vase, and no one was around to see who it was, we want a person who did something wrong to step forward and 'take responsibility for' her actions. And when that action takes place where there is an established rule about it (e.g., a posted sign that says "you break, you buy"), then taking responsibility also involves following through on whatever further duties that causal role entails. But Wolf claims that the problem with the unlucky driver who reacts along purely rational lines "is not that he refuses to accept what responsibility he objectively has for the child's death, it is that he fails to take responsibility for it, in a way that goes *beyond that*" (2001: 12, emphasis added). Clearly then, the sense of taking responsibility just described fails to meet Wolf's standards regarding what the virtuous agent ought to do, but it is not obvious what Wolf

means to express here. What would it mean for a person to take responsibility ‘beyond’ their rational liability? Two ideas come to mind.

For one, Wolf might mean that one ought to *see beyond* the discrete act and its immediate consequences in order to appreciate whatever more distal responsibilities might be at play. That is, if I accidentally kill a child, I should not think so myopically that I only assess whether or not I am guilty of murder, and I should appreciate that I might also stand in a unique relationship to that child’s parents or to the onlookers who had to witness the tragedy. I may now owe it to the parents to console them or to pay for the child’s medical or funeral bills, or I may be required to testify to investigators about my role in the child’s death. Exhibiting the nameless virtue, I take a broad view of the situation in order to recognize that I am embedded in a much larger social fabric, a fabric that entails any number of responsibilities beyond the ones I already clearly associate with my particular intentional activity.⁵

Surely, Wolf would want us to be broadly attentive in this way, but this conception of ‘beyond’ does not seem to me to capture all of what she is trying to point to. After all, conceiving of things in this way does not sufficiently distinguish her view from the rationalist conception that she intends to set her own against. She claims that the nameless virtue involves “giving more . . . than justice requires” (2001: 14), but this interpretation of ‘beyond liability’ simply widens the context in which one is always already responsible in a predetermined way and has only to sufficiently recognize and live up to the duties that are already entailed by that responsibility. If I allow myself to zoom out of my situation in order to see the larger network of responsibilities I am involved in, I have only awakened myself to some preexisting obligations I

⁵ Enoch (2015) generally follows this line of thought in his attempt to improve upon the nameless virtue, but for similar reasons as what follows, I think he fails to appreciate that it is our capacity and our willingness to create responsibility where there is none already that can make our relationships “special” and “normatively rich”—not the other way around (2015: 7, 37). He thus fails to preserve the quality that Wolf’s “beyond” is meant to point to.

had not previously seen. In so far as those obligations are objectively defined, I am once again merely responding to the obligations I have been ‘rationally assigned.’ Sure, this interpretation points to a highly socially-engaged way of living—an aspect of the virtue we should not overlook—but it is not clear that it displays the spirit that I sense in Wolf’s discussion of voluntarily creating new relationships and obligations beyond what is already established.

An alternative (or perhaps complementary) reading focuses on Wolf’s saying that the unlucky driver ought to “take responsibility *for it*” in a way that goes beyond—meaning that the virtuous person would do something ‘beyond liability’ in a way that remains explicitly tied to the bringing about of the death. This person would act with reference to their causal role but would, I imagine, overinflate the significance of their causal contribution. There is support for this reading: Wolf cites other examples like offering to pay for a broken vase even if it was not fully one’s fault that it broke or being willing to apologize rather than get defensive if one accidentally offends someone (2001: 13). She says that one should understand “the scope of ‘what one does,’ particularly when costs are involved, in an expansive rather than a narrow way” (2001: 13), which seems to suggest that we should conceptualize our accidental causal involvement more in line with the irrationalist’s conception. It sounds like Wolf is suggesting that we act in some sense *as though* we really did the awful thing or act in such a way so as to convey that we would be willing to follow through on whatever obligations we might have had if we were more causally responsible than we actually are—if only to appease those who were harmed in the accident. On this reading, going ‘beyond’ means acting charitably, either in giving more of one’s

resources than necessary or in being accommodating to someone else's demands even though we do not agree with them that we ought to be blamed to that degree.

I believe that this second interpretation captures something significant about the virtue, but I think that Wolf needs to develop that aspect in such a way that we are not tempted to slip back into the rationalist's position like we are with the former reading. If we want to do justice to this irrationalist impulse, then we should not think that the meaning of 'beyond' that Wolf invokes lies in an ostensible, charitable excess that, say, paying for that vase would suggest. I think the crucial factors here are the *offering* to pay for the vase and the *willingness* to adapt to the expectations of the harmed party. After all, if a person were to break a vase and simply put twice its cash value on the counter, imagining that they have done away with their moral obligation, we should judge that this person has fallen short of virtuous. But, in *offering* to buy the vase, one communicates to the shopkeeper that one is *willing* to pay, that she is ready to give her resources should the shopkeeper request it. Moreover, in doing this, she does not presume that the shopkeeper feels any one way about the situation; she simply acknowledges that she is ready to try to remedy the situation according to the shopkeeper's felt needs, whatever those are. I think this solicitousness is what really brings people together, and it is even more significant in serious cases. In §4, in which I apply the notion of Heideggerian authenticity to the case of the unlucky driver, the fact that a person offers up their energy and their resources in this indeterminate way plays a central role.

2.2.2 *Expectation, Willingness, and Luck*

Wolf believes that moral luck cases present opportunities for one to express this nameless virtue (or their lack of it), but also that these are likely not the only such opportunities. Indeed, she

thinks the virtue may refer to a more general way of living, marked by “an expectation and a willingness to be held accountable for what one does” (2001: 13), again understanding ‘what one does’ in an expansive way. At first glance, this sentiment seems to mean that one is committed to being responsible in the basic sense of heeding the judgments of others and of undertaking acts of atonement. But ‘expectation’ and ‘willingness’ seem to me speak to a prospective quality that simply being responsive to correction does not capture.

As I see it, living with the expectation of being held to account inflects one’s plans and projects with a distinctly moral sense. My tasks are not simply my own; others will have something to say about them, and others will have a stake in them, too. And when I am willing to be held accountable, I submit in advance that others’ concerns are (possibly) legitimate and that my projects should to some extent be guided by those concerns already, meaning that my projects are informed by and perhaps attest to my sensitivity to the concerns of others. As willing, I do not automatically resist the demands that others make on me, but for my willingness to be virtuous and not foolish or merely servile, I must already share the concerns that underwrite those demands. Moreover, I must understand the events that prompt others to hold me to task as capable of having that moral significance for others, even if I have not been explicitly thinking of them in that way. So, we should expect this virtuous person to undertake their projects with sensitivity and caution, for she actively appreciates that her projects take place in the midst of others.

All of this indicates to me that expectation and willingness together represent a readiness to respond to the concerns of others, to submit oneself in advance to them, and to live in such a way that one is ready to be called to question and, in so doing, to live in such a way as to

continually question oneself. It strikes me that such a person is not simply willing to be held responsible, but in fact wishes to be given the opportunity.

2.3 Summary: Naming the Nameless Virtue

As Wolf clearly indicates, the virtue in question involves living with a readiness to reinterpret and reorient one's actions in a way that is responsive to the needs and expectations of others. Sometimes things do not go as we planned; sometimes "luck in how things turn out" suddenly thrusts us into a situation that is messy, complex, grave, and unresolved. Other times, even when things do go more or less as we plan, we may be unexpectedly challenged by others to rethink what we have done and to change our course of action or to lend a hand in benefitting someone else at cost to ourselves. In times like these, we might not have any clear obligations. That is, our deeper involvement with others may not be obviously required, but our willingness to remain involved might nevertheless be called for.

I believe there is more to be said than Wolf provides. Wolf's emphasis on causal histories threatens to undermine her 'irrationalist' impulse. If the virtuous person will only be moved to act if she can sufficiently convince herself of the significance of her causal role, then I think she fails to display sufficient concern for the people who have been harmed. Moreover, we should not only be willing to take on unforeseen moral demands, but we should do so in a way that explicitly resists the impulse to claim to know what it is we are supposed to do to meet those demands. That is, when we express her nameless virtue, we do not simply step into the picture in an assertive manner; instead, we make ourselves clearly available to others by conveying that we share or appreciate their concerns and that we are willing to adapt our responses to their sense of what would make things right. Said another way, perhaps, we should demonstrate that we want

to figure out the right course together and that, to do so, we will dial back our own claims to knowing what should or should not be done. It is not obvious that Wolf will agree with this line of thinking, that the virtuous agent needs to be solicitous to the degree I am suggesting. But if she does not, then I think her conception, again, falls too in line with the rationalist's.

Whether or not she would agree, Wolf's discussion does not provide much guidance on what an appropriate reaction to moral luck would look like. She offers that what is appropriate will be contingent upon circumstantial details and will involve "offering the right amount (whether it be of compensation, apology, or guilt) at the right time to the right person in the right way" (2001: 10), but if we heed the suggestions I have argued for here, then we will gain a fuller picture of the right way to respond to moral luck situations across various circumstances. It seems to me that if we refine Wolf's discussion in the way I have suggested, we end up talking about a way of living that is not so mysterious as to be "nameless," after all. The way of life that Wolf has in mind is the way of life that Heidegger describes in his conception of authenticity, so considering authenticity should help us make better sense of moral luck.

3 HEIDEGGERIAN AUTHENTICITY

In this section, I present an interpretation of Heideggerian authenticity that I believe describes the virtue that Wolf has in mind, and it will be helpful to begin by considering why one might resist identifying the two concepts. Such resistance stems from a common reading of authenticity as primarily concerned with individual autonomy. We can understand this version of authenticity as an attempt to respond to a problem that Galen Strawson raises regarding the possibility of moral responsibility. Strawson asks how one can earn responsibility for their actions if they are not responsible for the mental states that motivated those actions. That is, Strawson argues that in order to be responsible, “one must have consciously and explicitly chosen to be the way one is, mentally speaking” (Strawson 1994: 6). Strawson is working with a common intuition about moral responsibility, namely that a person must reflectively endorse the criteria and values with which they approach their lives and make decisions in order for us to rightly hold them accountable for what they do as a result. They must develop their plans and their identities autonomously, sufficiently independent of outside influence, in order for their actions to really be their own. It is natural, I think, to suppose that Heidegger’s notion of authenticity relates to this intuition, as an early discussion of authenticity in *Being and Time* is concerned with the conditions under which something like genuine selfhood can emerge.⁶

However, if we adopt this limited formulation of the concept, then it is not easy to see how authenticity would reflect either the social concern, the responsiveness, or the solicitousness

⁶ This common conception can be seen in, e.g., Guignon’s “Authenticity, Moral Values, and Psychotherapy” (2006), in Garcia’s references to Heidegger in her recent study of Beauvoir (2021), in Wolf’s own mention of Heidegger in “Freedom Within Reason” (1990), and it likely undergirds Charles Taylor’s “deep-self view” (Wolf 1987). Ortega (2005) is explicitly concerned with challenging the stigma applied to the so-called “jargon of authenticity” (2005: 15) that results from this kind of conception by focusing on the centrality of the ‘call of conscience.’ In my formulation of the ‘incomplete account,’ I try to present a conception that is broadly representative of these various approaches.

which I have claimed are central to the nameless virtue. Still, starting with this conception offers us a foothold from which we can pivot to a truer discussion of the phenomenon.

3.1 An Incomplete Account: Autonomy and the ‘Sham of Authenticity’

According to Heidegger, ordinary human life is marked by the unspectacular playing-out of projects. That is, if I am undertaking the project of retrieving *What is Called Thinking?* from the university library, that means I will be walking from my house, buying a train ticket, navigating the station, waiting on the platform, and so on. Along the way, everything I encounter shows up according to my preconceptions and preoccupations; each thing shows up insofar as it factors into my purposes and with a character I already understand well enough to continue on my way (Heidegger 2010: 163-164).⁷ Unless something interrupts me or catches me off guard, my experience will amount to not much more than a seamless deluge of coherently related moments, and even when something does interrupt me, I will tend to approach that disruption in terms of its disrupting my project more than anything else (2010: 356). All along, my steps keep within the familiar bounds of the sidewalk; the sign above the archway leads me into the station; I instinctively pay the machine for my ticket; I ask a worker for directions to the platform, and so on. I avoid bumping into the people around me; I avoid walking into traffic—and all rather thoughtlessly. Ordinary life is a bit like that familiar experience of driving down the highway before it occurs to you that you have not been paying attention for the last ten minutes. Surely,

⁷ All references to *Being and Time* refer to the German pagination.

you have been turning when appropriate, registering other people's blinkers, and accelerating and braking when necessary, but you have not been really 'present' in the ordinary sense.

On a larger scale, Heidegger holds that the possible life paths we take to be available and appropriate for us are similarly prefigured. The way I conceive of my future generally playing out is for the most part unthoughtfully determined, too. I may be on the way to retrieving the book that will help me complete my master's program—a project I have taken on deliberately and which fits with my character—but insofar as it is common in my society to obtain that kind of degree, to get some appropriate job, to buy a house, and so on, I am functioning under the pretense that I am doing just what someone is supposed to be doing (2010: 383). Until I question the reasons and the values that motivate me to have the projects I have, I am not exhibiting a fully autonomous way of being.

According to Heidegger, in ordinary life we make use of a generic 'common sense,' and when we do this, we could just as well be anyone. In an important sense, when we do that, we *are* just anyone. Thus, Heidegger distinguishes between the everyday self, *das Man*—the one, the anyone, "the they-self"—and "the authentic self, that is, the self which has explicitly grasped itself" (2010: 129). To count as an authentic individual, a person must have "explicitly grasped" herself, in much the same way that Strawson argues a responsible person must explicitly choose to be the way that she is. And because Heidegger observes that "all genuine understanding, interpreting and communication, rediscovery and new appropriation come about [in terms of the paradigmatic, everyday way of interpreting things], out of it, or against it" (2010: 169), the authentic person resists her superficial deployment of familiar concepts in order to consider them and then endorse, reject, or otherwise modify her engagement with the world in light of her inherited way of looking at things. She thereby disambiguates herself from the average person

and returns to engagement with the world having taken on “a possibility that [she] inherited, and yet has chosen” (2010: 384).

Authenticity considered just this far represents an account of autonomy. According to this reading, one is never the original source of one’s worldview and is thus never the first cause of their various plans and projects, but the more one wrests oneself free from their casual deployment of familiar concepts and acts for considered reasons, that person might be taken as sufficiently responsible for who they are and what they do.⁸ But even if one does not accept that this authentic person has become sufficiently responsible for who they are such that they can be found morally culpable—a position that Strawson will take—this interpretation of authenticity might help a person come to grips with her situation in life such that they have a *sense* of self-determination, a sense that plays an important role in feeling psychologically whole and satisfied (Guignon 2006).

So, while it is true that there are benefits to reading Heidegger in this way, we have little reason to think that this conception corresponds to Wolf’s virtue, in part because this account does not provide us with a clear sense of what the positive character of the authentic person should look like. In other words, just so long as one has deliberately, reflectively endorsed the kind of person they are, they have thereby earned authenticity, and that person might display any positive character, be it apparently virtuous or vicious. Consistent with this account, Wolf’s unlucky driver could find herself having accidentally killed a child and then reflectively decide to flee the situation. After all, this event will really throw a wrench in her plans, and those plans

⁸ In fact, this is Wolf’s understanding of Heideggerian authenticity. In her all too brief discussion of it in *Freedom within Reason*, she writes that authentic individuals “can be said to be more responsible than nonautonomous agents in the sense that only they can be regarded as ultimate sources of their own choices, independent of both the desires and the reasons that their hereditaries and environments have instilled in them” (Wolf 1993: 65). The fact that she has this interpretation is likely one reason that she does not associate it with her virtue.

are crucial to her authentic self-concept. If one can be authentic and yet respond to moral situations in this kind of way, then there is little reason to draw a connection to the nameless virtue.⁹

However, if we take this account of authenticity to be the full story, then we fail to see much of what Heidegger has in mind. Indeed, he claims that this conception of authenticity cannot avoid the perniciousness of inherited ways of thinking. Even complicated deliberation makes use of one's inherited conceptual apparatus, so when one finally commits to being some way or other, they might just be deepening their inauthenticity. Heidegger expresses his distaste for the supposedly 'authentic' life brought about through mere deliberation:

the supposition of the they that one is leading and sustaining a full and genuine "life" brings a *reassurance* [which affords the sense that] everything is "in the best order" and for whom all doors are open. . . . [So even] the most exaggerated "self-dissection" . . . *closes off* to Dasein its authenticity and possibility . . . (although always with a sham of authenticity) (2010: 178).

Achieving authenticity requires more than just deliberate conviction, and if we include more of those requisite details in our account of the phenomenon, then we should have a much narrower sense of what sorts of behaviors will count as authentic, and we should end up with something closely resembling Wolf's vision.

3.2 A More Complete Account: Anticipatory Resoluteness and Fidelity

The interpretation of authenticity that leads me to draw the connection with Wolf's virtue focuses on what Heidegger calls "anticipatory resoluteness" (2010: 304), a way of being

⁹ Mark Tanzer notes that critics often claim that Heidegger's thought thus results in an "amoral permissiveness" due to this so-called "decisionism," but he argues that Heidegger's thought instead entails that all actions are to be morally *condemned* because they violate the rule that a person's resolution should be indeterminate. On his view, people should always strive to be moral but should always recognize that they fail in that endeavor (Tanzer 2001: 355). I will make a similar claim about resoluteness in the following section, but I think that embracing and expressing this indeterminateness transparently is precisely what marks the proper (and morally right) responses to moral problems.

genuinely oriented toward the future and toward others, as opposed to thoughtlessly absorbed in the present. A person is authentic to the extent that her engagement with the world transparently attests to her fundamental openness to an unknown future, and this transparency is achieved through what Heidegger calls “reticence” (2010: 164-165). By withholding her claim to understanding the world and by resisting the impulse to ‘know’ what she ought to do and then to act on that knowledge, the reticent individual puts themselves in the position to genuinely encounter the world and the other people within it. The reticent person, anticipative and attentive, is at last brought into authentic engagement with her world and can participate as a member of a real community. To gain a richer sense of what all of this means, I will now explore Heidegger’s account of existence a bit more thoroughly than before, particularly with regard to transparency, to anticipation, and to Heidegger’s notion of authentic discourse. I will then consider how these things factor into authentically being with others.

3.2.1 Transparency and Fidelity

First, Heidegger tends to describe something as ‘authentic’ whenever the way that phenomenon plays out demonstrates its underlying nature ‘transparently’ or with ‘fidelity.’ That is, human existence has an underlying ontological structure, and the top-level, apparent, so-called “ontic” way in which existence actually manifests itself can sometimes clearly display that deeper nature on its face. We can see the significance of ontic transparency across *Being and Time*, as when Heidegger claims that “authentic care . . . helps the other to become transparent to himself in his care” (2010: 122, emphasis removed); that “resoluteness first gives to Dasein its authentic transparency” (2010: 299); and that “resoluteness constitutes the fidelity of existence to its own

self” (2010: 391).¹⁰ So, when thinking of authentic human activity from Heidegger’s perspective, we should keep transparency and fidelity front-of mind.

I take it that a person achieves authenticity, on Heidegger’s view, when their actions clearly demonstrate and display their inner nature. On the one hand, we can understand this fidelity as a successful communication or illumination of features of human existence to others. For example, taking care of others might become authentic when it is done in such a way that it displays and enhances another person’s ability to take care of themselves. But fidelity might also refer to the legible character of a situation in total: taking care of projects with other people becomes authentic just when those involved engage in an explicitly cooperative way, as opposed to playing out through one person’s domination (2010: 146).

Now, Heidegger often invokes authenticity as a modification of some particular phenomenon (e.g., authentic historicity, authentic being-toward-death, authentic discourse, etc.), but insofar as we can conceive of authenticity as a way of life in general, that way of life must broadly and transparently display what Heidegger takes to be the human being’s essential nature.

3.2.2 Taking Care, Reticence, and Anticipatory Resoluteness

Earlier, I described Heidegger’s conception of ordinary human life as primarily constituted by taking care of projects. I offered the example of navigating the world on the way to the library, and while I claimed that I successfully accomplished any number of complex tasks in the process, I characterized that activity as mostly “thoughtless.” That thoughtlessness was attributed to my lack of reflective deliberation in the activity—and the lack of reflective deliberation

¹⁰ Interestingly, in the revised edition, Stambaugh and Schmidt change their translation of “*die Treue*” from “loyalty” to “fidelity.” Cf. (Heidegger 1996, 391). “Fidelity” seems more consistent with my reading of *Being and Time*, but the relatively more normatively loaded “loyalty” might be accurate, too. That translation certainly supports Harries’s and Robinson’s readings, which I cite in footnote 13.

regarding how that activity plays into my life's broader circumstance—but that account is only part of the story. Heidegger points out that the inauthenticity of that ordinary experience mostly results from the comportment that I take toward the world in general when I am taking care of things in that way.

When we are in the midst of taking care of things, Heidegger says, we engage with beings only insofar as they factor into (or disrupt) our present purposes. The roles that beings play and the spaces they occupy in our lives are generally limited to how they cohere with the way we already understand the world to operate (2010: 144ff), and those beings show up for us framed by what Heidegger calls our “discourse”—or the ‘language’ through which the world takes shape (2010: 161). Thus, he characterizes our ordinary activity as a kind of “idle talk,” an incessant, self-satisfied ‘saying’ of things according to our preconceptions (2010: 167).¹¹ The inauthenticity of ordinary life is not simply the result of an unreflective commitment to our projects and the worldviews that orient them, it is the result of generally approaching our projects as nothing but an endless procession of beings and events we understand and which thus have no greater significance than to lead us to the next—an approach that, as we saw earlier, Heidegger does not think deliberative reflection can avoid.

If human existence necessarily involves this endless ‘saying’ of things, then in order to live authentically, we must first modify our ‘speaking’ and our ‘asserting ourselves’ so as to step back from that endless procession. Conceived of as discourse, authentic human activity is marked by restraint and quietude, the attempt to silence one’s assertive nature. Authentic activity is what Heidegger calls “reticent” activity (2010: 165). But again, because existence is

¹¹ As Heidegger puts it in *Introduction to Metaphysics*, “saying beings as such involves understanding beings as beings, that is, their Being, in advance. . . . [To] be human means to be a sayer. . . . That is their distinction and also their predicament” (Heidegger 2000: 62-63).

necessarily a kind of ‘saying,’ we cannot hope to be fully silent; instead, Heidegger’s reticence must be positive activity of a peculiar kind.

David Batho has recently worked out a helpful account of the positive character of reticence (Batho 2018). Appreciating the fact that we must inevitably operate with our limited understanding, we may choose to adopt a way of living that is directly concerned with our preconceptions. We may undertake activity “in the spirit of making sense” and intentionally withhold the claim to know what it really takes to be any of the various things we may take ourselves to be. Thus, we will speak with friends and colleagues about how we can improve in our trying to be their friends and colleagues, and we will aim to constantly appreciate the incompleteness of our self-conceptions—and to readily revise them as situations merit. Such a person, reticent with regard to their preoccupations, withholding their claim to know, and ready to be called to question, thereby exhibits what Heidegger calls “resoluteness” (2010: 296-297).¹²

It might seem counterintuitive to connect reticence with resoluteness in this way. In ordinary use, reticence is akin to silence or something very much like it, while resoluteness is usually associated with assertiveness and commitment—not the restraint that characterizes reticence. But, I think we ought to conceptualize resoluteness here as the enduring ability to maintain focus in the face of distraction, and when we remember that Heidegger understands ordinary living as a deluge of events in which we restlessly jump from one already-understood thing to the next, what might at first appear to us as a stern commitment to a goal (i.e., “resolve”

¹² “But resoluteness is only the authenticity of care itself cared for in care and possible as care” (Heidegger 2010: 301).

in the ordinary sense) turns out, on Heidegger's analysis, to be quite irresolute, uncommitted, and adrift. Holding fast to one's uncertainty is authentically resolute (2010: 344).

Batho's account of reticence—as enduringly restraining one's understanding in order to seek that which is so far unknown—is helpful in thinking about how Heidegger's authentic person would respond to Wolf's moral luck case, as will be shown in §4, but it will be helpful to acknowledge before moving on that in addition to preconceptions and present circumstances, one can be reticent with regard to the future as such, too.

Heidegger claims that when we think of the future as simply 'the next moment' in which to bring our plans to fruition, we treat possibilities in the same limited and prefigured way that we ordinarily treat other beings. Thus, he says, "the average everydayness of taking care of things becomes blind to possibility and gets tranquilized with what is merely 'real'" (2010: 195). 'Blind to possibility,' we do not confront the future in its futurity, as possibility, but instead as something already sufficiently understood, made use of, and eventually done away with. Heidegger calls this the "leveling-down" of the significance of the future, and precludes real engagement with the world (2010: 329). However, when we are reticent toward the future, we exhibit what Heidegger calls "anticipation," withholding our preconception of what the future holds and letting it remain in question (2010: 262).

Taken altogether, these features of authenticity mean that the authentic person exhibits "anticipatory resoluteness." She reticently deploys her understanding such that she does not

“become rigid about the situation,” but instead is “kept free and open,” thus keeping herself “free for the possibility of taking it back” (2010: 308).

3.2.3 *Being-with-One-Another*

Although the connection between authenticity and Wolf’s virtue should already be coming into view, we ought to consider the social dimension of authenticity and the role that reticence plays there before clearly drawing the parallel.

On Heidegger’s view, there are two general ways in which people can engage with each other in the course of their various projects. When acting inauthentically, we intervene in others’ projects, “[taking] the other’s ‘care’ away from him” (2010: 122). We once again treat existence as merely solution-oriented and transactional; we interact only to propose adequate answers to people’s problems as we understand them or to complete their tasks more quickly—if we can be said to engage with each other at all. We can ‘level-down’ their experience just as much as we can ‘level-down’ our own, precluding their ability to fully appreciate futural possibilities.

On the other hand, when we authentically interact with people, we address others as thoughtful beings like ourselves. We address these people as beings who can become resolute and unique, and who are capable of carefully developing their own understanding. And more than just treating them as capable of these things, Heidegger thinks authentic community involves “being the conscience of others” and actively encouraging others to engage more thoughtfully with their world (2010: 298). By transparently practicing reticence, by displaying a self-critical and questioning demeanor and leaving space for others to act, one “does not so much leap in for the other as *leap ahead* of him, not in order to take ‘care’ away from him, but to first give it back to him as such” (2010: 122). Authentic sociality plays out when we cooperatively

manage tasks, when we give our children the space to try and to fail at new things, or when we withhold the answer to a question in order to allow another person to come to the answer themselves. Authentic interactions thus involve actively enabling and cultivating authenticity in others.

Perhaps most importantly, there is a social corollary to anticipation. Just as the individual comes to grips with their inherited understanding so as to get themselves in the position to confront a genuinely indeterminate future, so can a community take up its heritage in an effort to behold a social destiny. In fact, Heidegger says, “the fateful destiny of Dasein in and with its ‘generation’ constitutes the complete, authentic occurrence of Dasein” (2010: 384-385). An individual ‘grasps itself’ when they really face the future, and a community is genuinely gathered together when they seek to face that same future together.¹³ If this is the case, then the projects that an authentic person undertakes in life should have as their explicit goal the bringing-together of people in their community and the deepening of their engagement together in resolutely facing a shared future.

3.3 Summary

Reticence, anticipation, and fidelity suffuse Heidegger’s discussion of authenticity, and when we let those features guide our interpretation, we gain a much fuller picture of what Heideggerian

¹³ This notion of a community’s destiny being the peak of authenticity should call to mind Heidegger’s own contemptible involvement with the Nazi party, whose success in cultivating a society that endorsed the atrocities it committed capitalized on just this kind of sentiment. Harries (1976) provides a compelling history of the connection between Heidegger’s thought and the Nazi Party’s development. There, the ‘openness’ and the ‘resoluteness’ that he championed are seen as fostering the German community’s openness to the commands of an authoritarian leader and a fierce resolve toward that leader’s goals. Robinson (2009) also argues that resoluteness, which he translates as “forward-running resolve,” entails that kind of atrocious political outcome. Guignon (2011) provides an interpretation of *Ent-schlossenheit* that supports my reading of destiny and resoluteness as importantly indeterminate, but the particularly aggressive tone given to questioning in *Introduction to Metaphysics* presents another hurdle this interpretation of Heidegger will have to address.

authenticity looks like than what was provided by the reading that focuses on autonomy. In addition to being deliberately self-critical with regard to one's heritage, we should see that Heidegger's authentic person lives with a general demeanor of self-restraint, and she designs her projects so as to get herself into the right position to genuinely behold a world she does not fully understand. She attempts to draw herself into more solicitous and dignified engagement with the other people in her community in light of their shared past and in seeking their shared future, so she aims to be moved by the way the world really is—not simply how she expects it to be.

4 BEING MOVED: AUTHENTICITY AND VIRTUE

Earlier, I argued that Wolf's discussion of the nameless virtue does not go far enough. That is, although I think she is right that a person should respond to chance with a readiness to reinterpret and reorient one's actions in a way that is sensitive to the needs and expectations of others, she does not provide much guidance on the specific way in which her virtuous person should realize that virtue. Wolf says that the right action will involve "offering the right amount (whether it be of compensation, apology, or guilt) at the right time to the right person in the right way" (2001: 10), but she does not offer us the means to determine what the right amount of the right thing will be. Elsewhere (Wolf 2007), Wolf argues that doing the right thing involves "the holistic knowledge of what matters" (2007: 163) through which one accurately comprehends which specific acts are appropriate, but as I discussed earlier, any commitment to particularly appropriate acts, especially when they are determined by the matter-of-fact causal influence one played in an event, threatens to turn her account into the rationalist conception she means to avoid. I argued that in order to preserve the idea that the virtue involves 'going beyond' a rational calculation, we should take the virtuous reaction to involve making oneself available for others without claiming to know what is supposed to be done.

I then argued that we can turn to Heidegger for an account of interpersonal behavior that bears a strong resemblance to Wolf's virtue but which explicitly includes that manner of solicitude, and it seems to me that when we apply some crucial Heideggerian concepts to Wolf's moral luck case, we can envision authentic reactions that more fully demonstrate what I take to be the core sentiments driving her proposal. In what follows, I will explore in more detail what such authentic reactions might look like and then briefly discuss whether authenticity is rightly conceived of as a virtue.

4.1 Authentic Reactions to Wolf's Moral Luck Example

Wolf asks us to imagine that an unlucky driver has accidentally hit and killed a child with her car. Crucially, this person is not guilty of malice nor of any more negligence than you or I might ordinarily exhibit. Still, she has inadvertently contributed to a significantly harmful event. What, if anything, should we expect her to do? According to the reading of authenticity I have provided, an authentic person should transparently exhibit reticence, anticipation, and resolute endurance in an attempt to address the problem they are suddenly in the midst of. What would that look like?

First, we must allow that there may be any number of predetermined or otherwise predictable actions she ought to take—immediately or in the more distant future—and she should not hesitate to understand herself as called to act on them. She may need to call 911 or yell for help; perhaps she ought to double-check this child's vitals. It would be wrong for our driver to fail to do whichever of them she is in a reliable position to perform.¹⁴ However, Heidegger notes that “in limiting the inclination of the call [of conscience] to actual and planned incidents of indebtednesses (*sic*), we fail to recognize the disclosive character of conscience” (2010: 300), meaning that if we do not restrain our preconceptions of what we are supposed to be doing, we preclude our ability to identify the appropriate opportunities to act as they disclose themselves to us in real time. Thus, she should remain reticent and focused, reading the scene sensitively,

¹⁴ I am tempted to read Heidegger's statement that “one who is resolute knows no fear, but understands the possibility of anxiety as *the* mood that does not hinder and confuse him” (2010: 344) as implying that the authentic person will be resistant to shock, but this is likely too strong a reading. Although we should probably expect a resolute individual to be somewhat more impervious to losing their grip, some tragic events are unusually disorienting experiences, and I think it would be wrong to expect people to respond immediately and effectively in all situations. But insofar as they are in a stable position or come to be in one even much later, my interpretation continues.

looking for a moment that warrants her participation without acting too hastily. This means, perhaps, lingering on the periphery, keeping an ear toward whoever is talking, and taking a small step forward when the parents look her way.

This point can be seen somewhat more readily if we imagine the opposite case, in which the unlucky driver tries to do more and more, even with the charitable intention Wolf mentions. When the driver offers too many details about the accident to a medic in an attempt to help them do their job or when that person keeps voicing their apologies to the weeping parents out of a sense that she must atone—reactions like these strike me as thoroughly overinvolved, and Heidegger allows us to see why that is the case. This person not only does too much, but she also likely misses chances to do what could actually prove helpful. Even if no such chances reveal themselves, by busying herself with what she presumes to be helpful she in fact avoids confronting the truer gravity of her situation.

So, reticence plays a practical role here, but Heidegger's overall concern is not so strictly pragmatic. When acting presumptuously, we also "leap in" to the situation and attempt to resolve the problems we have caused without yielding to the actual needs of the people we have harmed. It might be appropriate at some point to apologize to the grieving parents or to pay for the medical bills, but the manner and occasion for those gestures should not be forced upon them. It is important to recognize that some actions might be called for some time after the immediate event comes to a close, so our unlucky driver should allow for things to happen at their own pace and to remain ready to respond when the time comes. Keeping up an authentic social relationship like this one involves maintaining a solicitous concern, so the virtuous driver ought to indicate that she will continue to be invested in the way things play out and will make herself available to meet the felt needs of the people involved. Both in the time immediately after the accident and in

the days or weeks to come, the authentic person will be there for those she has unwittingly harmed by resolutely allowing her time and her resources to remain indeterminately entangled in the well-being of others.

It is worth noting that the driver is not the only one capable of behaving authentically here, and the harmed party's ability to be anticipative and solicitous with regard to the resolution of the event is a crucial part of what makes the unfolding of a given moral luck case altogether just. Those who are harmed ought to be similarly yielding, and their being that way is the foundation of forgiveness and genuine resolution.

Finally, especially in tragic situations like accidental death, we should expect the unlucky driver to be there for those she has harmed not just in hoping to remedy the situation and in wishing to expediently bring things to a close. We should want her to dwell on the ongoing thoughts that the grieving people have: thoughts of mortality, of fragility, and of uncertainty. And if these thoughts do not come naturally, she should try to seek them out. Grief, especially sudden and enthralling grief like these parents and onlookers feel, strikes me as worthy of our commiseration not just because we are all, incidentally, liable to experience loss at some point, but because grief attunes us to the circumstances that pervade all of our lives. Thus, they are not the burdens of individuals but are thoughts that appreciate the realities we all live amidst. So, on a Heideggerian view, these are the thoughts that occasion authentic community. All grief is in a certain sense a shared grief, and these grave thoughts look to the severe, the pervasive, the fundamental, and the mysterious—thinking of them is the epitome of anticipatory resoluteness.

Sincere commiseration, forgiveness, and mercy, on the scene and in the aftermath, strike me as thoroughly authentic reactions consistent with Heidegger's vision and my own.

Wolf's account of her nameless virtue could not provide this sort of illustration. Although she may ultimately endorse any number of these proposals, her lack of clarity regarding what she means by taking responsibility beyond liability and her emphasis on even liberally interpreting our causal histories in order to motivate action strike me as insufficiently appreciative of the concerns of others and as overly preoccupied with the concrete things that we as individuals have already done and should do next. As I see it—and this is a sentiment I read in Heidegger—we should not have to finagle ourselves onto a hook in order to be moved to act, nor should our impulse (or our reluctance) to help others need to be justified by deferring to some overtly rational scheme. My sense is that Wolf's motivation in proposing her virtue is more or less in line with the motivation I have to read moral luck cases through the lens of authenticity, but if she does not develop her analysis to reflect the crucial roles that reticence and anticipation play in human existence, I think she fails to hit her mark.

4.2 Is Authenticity a Virtue?

Although it is somewhat outside of the scope of this thesis, it is an interesting question whether authenticity is in fact a virtue, especially in the normative sense. This question might at first seem counterintuitive, given that virtues are generally regarded, by definition, as the traits that a person ought to have. However, it is not obvious that virtue needs to be understood in this way,

and given that Heidegger claims that “authentic being a self is not based on an exceptional state of the subject,” it is worth a moment of consideration (2010: 130).

In Heidegger’s discussion of heritage and ‘the good,’ he says, “if everything ‘good’ is a matter of heritage and if the character of ‘goodness’ lies in making authentic existence possible, then handing down a heritage is always constituted in resoluteness” (Heidegger 2010: 383-384). We would be wrong to think that Heidegger is here attributing some kind of objective goodness to the particular possibilities that our heritage sets up for us, but he might be proposing that heritage determines the way in which resoluteness is legibly expressed in a given cultural setting. That is, the acts that are thought of as ‘good’ (e.g., Wolf’s “well-established virtue of generosity”) are just those acts which transparently display the several features of authenticity in the unique discursive language of the society in which they occur, but they do not speak to an ‘excellence’ that one person may possess and another may lack. No person can fail to realize the existential nature of the human being; virtuous action simply *articulates* that inner nature in a transparent way, such that others can sufficiently comprehend it. It is only because the virtues are demonstrative in this way that one can “be the conscience of others” (2010: 298). Virtues, on this view, are contingently defined and subordinate to existential authenticity in general.

I find this interpretation of virtue compelling, as it offers us a way to understand ethical norms across different cultures as fundamentally unified. It also allows us to maintain that different situations call for different responses, contingent upon the social context in which they occur, while appreciating that any right response will admit of a fundamentally similar character. If authenticity is in fact this unifying dimension of the virtues—or, a particularly good way of interpreting their unity—then it may prove fruitful for Wolf to take a deeper look at Heidegger’s

analysis, given her interest in working out ‘the unity of the virtues’ (Wolf 2007). It is for this reason, as well, that I think Heidegger’s work is a good supplement to Wolf’s.

That said, it may turn out that thinking in terms of particular virtues qua unique behaviors appropriate to unique situations (i.e., courage, as apart from generosity, as apart from honesty, etc.) might obscure the pervasiveness of authentic possibility, which Heidegger may very well object to, hence why we should be reluctant to consider authenticity a virtue.¹⁵ As to the normative force of authenticity, we might allow this to remain an open question, but it seems to me that there is a natural gravity that draws us toward what we perceive as authentic activity—and it may be that all other apparently inauthentic activity simply serves as a marker to point us back toward the authentic.¹⁶

¹⁵ Heidegger’s discussion of “values” in *Introduction to Metaphysics* should prove helpful here. Cf. “Values provide the measure for all domains of beings, that is, of what is present at hand” (Heidegger 2000, 151)

¹⁶ Walter Brogan’s analysis of Heidegger’s reading of *The Nicomachean Ethics* should prove helpful in continuing this inquiry (Brogan 2005), as might Heidegger’s essay, “Plato’s Doctrine of Truth” (Heidegger 1998).

5 CONCLUSION

My aim with this thesis was to argue that we should continue to develop the notion that Susan Wolf introduces as the nameless virtue and that we should do so in terms of Martin Heidegger's notion of authenticity, provided that we interpret authenticity in a particular way. So, in §2, I examined Wolf's nameless virtue in close detail and worked out a refined interpretation of that phenomenon which preserves her core sentiment while resolving some of its ambiguities and drawing out some of its most interesting features. In §3, I presented an interpretation of Heideggerian authenticity that presents a more complete picture of the nature of that phenomenon and which clearly bears the character of the virtue that I think Wolf has in mind. Then, in §4, I demonstrated some of what we have to gain in making this connection by analyzing Wolf's primary moral luck case through the lens of authenticity. What resulted, I believe, is a more thorough reading of the situation Wolf imagines, a reading that allows us not only to explain why the proper responses to moral luck cases should have the peculiar character Wolf thinks they do but also to imagine how those responses would play out in more detail. As Wolf acknowledges, her discussion leaves many questions open, and as she says, "without answering them . . . we cannot claim to have 'solved' the problem of moral luck or laid it, once and for all, to rest" (Wolf 2001: 15). It is my sense that incorporating Heideggerian authenticity in answering these questions takes us further toward that goal.

I want to conclude with a few remarks about the moral luck discourse in general that are prompted by my reading of Heidegger. It seems to me that the so-called problem of moral luck must result from an impulse that is, at bottom, resistant to altruism and service. What, after all, do the questions regarding moral luck ask? On my reading, one of the fundamental questions of moral luck is: may I be excused from what I clearly take to be a problem? When we ask whether

an unlucky driver ought to grieve with the parents or if their medical bills ought to be taken care of or whether a customer ought to help alleviate the burden faced by a shopkeeper who can no longer sell one of her wares—when we put these things to question, we must start from the position that it would be somehow disadvantageous for this unlucky person to do so, and we suppose we must find a reason for them to do it anyway. (Even Wolf’s account is focused on aiding others “at cost to oneself”) (2001: 14). Consistent with this impulse, I think, is the sense that it is something like an instance of luck that we find ourselves living in a space that is populated by others at all, such that now we have to temper our interests in light of theirs and must be careful not to bump shoulders if we can help it. This conception strikes me as a bizarre if regrettably natural approach to living, and it is only in light of it that we find ourselves needing to ‘solve’ this ‘problem.’

As I see it, no response to moral luck can be satisfying that lets us simply continue uninterrupted with whatever it was we were doing before luck leapt in. Moral luck problems stipulate that there are problems involving people who are harmed, so delimiting the boundaries of obligation should only help us to discover the ways that we can be of the most use—it should never result in an outcome that leaves that harm untended or which represses the impulse to aid in its resolution. I take it that we can only rightly lay the moral luck problem to rest if it means we stop asking ourselves whether we deserve some obligation and instead ask others whether we can be of any service.

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