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Appeals to Authenticity: Discourses on the True Self and the Politics of Identity Construction

By

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Abstract

Appeals to Authenticity: Discourses on the True Self and the Politics of Identity Construction

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My dissertation, *Appeals to Authenticity: Discourses on the True Self and the Politics of Identity Construction*, examines how appealing to a "true self" may have social and political value, even if such a self does not exist. Across contemporary life, individuals invoke notions of an inner self that has been maimed by oppressive norms and practices, or that would be harmed if it assimilated, conformed, or otherwise departed from who it was. From transgender individuals seeking to become the gender they feel they truly are, to indigenous groups seeking exemptions from equality laws, a variety of groups today cast their political claims in terms of authenticity. However, in the past quarter century, such appeals have been criticized by scholars from across the humanities and social sciences, who fault authenticity for stipulating regulatory notions of group identity, stigmatizing those who fall outside its norms, and relying on untenable notions of selfhood and self-knowledge. Some have even called for abandoning the term.

My dissertation responds to these critiques and argues for a renewed appreciation of authenticity in political life. Through an engagement with Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Michel Foucault, Judith Butler, and writings from American social movements from the sixties and today, I formulate a framework for appealing to the term that departs its problematic ontological grounds and is attuned to its political risks. Each chapter responds to a particular challenge facing such appeals, from the status of the "self" they imply, to their claims of genuine self-knowledge, to the risks of exclusion, and to the ways they can blur the public/private line. In addressing these critiques, I show that there are good reasons to continue to value authenticity: appeals to the term may enable marginalized groups to counter oppressive representations of themselves, mobilize individuals around visions of selfhood and community, facilitate critiques of social norms, and animate practices of resistance.

The dissertation begins by addressing those critics who claim that authenticity is too conceptually vague and too politically risky to be useful in pursuing progressive or emancipatory ends, and that political actors would be better served by parsing their claims in terms of related values, such as justice, integrity, or individualism. Chapter one examines how appeals to authenticity in American social movements in the 1960s facilitated critiques of capitalism, racism, and sexism, legitimated historically stigmatized identities, and encouraged marginalized individuals to speak truthfully about their experiences. I show that these effects were more easily elicited by appealing to authenticity than by appealing to related terms, such as sincerity or autonomy. The next chapter responds to criticisms of authenticity's "depoliticizing" effects

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through an engagement with the works of Jean-Jacques Rousseau. The third and fourth chapters look to the works of Michel Foucault and Judith Butler, respectively, to address criticisms of the notions of "the self" and "self knowledge" underlying such appeals. In the fifth chapter, I address the tendencies of exclusion and marginalization that have historically attended such appeals by examining recent deployments of authenticity arising in contemporary discourses on transgender. I conclude by examining how two texts responding to the events animating the Black Lives Matter movement, in order to show how discourses on authenticity need not presuppose an essential self or transparent self-knowledge, and need not rely on essentialized notions of "blackness" in order to advance social critiques.

My dissertation departs from contemporary philosophical accounts of the value of authenticity, which tend to treat it at an almost exclusively conceptual level. Whether providing an intellectual history, a conceptual analysis, or an exegesis of an early articulator, these thinkers largely focus on what appeals to authenticity *mean* rather than what they *do*. As a result, they incompletely answer those critics who are concerned with injuries wrought in pursuit of authenticity—for instance, the tendency to marginalize the experiences of middle-class blacks in definitions of "blackness." By examining authenticity's effects, my dissertation responds directly to these critiques, and provides a more complete account of why it continues to compel. I show that invoking authenticity does not always or necessarily give rise to detrimental political effects, and that refraining from such appeals may foreclose the potentially emancipatory futures they can help bring into being. Thus, my dissertation provides a more complete picture of why appeals to authenticity have been politicized, why they continue to compel, and why they need not replicate the injuries and regulation frequently associated with essentialism.

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INTRODUCTION
The Politics of Authenticity

"The search for authenticity, nearly everywhere we find it in modern times, is bound up with a radical rejection of things as they are."
—Marshall Berman, *The Politics of Authenticity*

"[Authenticity] is a deeply flawed and dangerous term; but our collective investment in it is so high that even after decades of deconstructivism and anti-essentialism it is impossible to get rid of it."
—Virginia Richter, "Authenticity: Why We Need It Although It Doesn't Exist"

Appeals to authenticity are ubiquitous across contemporary political life, yet also remarkably diverse. In electoral campaigns, the term is deployed to criticize hypocrisy, stiltedness, and too much distance from the common folk. Transgendered persons have invoked notions of a gender that is real and deeply felt as opposed to one that is apparent or assigned. Indigenous groups and religious minorities have made legal claims by insisting that their practices are faithful to their religion or culture, and by appealing to an inner self that would be injured if they assimilated to majority norms or practices. The term continues to describe a number of traits we find desirable or right—including honesty, sincerity, genuineness, and originality—while being perceived to be higher, rarer, and more valuable than these synonyms.[1]

Yet over the past four decades, notions of authenticity have also been strongly challenged. Across the humanities and social sciences, scholars have claimed that genuine self-knowledge is impossible, that there is no such thing as an essence, telos, or inner true self, and that notions of authentic origins are always fictional, purified of complexity. In contemporary philosophy, for instance, Charles Larmore notes, "On a theoretical level, it has generally become an object of skepticism, if not flat-out rejection. Few philosophers consider giving authenticity a philosophical articulation. . . . If the question even arises, it tends to be seen as no more than a

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[1] Charles Lindholm, *Culture and Authenticity* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2007), and Lionel Trilling, *Sincerity and Authenticity* (Cambridge: Harvard, 1972).

mirage or a mental confusion."[2] Many also argue that a politics of authenticity inevitably

stigmatizes and excludes, for example, by demeaning those considered not to be "real blacks" or

"true women." To appreciate the depth and scope of the opposition to authenticity, consider the

diversity of critiques below:

- Many notions of authenticity assume the existence of a self, nature, or essence "inside" the person

  or "underneath" social influence and outward displays.[3] Some philosophers have argued that

  these notions of selfhood deny the constitutive impact of language, culture, history, or the body

  and posit an unreal commonality ("human nature," "the subject," "all women").[4]

- Some feminists have argued for the existence of an "authentic" female essence—one that may be

  located in female bodies, or manifested in certain experiences (such as oppression or childbirth),

  or inherent in certain traits, dispositions, languages, behaviors, or values.[5] Critics not only contest

  that these are the real, true manifestations of femininity but also claim that *any* conception of

  "true femininity" upholds certain values, bodies, experiences, and identities at the expense of

  others.[6]

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[2] Charles Larmore, *Practices of the Self,* (Chicago: Chicago, 2010), p. 4.

[3] An example: "Through our feminist work, we try to peel away social influences that limit or authenticity or freedom. If we are successful in our attempts to peel away those influences, what would be left? It only makes sense for me to assume that what would be left would be our authentic selves." Ruth Colker, *From a Broken Web* (Boston: Beacon, 1988), p. 220.

[4] Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1974 [1967]); Jacques Lacan, *Écrits: A Selection* (New York: Norton, 1977); Gilles Deleuze, *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque* (Minneapolis: Minnesota, 1993); Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* (New York: Pantheon, 1977); Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Volume One* (New York: Pantheon, 1978); Richard Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, Solidarity* (Cambridge: Cambridge, 1989); Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990); William Connolly, *Identity\Difference: Democratic Negotiations of Political Paradox* (Ithaca: Cornell, 1991).

[5] See Adrianne Rich, *Of Woman Born* (New York: Norton, 1976); Mary Daly, *Gyn/Ecology* (Boston: Beacon, 1978); Carol Gilligan, *In a Different Voice* (Cambridge: Harvard, 1982); Catharine Mackinnon, "Feminism, Marxism, Method and the State," *Signs* Vol. 8, No. 4, 1983.

[6] Butler, *Gender Trouble;* Janet Halley, *Split Decisions: How and Why to Take a Break from Feminism,* (Princeton: Princeton, 2008); Cherríe Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa, eds., *This Bridge Called My Back* (New York: Kitchen Table, 1983).

- Notions of authenticity are often used to depict a "direct" access to reality or an experience, "unmediated by linguistic, representational, and cultural conventions."[7] Many philosophers claim that this type of access is impossible.[8]

- From colonial times onward, racist laws and customs have sought to define what "real blackness" is and, on the basis of this definition, adjudicate who is and is not black (for instance, "the one-drop rule").[9] Yet even notions of authentic blackness that arose within black emancipatory discourses have faced problems: some have inadvertently stigmatized blacks who are fair-skinned or middle class or who speak in certain ways; others have excluded black gays and lesbians; and still others have provided a narrow range of acceptable lifestyles that supposedly manifest this black essence.[10] Ostensibly pursued to generate solidarity, notions of "real blackness" have instead emphasized intra-racial differences, critics allege.[11]

- Appeals to authenticity may rest on notions of transparent self-knowledge, an inner, indisputable "felt sense." Such beliefs have been challenged by psychoanalytic accounts of the unconscious, Derridean accounts of *différance*, and Foucauldian analyses of power.[12]

- Some political theorists have invoked ideals of authenticity to argue for granting legal exemptions, protections, and recognition to subaltern or minority groups.[13] They have argued that

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[7] Virginia Richter, "Authenticity: Why We Need It Although It Doesn't Exist," in *Transcultural English Studies: Theories, Fictions, Realities*, eds. Frank Schulze-Engler, et al, (New York : Rodopi, 2009), p. 59.

[8] Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things,* (New York: Pantheon, 1971 [1970]); Joan Scott, "Experience," in *Feminists Theorize the Political,* ed. Judith Butler and Joan Scott (New York: Routledge, 1992); Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature,* (Princeton: Princeton, 1980).

[9] J. Martin Favor, *Authentic Blackness: the Folk in the New Negro Rennaissance* (Durham: Duke, 1999); National Black Feminist Organization, "Statement of Purpose" in *Feminism in Our Time* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994); Pauli Murray, "The Liberation of Black Women," in ed. Beverly Guy-Sheftall, *Words of Fire: An Anthology of African-American Feminist Thought* (New York: The New Press, 1995*);* Favor, *Authentic Blackness;* Ture and Hamilton, *Black Power,* 36-37; Ogbar, *Black Power,* 185.

[10] Tommie Shelby, *We who are dark: the philosophical foundations of Black solidarity* (Cambridge: Harvard, 2005); Randall Kennedy, *Sellout: The Politics of Racial Betrayal* (New York: Random House, 2008); Richard T. Ford, *Racial Culture: A Critique* (Princeton: Princeton, 2005); Kwame Anthony Appiah, "Identity, Authenticity, Survival: Multicultural Societies and Social Reproduction" in Gutman, *Multiculturalism*; Toure, *Who's Afraid of Post-blackness?* (New York: Free Press, 2011); Henry Louis Gates, Jr., *The Henry Louis Gates, Jr. Reader* (New York: Basic Civitas, 2012).

[11] Martin Japtok and Jerry Rafiki Jenkins, "What Does it Mean to be Really Black?," in *Authentic Blackness/"Real" Blackness,* ed. Japtok and Jenkins, (New York: Peter Lang, 2011), p. 12.

[12] Lacan, *Écrits*; Sigmund Freud, *A Case of Hysteria* (London: Oxford, 2013); Derrida, *Of Grammatology;* Foucault, *History of Sexuality 1.*

the majority ought to respect particular languages, practices, and ways of life because they are essential for the thriving and happiness of a collectivity. However, notions of what constitutes a genuine member may originate from outside the group and be constraining, if not coercively imposed.[14] Furthermore, such protections may permit members of a minority group to engage in unjust or inegalitarian practices (forced marriages, unequal rights to political participation, unequal access to education), because they are portrayed as "authentic."[15]

- Notions of authenticity may be easily commodified, facilitating insidious forms of capitalism.[16]

These critiques combine to convey an overwhelmingly pessimistic account of the value of authenticity in political life. Consequently, some scholars have suggested framing identity-based demands through other values, such as sincerity or autonomy. Others have suggested that we abandon the term entirely.[17] Thus we are left in a bind—notions of authenticity are entrenched in our language and practices, but they seem philosophically untenable and replete with political problems.[18]

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[13] The most famous of these are Charles Taylor, "The Politics of Recognition," in *Multiculturalism: Examining The Politics of Recognition,* (Princeton: Princeton, 1994); and Will Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship: A Liberal Theory of Minority Rights*, (Oxford: Oxford, 1995).

[14] J. Kehaulani Kauanui, *Hawaiian Blood: Colonialism and the Politics of Sovereignty and Indigeneity*, (Duke: 2008), Aleida Assmann, "Authenticity—The Signature of Western Exceptionalism?" in *Paradoxes of Authenticity: Studies on a Critical Concept*, ed. J. Straub (Transcript-Verlag: 2012).

[15] See the collection of essays in Susan Moller Okin, *Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?* (Princeton: Princeton, 1999); Sarah Song, *Justice, Gender, and the Politics of Multiculturalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge, 2007).

[16] Alessandro Ferrara, "New Reflections on Non-Essentialist Authenticity," paper delivered on November 23, 2012 at "Variations of Authenticity" conference at the Univeresity of Bern; Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello, *The New Spirit of Capitalism* (London: Verso, 2006); Somogy Varga, "The politics of Nation Branding: Collective identity and public sphere in the neoliberal state," *Philosophy and Social Criticism* (2013); Taylor, *A Secular Age.*

[17] Regina Bendix, *In search of authenticity: the Formation of Folklore Studies* (Madison: Wisconsin, 1997); James Johnson, "Liberalism and the Politics of Cultural Authenticity," *Politics, Philosophy, and Economics,* 2002 1: 213; Andrew Potter, *The Authenticity Hoax: How We Get Lost Finding Ourselves* (New York: Harper, 2010); Simon Feldman, *Against Authenticity* (Lanham, MD: Lexington, 2015).

[18] On authenticity's continued persistence, see Martin Jay, "Taking On the Stigma of Inauthenticity: Adorno's Critique of Genuineness," *New German Critique*, No. 97, Adorno and Ethics (Winter, 2006), p. 16; Lindholm, *Culture and Authenticity*; Charles Taylor argues that we currently live in "The Age of Authenticity," see *A Secular Age* (Cambridge: Harvard, 2007).

This dissertation argues for a renewed appreciation of authenticity in political life, by examining the discursive and political effects of appeals to the term. While some philosophers have recently offered defenses of such appeals, they tend to focus more on the conceptual or theoretical level, investigating what appeals to the term *mean* rather than what they *do*. Yet this understates the value of authenticity, since it overlooks the egalitarian and emancipatory effects that authenticity claims may facilitate: they may enable marginalized groups to counter oppressive representations of themselves, mobilize individuals around visions of selfhood and community, facilitate critiques of social norms, and animate practices of resistance. Through an engagement with a range of writings by political theorists, activists, feminists, and critical race theorists, this dissertation argues that authenticity's value lies partly in its effects, and considers how discourses of authenticity might be reformulated in order to harness the emancipatory potential of these effects.

In order to show how authenticity may be able to further egalitarian and emancipatory ends, the dissertation responds to some of the problems that have attended the term in political life, from the status of the "self" it implies to its claims of genuine self-knowledge, to its risks of exclusion, and to the ways it can blur the lines between public and private. Yet amid these different critiques, there is one that is even more foundational: the claim that authenticity is so ubiquitous and protean that it has become "devoid of meaning," that it only signifies approval or endorsement, and that a politics of authenticity will therefore be similarly incoherent.[19] The term

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[19] For instance, Andrew Potter claims, "when something is described as 'authentic,' what is invariably meant is that it is a Good Thing. Authenticity is one of those motherhood words… that are only ever used in their positive sense, as terms of approbation, and that tend to be rhetorical trump cards." Andrew Potter, *The Authenticity Hoax,* p. 6. The New York Times cites linguist Naomi S. Baron to suggest that authenticity is one of those words "used so often that they actually become devoid of meaning." Ainsley Newton and Richard E. Ashcroft wonder if authenticity could be reduced to other words (autonomy, welfare), and whether it is too conceptually vague to be coherent. See Stephanie Rosenbloom, "Authentic? Get Real," *New York Times,* September 11, 2011; Ainsley J. Newton and Richard E.

authenticity is able to describe a vast range of objects, including works of art, social groups, experience, and individual human beings. The authenticity that certain Western tourists pursue (a "true" culture, nature, or "man") seems different in kind from the authenticity that some feminists promote (the category and composition of "real," "genuine" women). Both, in turn, differ from the strongly individualist cultural ethos that some conservatives call the "cult of authenticity." Even those who limit themselves to the authenticity of *individuals* do not agree on what renders one authentic—whether it is one's origins or one's presentation; one's feelings, desires, or experiences; all or part of one's identity. How can "authenticity" be scattered across so many disparate objects and contexts?

Since this objection, which I will term the *conceptual critique*, is so foundational, the rest of the introduction will address it. Section one considers the etymology, origins, and development of notions of authenticity. In this section, I show that while *authenticity* is a loose and protean term, it is not merely a term of approbation; through a brief consideration of its history, I explain its meanings, features, and rough boundaries. This section covers the term's history from the ancient Greek to the twentieth century, examining its migrations from philosophical discourses to political activism, and culminating with the emergence of late twentieth century critiques of authenticity. Section two examines contemporary philosophers who have responded to these critiques, including Charles Taylor, Alessandro Ferrara, and Charles Larmore. In this section, I argue that while many of these arguments are philosophically compelling, they incompletely capture authenticity's full value and potential, in part because they focus on the task of normative reconstruction. Section three explains the different

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Ashcroft, "Whither Authenticity?" *American Journal of Bioethics* 5 (3):53 – 55 (2005); Stanley Crouch, *The Artificial White Man* (New York: Basic Civitas, 2004).

challenges that the dissertation will address in order to formulate alternative discourses of authenticity.

1. Authenticity: The Term, Its Concepts and Histories

The *Oxford English Dictionary* (*OED*) provides three contemporary uses of the term *authentic*: "legally valid," "in accordance with fact or stating the truth," or "genuine, not feigned or false."[20] This last sense, which the *OED* describes as "its usual sense," contains five sub-senses, three of which refer to persons: first, one who "rightly or properly bears the name"; second, that which "truly reflects one's inner feelings"; and, third, a mode of existence deriving from existentialism, which involves self-awareness, critical reflection on one's values, and responsibility for one's actions.[21]

Despite the seeming straightforwardness of these definitions, the term connotes a much wider range of meanings and attributes today, including ideas like "immediacy," "autonomy," "self-fulfillment," "wholeness," and "exemplariness."[22] Authenticity, Somogy Varga notes, is a highly context-dependent term, and the relative ease we have in distinguishing what is authentic from inauthentic depends on the particular categories of a given context, particularly on how it distinguishes between truth and falsity, real and unreal, genuine and disingenuous.[23] Thus, in certain situations, determining what is authentic is relatively straightforward, such as when a computer "authenticates" a password or a notary a legal document. In other situations, this

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[20] "authentic, adj. and n.". OED Online. June 2014. Oxford University Press. http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/13314 (accessed June 30, 2015).

[21] This last sense was absent from earlier entries, and was added in the June 2014 revision to the entry. Compare to "authentic, adj. and n.". OED Online. March 2013. Oxford University Press. http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/13314 (accessed May 16, 2013).

[22] See Lindholm, *Culture and Authenticity;* Alessandro Ferrara, *Reflective Authenticity: Rethinking the Project of Modernity* (New York: Routledge, 1998).

[23] Somogy Varga, *Authenticity as an Ethical Ideal* (Routledge: 2011), p. 1.

distinction is more opaque—to determine if an *experience* is authentic (or what that might mean), we might appeal to epistemology, aesthetics, theology, or psychiatry, which have their own standards, distinctions, and sets of concepts.

In addition to context, one must also take into account the object itself and the different constitutive parts that may render it authentic or not. As Denis Dutton notes, authenticity is a "dimension word," "a term whose meaning remains uncertain until we know what dimension of its referent we are talking about."[24] For example, when referring to whether a painting is authentic, a forgery may be at the same time "a fake Vermeer and an authentic Van Meegeren"—that is, while its origins are false with regard to what it purports to be, it nonetheless possesses true (and, in this case, valuable) origins, insofar as it originated from a talented forger. If one examines the various dimensions authenticity refers to, one can distinguish a range of different concepts that fall under the umbrella of the term: authenticity may refer to an objective quality or it may require a specific kind of consciousness; it may refer to something given (such as an essential nature) or to something that requires construction (for instance, a narrative identity); it may refer to an identity that is universal, tied to a group, or individual.[25]

The term *authenticity* existed long before its association with ideas of sincerity, personal and collective identity, and the ethical demand to be "true" to oneself. It has roots in the ancient Greek *autos,* meaning "self," and *hentes,* meaning "worker, doer, being." The Greek *authentes*

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[24] Denis Dutton, "Authenticity in Art," in *The Oxford Handbook of Aesthetics*, ed. J. Levinson (Oxford: 2003), p. 258. On Dutton's reading, even counterfeit money is, nonetheless, "genuine paper." One might ask that if every thing is in some regard "authentic," then whether and in what regard authenticity is valuable at all.

[25] I am indebted to Hans Sluga for suggesting this distinction. For a slightly different taxonomy of authenticity, see Ferrara, *Reflective Authenticity*.

referred to "one who does a thing himself, a principle, a master, an autocrat."[26] The term was

passed down through Medieval Latin and Old French before being incorporated into Late Middle

English in the late thirteenth century. In its earliest English uses, it referred to objects that were

"prototypical and firsthand" ("Jove's authentic fire") as well as objects characterized as

"belonging to oneself, one's own" ("his new-drawn authentic sword"), though these two senses

are largely obsolete.[27] Up until the eighteenth century, the term emphasized an object's

authoritativeness, accuracy, and true origins.[28] Samuel Johnson's 1785 dictionary described it as

"that which has everything requisite to give it authority."[29] Thus, the term was relevant to early

modern political theorists who were interested in the characteristics, sources, and entailments of

political authority. For instance, when Jean-Jacques Rousseau used the term, he did so to

describe the authority of the sovereign and the laws: "The sovereign . . . acts only by means of

the laws, the laws being nothing but the *authentic* acts of the general will."[30] Thomas Hobbes

used the term in a similar context and manner: "the *authentic* interpretation of the law . . . . is the

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[26] This noun had two adjectival forms, *authentia* or "original authority," and *authentikos* "of first hand authority, original." "authentic, adj. and n.". OED Online. March 2013. Oxford University Press. http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/13314 (accessed July 16, 2013).

[27] Taylor Carman notes that this last sense was used in Champan's *Iliad* and Milton's *Eikonoklastes,* in which Nestor and Justice wield, use, or set down their "authentic"—"that is, *their own*"—swords. "The point was not that the swords were not forgeries or unreal, but that they were not someone else's." Taylor Carman, "Authenticity," in *A Companion to Heidegger,* eds. Dreyfus and Wrathall, (Malden: Blackwell, 2005), p. 285.

[28] OED. Its three contemporary synonyms would be authorized, accurate and authoritative. An action was authentic if it had legal authorization ("what is done by commission is Authentik"); an historical account was authentic if it was accurate, or corresponding to factual truth (one that "relates matters as they really happened"); and a biblical interpretation was authentic "if it be grounded in the text." Authoritative and authorized still resonate with the contemporary meaning of the word.

[29] Samuel Johnson, Vol I, Edition 6, *A Dictionary of the English Language* (1785) "AUTHENTICK" (J.F. and C. Rivington: 1785)

[30] "*les loix n'étant que des actes authentiques de la volonté générale.*" See Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *On the Social Contract,* Book III, ch. 12. Emphasis mine. Rousseau only uses the term twice in his oeuvre, here and in Book II, ch 4. "Every act of sovereignty, that is, every authentic act of the general will, binds or favors all the citizens equally." (*c'est-à-dire tout acte authentique de la volonté générale*).

sense of the legislator's."[31] Here, Hobbes referred to the authoritativeness of the legislator's interpretation, rather than what we would call "the letter of the law" (though it does entail—albeit in a secondary sense—questions of what the legislator genuinely meant). In each of these cases, the term is used in this "premodern" sense, as primarily meaning "authoritative" and as also meaning "deriving from true or certain origins," which may be the *source* of its authority. This sense of authenticity is older, and such issues would be discussed today in terms of authority and legitimacy, rather than authenticity. Owing to later changes in the term, *authenticity* is no longer the most precise word to fit this context, nor is it the one that most immediately comes to mind.[32]

Scholars claim that our "modern" conception of authenticity emerged around the late eighteenth century, when the term adopted the meaning "genuine."[33] This new connection between authenticity and genuineness made the term available to new applications. According to the *OED*, up until the eighteenth century, an authentic *person* was one who possessed authority in some form ("an authentic man of the Court of parliament," "of all the learned and authentic fellows").[34] After the eighteenth century, an authentic person became more closely associated with the virtues of genuineness, sincerity, honesty, and transparency. The shift in emphasis was particularly important in that it allowed the term to move beyond describing definitive or

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[31] See Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan,* Book II, ch. XXVI, passage 20, ed. Curley (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1994), p. 180. Emphasis mine. Curley's glossary to the Leviathan even includes an entry for "authentic," which he defines as "authoritative," presumably in contradistinction to the terms contemporary usage. See p. 551. Grotius as well, when referring to "the authentic synodical canons" is describing these texts as authoritative, because they come from true, Christian origins. Hugo Grotius, *On the Law of War and Peace.* Prolegomena (p. 16).

[32] A recent exception to this is Howard Schweber's *Democracy and Authenticity* (Cambridge: Cambridge, 2011).

[33] Trilling, *Sincerity and Authenticity;* Charles Guignon, *On Being Authentic* (New York: Routledge, 2004); Charles Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity* (Cambridge: Harvard, 1992); Taylor, "The Politics of Recognition."

[34] We get the sense that such an attribution was nevertheless uncommon, since Johnson's dictionary holds that the term is "never used of persons."

material objects (documents, officials, laws), to abstract ideas (art, experience, the self). Once

notions of an authentic person shifted from one who is authoritative to one who is (in some

regard) genuine, the term began to denote a possible aim of conduct, art, and self-development,

and eventually, to designate ethical and aesthetic ideals.

During the eighteenth century, philosophers and literati began articulating and developing

a number of beliefs that would come to be associated with our current understandings of

authenticity—such as the belief that society alienated individuals from their true selves, that each

person has a unique nature that they ought to fulfill, and that one is happiest when one lives in

accordance with nature. While eighteenth-century writers did not use the term *authenticity* to

articulate these ideas, scholars nonetheless argue that many contemporary notions of authenticity

first emerged during this time.[35] Johann Gottfried von Herder described every man as having his

own "measure," an inner ideal or purpose. To conform, to imitate, or to live according to a

different measure is to miss out on what makes one's life one's own.[36] Friedrich Schiller

articulated an ideal of integrated selfhood, "a beautiful soul," in which man overcomes the

conflict between his duty and his passions and no longer needs to deny the different parts of

himself.[37] Stendhal, in his reflections on love, formulated an ideal of social unaffectedness that

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[35] Most notable of these historians are Trilling, *Sincerity and Authenticity;* Taylor, *Ethics of Authenticity,* and "The Politics of Recognition"; and Charles Larmore, *The Romantic Legacy,* (New York: Columbia, 1996). Unlike the above thinkers, Assmann and Nehamas believe that we can trace notions of authenticity back even earlier to the Greeks. See Alexander Nehamas, *Virtues of Authenticity: Essays on Plato and Socrates,* (Princeton: Princeton, 1998), and Assmann, "Authenticity." For more on authenticity's Romantic roots, see Tim Milnes and Kerry Sinanan eds., *Romanticism, Sincerity, and Authenticity,* (New York: Palgrave, 2010).

[36] Johann Herder, *Reflections on the Philosophy of the History of Mankind* (Chicago: Chicago, 1968). See also Charles Taylor, "The Politics of Recognition," p. 30. Adam Culver is attuned to even more dimensions of Herder's notion of authenticity: its role in critiquing instrumental rationality, the fragmentation of subjectivity, and individualism; its ability to cast these developments as "mechanistic," as opposed to "organic;" and its emphasis on wholeness, self-expression, and self-actualization. See Adam Culver, "Race and Romantic Visions: A Tragic Reading," PhD Dissertation, p. 41-43.

[37] Friedrich Schiller, "On Grace and Dignity," in *Friedrich Schiller: Poet of Freedom,* vol. 2, ed. The Schiller Institute, trans. George Gregory (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1976 [1793]).

he called "being natural," in which one spontaneously revealed what was in one's heart, rather than try to appear witty or moving, in order to gain romantic affection.[38] And perhaps most notably, Rousseau believed that "the voice of nature" was still present within civilized man, that what it said was always true, and that our happiness consisted in developing ourselves in accordance with it.[39] By the twentieth century, these various concerns and their implicit understandings of self and society would be subsumed under the term *authenticity*, providing the backdrop against which it became intelligible to speak about "an authentic self," to conceive of such a self as a source of moral authority, and to formulate "being true to oneself" as an ethical imperative.

In the US at the beginning of the twentieth century, popular understandings of the self began to shift from a Victorian emphasis on "character," regarded as "self-reliance, moral self-restraint, and instinctual renunciation," to an emphasis on "personality," characterized by "personal magnetism, charm, sincerity."[40] While personality was often cast as a means for social advancement, a group of social critics known as the Young Americans argued that it should be valued as an end in and of itself. "The belief that personality lay dammed up and imprisoned, a restricted soul trapped behind a shell of class and social position, could lead to a new vision of political change."[41] Writers such as Randolph Bourne and Van Wyck Brooks argued that personality was repressed by capitalism and consumer culture and could be "liberated" only through civic engagement in an egalitarian and democratic culture. Such liberation would bring true "self-fulfillment." Similarly, André Gide, writing at the turn of the century, appealed to a notion of an innate, natural homosexual desire in his "coming-out" narratives. In his fiction and

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[38] Stendhal, *On Love,* (New York: Penguin, 1975), p. 106-107.
[39] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Emile* (New York: Basic Books, 1979), p. 286.
[40] Casey Nelson Blake, *Beloved Community*, p. 50.
[41] Ibid., p. 51.

his autobiographical writings, he advocated the transgression of mainstream norms in order to discover one's real self, which he cast as presocial, natural, individual, and repressed by culture.[42]

Martin Heidegger is often credited for making the term one of central importance for ethics and philosophies of the self.[43] Yet oddly enough, in his 1927 *Being and Time,* he deliberately chose not to use the German *Authentizität,* using instead his own self-styled term *Eigentlichkeit* (or *eigentliche Existenz*), literally translated into English as "ownedness" or "being owned." In the 1930s, French commentators and translators rendered these terms as *authenticité* and *authentique existence.*[44] Though Heidegger largely disagreed with this terminology and with many aspects of the French "existentialist" interpretations of his work, many contemporary readers consider Heidegger's *Eigentlichkeit* as nonetheless articulating a notion of authenticity, albeit one distinct from both romanticist and contemporary formulations.[45] At its most basic,

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[42] Andre Gide, *Journals*, 4 vols. (New York: Knopf, 1947-51); *The Immoralist* (New York: Knopf, 1970 [1902]); *Corydon* (New York: Farrar, Strauss, and Co., 1983 [1925]).

[43] Charles Guignon credits Heidegger in particular for popularizing the term *authenticity*. See Charles Guignon, "Authenticity," *Philosophy Compass 3/2,* (2008): 277-290. Grant and Berman credit "existentialism" in general for popularizing the term, see Ruth Grant, *Hypocrisy and Integrity : Machiavelli, Rousseau, and the Ethics of Politics* (Chicago: Chicago, 1999), p. 58 and Marshall Berman, *The Politics of Authenticity* (New York: Verso, 2009 [1970]). On the valences of the German term *Eigentlichkeit,* see Guignon, *On Being Authentic*, p. 86. Guignon emphasizes how this word sounds strange to German ears, and even stranger when translated as *authenticity.*

[44] In his 1930 *Les tendances actuelles de la philosophie allemande,* Georges Gurvitch translates Heidegger's *eigentliche Existenz* as *"l'existence qui se retoure elle-meme."* (Vrin: 1930). However, Emmanuel Levinas translates it into *authenticité* in his *Martin Heidegger et l'ontologie* (1932)*,* as does Henry Corbin in his influential translations of *Was ist Metaphysik?* (Gallimard: 1938) and his translations of two chapters of *Sein und Zeit* (Hermès: 1938)*.* On Heidegger's reception in France, see Christian Delacampagne, "Heidegger in France" in *Columbia History of Twentieth Century French Thought,* ed. Kritzman and Reilly, (New York: Columbia, 2007), p. 250-55. English translations would also translate *Eigentlichkeit* into authenticity, but the first English translation would not come out until 1962.

[45] See Delacampagne (2007) and Heidegger, "Letter Concerning Humanism." *Habermas believes that Heidegger's conception of das Man is compatible with Romanticist accounts of inauthenticity—in which the individual is rendered false and artificial through conforming to social mores.* Guignon sees connections between Eigentlichkeit and a type of integrated, unified subjectivity, of the kind espoused by Schiller or Rousseau. Still others, like Carman, believe that a central demand of authenticity—"being true to oneself"—makes little sense in Heidegger's schema, since it relies on a sense of "selfhood" that

Heidegger used the terms *Eigentlichkeit* and *eigentliche Existenz* to refer to an irreducible first-person standpoint. Here, *Eigentlichkeit* draws on the German sense of *eigen*—meaning "owned" or "proper to something." According to Heidegger, the first-person standpoint or perspective is my own (*eigen*); only I can embody or access it. In a stronger sense, Heidegger used *eigentliche Existenz* to refer to "taking a resolute stance" toward one's life, in which one acts in accordance with one's own beliefs, motives, and desires, rather than acting in the way that is socially expected of someone in one's situation and role.[46] The French reception of Heidegger, with its translation of *Eigentlichkeit* into *authenticité,* spurred some of the first philosophical discussions in which the term authenticity was used as an ethical ideal, as a desirable feature of persons and human life.

Over the course of the 1940s, some of these thinkers began to construct their own accounts of authenticity. Jean-Paul Sartre, in his 1943 *Being and Nothingness,* articulated a notion of inauthenticity in the form of bad faith. According to Sartre, when one was in bad faith, one denied a constitutive feature of one's selfhood, whether it was one's facticity (one's history, present, and desires) or one's transcendence (one's ability to exercise one's freedom, to make a radical choice, to take a different perspective on one's facticity).[47] For instance, in one of his most famous examples of bad faith, Sartre describes a woman who is allowing herself to be seduced. The seduction proceeds because she is in denial of her present desires (or ambivalent desires), the reality of the situation she is in, and her capacity to choose among a range of possibilities instead of just allowing herself to be swept along by the situation. Note that in this example, the woman is in bad faith not because she is being untrue to herself, but rather, because

Heidegger explicitly tries to overcome. See Jürgen Habermas, *Philosophical Discourse of Modernity,* Guignon (2004), and Carman (2005), p. 285-292.

[46] See Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time,* (Harper: 2008) and Carman (2005).

[47] In addition to Sartre, other French writers that were responding to Heidegger's notion of authenticity at this time included Emmanuel Levinas, Karl Jaspers, and Jean Wahl.

she is engaged in a form of self-deception—one which keeps her from correctly perceiving herself and her world. While Sartre does not offer a positive notion of authenticity in this text (claiming that "the description of it has no place here"), one can infer that it is a way of perceiving the world and oneself, in which one grasps one's facticity and one's capacity for transcendence.[48]

During the 1950s, notions of individual authenticity entered American mass culture for the first time. Works like *Catcher in the Rye* and *Breakfast at Tiffany's* engaged issues of pretense and phoniness. Social critics such as David Riesman, Erich Fromm, and Herbert Marcuse worried that "man" was perhaps less autonomous than previously thought, that he suffered from "a defect of individuality," resulting from a range of social and psychic causes.[49] Branches of humanist and existentialist psychology began investigating how individuals could fully actualize themselves.[50] Anxiety, "weightlessness," and an inability to commit oneself were all signs that one was inauthentic.[51] "Alienation" became a central concern among theologians, psychologists, and a generation of college students.[52]

During the sixties, these concerns with authenticity found political expression as a variety of social movements began to frame it as a political cause. Whereas some appeals to authenticity posited needs, drives, and capacities that were common to all human beings, other appeals

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[48] Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness,* (New York: Washington Square Press, 1992).

[49] David Riesman, *The Lonely Crowd* (New Haven: Yale, 1950); Erich Fromm, *The Sane Society* (London: Routledge, 2002 [1955]); Herbert Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization* (Boston: Beacon, 1966 [1955]). See also William Whyte, *The Organization Man* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1956); C. Wright Mills, *White Collar* (New York: Oxford, 1951); Abigail Cheever, *Real Phonies* (Athens: Georgia, 2010), p. 7; Mark Greif, *The Age of the Crisis of Man* (Princeton: Princeton, 2015).

[50] J.F. Bugenthal, *The Search for Authenticity: An Existential-Analytic Approach to Psychotherapy*, (Winston: 1965); Rollo May (ed), *Existential Psychology*, (New York: Random House, 1961).

[51] Douglas Rossinow, *The Politics of Authenticity* (New York: Columbia, 1998).

[52] Paul Tillich, *The Courage to Be,* (New Haven: Yale, 1952); Alan Wheelis, *The Quest for Identity* (New York: Norton, 1958); Erich Fromm, *Man for Himself* (New York: Rinehart, 1947); Rollo May, *Man's Search for Himself* (New York: Norton, 1956); Erik Erikson, *Young Man Luther* (New York: Norton, 1962); Rossinow, *The Politics of Authenticity.*

posited culture as an authenticating source that differentiated some groups from others. That is, rather than posit culture as something that *repressed* genuine human needs (as in, for instance, Marcuse's *One-Dimensional Man*), these latter appeals to authenticity cast culture as a source of strength, value, and self-fulfillment. For instance, authenticity was listed as a leading value of the *Port Huron Statement* and was invoked in order to challenge and criticize segregation, bureaucracy, the stultifying character of work, and gender norms.[53] In this statement, authenticity provided a vision of an underlying human "sameness" that justified pursuing political aims of integration, solidarity, and community.[54] This vision of an integrated, actualized self and the forms of critique it fostered became central to a variety of movements across the political spectrum, including the civil rights movement, Black Power, the New Right, gay liberation movements, and liberal and radical feminists alike.[55]

By contrast, Malcolm X, for example, posited an essential difference between whites and blacks and argued that the only way for blacks to realize their true selves was to get political power and to pursue "a spiritual and cultural return to Africa."[56] Similarly, feminists such as Robin Morgan, Mary Daly, and Barbara Burris began to argue that women's distinct voices, experiences, languages, and spirituality were disparaged by a society that privileged only "male" traits and dispositions. In their accounts, authenticity required appreciating the value of those

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[53] "The Port Huron Statement," reprinted in full in Paul Jacobs and Saul Landau, *The New Radicals: A Report with Documents* (New York: Vintage, 1966), p. 149-162; Rossinow; *Politics of Authenticity;* Marshall Berman, *The Politics of Authenticity* (New York: Verso, 2009 [1970]); Dick Flacks, "Some Problems, Issues, Proposals," in Jacobs and Landau, *The New Radicals*, p.163; Barbara Brandt, "Why People Become Corrupt, " in Jacobs and Landau.

[54] Rossinow, *Politics of Authenticity;* "Port Huron Statement," p. 42; Farrell, *Spirit of the Sixties,* 142.

[55] Radicalesbians, "The Woman-Identified Woman," in *Feminism in Our Time,* ed. Miriam Schneir (New York: Vintage, 1994); Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (New York: Norton, 1963); Rick Perlstein, *Before the Storm: Barry Goldwater and the Unmaking of the American Consensus* (New York: Nation, 2001); Paul Lyons, *New Left, New Right, and the Legacy of the Sixties* (Philadelphia: Temple, 1996).

[56] Malcolm X, *By Any Means Necessary* (New York: Pathfinder, 1992 [1970]).

traits and dispositions conventionally cast as "feminine," either by integrating these female

characteristics with "male" ones or by embracing them exclusively.[57]

Political invocations of authenticity began to decline during the 1970s, especially those

predicated on a belief in a shared human "sameness." Appeals to an authentically black or an

authentically feminine self persisted a bit longer, although some scholars believe that they were

directed less at the eradication of racism or sexism and more at the creation of separate cultural

enclaves.[58] In part, what contributed to this decline was the changing political climate. The

breakup of the New Left, the deceleration of the economy, and the rise of identity-based politics

all contributed to making appeals to a universal self and the projects of integration and solidarity

less plausible. Moreover, notions of authenticity began to have increased popularity in other

areas of life and began to be interpreted in increasingly individualistic ways, feeding into what

Tom Wolfe termed "the Me decade."[59] As people began to pursue their authentic selves through

therapy, consumption, and travel, authenticity became less associated with visions of collective

life and political freedom or with practices of social critique.[60] Not only did one no longer need

politics to solve the problems of inauthenticity; inauthenticity was also no longer conceptualized

as necessarily being a political problem—as opposed to a spiritual, psychological, or individual

one.

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[57] Mary Daly, "After God the Father," in *Feminism in our Time;* Mary Daly, *Gyn/Ecology* (Boston: Beacon, 1978); Barbara Burris, "The Fourth World Manifesto," in *Notes From the Third Year,* eds. Koedt and Firestone, (New York: Redstockings, 1971).

[58] Echols, *Daring to be Bad*; Jeffrey Ogbar, *Black Power* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 2004).

[59] Tom Wolfe, "The 'Me' Decade and the Third Great Awakening," *New York Magazine*, August 23, 1976.

[60] Taylor argues that in these years, we see the rise of "deviant" strands of the ideal, in which people act on some aspects (self-expression, freedom as self-articulation) at the expense of others (intimate relationships, equality, solidarity), and that this "flattens" or diminishes the importance of the ideal. See Charles Taylor, "The Politics of Recognition" in *Multiculturalism* (Princeton: Princeton, 1994), and *A Secular Age.*

By the time many of the scholarly critiques of authenticity began to arise, political appeals to a true self had largely waned. Many of these critiques targeted concepts that were closely related to or implied by authenticity. For instance, some notions of an authentic self were subsumed under critiques of "the subject," which posited an underlying, human "substratum" undetermined by history or language.[61] The idea of authenticity as an attribute of "experience" was discredited by those critiques showing how such experience was always discursively constituted, linguistically framed, and laden with power.[62] Authenticity was subsumed under critiques of metaphysical Truths, which were shown to be produced by the powers of language and discourse.[63] Finally, an assortment of psychoanalysts and philosophers challenged the idea that one could possibly know oneself or remain congruent with oneself over time or that either goal was even desirable.[64]

In particular, many of the critiques of authenticity arose out of critiques of essentialism, which posited an original or essential quality of being for particular groups— such as women, blacks, or gays.[65] Not only did critics find this to be impossible, but they also illustrated the various injuries such notions produced. Critics alleged that notions of authenticity risked reinforcing prevalent cultural stereotypes: for instance, that women were essentially nurturing and peaceful or that "real blackness" resided in the black urban poor.[66] They claimed that ideas of "real blacks" and "true women" often acted as a constraint, compelling women and blacks to uphold these definitions on pain of being stigmatized as "inauthentic" as well as marginalizing

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[61] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* (London: Pantheon, 1976); Lacan, *Écrits*.

[62] Foucault, *History of Sexuality 1;* Scott, "Experience."

[63] Foucault, *History of Sexuality 1;* Derrida, *Of Grammatology.*

[64] Lacan, *Écrits*; Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, *The Dialectic of Enlightenment* (Stanford: Stanford, 2002 [1944]).

[65] Michel Foucault, *History of Sexuality, Volume One* (London: Pantheon, 1977); Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble.*

[66] Echols, *Daring to be Bad;* Favor, *Authentic Blackness.*

those who did not and could not live up to these ideals.[67] Finally, being seen as "authentic" tended to confer privilege, authorizing some to speak on behalf of, or in lieu of, those who were "inauthentic."[68]

As a result, appeals to authenticity have retained their normative force in many areas of everyday life but have become generally distrusted in the academy. Yet its continued popular appeal has not been lost on all of its critics. For instance, Mariana Valverde recalls the emancipatory and critical potential these notions once had: "We might be well read in deconstruction and/or postcolonial studies and be very skilled at taking apart other people's naïve realist assumptions about 'the inner self' . . . . But we also know that 'breaking the silence' . . . however problematic as a theoretical project in the post-Foucauldian age remains a real, meaningful imperative for many ordinary women facing up to the old problems of oppression, violence, sexual shame, and so on."[69] Given its persistent hold over our popular imaginations, some philosophers have offered rehabilitations of authenticity that would be able to withstand some of its more trenchant critiques.

2. Reconstituting Authenticity: Prior Efforts

In recent years, a number of thinkers have offered new accounts of authenticity and new articulations of its value. Taken together, these works help explain authenticity's emergence and persistence, showing how it stood in opposition to certain pervasive character deficiencies that were thought to emerge with the advent of modern capitalism, such as sycophancy,

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[67] Kwame Anthony Appiah, "Identity, Authenticity, Survival;" bell hooks, *Ain't I a Woman?* (Boston, South End, 1981).

[68] E. Patrick Johnson, *Appropriating Blackness: performance and the politics of authenticity,* (Durham: Duke, 2003), 3.

[69] Mariana Valverde, "Experience and Truth Telling in a Post-Humanist World," in *Feminism and the Final Foucault,* ed. Taylor and Vintges (University of Illinois: 2004), p. 68-9.

dissimulation, hypocrisy, lack of integrity, and treating oneself instrumentally in the hope of social advancement. To the extent that these traits remain unattractive to us, notions of authenticity still have a hold on our imaginations.

However, most of the thinkers who have rearticulated authenticity have focused on rehabilitating its conceptual underpinnings and crafting new foundations on which it can stand. While they acknowledge authenticity's political uses and effects, they tend to focus on the type of "self" it presupposes and its importance relative to other values and ideals. The objections they address inform not only how they rehabilitate authenticity but also how they specify its value. This is the case in Alessandro Ferrara's *Reflective Authenticity* (1999), which rehabilitates a notion of authenticity as part of a larger project of formulating standards of validity appropriate to a postmetaphysical age. Ferrara notes that conceptions of authenticity have been undermined by a number of philosophical challenges but, in particular, by their association with essentialist, individualist, and humanist understandings of the self (51). Thus, he focuses on rehabilitating an understanding of authenticity that is able to withstand these challenges: one that is intersubjective and allows for multiple modes of self-flourishing.

According to Ferrara, the normative force of authenticity stems from what he calls an "exemplary congruence," which he describes by means of a quote by Luigi Pareyson: "The work of art is as it should be, and should be as it is, and has no other law than its own" (68). This notion of authenticity focuses on both self-congruence and self-actualization: the work of art is what it can best possibly be and thus is true to its best self. Ferrara applies this idea to other forms of authentic identity, including individuals, collectives, and works of art. He thinks that authenticity, rightly understood, ought to be rehabilitated because it is constitutive of self-fulfillment, what he calls "a post-modern *eudaimonia*" (74). He turns to psychoanalysis to

formulate the "guidelines" for self-fulfillment of individual and collective identities—which

include coherence, vitality (the "experiential content" of being authentic), maturity, and depth.

These guidelines are not meant to exhaust what it means for an individual to attain the good life,

for they are too underdetermined, but they are meant to "orient" one toward becoming authentic,

or *"perfect in [one's] own terms"* [emphasis his] (164).

Ferrara recognizes that authenticity is invoked in political life and that political struggles

have informed certain conceptions of authenticity, such as notions of difference arising from

feminism. In an earlier work, he addressed conservative critics of authenticity, who thought that

it led to rampant individualism.[70] Yet the notion of authenticity that Ferrara reconstructs is

removed from political struggles and political life. Ferrara rehabilitates a philosophically

plausible ideal of an integrated, actualized self but does not address those social factors that

might prevent individuals from developing such a self that animated appeals to authenticity.

Moreover, while such a rehabilitated notion could facilitate social critique or provide a normative

account of the good life, Ferrara does not specify how social actors would actually offer such a

critique or invoke a normative vision of authentic selfhood or community.

Three other philosophers—Bernard Williams, Charles Guignon, and Charles Larmore—

reconstitute a notion of authenticity that involves coming to hold a set of beliefs, convictions,

and attachments and holding them steadfastly and sincerely. Like Ferrara, the challenges they

respond to are somewhat removed from political life and inform how they rehabilitate

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[70] Alessandro Ferrara, *Modernity and Authenticity: a study in the social and ethical thought of Jean-Jacques Rousseau* (Albany, NY: SUNY, 1993). Here, Ferrara addressed those critics who thought authenticity animated rampant individualism, hedonism, narcissism, or a non-moral self-indulgence, which would lead to the decline of the family and collective life. This objection is also addressed by Taylor below. Critics who voice this objection include Daniel Bell, *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism* (New York: Basic Books, 1976), p. 19, 132, Christopher Lasch, *The Culture of Narcisissm* (New York: Norton, 1979), p. 166-167, Allan Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987) and Richard Sennett, *The Fall of Public Man* (New York: Norton, 1974).

authenticity. Bernard Williams dedicates a chapter of *Truth and Truthfulness* (2002) to discussing some of the problems facing authenticity, such as whether the "real self" is necessarily virtuous or sociable, whether sincere self-expression will reveal it, and whether it can be discovered through introspection.[71] Williams offers a conception of authenticity that is less about discovering a true self within and more about becoming a self, which involves adopting consistent or "steady" beliefs that are "relatively unaffected by the weather of the mind" (191). This steadiness distinguishes "beliefs" from something like "propositional moods" and plays a crucial role in facilitating cooperation and trust. "There are others who need to rely on our dispositions. . . . We learn to present ourselves to others, and consequently also to ourselves, as people who have moderately steady outlooks or beliefs" (192). Notice that in William's account, authenticity entails sincerity but not in the sense of spontaneous declaration of what is currently on one's mind. Rather, it involves a process of coming to hold beliefs, holding them consistently and with conviction, and sincerely expressing them (204).

Charles Guignon's *On Being Authentic* (2004) elucidates some of the paradoxes he sees afflicting notions of authenticity by tracing their history and evolution. He begins with authenticity's roots in Greek and Christian thought, details its development in the romantic age, and addresses its complications by psychoanalytic and postfoundational thought. Like Williams and Ferrara, Guignon responds to the critique that there is no inner, substantive "self" that can provide the reference point for appeals to authenticity. He suggests that this problem could be solved by appropriating a "dialogical conception of the self."[72] Such a self is not "a thing or object" but rather "the continuous, ongoing, open-ended activity of living out a story over the

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[71] Bernard Williams, *Truth and Truthfulness* (Princeton: Princeton, 2002)
[72] This notion of the self emerges with Heidegger, is elaborated upon by Paul Ricoeur, and finds contemporary expression in Seyla Benhabib, *Situating the Self* (Cambridge: Harvard, 1992); Alasdair Macintyre, *After Virtue* (Notre Dame: Notre Dame, 1984); Taylor, *Ethics of Authenticity;* Alexander Nehamas, *Nietzsche: Life as Literature.*

course of time" (65). Authenticity, on this account, involves committing oneself, "taking a wholehearted stand on what is of crucial importance to you" and "steadfastly express[ing] those commitments in your actions throughout the course of your life" (71).

More than Williams, Guignon examines some of authenticity's effects in social and political life. He argues that while we tend to see authenticity as a personal virtue, one appropriate to private life, it is also importantly a social virtue. Adopting William's argument discussed earlier, Guignon claims that authenticity acts as a regulative ideal that encourages us to transform our moods into steady beliefs and attitudes and that this is an irreducibly social process that is necessary for facilitating cooperation and trust. Building on this argument, he suggests that in the context of a democratic society, ideas of authenticity encourage citizens not only to form consistent beliefs but also to choose beliefs that are worthwhile. This is because such a society requires people to deliberate on what they believe and choose beliefs that are worth pursuing. "When someone fails to deliberate about what is important or comes up with transparently trivial or pointless commitments, or when someone refuses to stand up for what he believes, we feel that they are not doing their part to sustain a social system that depends on people who do precisely these things" (81). Thus, on his account, authenticity is valuable because it makes us into the types of citizens a democratic society needs.

Finally, Charles Larmore, in *Practices of the Self* (2010), rehabilitates two different understandings of authenticity.[73] The first understanding, which he derives from Stendhal's *le naturel,* involves "being purely and fully oneself . . . without deformation and in keeping with its intrinsic character" (7). Even though he uses the language of "intrinsic character," Larmore does not believe there is an inner core or true self to which one is supposed to be faithful, and his

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[73] Charles Larmore, *The Practices of the Self* (Chicago: Chicago, 2010).

conceptions of authenticity have little to do with being unique, original, or faithful to one's roots. Rather, he frames authenticity as a way of relating to oneself and one's world without the distortions or interruptions that may arise from attention to how others' perceptions of oneself, a temporary silencing of others' expectations, so that they do not interrupt our immersion and embeddedness in what we are doing. Larmore sees authenticity as valuable because it speaks to "the *desire* to stop measuring ourselves against others and their expectations and to be ourselves" (4). Yet this form of "being ourselves" seems to involve a temporary forgetting of who one is, in order to focus more fully on what one is doing. Thus, he opposes authenticity to being preoccupied with others' expectations and others' assessments of ourselves—while recognizing that we can never escape such preoccupations entirely or for an extended period of time.

The second notion of authenticity that he rehabilitates differs, in that it involves practical reflection, "to turn back upon ourselves . . . in order to formally endorse some belief or some action" (140). For Larmore, practical reflection does not involve the discovery of a preexisting self or of preexisting beliefs but rather involves relating to the self "as the individual we alone have to be." In particular, we assume this self-relation when we "explicitly adopt some belief or plan of action" (141). Larmore identifies practical reflection with authenticity because it involves assuming a self-relation that no one else can assume for oneself, that of *committing* or binding oneself. Thus, Larmore joins Guignon and Williams in rehabilitating a notion of authenticity that takes distance from the idea of an inner substantive self and focuses instead on the importance of commitment and becoming a person with integrity. Without rejecting his earlier claims, Ferrara comes to adopt this argument in his later writings as well.[74]

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[74] See Alessandro Ferrara, "Authenticity Without a True Self," in *Authenticity in Culture, Self, and Society,* ed. Vannini and Williams, (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2009); and "New Reflections on Non-Essentialist Authenticity," paper delivered on November 23, 2012 at "Variations of Authenticity" conference at the Univeresity of Bern. He argues that the notion of commitment implies the notion of a

What these works have in common is that they tend to engage authenticity at an almost exclusively conceptual level. Whether providing an intellectual history (Guignon), a conceptual analysis (Ferrara), or an exegesis of a key articulator of authenticity (Williams), these thinkers largely focus on what appeals to authenticity *mean* rather than what they *do*. The one exception here, as already indicated, is the acknowledgment that authenticity encourages individuals to form steady beliefs by which they will stand and that this is a necessary or at least desirable influence on the formation of democratic subjects. Without denying the importance of this effect, I nonetheless think it sells short the potential of authenticity and eclipses the normative force of contemporary appeals to the term, particularly in social movements. Few people today appeal to an authentic self in order to stabilize their beliefs or in order to encourage others to stabilize theirs.

One thinker who has rehabilitated authenticity in light of its role in political life is Charles Taylor. Taylor acknowledges that ideas of authenticity are at the root of feminist, black, multicultural and postcolonial struggles for self-definition. While he recognizes that there are various notions of authenticity and various reasons for appealing to the term, he is concerned with recovering *the* moral ideal and determining its content, so that appeals to the term will create better effects in political life. In *The Ethics of Authenticity* (1992), he argues that our current culture has failed to perceive authenticity as a moral ideal because its expression has been "degraded." Taylor retrieves what he sees as the genuine form of the ideal against two intellectual currents that "distort" it. The first current is composed of critics who see authenticity as responsible for a widespread individualist ethos. These critics perceive individualism as "non-moral" and "self-indulgent" and as creating a culture of "narcissism" and license (16, 21). The

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unified, stable self with an identity that persists across time. For a similar argument, one parsed in terms of integrity, see Cheshire Calhoun, "Standing for Something," *Journal of Philosophy*, 62 (1995).

second current contains those proponents of the ideal who distort its true meaning through what Taylor calls a "soft-relativism" (in which one is against imposing ideals on others) and a "moral subjectivism" (in which one is against arguing rationally for one's ideals) (18). By casting authenticity as a purely individualistic pursuit, both of these groups fail to grasp the real requirements of the ideal, namely, that it cannot be realized apart from our personal and social relationships (50) or apart from our "horizon of significance," a culturally-shared "background" that confers meaning on our lives (37). According to Taylor, the ideal of authenticity has been degraded because our cultural practices deny the importance of these relationships (leading to individualism) and the importance of these horizons of significance (leading to moral subjectivism). However, authenticity still remains an ideal worth realizing: first, because it encourages us to be responsible for ourselves; second, because it encourages us to pursue richer, fuller lives; and, third, because the importance of self-fulfillment has become undeniable in our modern culture (75).

In "The Politics of Recognition" (1994), Taylor examines how notions of authenticity have come to play a key role in the formation of identities. Taylor argues that such conceptions arose during the collapse of social hierarchies in the eighteenth century and provided a moral basis for opposing socially ascribed identities and social conformism and treating oneself in an instrumental manner. They did so by stressing the moral importance of being in touch with one's inner nature, which could provide direction for how one ought to live. Taylor describes the importance of this idea through a reading of Herder:

> "There is a certain way of being human that is *my* way. I am called upon to live my life in this way, and not in imitation of anyone else's life. But this notion gives a new importance to being true to myself. If I am not, I miss the point of my life; I miss what being human is for *me*." (30)

According to Taylor, while one was responsible for discovering this unique self, it could not be sustained without the recognition of others. On both the "social" and "intimate planes" of our

existence, others provide confirmation of who we are and what kind of lives are worth pursuing. However, this type of recognition is not conferred automatically, and the absence of it could cause grave injury. "A person or a group of people can suffer real damage, real distortion, if the people or society around them mirror back to them a confining or demeaning or contemptible picture of themselves" (25). Taylor argues that notions of authenticity and recognition are at the root of both a politics of universalism—the pursuit of equal dignity among individual identities—and a politics of difference, exemplified by contemporary multiculturalism politics.

Like Williams and Guignon, Taylor recognizes that ideals of authenticity have come to bear on the ways in which identities are formed, whether by providing a regulative ideal of a self with integrity (as Williams and Guignon claim) or by providing a normative picture of individual uniqueness and value (as Taylor claims). Taylor develops this point further than Williams and Guignon do, by addressing how authenticity can articulate pathologies in identity formation and in the types of injuries sustained by problematic social norms. However, in the *Ethics of Authenticity,* he explicitly brackets those who appeal to authenticity out of a desire for greater freedom, claiming that such a demand, while "closely related" to authenticity, is nonetheless "obviously . . . distinct" (27–28). Yet in separating authenticity and freedom, Taylor does not address those political movements that appeal to authenticity for individual freedom or collective self-determination or that understand the inability to be oneself as a form of constraint. Since Taylor wants to rehabilitate the version of the ideal that he thinks is the genuine one, he mainly analyzes appeals to authenticity that pertaining to issues of recognition and justice. This eclipses the political potential of appeals to authenticity in projects of freedom, resistance, collective and individual self-determination, and democratic belonging.

Moreover, while Taylor accounts for some of the undesirable effects that arise from these appeals, namely, a strong individualist ethos, he neglects key others. Taylor does not explain why representations of "true womanhood" may replicate traditional stereotypes about women; or marginalize those women who are not white, middle-class, or cisgendered; or cordon off an area of the self beyond contestation and struggle. Nor does he address the impact that ideas of "authentic blackness" have had on black solidarity, cultural norms, and political projects. None of these effects need be advertent, nor do they seem to stem from any inherent quality in the term. Yet, for many contemporary critics, our judgments of authenticity, for better or worse, cannot be divorced from its discursive effects.

3. Rethinking the Politics of Authenticity

Are all of the effects emanating from appeals to authenticity uniformly or necessarily negative? As we have seen, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, philosophers and literati invoked ideas of a true self to criticize some of the undesirable results of modern subject formation, such as conformism, hypocrisy, sycophancy, dissimulation, servility, and inequality. For some, the authentic self provided a bulwark against these constitutive forces; for others, an inner truth that could guide ethical action; and for others still, a place from which social and political resistance could emerge. In our time, historically marginalized groups have used the language of authenticity to counter oppressive representations of themselves, to mobilize around and to advance their projects of self-determination. These groups have used notions of authenticity as a means for claiming the authority of their experiences, as a strategy of political mobilization, and as a compelling form of social critique.

By examining how appeals to authenticity operate discursively, this dissertation explains

more fully why such appeals continue to compel and how political actors might tap into their emancipatory potential. Key to my argument is the idea that authenticity can be best recuperated as a discourse (or as a number of discourses), rather than as a concept or an ideal. Thus, the dissertation engages a range of texts to investigate how discourses of authenticity may be reconfigured such that they depart from their traditionally problematic ontological grounds and are attuned to their political risks. In order to address a wide range of critics, each chapter concentrates primarily on one prominent challenge facing the practice of invoking authenticity. These challenges are not exhaustive, nor do I attempt to engage every variant of them. Moreover, an emphasis on one is not meant to preclude the others; Michel Foucault's genealogies of the self, for example, pose problems for authenticity that are at once ontological, political, and epistemological. While these challenges work in concert with one another, in the interest of clarity, each chapter focuses on a discrete issue in a discrete archive.

The introduction has already addressed what I call the conceptual critique, which claims that the term *authenticity* is so malleable and ubiquitous that it has become devoid of meaning.[75] By providing a brief history of the term and analyzing its meanings and features, the introduction showed that while the term is protean in meaning and historically variable, it is not so plastic as to be empty. It also suggested that appreciating both the distinctiveness of appeals to authenticity and their value in political life requires moving beyond a conceptual analysis and toward an examination of how such appeals operate in discourse.

Chapter 1, "Truth, the Self, and Political Critique: Authenticity in 1960s America," takes up this task and, in doing so, addresses what I call the *strategic critique*. This critique claims that despite what ideals of authenticity mean, the political effects of appeals to the term are

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[75] Crouch, *The Artificial White Man;* Potter, *Authenticity Hoax*; Rosenbloom, "Authentic? Get Real," Newton and Ashcroft, "Whither Authenticity?"

overwhelmingly detrimental. This chapter also takes up a narrower version of the conceptual

critique, one that claims that authenticity is too conceptually vague to be useful in ethical or

political life and that political actors would be better served by parsing their claims in terms of

related values—such as sincerity, autonomy, or individuality.[76] This chapter responds to these

critiques by examining how authenticity operated in four political texts associated with the New

Left, black and Chicano freedom struggles, and radical feminism in the late sixties and early

seventies. Though these appeals to authenticity varied considerably, the claims they made about

the self were irreducible to related values. Furthermore, they could generate a range of desirable

discursive effects, enabling marginalized groups to counter restrictive and disrespectful images

of themselves, authorizing individuals to speak truthfully about their experiences, and facilitating

justice and equality claims based on the equal dignity of different members in society.

Chapter 2, "Between Nature and Artifice: Rousseau and the Roots of Authenticity,"

addresses what I call the *liberal critique*, which claims that appeals to authenticity are not, and

should not be, a matter for politics. Some critics say that authenticity is a private value

appropriately pursued in the private sphere.[77] Others argue that its tendencies to separatism and

purity, along with its focus on the "self," tend to obscure its political relevance and foster a

"retreat from the political."[78] I call this the *liberal critique* because it tends to advocate a firm

public-private divide and in particular, privatizes self-realization. This chapter argues that at the

root of this critique is a concern about how authenticity claims move between the psychological

and the political, threatening to blur the two. To see some of the political challenges of appealing

to authenticity, this chapter turns to the work of Jean-Jacques Rousseau. By casting the formation

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[76] Feldman, *Against Authenticity,* p. 164
[77] Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, Solidarity*
[78] Echols, *Daring to be Bad;* Brooke, "The Retreat to Cultural Feminism," in Redstockings, eds., *Feminist Revolution* (New York: Redstockings, 1973).

of the subject as a political problem, Rousseau's work challenges certain framings and boundaries of the political. In doing so, he argues for a variety of political, socioeconomic, and gender arrangements that will prevent subjects from manifesting vicious and unnatural drives. The chapter examines a number of the theoretical issues underpinning his claims, and in doing so, highlights certain problems with his account—in particular, that some of his appeals to authenticity may be at odds with certain notions of justice, equality, or freedom; and that the authenticity of some may depend on the inauthenticity of others. In the last section of the chapter, I consider how we can adjudicate and assess competing accounts of what forms of political life will sustain authenticity.

Chapter 3, "Disassembling the Self: Authenticity After Foucault," addresses what I term the *ontological critique*, which holds that appeals to authenticity rely on notions of the "self" that are philosophically untenable. How can one believe in a true, inner, or essential self, given the constitutive powers of language, history, or discourse? What if there is no "there" there? While this objection has been raised by a variety of philosophers associated with poststructuralism, in this chapter, I examine a particular instance of this critique, stemming from Foucault's genealogies of sexuality.[79] I show that Foucault is not claiming there is *no* existing self, but rather that this self is brought into being by historically and culturally specific discourses— including a discourse on authenticity. Thus, we can use Foucault to ask: How do appeals to authenticity produce, regulate, and position subjects? How do they legitimate certain kinds of actions? Even if, following Foucault, discourses of authenticity are power-laden, I argue that it does not follow that they ought to be rejected. Rather, one can use such discourses for one's own purposes—to resist, to alter existing power arrangements, or to erect a "bulwark" around the self.

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[79] For alternative formulations of this objection, see Deleuze, *The Fold*; Lacan, *Écrits*; Butler, *Gender Trouble*; Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, Solidarity;* Derrida, *Of Grammatology.*

By reading Foucault against himself, I show how appealing to authenticity may be as much an effort to modify existing discourses as it can be an effort to modify the self and that it may be fruitful to shift away from the question "What kind of self is authentic?" and toward the questions "How might one invoke authenticity, and with what effects?"

Chapter 4, "Resignifying Authenticity: Butler on Truth and the Psyche," addresses what I call the *epistemological critique*, which claims that appeals to authenticity presuppose a type of self-knowledge that is impossible to attain. Again, while this objection has been raised by a number of thinkers, I engage a particular variation of it—one offered by Judith Butler.[80] Like earlier efforts at reconstituting authenticity (discussed earlier herein), this chapter argues for moving away from claims about self-knowledge and false consciousness. Unlike those efforts, though, this chapter examines appeals to authenticity in order to theorize the connection between the social environment and experiences of authenticity and inauthenticity. As with the last chapter, this chapter shows how authenticity may be as much a problem in one's social environment as in oneself and also shows the fruitfulness of shifting the question away from "Which of my feelings or beliefs are authentic?" to "What type of social environment might enable one to feel authentic?"

Chapter 5, "Authenticity without Essentialism," addresses what I term the *essentialism critique*, which claims that appeals to authenticity generate the same injuries as appeals to essence: they reproduce stereotypes, marginalize non-normative subjects, and stigmatize those perceived as inauthentic. This chapter distinguishes between two types of appeals to authenticity, which are not mutually exclusive. Negative appeals to authenticity seek to articulate a range of self-relations often associated with inauthenticity, such as self-alienation, falseness, and

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[80] For alternative formulations of this objection, see Lacan, *Écrits*; Derrida, *Of Grammatology;* Foucault, *History of Sexuality, Vol. 1*.

distortion. I interpret Kate Bornstein's *Gender Outlaw* as engaging in these negative appeals. Without trying to specify what femininity is or who belongs to it, Bornstein describes how different manifestations of anti-trans sexism compel trans people to hide who they are and censor how they feel—with detrimental consequences to their inner lives. These negative appeals more effectively reduce the risks of essentialism because they invoke pictures of inauthenticity without positing an inner authenticating source. By contrast, positive appeals to authenticity more directly specify this authenticating source—whether it resides in gender, an inner "felt sense," or one's own particular way of being in the world. This chapter suggests that negative appeals to authenticity could contribute to a counter discourse that could open up gender in non-binary ways. Such a discourse can help us imagine how invoking authenticity may, in fact, produce the opposite effects of these critiques: they may help usher non-binary identities into existence, such as those that are "fluidly" gendered (such as in the work of Bornstein and Feinberg), or they may loosen the hold of the gender binary, for instance, by illustrating that one's gender need not reside in one's anatomy, socialization, or appearance. While authenticity is often used to exhort faithfulness to one's roots, the counter discourse offered here would loosen the link between the gender one is and the gender one can become.

The conclusion incorporates the insights gained from the previous chapters. In order to imagine how alternative discourses of authenticity could advance emancipatory causes, particularly with regard to racial justice. Through a reading of Ta-Nehisi Coates's *Between the World and Me* and Claudia Rankine's *Citizen,* the conclusion considers how authenticity might be invoked in a way that presupposes neither an essential self nor transparent self-knowledge and that minimizes the risks of injury and exclusion that have historically attended its deployment. The dissertation ends by considering how appeals to authenticity could fruitfully operate in

contemporary political movements, including those that are not strictly identity-based, such as

those that seek to resist neoliberalism.

CHAPTER ONE
Truth, the Self, and Political Critique: Authenticity in 1960s America

"You've got to get some power before you can be yourself." – Malcolm X

Can appealing to authenticity be an emancipatory or egalitarian practice in the wake of

critiques of a "true self"? Over the past four decades, philosophers and literary critics have

challenged many of authenticity's philosophical foundations, such as how such notions

distinguish truth from non-truth, virtual from real, copy from original.[81] Some scholars have

questioned the idea that beneath power, discourse, language or experience, there exists a true,

inner "self."[82] Feminists and critical race theorists have argued that notions of "real blackness"

and "true women" may stipulate prescriptive and regulatory accounts of femininity and

blackness, and that some may even reinscribe oppressive stereotypes.[83] Political theorists have

claimed that appeals to authenticity can foster rampant individualism, a politics of injury and

ressentiment, insidious forms of capitalism, and justifications for paternalistic rule.[84]

Despite these challenges, authenticity continues to compel, and in recent years, some

scholars have offered more philosophically robust accounts of it: some by providing an

intellectual history of authenticity, others by reformulating its conceptual underpinnings, and

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[81] W. V. Quine, *From a Logical Point of View*, (Cambridge: Harvard, 1953); Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature,* (Princeton: Princeton, 1979); Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation* (Ann Arbor: Michigan, 1994 [1981]).

[82] Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, tr., Gayatri Spivak, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974 [1967]); Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1* (New York: Pantheon, 1979); Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble* (New York: Routledge, 1990).

[83] Trinh T. Minh-Ha, *Woman, Native, Other* (Bloomington: Indiana, 1989); William Connolly, *Identity\Difference* (Minneapolis: Minnesota, 1993); Alice Echols, *Daring to be Bad* (Minneapolis: Minnesota, 1989); E. Patrick Johnson, *Appropriating Blackness*, (Durham: Duke, 2003).

[84] See Daniel Bell, *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism* (New York: Basic Books, 1976); Christopher Lasch, *The Culture of Narcissism* (New York: Norton, 1979); Wendy Brown and Janet Halley, "Introduction," *Left Legalism/Left Critique* (Durham: Duke, 2002)*;* Lauren Berlant, "The Subject of True Feelings," in *Left Legalism/Left Critique;* Isaiah Berlin, *Four Essays on Liberty* (New York: Oxford, 1969); Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello, *The New Spirit of Capitalism* (London: Verso, 2006).

others still by providing an exegesis of one of its historical proponents.[85] This chapter departs

from these earlier approaches in that it considers the value of authenticity by examining the

different ways it operates in particular political discourses, namely, those found in American

progressive social movements in the sixties and early seventies.[86] By focusing on how

authenticity operates in social movement texts from this period, I show that while appealing to

authenticity may give rise to these problematic effects, it does not always, only, or uniformly do

so. During this period, appeals to authenticity could accomplish many desirable things,

particularly for activists on the left: they facilitated compelling forms of social critique,

constructed normative conceptions of selfhood and community, authorized the claims of

historically marginalized speakers, and animated practices of resistance. Moreover, the value of

these appeals was not entirely restricted to the political outcomes they could yield. Appeals to

authenticity during this time could also articulate understandings of one's self and one's world

that could foster pride, integrity and thriving. Such appeals also offered alternatives to more

formal conceptions of equality, justice, and freedom, in that they connected those values to

concerns with one's inner life, to the way one thinks and feels about who one is.

I turn to this period, in part, to emphasize the contingent connection between authenticity

and political life: appeals to authenticity are not always political and do not always advance

political projects effectively or in the same way. However, because these claims were so potent

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[85] Charles Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity* (Cambridge: Harvard, 1992); Charles Taylor, "The Politics of Recognition," in *Multiculturalism: Examining The Politics of Recognition,* (Princeton: Princeton, 1994); Alessandro Ferrara, *Reflective Authenticity: Rethinking the Project of Modernity* (New York: Routledge, 1998)*;* Bernard Williams, *Truth and Truthfulness* (Princeton: Princeton, 2002); Charles Guignon, *On Being Authentic* (New York: Routledge, 2004); Charles Larmore, *Practices of the Self,* (Chicago: Chicago, 2010); Somogy Varga, *Authenticity as an Ethical Ideal* (New York: Routledge, 2011).

[86] Two exceptions here: Taylor acknowledges how ideals of authenticity have shaped both the politics of difference and the politics of individualism, and in *A Secular Age* (Cambridge: Harvard, 2007) he examines both historically. Varga in *Authenticity as an Ethical Ideal* shows how ideals of authenticity have shaped contemporary capitalism in beneficial ways.

and held such broad popular appeal, a wide range of activists during this time parsed their claims

in terms of authenticity, even as they pursued starkly different ends: integration and black

nationalism, equal rights for women and female-only spaces, sexual liberation and free speech,

critiques and defenses of capitalism. While this chapter focuses on authenticity in progressive

movements, in part, to emphasize its potential for social critique, notions of authenticity were by

no means the sole property of the left: for instance, James Robinson tried to mobilize the

religious right by proclaiming, "It's time for God's people to come out of the closet"; Phyllis

Shlafly advocated against the Equal Rights Amendment by invoking "the creative capacity

within [a woman's] body, and the power potential of her mind and spirit"; and the Sharon

Statement criticized government regulation for distorting the integrity and autonomy of

persons.[87]

While I pursue these claims by examining four social movement texts from the period

1962-1974, my intent is not first and foremost historical. Rather, I am primarily interested in

what these texts might tell us about the potentials and perils of invoking authenticity in our time

and place, and which aspects of authenticity appeals might be recovered or revalued from this

period. At the same time, my approach is not straightforwardly normative either. What follows is

neither an argument as to whether we should be for or against authenticity as such, nor an

argument as to whether or how we should deploy the term, nor a work of philosophical

reconstruction. Such arguments are difficult to make outside of the particular political, cultural,

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[87] Daniel K. Williams, *God's Own Party,* (New York: Oxford, 2010); Eric Miller, "Phyllis Shlalfly's 'Positive Freedom': Liberty, Liberation, and the Equal Rights Amendment," *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* 18 (2005); The Sharon Statement, printed in full in Rebecca Klatsch, *A Generation Divided: The New Left, The New Right, and the 1960s* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: California, 1999). As Douglas Rossinow eloquently puts it, "The search for authenticity has become so pervasive a yearning in the United States, its open expressions so chockablock in our popular culture and so evident across the political spectrum, as to render it less clearly a dissident, much less specifically a leftist, resource," *The Politics of Authenticity,* (New York: Columbia, 1998), p. 340.

or discursive contexts in which these appeals arise, particularly since these claims may yield such contingent and wide-ranging effects. However, examining the effects of authenticity claims in this particular context, and in light of these critiques, may help us appreciate their broad appeal and potency as well as the possibilities for alternative deployments of authenticity today.

In section one, I explain what it means to treat authenticity as a discourse, and describe some of the important features of discourses on authenticity during this time. This section elaborates on what a Foucauldian discourse analysis entails, and uses this interpretive strategy to examine the production of an authentic self in the text *The Woman Identified Woman*. In section two, I show how appeals to authenticity could advance the causes of progressive social movements through the range of effects they could generate. I turn to two texts—*Black Power* and *The Port Huron Statement*—that deployed authenticity to support quite different political projects and views of selfhood and community. While section two articulates authenticity's value in its capacity to generate potentially desirable effects, section three argues that authenticity's value need not be limited to these effects. While it is possible to deploy authenticity strategically—that is, without really believing that an inner self exists—such a deployment may eclipse some of the more empowering understandings offered by such appeals: reframings of the relationship between social norms and one's inner life, and alternative articulations of oppression and justice. Through a reading of *Viva La Raza,* I show that the critical and normative purchase of such appeals may refer to a notion of an authentic self in a way that reduces some of the risks of essentialism. The chapter concludes by considering how one might assess the political potential of authenticity appeals in light of recent critiques of the term.

1. Postwar Discourses on Authenticity: 1962-1974

While appeals to authenticity during the sixties and seventies claimed to simply depict an already existing self "within" person, a Foucauldian discourse analysis examines how such appeals constitute, position, and regulate individuals through the very self they posit.[88] For Foucault, discourse is not simply language or speech, but rather a set of related statements, terms, categories and beliefs that organizes knowledge and generates meanings.[89] Not only does a discourse represent and help apprehend subjects, objects, and experiences, but it also helps bring these things into being. When a discourse is dominant, its truths seem ahistorical; they have what Joan Scott describes as "an aura of naturalness and inevitability."[90] However, in any given context, multiple discourses compete with one another to organize social life and impose their own interpretations on the world. As a result of this struggle, discourses are contingent and potentially contradictory, and may thus constitute the same object in different and incoherent ways. This is especially the case with subjectivity: according to Foucault, discourses produce the range and modes of subjectivity available in a given context, and thus influence how individuals will think and act.[91]

In this section, I examine how authenticity operated discursively in Radicalesbian's 1970 manifesto "The Woman-Identified Woman." While this is only a single instance of the discourses of authenticity in the United States during the late sixties and early seventies, and not meant to represent them all, it shows some of the key features of authenticity's operation during

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[88] For a discussion of non-Foucauldian types of discourse analysis, see Sara Mills, *Discourse* (London and New York: Routledge, 2003).

[89] Michel Foucault, *History of Sexuality: Volume 1*; see also Joan Scott, "Deconstructing Equality Versus Difference," *Feminist Studies* 14 (1988).

[90] Joan Scott, "The Class We Have Lost," International Labor and Working Class History 57 (2000), p. 73.

[91] See Michel Foucault, *History of Sexuality, Vol 1;* Michel Foucault, *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice* (Ithaca: Cornell, 1977); see also Chris Weedon, *Feminist practice and poststructuralist theory* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1987), p. 35, 92, 95.

this period.[92] My analysis focuses on what kind of selves could be authentic in a given discourse

and which were precluded from being seen as such. It considers what kind of experiences were

made possible by different notions of authenticity—for instance, whether a given notion of

authenticity would make it easier to apprehend experiences of phoniness, assimilation or

stuntedness, and how these experiences came to be seen as instances of not being true to oneself.

It also asks how these discourses encouraged various ways of relating to oneself, such as

expressing oneself or being faithful to one's roots.

During the sixties and seventies, appeals to authenticity operated by clearly demarcating

what was authentic from not, and by casting the authentic as good.[93] While appeals to

authenticity during this period applied to a wide-range of phenomena—from consciousness,[94] to

emotions,[95] to cultures,[96] to political movements,[97] to democracy,[98] to revolutionaries[99]— each of

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[92] Radicalesbians, "The Woman-Identified Woman," *Notes From the Third Year,* eds. Koedt and Firestone, (New York: Redstockings, 1971), p. 81-84, henceforth *Notes 3.* All quotations come from these three pages.

[93] This binary function, according to Walter Benjamin, has its roots in the object world: namely, in the beginnings of mass production, during which the nature, originality, and quality of objects emerged as a prevalent cultural concern. Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" in *Illuminations* (New York: Schocken, 2007 [1936]); Miles Orvell, *The Real Thing: Imitation and Authenticity in American Culture, 1880-1940* (Chapel Hill: North Carolina, 1989). Other scholars who emphasize how authenticity works through the construction of its opposites include Aleida Assmann, "Authenticity—The Signature of Western Exceptionalism?" in *Paradoxes of Authenticity: Studies on a Critical Concept*, ed. J. Straub (Transcript-Verlag: 2012); Randolph Hohle, *Black Citizenship and Authenticity in the Civil Rights Movement* (New York: Routledge, 2015.

[94] For instance, Mary Daly, "The Spiritual Dimension of Women's Liberation" in *Notes 3*; and Anne Foer, "Notes on Consciousness Raising," in *Feminist Revolution,* ed. Redstockings, (New York: Redstockings, 1973).

[95] For instance, for Firestone, it might refer to genuine versus les genuine forms of suffering (87), racial hatred (99) or love (125). See Shulamith Firestone, *The Dialectic of Sex* (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 2003 [1970]).

[96] Sekou Toure, "A Dialectical Approach to Culture," *The Black Scholar* 1.1, 1969, p. 22.

[97] See Robin Morgan's excoriation of the New Left as "a counterfeit Left" in "Goodbye to All That" in *Feminism in Our Time,* ed. Miriam Schneir (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), p. 158. See also Brooke's characterization of genuine feminism versus its imposter variants in "The Retreat to Cultural Feminism," in *Feminist Revolution*, and Gregory Calvert's notion of "authentically revolutionary movements" in Calvert, "In White America: Radical Consciousness and Social Change," in *The New Left: A Documentary History,* ed. Massimo Teodori (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1969), p. 412.

these objects were portrayed as either genuine or not, with the genuine ones being rarer.[100] One

can see this binary at work in "The Woman-Identified Woman," in which women are figured as

being either their "real selves," or "the male culture's definition of themselves." There may be a

transitional period during which women jettison their old roles and identifications in order to

develop as their own persons, but unless one is in the process of overcoming these imposed rules,

there can be no middle ground: women either inhabit their feminine role or forge "[their] own

selves." "Women and person are contradictory terms… Being 'feminine' and being a whole

person are irreconcilable." In the words of Walter Benjamin, such claims produced a "distance"

between what was authentic and what was not.

By deeming what was authentic as "good," authenticity was constructed as irreducibly

normative. During this period, "being authentic" intersected with a range of traits that did not

simply follow from the concept or its synonyms, but which also had a normative and binary

character. For instance, in "The Woman-Identified Woman," the "real self" is associated with

genuine self-knowledge, "autonomy," "freedom," "pride and strength," self-respect and self-

love, and "full-humanity." [101] These features did not all denote the same character traits and self-

relations, and not every appeal to authenticity invoked these particular features; some

emphasized freedom, others integrity, others self-actualization, and so forth. But they did operate

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[98] Paul Jacobs and Saul Landau, "Introduction," in *The New Radicals: A Report with Documents* (New York: Vintage, 1966), p. 25.

[99] Morgan, "Goodbye to All That."

[100] This distinction arose from the object world, too, amid a concern that objects might be forged, corrupted, or mass-produced, and that their true nature had to be determined. Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction;" Orvell, *The Real Thing;* Assmann, "Authenticity."

[101] Given the richness of meaning, there was potential for contradiction. Consider what Howard Brick calls "the authentic enjoyment of camp" in *The Age of Contradiction* (New York: Twayne, 1998)*,* in which (according to Brick) gays and lesbians found genuine pleasure and increased self-fulfillment by donning roles and pretending not to be themselves. Dennis Dutton argues that these contradictions could be mitigated by recognizing that authenticity is a "dimension word," "a term whose meaning remains uncertain until we know what dimension of its referent we are talking about." See Dutton, "Authenticity in Art," in *The Oxford Handbook of Aesthetics*, ed. J. Levinson (Oxford: Oxford, 2003), p. 258.

in a binary and normative fashion—demarcating at various times who is free, natural, original, or sincere, versus who is unfree, imitative, alienated or phony.

What made it possible for something to be authentic or not was the existence of an "inner source," a kind of wellspring of authenticity to which these various appeals referred. This authenticating source might be universal (a common, human sameness), a property of a group, or something particular to an individual. In "The Woman-Identified Woman," this source is "our centers inside of ourselves," one that is opposed to "our male-given identity." Since authenticity intersects with a wide range of binaries, being authentic could involve a number of ways of relating to this source—in "the Woman-Identified Woman" alone, authenticity might involve "coinciding with [oneself]," respecting oneself, "finding" oneself, "validating" oneself, or "act[ing] in accordance with [one's] inner compulsion."

While these appeals varied significantly in their explanations of what inauthenticity was, as well as how and why *people* became inauthentic, what many of them shared was the idea that dissembling may be socially advantageous, that it may confer social benefits and shield one from sanctions.[102] In "The Woman-Identified Woman," for instance, conforming to conventional standards of femininity conferred social legitimacy and status. A woman who did not conform to these expectations, who might be "successful, independent, [and not] orienting her whole life around a man," was cast as "invisible, pathetic, inauthentic, unreal." To defy these roles was to risk being cast as a "lesbian" or "dyke," and to bear the stigmatization and marginalization such roles entailed.

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[102] Kathie Sarachild captures this well. "it's a question of whether we want to finally go after what we really want, our own true desires, or whether we are toning down our desires, lying about them, even to ourselves, in order to get favors from men who have power." Kathie Sarachild, "Going for What We Really Want," *Feminist Revolution*, p. 158.

However, these appeals cast the social benefits of dissimulation as superficial, and as sacrificing something more valuable within. In particular, they posited that a person's inner authenticating source could be damaged if one ignored or denied it, and that this would have detrimental effects on the whole of one's inner life. Thus, in "The Woman-Identified Woman," conforming to male-defined expectations distorted a woman's relationship to her inner world: "poison[s] her existence, keep[s] her alienated from herself, her own needs." It fostered feelings of constraint: "the sense… of being cut off, of being locked behind a window, of being unable to get out what we know is inside." It prevented her from being a "whole person" and achieving "her full humanity." It also foreclosed the possibilities for self-love and self-acceptance, creating "an enormous reservoir of self-hate." Conversely, by being true to herself, a woman would become "a more complete and freer human being." Despite the stigma she might bear, being authentic would eventually cause her feelings of "turmoil" and "inner division" to subside, leading her to "coincide" with herself and to become more "autonomous."

By positing an inner source, one that could be distorted or freely developed depending on how one relates to it, appeals to authenticity could act as vehicles for tacit appeals to more overtly political values, such as freedom, justice and equality.[103] While at face value, these appeals to authenticity called for a freer, more fulfilling way of relating to oneself, many also implicitly called for a more just social order. An inauthentic self-relation may be voluntarily assumed (such as phoniness), or involuntarily internalized (for instance, through socialization), but was never done so outside social norms and powers that encourage certain self-relations.

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[103] This point is well developed by Taylor in *A Secular Age* and *Ethics of Authenticity* and Feldman in *Against Authenticity.* Feldman thinks these claims would be stronger if they were articulated as justice, equality, or liberty claims, without using the language of authenticity. Taylor also recognizes authenticity's potential to bolster claims for recognition, self-fulfillment and equality, but he has qualms with how the term is used to promote freedom and individualism (and what kind of freedom and individualism discourses of authenticity tend to promote).

Different authenticity claims throughout the sixties and seventies posited a number of factors were thought to corrode the inner self, such as capitalism, racism, sexism, and bureaucracy. In "The Woman-Identified Woman," for instance, what generated an oppressive relationship to oneself was a combination of binary gender roles, constraining norms of femininity, and cultural restrictions on living independently. If being inauthentic was corrosive to the self, and if the sources of the self's inauthenticity resided somewhere in the social order, then appeals to authenticity could facilitate practices of social critique.

Although disentangling the authentic from the inauthentic was difficult, this contestability did not challenge the idea of authenticity nor its binary operation for activists during this time.[104] In "The Woman-Identified Woman," conventional femininity is cast as supporting a false authenticity, as circulating spurious notions of being a "real woman." While the text accounts for the various harms of this illusory idea of true womanhood—that it is used to withhold social acceptance, that it confines women to a subordinate position—the text does not seek to do away with the distinction itself.[105] Rather, it mobilizes its own idea of "the real self" for its own purposes: to create an alternative, emancipatory way of being a woman, to facilitate critiques of sexism, to promote new forms of solidarity and togetherness.[106] In part, this may be

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[104] This last feature would come to contrast with later feminist, queer, poststructuralist and postcolonial critiques, which would seek to undermine this very distinction. The literature here is vast, and authenticity was sometimes collateral damage in critiques targeted at essence, race, the subject or gender. See Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble*; William Connolly, *Identity\Difference*; Stuart Hall, "The Question of Cultural Identity," in *Modernity and its Futures* (Cambridge: Polity, 1992)*;* Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic* (Cambridge: Harvard, 1993)*;* and K. Anthony Appiah, *In My Father's House* (New York: Oxford, 1992)*.*
[105] The harmfulness of notions of "true womanhood" was a pervasive concern throughout the Women's Liberation Movement. See Heather Booth, Eri Goldfield, and Sue Munaker, "Toward a Radical Movement" in Barbara A. Crow (ed.), *Radical Feminism* (New York: NYU, 2000), p. 59; Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (New York: Norton, 2013 [1963])*,* p. 33, 25.
[106] Other feminist texts from this period make a similar move, substituting "real personhood," "inner potential," "whole human being" for "true woman," as the authenticating source, or as the source that will make women feel whole, thriving, or real. See for example, Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique;* Mary Daly, "The Spiritual Dimension of Women's Liberation" in *Notes 3;* Susi Kaplow, "Getting Angry," in

because casting a given identity as being the true representation of oneself, rather than merely a preferred, healthier, or more respectful representation, gave significant rhetorical force to authenticity appeals. Truth claims, as opposed beliefs, preferences, or wishes, had the potential to compel assent to what they proclaimed, settle disagreement, and cast rival claims as false.[107]

Finally, while I read this text as a discourse on authenticity, it also intersects with related discourses. "The Woman-Identified Woman" argues that unless women are "defining and shaping the terms of our lives," they will never be autonomous or free. While this emphasis on self-definition locates this text in a discourse on autonomy, I think its claims about the nature of the underlying self also locate it in a discourse on authenticity. "The Woman-Identified Woman" bases its defense of autonomy, in part, on the harmful ways the person "inside" is transformed when one is phony, subordinate, or unequal. Similarly, the text bases its critique of sex roles neither on the importance of truthfulness nor on the importance of individuality for their own sake, but rather, on the effects of having to hide or distort who one is—which would "emotionally cripple" men and "dehumanize" women. Given that there are always multiple discourses at work in a given context, appeals to authenticity may intersect with discourses on autonomy, freedom, equality, and justice. Yet what makes this claim an appeal to authenticity in particular is that it casts the self as possessing an inner source and argues that certain ways of relating to this source will either nourish or diminish the person inside. Given these features, one

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Notes 3; Kate Millet, "Sexual Politics: A Manifesto for Revolution"*; and "Politics of the Ego: A Manifesto for N.Y. Radical Feminists," both in *Notes from the Second Year,* eds. Firestone and Koedt, (New York: Radical Feminism, 1970; henceforth *Notes 2);* and "Congress to Unite Women," in *Radical Feminism,* ed. Anne Koedt, p. 308.

[107] As Michaele Ferguson in *Sharing Democracy* (Oxford: Oxford, 2012) notes, "Such claims purport to being uncontestable; if you disagree with a truth claim, you are in essence denying reality. And since truth claims compel universal agreement, they are claims that aspire to settle debates once and for all… Such claims are meant to correspond to reality." (p. 67-8).

can make a case for situating such a claim in a discourse on authenticity, even if it does not explicitly use the term, and even if it is simultaneously at work in other discourses.

2. The Potency of Authenticity Claims

Many critics have faulted authenticity claims for the effects they have generated in political life: for stigmatizing those deemed inauthentic, for constraining individuals to embody a particular "truth," and for fostering depoliticizing turns to the self, to name only a few. However, appeals to an inner self do not always, only or uniformly produce these problematic effects. In this section, I show that they might accomplish desirable ends for social movements, particularly those critiquing social norms. Appeals to authenticity could mobilize individuals around alternative visions of an actualized human potential, of human or group solidarity, or of an emancipatory political subject. Such claims could facilitate critiques of norms that prevent the realization of that vision or that promote self-relations that are contrary to it. When used on behalf of stigmatized identities, such appeals could counter demeaning representations of oneself, revalue those aspects that were stigmatized, and animate resistant practices of truth telling. In this section, I turn to two texts that show how authenticity appeals could generate these effects for quite different purposes: one that deployed a notion of a universal sameness in order to pursue integration, human solidarity, and a more democratic society, and another that deployed a notion of a fundamental difference in pursuit of separation, racial solidarity, and black pride.

The Port Huron Statement shows how appeals to authenticity could generate a normative vision of human solidarity, and on that basis act as a form of social critique.[108] The text

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[108] *The Port Huron Statement*, reprinted in full in Paul Jacobs and Saul Landau, *The New Radicals: A Report with Documents* (New York: Vintage, 1966), p. 149-162. All quotes are taken from these pages.

constructs a notion of an inner, authenticating source in the form of a common, human potential: "unfulfilled capacities for reason, freedom, and love… unrealized potential for self-cultivation, self-direction, self-understanding and creativity." These features are the "crucial" and defining ones of human beings, and any action or treatment that departs from or contradicts this source "depersonalizes" individuals and "reduces human beings to the status of things." This notion of human nature seemed more aspirational than descriptive: the authors recognize that human beings have often been submissive, unreasonable, violent and incapable of self-direction. However, even though these traits contradict the meaning and value of one's personhood, they do not eliminate this inner potential—it remains central though unrealized.

According to the *Statement*, this inner source could be best actualized by attaining "human independence." Here, human independence was not cast as independence from others, but as independence from those concerns that hindered the realization of one's potential, such as popularity, status, or powerlessness. While the term *independence* may have more immediately political connotations, the text articulates this notion using language derived from psychology and existentialism: "a meaning in life that is personally authentic," "a way that is one's own," "an intuitive awareness of possibilities," "an ability and willingness to learn," "a quality of mind… which easily unites the fragmented parts of personal history." Each trait invokes psychological and existential categories in ways that may initially seem foreign or secondary to notions of independence, but that have the effect of fusing them into an ideal of actualized, integrated personhood.

Through the way it formulates human independence, the text is able to draw ethical and psychological concerns into the political domain. In particular, the text articulates human independence as an ideal of self-development that required being treated first and foremost as a

person, without regard for one's class, race or status. Thus, human independence could serve as the basis for a critique of social norms, which were cast as estranging individuals from one another. By casting human independence as a capacity within every person, regardless of race, class, or personal differences (gender is not mentioned), the *Statement* was able to treat these features not only as contingent and external, but also as stifling the self's chance for human independence. Such features fostered widespread social pathologies, such as loneliness, estrangement, and isolation because they ignored the "person" underneath them, and thus hindered genuine connection between "man and man."

In addition to facilitating critiques of social norms and articulating ideals of autonomy and solidarity, the *Port Huron Statement* used notions of authenticity to argue for a fundamental reorganization of political life. According to the *Statement*, the only political system that would foster human independence was "participatory democracy."[109] Participatory democracy would respect the "well being and dignity of man," by allowing the individual a "share in those social decisions determining the quality and direction of his life." In this way, independence related not only to personal life, but to political life. It could also address at a system-wide level those social pathologies of estrangement and a lack of meaning by "bringing people out of isolation and into community." Thus, by appealing to inner potential, the *Port Huron Statement* broadened the scope of "human independence" to bridge the political, the interpersonal, and one's inner life. It then rooted certain forms of individual wellbeing and suffering in both social and political arrangements and in interpersonal relations, formulating a vision of community that could address key social pathologies and realize one's truly human capacities.

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[109] For an in-depth discussion of the meanings, features and ambiguities of participatory democracy for activists in the sixties, see especially Miller's discussion in *Democracy is in the Streets,* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987), p. 142-153.

Whereas the *Statement* casts authenticity as being realized by overcoming social differences, Kwame Ture and Charles Hamilton's 1967 manifesto, *Black Power,* casts authenticity as being realized through them.[110] Like the *Port Huron Statement*, *Black Power* argues that social pathologies would emerge when one was prevented from realizing an inner authenticating source. The text draws on the popularity and prevalence of individualized notions of authenticity in order to construct an emancipatory vision of a collective self. Unlike the *Statement*, however, this inner, authenticating source was not something universally shared, but rather, something common to all blacks, consisting in black culture, origins, and roots. As with more individualized sources of authenticity, such as one's beliefs, desires, or personality, these inner sources are constructed as a fundamental part of a person, and as something that will strengthen or diminish his or her well being, depending on whether it is cultivated or repressed. For instance, Ture and Hamilton claim that, "No person can be healthy, complete, and mature if he must deny a part of himself." Notice here that if one did not know what "part of himself" this appeal was referring to, this sentence could easily resemble more individualistic appeals to authenticity—it could be an individual belief, manner, or desire. Yet in treating blackness as that "part of himself" that can render one diminished or thriving, this text brings concerns with authenticity onto a collective register.

By transposing these notions associated with individual authenticity onto a collective subject, *Black Power* was able to encourage certain actions and self-relations and discourage others. In particular, by casting integration and assimilation as species of phoniness and conformism, Ture and Hamilton could cast these behaviors as instances of being inauthentic, and thus, as ethically undesirable. By using the metaphors of authenticity to exhort faithfulness to

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[110] Kwame Ture and Charles V. Hamilton, *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation* (New York: Vintage, 1993 [1967]).

one's black roots and black culture, *Black Power* sought to mobilize blacks to cultivate a sense

of racial solidarity and political consciousness. The text also draws on psychological language

associated with individual authenticity, referring to "the racial and cultural personality" of the

black community, and exhorting blacks to preserve its "cultural integrity."[111] Here, it is not only

black individuals but the black community that is cast as having an inner, authenticating source,

one that is worthy of preservation and able to be strengthened or diminished depending on

whether blacks openly embrace or conceal it. In particular, the text encourages three self-

relations to this collective source that are thought to nurture and sustain the black community:

"self-identity" (being true to one's identity), "self determination" (creating positive definitions of

oneself and collectively determining one's goals and directions), and self-discovery

("recognition of the virtues in themselves as black people") (xvii, 46-47). By contrast,

assimilating and striving for integration are depicted as attempts at rejecting one's own

"blackness," and viewing it as less valuable than white, mainstream culture (54).

     Throughout the text, being true to one's culture or roots is not cast as an end in itself, but

as a means to combat oppression, to counter norms that rendered one stigmatized and to foster

individual and collective thriving. Faithfulness to the black community is depicted as bringing

about not only collective thriving, but also emancipation. "The extent to which black Americans

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[111] This discursive move—in which the features of an authentic, individual person are used to describe an authentic culture or race—is found in other Black Power texts from this period. Consider this quote from Barbara Ann Teer: "The way we talk (the rhythms of our speech which naturally fit our impulses) the way we walk, sing, dance, pray, laugh, eat, make love, and finally, most importantly, the way we look, make up our cultural heritage. There is nothing like it or equal to it, it stands alone in comparison to other cultures. It is uniquely, beautifully, personally ours and no one can emulate it." Note how the features used to describe authentic individuals—natural, unique, personally one's own, inimitable—are used to describe culture. Teer even approaches the language of Herder in casting authenticity as a manner or way of doing things, in a way of one's own. Finally, culture is cast as an authenticating source within every black individual—emanating "naturally" from one's "impulses." See Barbara Ann Teer, "Needed: A New Image," in *The Black Power Revolt,* ed. Barbour (Boston: Sargent, 1968), p. 222. See also Malcolm X, *By Any Means Necessary,* p. 53: "A race of people is like an individual man; until it uses its own talent, takes pride in its own history, expresses its culture, affirms its own selfhood, it can never fulfill itself."

can and do 'trace their roots' to Africa, to that extent will they be able to be more effective on the political scene" (45). Moreover, when one's roots are collectively valued and upheld as good, being true to one's roots may cultivate a sense of "pride, rather than shame, in blackness," (xvi). In this way, *Black Power* articulates an inability to be oneself not only as a constraint, but as a form of oppression: "Too long have [blacks] been kept in submission by being told they have no culture, no manifest heritage… If black people are to know themselves as a vibrant, valiant people, they must know their roots" (38-39). Notice here how "pride" (and by contrast, shame) is an emotion that presupposes an inner, underlying "self" because it takes the whole "self" as its object.[112]

Although I have been emphasizing the desirable effects in this appeal, it is not wholly immune to some of the concerns raised by the critics of authenticity. While this appeal has produced effects that are desirable in some regards, it does not do so uniformly. For instance, some scholars have argued that the valorization of one's roots is potentially depoliticizing—it may foster a retreat from political action, or shift one's focus from political to cultural life.[113] *Black Power,* I believe, is less vulnerable to this risk, since it explicitly casts a return to one's roots as part of a larger strategy of emancipation, as a spur to political action and social transformation; one returns to one's roots not as an end in itself, but in order to transform one's society. Thus, the risk is there, but its realization is contingent. What is less successfully avoided

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[112] See Alessandro Ferrara, "Rehabilitating authenticity: why agency, self-identity and community presuppose purposive unity." Unpublished paper delivered at "What's Authentic About Authenticity?" Conference, Bern, March 14-15 2014, p. 12-13. Ferrara, adopting an argument from Hume, argues that pride cannot be experienced without invoking the first-person "I," and without referring to the self in its entirety. "A man… may be proud of his beautiful house. However, the objective beauty of his house, which he as anybody else may admire, if "consider'd merely as such" and not as related to his self, "never produces any pride or vanity." (p. 12)

[113] Richard Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, Solidarity* (Cambridge: Cambridge, 1989), p. xiv-xv, 100; Echols, *Daring to be Bad,* p. 5, 201; Ellen Willis, "Radical Feminism and Feminist Radicalism," in Sohnya Sayres (ed.), *The 60s Without Apology* (Minneapolis: Minnesota, 1984).

in this strategy is the risk of marginalization. According to the text, black culture and community provide the resources for pride, personal integrity, and thriving. However, does this mean that blacks who do not identify with black culture are less authentic? Would a lack of identification mean that they are unfaithful to their community or roots?[114] While I return to a version of this challenge in section 3, it is worth noting here how mixed authenticity's effects can be—that what may be empowering and emancipatory for some may be experienced as a constraint for others.

Black Power contains an alternative appeal to authenticity that is less susceptible to both of the above risks. This appeal is an exhortation to embodied truth-telling, one that encourages individuals to affect change in the world by arguing for what they want in their own voice.[115] Consider how "telling it like it is" is positioned against resistance strategies that may be considered more civil. The text begins with the claim that white Americans would rather not address issues of widespread racial injustice. "To some, it is embarrassing; to others, it is inconvenient; to still others, it is confusing" (xvi). As such, they "reward" blacks with "prestige, status, and material benefits, for agreeing not to "forcefully condemn" the American system. Ture and Hamilton reject these more moderate strategies, casting them as instances of downplaying what one thinks, if not concealing it: "to speak softly, tread lightly, employ the soft-sell and the put off" (xvii). However, by posing only "mild demands," they contend, blacks

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[114] Such objections are well elaborated in Tommie Shelby, *We Who Are Dark: the philosophical foundations of Black solidarity* (Cambridge: Belknap, 2005); and Toure, *Who's Afraid of Post-Blackness?*

[115] Feminist consciousness-raising was also a practice of resistant truth telling, one that was often cast as an adaptation of "telling it like it is." In one text from this period, Kathie Sarachild argued that if women spoke honestly about their experiences, they could distill theoretical truths about their real selves, the condition of women in general, and the workings of oppression. Underpinning this argument was the belief that consciousness-raising could tap into a shared quality of women's experiences. See Kathie Sarachild, "Program for consciousness-raising," in *Notes 2;* Kathie Sarachild, "Consciousness Raising: A Radical Weapon," in Redstockings, *Feminist Revolution*, (New York: Redstockings, 1978 [1975]). Other feminist texts during this time disagreed with Sarachild as to the nature of what was revealed in consciousness-raising. See Echols, *Daring to be Bad*, 146.

do not force whites to confront the injustices in their system. Moreover, Ture and Hamilton claim that such strategies come at the expense of something more important: namely, "the true feelings, hopes, and demands of an oppressed black people," which have suffered centuries of "sliding over, dressing up, and soothing down" (xvii). In this way, Ture and Hamilton are able to argue that one feature of oppression involves having one's "true feelings, hopes, and demands" be forcefully concealed, misrepresented, or devalued.

At first, what Ture and Hamilton advocate may seem to be a practice of sincerity rather than authenticity. They advocate revealing what one really believes and thinks, doing so "forcefully and truthfully," and they oppose this to "hypocritical" and "mislead[ing]" speech. Yet in their emphasis on revealing the person underneath, and on the manner of how one reveals it, this practice comes closer to one of authenticity. Ture and Hamilton claim that "only when one's true self—white or black—is exposed, can this society proceed to deal with the problems from a position of clarity and not from one of misunderstanding" (xviii). What makes up this "true self" seems to be not only one's "true feelings, hopes, and demands" (connecting it to sincerity) but also one's "way" or manner of speaking and acting (connecting it more directly to authenticity). The text not only emphasizes declaring what one wants, but also declaring it in one's own voice, and as who one is. "We blacks must respond in our own way, on our own terms, in a manner that fits our temperaments" (xvii). Here, resistance involves embodying the self one wants to become, and demanding that one be heard without having to first conform or to assimilate.

Notice, too, how posing "mild demands" is portrayed as hiding one's voice and manner and is cast as politically inefficacious: Ture and Hamilton do not believed that a restrained sincerity will bring about the type of "clarity" and "understanding" needed to address racial injustice. To appreciate how Ture and Hamilton are departing from forms or resistance that

emphasize civility, consider some of the texts surrounding practices of civil disobedience from the Montgomery bus boycott. In a pamphlet emphasizing polite decorum, black activists were advised to "talk as little as possible, and always in a quiet tone," and to use only "common courtesy" ("May I sit here?") when interacting with whites—even if they display hatred or violence.[116] Randolph Hohle interprets such advice as an attempt to show that blacks could be "good citizens," worthy of inclusion in the public sphere, and more civil than the whites who tried to exclude them from it. However, he also notes that in trying to integrate segregated areas, black activists were encouraged to imitate "white" ways of speaking and white middle class norms of dress and hairstyle.[117] Hohle shows how pamphlets and flyers urged blacks to control their displays of emotion and bear violence without losing composure. By contrast, Ture and Hamilton argued that blacks should receive rights and recognition on the basis of who they are, and not on the basis of conforming to white or middle-class expectations. Not only did they think this would help blacks achieve their political aims, but it would also help them overcome a form of oppression, one that consisted in having their needs, desires, and feelings treated as less legitimate and less urgent.

3. Authenticity Beyond Strategic Essentialism

In the last section, I argued that while appeals to authenticity carry certain risks, they may also generate desirable discursive effects, particularly for progressive social movements. Such an

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[116] Quoted on p. 29 of Hohle, *Black Citizenship and Authenticity.* See also Kenneth Cmiel, who argues that even though the Montgomery protesters showed courtesy and restraint, they were seen as breaking the norms of civility simply by breaking norms. Kenneth Cmiel, "The Politics of Civility," in *The Sixties...,* ed. David Farber. (Chapel Hill: North Carolina, 1994);

[117] Hohle, *Black Citizenship and Authenticity,* p. 29-31. See also Kobena Mercer, "Black Hair/Style Politics," *new formations* 3 (1987), who argues that norms of civility in the civil rights movement encouraged blacks to hide who they were and conform to white standards of middle-class respectability— from hiding their black vernacular way of speaking, to carrying themselves in a non-threatening way, to mimicking middle-class fashions and hairstyles

argument may resemble those often labeled as "strategic essentialism." Primarily associated with

Gayatri Spivak, strategic essentialism refers to claims made on behalf of an identity as if it were

uniform in order to achieve a specific political goal, yet with full knowledge that the identity

being described is indeterminate and impossible.[118] A strategic deployment of essentialism, for

instance, may help women engage in collective action, appropriate patriarchal discourse for their

own purposes, and mobilize others. Moreover, such claims may be compelling since, to

paraphrase Denise Riley, the world behaves as if "women" exist. However, in taking the "risk of

essentialism," Spivak cautions that one ought to acknowledge "the dangerousness of what one

must use"—dangers which include reinforcing claims about an identity that are descriptively

false, and having one's strategy appropriated outside of the context it originated or for ends one

did not intend.[119]

One could appeal to authenticity strategically, that is, without the belief in an authentic

self, but with the intent of harnessing authenticity's discursive effects and persuasiveness. Such a

strategic deployment would have an ironic character to it, since the person invoking authenticity

would not believe it "refers" to anything deeper within. Yet, if strategic essentialism involves

appealing to something that one does not believe exists, how might this change appeals to

authenticity? In this section, I depart from a strategic defense of authenticity by elucidating the

fruitfulness of appealing to the term in a more genuine way. In the first part of the section, I

show why a belief in an authentic self may be valuable beyond the effects it produces. I do this

through a reading of Elizabeth Sutherland Martínez and Enriqueta Longeaux y Vásquez*'s* 1974

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[118] Gayatri Spivak, "Criticism, Feminism, and the Institution," *Thesis Eleven* 10/11 (1984–85), pp. 175-87. For other texts examining the risks and potentials of what is often called strategic essentialism, see Denise Riley, *Am I That Name: Feminism and the Category of "Women" in History,* (Minneapolis: Minnesota, 1988); and Diana Fuss, *Essentially Speaking: Feminism, Nature and Difference,* (New York: Routledge, 1989).

[119] Gayatri Spivak, "In a Word. Interview," in *The Essential Difference,* eds. Naomi Schor and Elizabeth Weed, (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana, 1994), p. 157.

manifesto, *Viva La Raza*, a text that not only generates emancipatory discursive effects, but also shows the value in adopting the belief in an authentic self. In particular, Martínez and Vásquez show how some of the effects generated by appealing to authenticity—namely articulating and overcoming one's oppression—are tied to having certain beliefs about what the self is. In the second part of this section, I offer an interpretation of *Viva La Raza* that shows that the belief in an authentic self need not be a belief in an essentialist or universal self, but rather, a self one is able to endorse. In this way, I show that the normative and critical purchase of such claims need not depend on philosophically untenable foundations.

Viva La Raza shows how notions of authenticity could counter culturally prevalent representations of Mexican-Americans that were oppressive and demeaning.[120] Martínez and Vásquez catalogue a list of harmful stereotypes attached to the identity of Mexican-Americans: that they are "immigrants" who do not belong, that they had no history before Europeans "discovered" their land, that they were inferior and their culture without value, and that they were "savages" with ways of life that were antiquated. *Viva La Raza* argues that these images make it difficult for Mexican-Americans to want to be themselves, and casts this difficulty as an instance of oppression. In particular, having lies promoted about one's culture and history distorts one's connection to one's people and oneself. "In the search for the truth about ourselves… we must tear away the shroud of distortion, hypocrisy, and just plain falsity that has been wrapped around us—and all other oppressed peoples—for centuries" (9). Because Mexican-Americans have encountered only negative images of themselves, they feel "ashamed" of who they are (5), "in conflict with [them]selves" (3), and "ma[de] to hate their true selves" (140). This, in turn, encourages them to hide who they are, give up their cultural traditions, and

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[120] Elizabeth Sutherland Martínez and Enriqueta Longeaux y *Vásquez, Viva La Raza! The Struggle of the Mexican-American People,* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1974). All citations will be from this text. The term Mexican-American is Martínez and Vásquez's.

assimilate to white middle class norms. Martínez and Vásquez want to expose these lies as forms

of oppression and to "put[] the truth back into history" (10). Such a practice will not only remedy

past distortions but will serve as a liberatory practice of self-definition. "We are going to make

our own studies, tell our own stories, write our own books. We are going to speak for ourselves."

In discovering the truth about their history, Mexican-Americans will discover the truth about

themselves and use this truth to counter social norms that falsely posit them as inferior.

Moreover, by being connected to their culture and their history, Mexican-Americans will tap into

a collective source of strength and fortify themselves as a people.

 While Martínez and Vásquez believe the in the reality of the authentic self they are

describing, one could strategically appeal to this notion of a true Mexican-American identity

without really believing in it, in the hopes of harnessing its political potential. One could appeal

to authenticity, as it were, disingenuously. Yet if one subscribes to Martínez and Vásquez's

account of oppression, such a strategic deployment may not address the experiences of inferiority

these appeals seek to counter. The authors do not want only to change the way they are

represented and the way others see them; they also want to change the way they inhabit their

identity: they want a truth about themselves that will reflect their value and foster their integrity.

Since oppression, on their account, involves the way one's self is transformed by norms that

posit one's culture and history as inferior, the goal is not only to counter these stigmatizing

representations, but in doing so, to change the way one relates to oneself—namely, the feeling

that one must assimilate or else feel ashamed of oneself. In this way, notions of authenticity and

inauthenticity enabled one to apprehend those experiences that arose not only from negative

representations of oneself, but from the way these representations cultivated a desire to depart

from who one was.

Even though Martínez and Vásquez cast this self as true for all Mexican-Americans, and as the defining truth of this identity, must one subscribe to this particular truth in order to overcome one's oppression? Martínez and Vásquez argue that the "truths" that circulate about a given identity will determine whether it will diminish or thrive. In making this claim, they assume, rightly I think, that one's beliefs about who one is must rely on social confirmation, that they cannot be entirely generated by oneself alone.[121] Such beliefs form the bases for feelings of pride and shame, and shape which aspects of oneself one may want to express, modify, or conceal. Thus, it is important for individual and collective well being to have a self one can endorse, and to believe that self is valuable.

On this reading, what the text calls the "deep search for self" seems not so much the search for a historical self, but rather the search through history for an identity one can affirm. In *Viva la Raza*, this self is grounded in Mexican history and culture, but in particular, in those parts of history and culture that can provide the basis for feelings of pride and self-worth. "Our whole struggle [is] for what some people call identity—the affirmation of who and what we really are; and learning to be proud of it rather than ashamed." Yet individuals could have different readings of that history, or different ways of relating to and identifying with it, that elicits a feeling of pride.[122] Moreover, while the search for an inner self is supposed to reveal that they are "a people… [with] a noble past, a rich culture, and beautiful human values" (9), there can be many different "truths" that lead to this realization, rather than a single agreed upon one. Thus, to

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[121] For a philosophical elaboration on this point, see Taylor, *Ethics of Authenticity* and Ferrara, *Reflective Authenticity.*

[122] Such a reframing may allow for a more intersectional understanding of authenticity, one that does not tie authenticity to a particular gender, sexuality, class, or race, but that allows multiple subject positions to share in it. As critics have noted, some notions of collective authenticity have inadvertently stigmatized those who are middle class; others have excluded gays and lesbians; and still others have provided a narrow range of acceptable lifestyles that supposedly manifest a racial essence. See Shelby, *We Who are Dark;* Toure, *Who's Afraid of Post-Blackness;* Pauli Murray, "The Liberation of Black Women," in *Words of Fire: An Anthology of African-American Feminist Thought* (New York: The New Press, 1995).

return to one of the concerns we encountered in *Black Power*, the "truths" that form the basis of a collective identity need not be universal, historically accurate, or singular; moreover, a reluctance to identify with a given truth need not mean that one is inauthentic.

Thus, one way to diminish the "risk of essentialism" is to treat authenticity as something plural rather than unitary, particular rather than shared, and as something that is not given, but requires construction, even interpretation. In order to address what Martínez and Vásquez describe as oppression, we may not need to agree upon what an authenticating source is or how to best relate to it; a variety of truths may do. Moreover, our ability to grasp instances of inauthenticity need not depend on a unitary conception of authenticity either. On the contrary, different discourses of inauthenticity may help us apprehend the various way identities are formed and malformed in social life, and may place different emphasis on phoniness, assimilation, or stuntedness as objects of critique.

What is at stake in *Viva la Raza* seems to be the *integrity* of the self rather than its truth, though the text suggests that the integrity of Mexican-Americans depends on what they truly believe about themselves. As mentioned earlier, there is significant rhetorical force in casting something as the true representation of Mexican-Americans, since truths could compel assent to what they proclaimed and counter other representations by casting them as false. Rather than reading *Viva la Raza* as containing the single, true account of their history and roots, one can read the text as offering an alternative valuation of Mexican history, one that could generate alternative self-understandings, pride in oneself, and integrity. Such a reading would emphasize how appeals to authenticity can usher into being a self that does not yet exist: an identity that can facilitate more desirable ways of relating to oneself, or an identity that one can more readily affirm.

4. Conclusion

As critics have rightly noted, appeals to authenticity do not always yield the good: they may facilitate a politics of purity that stigmatizes outsiders, they may fuel nationalist discourses that marginalize those cast as foreigners, they may privilege "telling it like it is" over concerns with accuracy or inclusiveness. They may be in tension with our commitments to justice, freedom, or solidarity. However, during the sixties and early seventies, not only did these appeals often intersect with such values, but they were also able to generate political effects that could advance progressive causes. Authenticity claims could enable marginalized groups to counter oppressive representations of themselves, legitimate culturally undervalued identities, animate practices of resistant truth telling, and mobilize people around normative conceptions of the good. They could facilitate compelling forms of social critique, often by casting those roles, institutions, and social norms that allowed certain individuals to develop themselves while others remained stifled, or that allowed certain individuals to express themselves while others remained constrained, as contrary to notions of basic fairness.

Moreover, appeals to authenticity were valuable not only for their effects, but also for the way they gave richer, fuller meaning to the values of justice, equality and freedom. Such appeals could cast various forms of "hiding oneself," such as phoniness, civility, and assimilation, as instances of constraint, even oppression. In doing so, these appeals could connect experiences of incoherence, stuntedness and shame to the ways different social norms communicated messages of inferiority—encouraging people to hide or change who they are. In this way, authenticity claims were uniquely positioned to draw concerns about the nature and formation of subjectivity into the political realm.

While authenticity claims do not guarantee political outcomes, this fact need not entail a rejection or replacement of the term. Authenticity is not alone in possessing this Janus-faced tendency: many of our political values and strategies harbor the potential to be deployed for ends we find unsavory, or in ways that seem to contradict their inner purposes.[123] Some scholars have responded to this tendency with reconstructions of authenticity that treat these problematic effects as arising from corrupt versions of the ideal.[124] Underlying such a project seems to be the idea that if one could apprehend the right version of the ideal, one could reject the others, and their effects, as distortions. Yet might there be some value to engaging authenticity in all of its potency and variability? Attending to authenticity in all of its diversity may disclose different meanings and effects, depending on whether the term is deployed to advance social movements or presidential campaigns, to construct a group identity or a universal self, to counter oppression or estrangement. Appreciating the protean character of such appeals may not only help us become more discerning in how we assess such claims, but may also help us imagine alternative futures, ones that are freer and fairer, for the politics of authenticity today.

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[123] Nancy Fraser, *Fortunes of Feminism: From State-Managed Capitalism to Neoliberal Crisis* (New York: Verso, 2013)*;* Wendy Brown, "Suffering Rights as Paradoxes," *Constellations* 7, 2(2000).
[124] Charles Taylor, *Ethics of Authenticity*; Somogy Varga, *Authenticity as an Ethical Ideal.*

CHAPTER TWO
Between Nature and Artifice: Rousseau and the Roots of Authenticity

"It has been noticed in the course of their life the majority of men are often unlike themselves and seem to be transformed into entirely different men. I did not want to write a book to establish such a well-known thing: I had a newer and even more important object. It was to look for the causes of these variations, and to pay particular attention to the ones that depend on us to show how we could direct them ourselves."

—Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Confessions.*

Although ideals of authenticity fueled social movements in the 1960s, political invocations of a true self began to decline during the 1970s, especially those predicated on a belief in a human "sameness." Appeals to an authentically black or an authentically feminine self persisted a bit longer, though some scholars argue that these appeals were directed less at the eradication of racism or sexism and more at the creation of separate cultural enclaves for women and cultural minorities.[125] The breakup of the New Left and the rise of identity-based politics all reduced the plausibility of appeals to a universal self and the projects of integration and solidarity. Moreover, as people began to pursue self-realization through therapy, consumption, and travel, authenticity was less often associated with visions of collective life and political freedom, or with practices of social critique.[126] Even if there were such a thing as an authentic self, it was no longer clear that politics was the appropriate medium in which to realize it.

Some scholars argue that notions of authenticity fostered this "retreat from the political" by placing more weight on transforming the self than on transforming society. Alice Echols, for instance, argued that the emphasis on "the personal is political" in early seventies radical feminism led to a conflation of the two, in which personal transformation and self-improvement

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[125] Alice Echols, *Daring to be Bad* (Minneapolis: Minnesota, 1989); Jeffrey Ogbar, *Black Power* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 2004); Douglas Rossinow, *The Politics of Authenticity* (New York: Columbia, 1996).

[126] Taylor argues that in these years, we see the rise of "deviant" strands of the ideal, in which people act on some aspects (self-expression, freedom as self-articulation) at the expense of others (intimate relationships, equality, solidarity), and that this "flattens" or diminishes the importance of the ideal. See Charles Taylor, "The Politics of Recognition" in *Multiculturalism* (Princeton: Princeton, 1994), and *A Secular Age.*

became cast as political ends in themselves, de-emphasizing projects of widespread social

transformation.[127] Brooke worried that the emphasis on self-transformation fostered the idea that

"our oppression is purely psychological and the way to get out of it is to develop a 'sense of

self.'"[128] Others, such as Richard Rorty, claimed that it is desirable for appeals to authenticity to

recede from political life, since the demands of self-creation and the demands of human

solidarity are "forever incommensurable."[129]

This chapter engages two versions of what I call the liberal critique of authenticity. The

first critique claims that appeals to authenticity have depoliticizing effects, in that they privilege

transforming the self at the expense of transforming the social. The second critique argues that

appeals to authenticity are not depoliticizing per se, but that they *should* not be politicized:

because their objects—the self and its transformation—belong to the private sphere; because

they may be at odds with more squarely political values, such as freedom or justice; and because

the claims they make—about the self, its truth—cannot be adjudicated.[130]

I term both of these critiques the liberal critique not because they are made by self-

avowed liberals (though some of them are), but rather because they advocate a firm public-

private divide for authenticity appeals, even if they disagree on where that divide should be. In

responding to these critiques, I ask how appeals to authenticity affect the way we distinguish

public from private and political from non-political. Clearly, not every pursuit of authenticity is

political, but how can one judge which ones are? Do appeals to authenticity threaten to blur the

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[127] Echols, *Daring to be Bad,* p. 201; see also p. 5. Other feminists who held similar views included Meredith Tax (quoted in Echols, p. 5); and Ellen Willis, "Radical Feminism and Feminist Radicalism," in Sohnya Sayres (ed.), *The 60s Without Apology* (Minneapolis: Minnesota, 1984).

[128] Brooke, "The Retreat to Cultural Feminism," in Redstockings, eds., *Feminist Revolution* (New York: Redstockings, 1973).

[129] Richard Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, Solidarity* (Cambridge: Cambridge, 1989), p. xiv-xv, 100.

[130] For instance, see Isaiah Berlin, *Four Essays on Liberty* (New York: Oxford, 1969); Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, Solidarity.*

lines between public and private, or do they expand and challenge conventional boundaries of

the political, drawing in concerns with sentiment and subjectivity? What challenges emerge

when we connect claims about the authenticity of the self—its thriving, integrity, and inner

world—to claims about how we should lead our shared lives?

This chapter considers these questions through the work of Jean-Jacques Rousseau.

Though scholars disagree on the precise notion of authenticity Rousseau held (a disagreement

exacerbated by the fact that he rarely used the term), many agree that he was one of the first

thinkers to articulate a notion of authenticity.[131] Rousseau believed that individuals during his

time made and remade themselves in detrimental ways, corroding those attributes of selfhood

necessary for human flourishing. He directs his readers' attention to the social and political

causes of these self-transformations: how they are triggered and exacerbated by political

arrangements, by certain forms of cultural expression, by social rank and class, and by the

influence of other people. He also considers inauthenticity's political costs—a loss of freedom at

the level of desire, institutions, and collective life.

A number of scholars have turned to Rousseau on the question of authenticity, so it is

worth pausing for a moment to distinguish my approach from theirs. While I agree that Rousseau

is an early and influential articulator of authenticity, this chapter does not seek to situate

Rousseau in a larger intellectual history of what authenticity was or is.[132] Similarly, while some

scholars have turned to Rousseau in order to construct a philosophically robust account of

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[131] Rousseau used the terms *authentique* and *authenticité* very rarely—twice in *The Social Contract,* three times in *Emile,* and five times in *Letters Written from the Mountain.* His usage is consistent with the way the word was used at the time: characterizing an act as genuine or original, as opposed to counterfeit. Only well after Rousseau's death did the word acquire a connection to sincerity and the self. Ruth Grant, *Hypocrisy and Integrity* (Chicago: Chicago, 1997), p. 58.

[132] For books that provide an intellectual history of authenticity, see Lionel Trilling, *Sincerity and Authenticity* (Cambridge: Harvard, 1972); Charles Taylor, *Ethics of Authenticity* (Cambridge: Harvard, 1992), p. 27-29; Charles Guignon, *On Being Authentic* (New York: Routledge, 2004).

authenticity, this chapter does not aim to systematize his thought or articulate the bases of a Rousseauean ideal of authenticity.[133] Likewise, while a body of work argues for attributing a particular understanding of authenticity to Rousseau, this chapter is not, first and foremost, exegetical.[134] I do, however, argue that we can attribute a variety of conceptions of authenticity to Rousseau, and in this regard I differ from those (rare) scholars who argue that Rousseau did not espouse a concept of authenticity.[135]

In contrast to these other approaches, in this chapter, I engage with Rousseau in order to respond to those critiques about the problems that may emerge in politicizing authenticity claims: that is, in making claims about the authenticity or inauthenticity of the self and in connecting those claims to political life.[136] How might one address these problems, and why might one *still* want to appeal to authenticity despite these risks? In the first part of the chapter, I respond to the first critique: that appeals to authenticity have depoliticizing effects. I show that while depoliticization is a risk with authenticity claims, it is a contingent one; Rousseau offers a causal story in which the origins, nature, and effects of natural man's inauthentic self-transformations directly bear on political life. I also show that while Rousseau's prescriptions for attaining individual authenticity in *Emile* focus on domestic education and children's upbringing,

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[133] For books that systematize Rousseau's thought with regard to authenticity, see Alessandro Ferrara, *Modernity and Authenticity* (Albany: SUNY, 1993) and Somogy Varga, *Authenticity as an Ethical Ideal* (New York: Routledge, 2011). Other works that operate in a similar vein, but without the focus on authenticity, include Frederick Neuhouser, *Rousseau's Theodicy of Self Love* (Oxford: Oxford, 2008); Timothy O'Hagan, *Rousseau,* (New York: Routledge, 1999); Nicholas Dent, *Rousseau* (New York: Routledge, 2005).

[134] Exegetical accounts of Rousseau on authenticity include Marshall Berman, *The Politics of Authenticity* (New York: Atheneum, 1970); Mira Morgenstern, *Rousseau and the Politics of Ambiguity* (University Park: Penn State, 1996); Ferrara, *Modernity and Authenticity.*

[135] Ruth Grant in *Hypocrisy and Integrity* (Chicago: Chicago, 1999) argues that Rousseau is one of the sources of ideals of authenticity (75), but argues against attributing an ideal of authenticity to him (58); Jonathan Marks in *Perfection and Disharmony in the Thought of Jean-Jacques Rousseau* (Cambridge: 2005) argues that Rousseau is not ultimately advocating an ideal of authenticity (129).

[136] In this regard, my approach comes close to Bernard Williams's use of Rousseau in *Truth and Truthfulness* (Princeton: Princeton, 2002) and Charles Taylor's in *Ethics of Authenticity.*

he sees such prescriptions as instrumental in curbing the emergence of vices that threaten

collective life. In the second part of the chapter, I respond to the critique that appeals to

authenticity should be relegated to the private sphere. I consider three motivations for this

critique: first, that the demands of authenticity may threaten the realization of other political

values (such as justice, equality, solidarity or freedom); second, that the causal story offered by

appeals to authenticity is contestable; and third, that there is no way to adjudicate between

competing accounts of what makes one authentic.

I. A retreat from the political?

1. Inauthenticity as a political problem: The *Second Discourse*

The *Second Discourse* ends with a portrait of civilized man at the end of a historical

progression.[137] He is wracked by a number of vices—insincerity, malice, ambition, and

avarice—which render him hostile towards others.[138] He is "perpetually sweating and toiling" in

his pursuit of recognition, and is willing to sacrifice his freedom and wellbeing for it (137). He

willingly enslaves himself to others, bending his will to theirs, in the hopes of advancing himself

or satisfying his needs. He is entirely dependent upon the opinion of others for his happiness and

sense of self, and is thus "constantly outside himself, knowing only how to live in the opinion of

others" (138). He does not care whether he actually has the characteristics that others attribute to

him, since the appearance of such traits is more valuable to him than the actual possession of

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[137] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, "Discourse on the Origin and Foundations of Inequality Among Mankind," in *The Social Contract and the First and Second Discourses,* (New Haven: Yale, 2002), p. 137. Henceforth *SD*.

[138] I will be referring to "man" and using the pronoun "he" unless explicitly referring to women. This is keeping with Rousseau's language and probable intent, seeing as many of his prescriptions did not apply to women.

them. He has become nothing more than a "deceitful and frivolous exterior" whose outward appearance is at odds with his inner life (138).

Rousseau uses a number of terms to describe capture this constellation of afflictions and their transformative effects on civilized man, but some scholars use the contemporary, though anachronistic term, *inauthentic.*[139] While Rousseau describes civilized man as "factitious," "artificial," and "reduced to appearances," what makes civilized man "false" is less dissimulation than wholesale construction. In this regard, civilized man is not, in the first instance, insincere. Consider Rousseau's depiction of insincerity in the *First Discourse:* "No more sincere friendships, no more real regard for another, no more deep trust. Suspicions, resentments, fears, coolness, reserve, hatred, and betrayal, habitually hide under that uniform and perfidious veil of politeness."[140] Here, sincerity describes those beliefs and feelings that are "real" and exist "deep" within the self, and which can be "hidden" or "veiled." To be insincere is to willfully deceive: to conceal one's true feelings, intentions, beliefs or desires. "True" in this instance refers to what is "deep" and "hidden" within the self, even though these inner states are depicted as vicious, anti-social, and what Rousseau would later term "unnatural," "suspicions, resentments, fears," and so forth.

By contrast, civilized man at the end of the *Second Discourse* transforms rather than conceals himself, and does so in order to obtain the recognition of others. He competes for those attributes and achievements that will elicit people's higher estimation of him, such as "genius, beauty, strength or skill," and is indifferent as to whether he has those traits or can successfully feign them (SD 122). Both the insincere man and civilized man tailor their self-presentation to

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[139] Charles Guignon, *On Being Authentic* (London: Routledge, 2004), p. 29-31; Alessandro Ferrara, *Modernity and Authenticity* (Albany: SUNY, 1993); Marshall Berman, *The Politics of Authenticity* (New York: Verso, 1970); and Lionel Trilling, *Sincerity and Authenticity* (Cambridge: Harvard, 1972).
[140] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, "A Discourse on the Moral Effects of the Arts and Sciences," in *The Social Contract and the First and Second Discourses,* (New Haven: Yale, 2002), p. 50. Henceforth *FD*.

attain the good opinion of others. Yet by constantly privileging other people's opinions and

beliefs over his own, or over what he knows is true of himself and his world, civilized man

corrodes his connection to his interior: he becomes less able to recognize and act on those

feelings and impulses that arise from within, until they eventually cease to exist. While there is

something false about civilized man, the problem is not that he opportunistically conceals what

he feels or believes, but rather, that his passions and desires themselves are artificial and harmful,

that they are too fluid and dispersed to be properly his own, and that they cause him to live in

contradiction with himself.[141] By routinely shifting his desires, feelings, and beliefs, civilized

man has stifled the development of a coherent self, has foreclosed the possibility of having

integrity, and has become a purely exterior creature.[142]

What drives this process of denaturing is a combination of social and individual forces.

On the individual side is the passion *amour-propre,* a form of self-love that drives man to seek

recognition from his fellow human beings.[143] This recognition may take various forms—love,

admiration, esteem—but in each case, *amour-propre* primarily seeks "standing," or the judgment

and good opinion of others, and it defines such standing comparatively.[144] Rousseau is adamant

that *amour-propre* is absent in the state of nature, and will remain dormant until it is awoken in

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[141] Timothy O'Hagan in *Rousseau* (London: Routledge, 2003) identifies three "modalities" of self-contradiction in Rousseau's thought: when our desires contradict the actual state of affairs, when our duties contradict our inclinations, and when our nature contradicts our social institutions. The concern with the self's fragmentation receives further treatment in Rousseau's novella, *Julie.* "When a man speaks, it is, so to say, his attire and not he that expresses its sentiments, and he will change it without ado as often as he does his condition." "I find but a vain appearance of sentiments and truth that changes form at every instant and vanishes, in which I perceive but larvae and phantoms that catch the eye for a moment, and disappear the moment you want to capture them." Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Julie, Or the New Heloise,* (Hanover, NH: Dartmouth, 1997), p. 193-4.
[142] See Ferrara, *Modernity and Authenticity.* "Man becomes so dependent on the opinion of others, argues Rousseau, that his very sense of self-cohesion is endangered and the self is gradually reduced to pure exteriority, a mere copy of what society requires" (48). Berman and Trilling make a similar distinction between insincerity and inauthenticity.
[143] SD 146, Neuhouser, *Rousseau's Theodicy of Self-Love.*
[144] Neuhouser, *Rousseau's Theodicy of Self-Love*

social life, but its emergence seems inevitable once individuals begin living together. For this reason, Rousseau describes it as an "artificial" passion.[145] Once savage man entered the first forms of community, he became able to make comparisons of beauty, strength, dexterity and eloquence, and to see himself from an outside point of view. This transformed his sense of self and his sentiment of existence, and for the first time he experienced feelings of superiority and inferiority, injury, vanity, pride and envy.

While certain social and political arrangements exacerbate *amour-propre,* Rousseau describes *amour-propre* as the "yeast" that "leavens" inequality.[146] It does so, in part, by corroding those natural dispositions that ensure human happiness and self-preservation (SD 111, 117, 123). The first of these dispositions is *amour de soi,* "a natural sentiment which inclines every animal to look to its own preservation" (146), an unreflective love of himself and his existence. *Amour-propre* may corrode *amour de soi* by encouraging individuals to pursue recognition at the expense of their vital interests. The second natural disposition he possessed was *pitié--* "a natural aversion to seeing any other being… suffer or perish" (84), a strong "impulse" or "force" that prevented man from inflicting suffering on others. *Amour-propre* can corrode *pitié* by fostering anti-social vices, such as envy and dominance, and inspiring acts of cruelty and violence. And though it is not a natural disposition per se, *amour-propre* deeply threatens man's original freedom, something he treasures in the state of nature but becomes willing to sacrifice for social standing.

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[145] We can say that the creation of these inequalities is artificial in a rather ordinary sense, simply in that they are the product of human consent and convention. According to Dent, "artificial" in this ordinary sense is a "going beyond" the mere process and product of nature. Dent contrasts this with a more invidious notion of artificiality, which *goes against* nature by (a) being harmful, (b) having no reasonable foundation (i.e., status, rank), and (c) being motivated by *amour-propre.* See Nicholas Dent, *A Rousseau Dictionary,* (Wiley-Blackwell, 1992).

[146] Neuhouser, *Rousseau's Theodicy of Self-Love*.

In the *Second Discourse*, Rousseau describes how different social and political arrangements "inflamed" *amour-propre*, providing an environment that encouraged man to transform himself in unnatural and detrimental ways. The first of these arrangements were the first "duties of politeness," or customs. Though he does not discuss them in the *Second Discourse,* in the *First Discourse*, Rousseau describes custom as nothing more than shared characteristics and ways of life, which emerged prior to law or regulation. However, customs eventually evolved to convey important and sought-after markers of social status. By following custom, civilized man could appear learned, urbane, and benevolent, even if he was not. While this esteem was premised on false beliefs about who he was, civilized man derived his sense of self more from how others regarded him rather than from his own judgment of himself. He realized he could command the respect of his neighbors by feigning different attributes and accomplishments, and that custom provided a ready vehicle. In this way, custom became an agent of widespread conformism and insincerity, encouraging politeness over honesty, uniformity over originality, and the voice of society over the voice of nature (FD 49-50).

Another institution that exacerbated *amour-propre* was the division of labor, transforming man's condition of natural self-sufficiency into one of interdependence. By pursuing one task at the exclusion of others, man now needed to enlist others to fulfill the bulk of his needs (SD 121). He realized he could gain more from others if he could deceive them into thinking that he was richer, more benevolent, or more useful than he actually was. The division of labor also worsened existing inequalities, providing a means through which men could develop their abilities and profit at the expense of others.[147] Growing inequality only heightened the competition for recognition, causing man to treat every facet of his character as a competitive

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[147] "Natural inequality insensibly unfolds itself with that arising from men's combining, and the differences among men, developed by the differences of their circumstances, become more noticeable, more permanent in their effects" (122).

asset, developed (or feigned) in order to sustain his *amour-propre*. The establishment of money and private property extended this condition of interdependence and competition to the entire community—the rest were forced to join or risk impoverishment.[148] Whereas preferential esteem had always derived its power from an unequal distribution, the invention of money rendered all goods zero-sum. This led to a state of endless competition in which people were deeply interdependent, but could only advance at the expense of each other.

Rousseau emphasizes that the inflammation of *amour-propre,* and the resulting transformation of civilized man's inner world, was corrosive not only to individual wellbeing, but also to the possibilities for a free and equal common life. Individually, the natural dispositions that guaranteed his wellbeing began to erode, leaving in their place all-consuming desires for esteem, ascendancy, and dominance. Man traded his natural happiness, peace, and even his freedom in attempting to satisfy such needs. Socially, the conditions of peace and independence became replaced by conflict and interdependence, as man developed unnatural vices that stifled his original *pitié*. These vices corroded friendship and solidarity, and led to a state of perpetual conflict. Politically, man relinquished his authority for self-rule to magistrates, who would enforce rules of conduct among the community. He willingly ceded this authority because social conflict was intense and pervasive, and because he was too invested in satisfying his appetites to sustain care and interest to collective and political projects. His only collective attachment was to the competitive hierarchy that allowed him to feel superior over those who had less. He remained dependent upon this hierarchy even as it turned despotic, and was willing to uphold the powers that dominated him, hoping to share in this power. This attachment persisted even as he was dominated (133). Natural man became so completely transformed, so

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[148] "The supernumerary inhabitants, who were too weak or too indolent to make such acquisitions in their turn, impoverished without having lost anything" (123).

completely vanquished and erased, that all that was left is a dispersed and disingenuous self,

wrecked by unnatural and artificial needs, who is both complicit in and attached to his servitude.

2. Fostering authenticity in the domestic sphere: *Emile*

The *Second Discourse* lacks a picture of human health, happiness, and flourishing in

modern society; readers encounter either their opposite in civilization or their asocial rudiments

in the state of nature. Some scholars, however, read Rousseau's later works as continuing to

grapple with the problems of man's unnatural self-transformations.[149] In *Emile,* Rousseau claims

that man's unnatural transformations derive from his contradictory "educations"—the education

of the physical world, the education of Nature, which is "the internal development of our

faculties and our organs," and the education of men.[150] These forms of education shape men in

the same way that cultivation shapes plants: they are the external and internal impulses that

direct man's growth, encouraging him to develop in natural or unnatural ways.[151] When the

education of men opposes the education of nature, the conflict manifests itself at the level of

desires, dispositions, and passions: creating experiences of being "always in contradiction with

himself," "at odds" with himself, "divided" between his different impulses (40). Such feelings

of division make it more difficult to determine which of man's feelings and judgments are his

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[149] Allan Bloom, "Introduction" in Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Emile* (New York: Basic Books, 1979); Ferrara, *Modernity and Authenticity*, p. 51-52; Neuhouser, *Rousseau's Theodicy of Self Love,* 19. Neuhouser claims that Rousseau is agnostic to pessimistic about mankind's capacity to transform and redeem itself, claiming that "fallenness may well be all that humans will in fact ever know." O'Hagan says Rousseau alternates between extreme optimism and extreme pessimism, with the latter particularly evident in the *Dialogues* and *Reveries*. See O'Hagan, *Rousseau.*

[150] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Emile* (New York: Basic Books, 1979), 39; henceforth *E*.

[151] Rousseau compares men to plants in order to show how artificial conditions can cause men to develop in unnatural ways. "Such, for example, is the habit of the plants whose vertical direction is interfered with. The plant, set free, keeps the inclination it was forced to take" (E 39).

own, and disconnects his outward appearance from his inner life. "He dares not eat when he is hungry, nor laugh when he is gay, nor cry when he is sad" (118).

In *Emile,* Rousseau theorizes a much more malleable human than in the *Second Discourse*—one whose character can be molded in different ways through education, upbringing and collective institutions.[152] In particular, Rousseau in *Emile* suggests that it is possible to contain or redirect *amour-propre* through domestic education. Such an education aims to prevent *amour-propre* from emerging until the child has already developed reason, virtue, and benevolent dispositions.[153] If *amour-propre* is triggered prematurely, the child will wish for superiority before he is able to handle such desires: "the first glance he casts on his fellows leads him to compare himself with them. And the first sentiment aroused in him by this comparison is the desire to be in the first position" (235). According to Rousseau, the awakening of *amour-propre* is irreversible, permanently affecting the way men perceive and evaluate themselves, and providing the source of all of man's malign and vicious passions.[154] In order to prevent the formation of unnatural dispositions, feelings of inner contradiction, and the workings of inflamed *amour-propre,* Rousseau proposes an upbringing that would coincide with nature.

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[152] *Amour-propre* seems to be the passion that can be sculpted with the most dramatic effects: in shaping *amour-propre,* humans can be taught to be more or less sensitive to public opinion or their own inner judgment; to want better or worse rewards, to be recognized for real versus factitious accomplishments, and to desire recognition from certain people or from all. Importantly, *amour-propre* does not always need to seek ascendancy, but can be taught to seek equal recognition. See O'Hagan, *Rousseau* and Neuhouser, *Rousseau's Theodicy of Self Love.* In his *Government of Poland,* Rousseau shows that man's *amour de soi* and *pitie* can also be molded: to make the citizen less self-dependent, to make him less sensitive to nature, and to shape his sympathies and antipathies. See "Considerations on the Government of Poland," in *The Social Contract and Other Later Political Writings,* (Cambridge: Cambridge, 2007), p. 189-93. Henceforth *Poland.*

[153] See E 214-215, 230. The tutor was able to keep *amour-propre* dormant in Emile until the child was 15 or so, such that he could cultivate and strengthen his natural dispositions and a steady sense of character.

[154] For *amour-propre's* irreversibility, see E 243, for *amour-propre* as the source of "all the hateful and irascible passions," see p. 214. Bloom distills an extensive list of these passions: "from [self love] flow[s] anger, pride, vanity, resentment, revenge, jealousy, indignation, competition, slavishness, humility, capriciousness, rebelliousness, and almost all the other passions that give poets their themes" (E 11).

Even though Rousseau did not use the term *authenticity*, scholars have argued that Emile's education is designed to attain it.[155] Such a term, they say, captures the nature and range of those dispositions Emile was supposed to cultivate better and more fully than the vocabulary at Rousseau's disposal.[156] The word *honesty*, which Rousseau used frequently, refers less to the formation of an identity or self than to the sincere expression of one's beliefs. The terms *uprightness* and *virtue* are component parts of Rousseau's ideal self, but do not capture capacities of self-congruence, naturalness, or freedom.[157] The words *individuality* and *self-realization*, which characterize more contemporary conceptions of authenticity, do not fully capture the moral constraints at the heart of Emile's education.[158]

Moreover, the metaphors and imagery found throughout *Emile* strongly resonate with both contemporary and older senses of the term authenticity. Rousseau makes frequent exhortations to be true to oneself and one's origins,[159] which are two prevalent senses of the term: first, genuineness, or whether something *is* what it appears to be; and second, faithfulness to an original, understood here as humans' natural dispositions.[160] Next, Rousseau's metaphors of self-ownership—that Emile has "his own tastes," and that "his own sentiments" resonate with an obsolete sense of the term (i.e. property or ownership).[161] While "ownership" may be

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[155] Berman, *The Politics of Authenticity,* 168; Ferrara, *Modernity and Authenticity*, 69-70; Morgenstern, *Politics of Ambiguity*, p. 70; Eileen Hunt Botting, *Family Feuds* (Albany: SUNY, 2007), p. 52

[156] The connection between authenticity and the self emerges in light of developments in Romanticism and Existentialism, and that it is in retrospect that historians have attributed such a concept to Rousseau. See Grant, *Hypocrisy and Integrity*.

[157] Grant, *Hypocrisy and Integrity*, p. 60.

[158] Morgenstern, *Politics of Ambiguity*, p. xiii, Grant, *Hypocrisy and Integrity*, p. 162; Taylor, *Ethics of Authenticity*.

[159] "One must be oneself at all times and not battle against nature" (350); "to be oneself and always one" (40); "always acting according to his own thoughts and not someone else's," (119);

[160] "authentic, adj. and n.". OED Online. December 2013. Oxford University Press. 19 February 2014 <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/13314 >.

[161] See E 341 and 343; Emile owns other aspects of his character as well: his judgment is his own (and not based on opinion) (338), his needs (333), his knowledge (207). See OED, def. 7: "Belonging to himself, own, proper."

obsolete in our ordinary sense of authenticity, this sense persists in conceptions of authenticity

influenced by Existentialism, in which "self-ownership" plays a featured role.[162] This idea of

"owning" one's feelings, judgment, or knowledge also resonates with another sense of the term:

that they are "inwardly-generated," as opposed to derived from elsewhere.[163] Finally,

Rousseau's praise of Emile's uniqueness, that he "will not be like everyone else" (339),

particularly resonates with contemporary senses of the term.[164]

However, it is not entirely clear which aspects of Emile's character—truth, self-harmony,

naturalness, or an indifference to social opinion—render him authentic, or how. This ambiguity

is reflected in the secondary literature, which attributes conflicting notions of authenticity to

Rousseau. For Lionel Trilling, Rousseau's authenticity foremost involves contact with the

sentiment of being, which bestows a unity of self.[165] For Mira Morgenstern, authenticity

involves "the maximization of humanity… the moral imperative to actualize individual and

communal humanity to the greatest extent possible."[166] For Marshall Berman, "authentic" seems

almost synonymous with "ideal;" he uses the term to describe "interaction," "control,"

"citizenship," "mother-child relationships," and "political bodies," and provides half a dozen

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[162] Heidegger's *Eigentlichkeit,* or "owned-ness," is a conception of authenticity that draws heavily from this sense. Taylar Carman notes that this last sense was used in Champan's *Iliad* and Milton's *Eikonoklastes,* in which Nestor and Justice wield, use, or set down their "authentic"—"that is, *their own*"—swords. "The point was not that the swords were not foregeries or unreal, but that they were not someone else's." Taylor Carman, "Authenticity," in *A Companion to Heidegger,* eds. Dreyfus and Wrathall, (Blackwell: 2005), p. 285.

[163] See OED, def. 8: "Acting of itself, self-originated, automatic."

[164] Uniqueness has an ambiguous status in Rousseau's ideal. On the one hand, Rousseau dislikes the social conformism that he sees; but his dislike of it seems to derive more from the fact that it is vice-ridden and symptomatic of our estrangement from nature. It seems that Rousseau would only approve of uniqueness if it fit the parameters already delimited above: unmotivated by invidious desires for superiority or dominance; harmless to others, and so forth. While Rousseau wants Emile to "establish his own tastes," he also wants those tastes to be "pure and healthy," "simple," and guided "to prevent his natural appetites from being corrupted;" "neither troublesome nor ridiculous in his difference from others" (E 339, 342, 344). See Grant, *Hypocrisy and Integrity*, p. 162: Emile "is not striking for his individuality, but for the ordinariness of his tastes and habits. There is nothing Bohemian about Emile."

[165] Trilling, *Sincerity and Authenticity,* p. 92.

[166] Morgenstern, *Politics of Ambiguity*, p. xi-xiii.

synonyms to the term.[167] Lastly, others, like Ruth Grant, argue against attributing a concept of

authenticity to Rousseau, claiming that ideals of authenticity are not morally stringent enough.[168]

These definitions do not seem so much wrong as they do partial. They each grasp aspects of

Rousseau's thinking and different notions of authenticity as it is understood today, relying on

different texts and ideas of Rousseau's and privileging different traits as "authentic."[169] While

Rousseau wanted Emile to realize and integrate several different traits, the potential for conflict

and tension among them renders authenticity to be a rather unwieldy concept, and it is unclear

why some aspects belong to authenticity and others do not.

    While there are a variety of notions of authenticity that scholars can plausibly attribute to

Rousseau, I argue that if we begin with a picture of authenticity's supposed opposite—the

harmful and unnatural self-transformations portrayed in the *Second Discourse*—authenticity

would involve *restoring and surpassing what is best in the state of nature and in natural man,*

using the tools of convention and artifice to cultivate these dispositions in civilized man and civil

society.[170] Considering authenticity in this light takes into account many of its different senses:

its concerns with ownership, genuineness and self-generation, its emphasis on remaining true to

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[167] Berman, *The Politics of Authenticity*: "authentic action is interaction" (188); "authentic control is self control" (190); an entire chapter is dedicated to "the authentic citizen" and "the authentic polis." In his 2009 preface, he writes: "My choice of the word was rather arbitrary; so many others might have done as well. 'Identity,' 'autonomy,' 'individuality,' 'self-development,' 'self-realization,' 'do your own thing." P. xxiii.

[168] Grant, *Hypocrisy and Integrity*.

[169] For instance, Ferrara focuses on *Julie* in his portrayal of inauthenticity, which then alters his portrayal of authenticity, Williams relies more on the *Confessions*, and thus attains a different understanding of authenticity, and Trilling on Rousseau's *Letter to D'Alembert*. See Trilling, *Sincerity and Authenticity;* Ferrara, *Modernity and Authenticity;* Williams, *Truth and Truthfulness*.

[170] My notion comes close to O'Hagan's "dialectic of nature and art," which sees Rousseau as trying to restore "the four basic elements of human nature" (freedom, *amour de soi, pitié,* perfectability) and to "channel them through a reformed education and politics" through "a careful moderation of *amour-propre.* Like Ferrara, my understanding of authenticity involves cultivating a constellation of different traits to prevent man's denaturing: we disagree on what those traits are. For him, they include "empathy, self knowledge, the capacity to understand the undesired aspects of the self, a sensitivity to the inner needs linked with the essential aspects of an identity, and a nonrepressive attitude towards one's inner nature" (p. 27). See O'Hagan, *Rousseau;* Ferrara, *Modernity and Authenticity.*

an original, and some of its more contemporary senses, such as exemplariness, autonomy, human flourishing, and nonconformism. It also provides a means for ordering and prioritizing the various facets and strands of authenticity, such that authenticity is not vaguely synonymous with all of these things. And given that Rousseau believes that freedom, integrity and self-congruence exist in natural man, authenticity would involve restoring and recasting these traits in civilized man. So while Emile must manifest a combination of different traits and attributes to protect himself against being unnaturally transformed, the *central* and *organizing* requirement is to restore and cultivate his natural dispositions: *amour de soi,* freedom, and *pitié*. [171]

Since *amour de soi, pitié* and *goodness* are found in the state of nature, these dispositions have conceptual and developmental priority—they must be restored and cultivated before the child develops more complicated dispositions in civil life.[172] However, restoring man's natural dispositions is not enough to prevent man from denaturing once he is in society; authenticity requires that man then *surpass* them by cultivating dispositions that fulfill and ennoble him. Consider, for instance, Rousseau's argument as to why Emile's natural goodness must be transformed into virtue (444, 473). While a child with a developed sense of *amour de soi* and *pitié* may be naturally inclined to feel a disinterested benevolence towards others, Rousseau believes that his character is better described as good rather than virtuous, because his dispositions arise effortlessly and spontaneously from proper upbringing and circumstances. The need for virtue emerges when the adolescent inevitably begins to feel passions, passions that Rousseau believes develop late and risk undermining his character and sense of self. While

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[171] Like *amour-propre,* Rousseau further elaborates on the characteristics of both *amour de soi* and *pitié* in *Emile*. *Amour de soi* is "a primitive, innate passion, which is anterior to every other… love of oneself is always good and always in conformity with order… the first and most important of his cares" (E 213). *Pitié* is connected to imagination, and involves being able to identify with another's suffering (E 222-3). In *Emile*, he describes these natural attributes as "true," meaning both natural and genuine (E 48, 50, 177).
[172] In the *Second Discourse*, Rousseau writes that all of the social virtues have a natural basis, which derive from pity: generosity, clemency, benevolence, friendship, commiseration. (107).

goodness involves avoiding passions that run contrary to nature and will inevitably ruin man—like desires for dominance and ascendency—*virtue* involves mastering one's passions through a law one imposes on oneself.[173] The virtuous man "is he who knows how to conquer his affections; for then he follows reason and his conscience; he does his duty; he keeps himself in order, and nothing can make him deviate from it" (444-5). Such virtue allows him to feel passions without being overtaken by them, and helps him maintain a feeling of self-congruence and centeredness.

Just as savage man was able to be "at one with himself" and undivided, authenticity involves restoring a feeling of unity and wholeness to social man. Even though society requires one to be more developed, dependent, and multifaceted than in one's natural state, one must still strive to resist tendencies towards fragmentation and dissimulation. Our ordinary, contemporary use of "authenticity" often takes this aspect to be the whole, understood as "being true to oneself." While such metaphors are rife in *Emile*, self-congruence is not and cannot be the whole picture. For example, Rousseau believes that without natural and virtuous dispositions, the self would not have the capacities to remain true to itself; it would be oriented "outside itself" by social forces. For Rousseau, constancy of character requires moderation and virtue: it requires "true habits" that are formed in childhood and persist throughout a lifetime, providing the backdrop against which more peripheral changes gradually occur.[174] Without those dispositions sketched above, one would be vulnerable to frequent and unnatural self-transformations (344-5).

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[173] See 444-446. Contrast the above formulation (that natural man is good without being virtuous) with one found in an earlier draft of the *Social Contract:* With only our natural drives developed, "our entire happiness would consist in not knowing our misery; there would be neither goodness in our hearts, nor morality in our actions, and we would never have tasted the most delicious sentiment of the soul, which is the love of virtue." "Geneva Manuscript," in *The Social Contract and Other Later Political Writings,* (Cambridge: Cambridge, 2007), p. 154-5.

[174] "Immoderate people change their affections, tastes, and sentiments every day, and they are constant only in the habit of change. But they steady man always returns to his old practices and even in his old age does not lose his taste for the pleasures he loved as a child." (E 432).

Moreover, even if one *could* be true to vicious or malformed dispositions, Rousseau would not want one to sustain or preserve an "unnatural" self, a self ridden with vices and desires to harm others.[175] Thus, the ability and obligation to sustain one's identity holds true only if one has crafted those virtues, desires, dispositions and feelings that align with nature.[176]

The final feature of authenticity arises out of the several facets we have already addressed: in abiding by a coherent identity, one that is natural and virtuous, man is able to develop himself and experience happiness, and thus he flourishes.[177] This last dimension of authenticity takes us back full-circle: if *amour de soi* is interested in directing man to his own good, then cultivating and abiding by an authentic self is the highest fulfillment of his own self interest.[178] The dimension of human flourishing reconnects social man back to that "tranquility of soul" that savage man lost, by allowing one to "find happiness within oneself"—by quelling the incessant spiritual and physical restlessness that arises when one is subject to unnatural and insatiable desires, when one is constantly trying to surpass and compete with others, when one is

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[175] See Grant, *Hypocrisy and Integrity*, p. 174. "Rousseau does not extol authenticity per se; to the extent that Rousseau urges us to be ourselves, he does so because those selves are good." While I agree with this point, I delimit notions of authenticity far wider than Grant does (who treats it as "being yourself") to take into account its older usage of "remaining faithful to an original" and Rousseau's problematic in the Second Discourse.

[176] There is clearly a tension between the demand to be virtuous and the demand to be true to oneself, perhaps best embodied in *Julie.* O'Hagan sees these as two competing moralities that are never fully reconciled in Rousseau's thinking. Ferrara and Berman argue that the ethics of authenticity demands taking one's non-repressed feelings into account when making ethical decisions. See O'Hagan, *Rousseau;* Ferrara, *Modernity and Authenticity;* Berman, *The Politics of Authenticity.*

[177] Ferrara and Morgenstern place much emphasis on human flourishing (in Morgenstern's terms "the maximization of humanity," p. x) in their interpretations of Rousseau's concept of authenticity, but I argue that such a strand must presuppose the earlier requirements I have mentioned. See Ferrara, *Modernity and Authenticity;* Morgenstern, *Politics of Ambiguity.*

[178] These ideas of flourishing and self-interest have strong constraints: Emile will not become the smartest, most esteemed or strongest, but he will have enough of these traits to make him truly happy. Penny Weiss argues, even if they could be further developed or perfected, this would not necessarily make man happier. See Penny A. Weiss, "Rousseau, Antifeminism, and Woman's Nature," *Political Theory*, Vol. 15, No. 1 (Feb., 1987), pp. 81-98

driven to ascend and to dominate.[179] When man is able to sustain a coherent identity that brings

to fruition what is best and natural within him, we can say that he flourishes, and that he is

authentic.

3. Fostering authenticity in the public sphere: *The Social Contract*

From the way Rousseau formulates the social bases of inauthenticity, there is good reason

to think that authenticity requires participating in political life: that is, becoming an active

citizen. In *Emile,* Rousseau argues that Emile owes certain duties to his country—duties he

incurs from living tranquilly under a government, having laws enforced, and being head of his

household (448). Emile owes these duties whether he lives within a well-ordered republic or

merely a country with "the simulacra of laws" (473). He must act morally and virtuously; master

his appetites and desires; sacrifice his interest for the common interest; and grant the state

whatever services it asks of him (474). Even though *Emile* shows how one could develop these

capacities through domestic education, Rousseau ultimately argues that Emile can only acquire

virtue and self-mastery by obeying the laws of his country, that they "have given him the

courage to be just among wicked men… they have taught him to reign over himself."[180]

In *Emile,* Rousseau claims that following the laws of one's country and becoming a

citizen transforms and ennobles man in positive and fruitful ways. In the *Social Contract,*

Rousseau strengthens this claim, arguing that it is *only* when man participates in the state that he

can develop himself to the fullest, that he expresses what is best and most human in him.

> "This transition from the state of nature to the civil state produces a most remarkable
> change in man by substituting justice for instinct in his conduct, and endowing his actions

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[179] Thus, this type of happiness is entirely distinct from the happiness that civilized man had at the end of
the *Second Discourse,* a happiness based on the misery of others (135), a happiness so unnatural that it
would "reduce [savage man] to despair," (137), a type of "pleasure without happiness" (138).
[180] *Emile* 473, see also Dent, *A Rousseau Dictionary.*

with the morality they previously lacked. Only then, when the voice of duty succeeds physical impulsion and right succeeds appetite, does man, who until then had looked only to himself, see himself forced to act on other principles." [181]

For Rousseau, the civil state is the only medium through which man can restore and recast a fundamental aspect of his natural self: namely, his original freedom. While man might be able to develop his natural faculties in the private sphere, it is only in a just political regime that he can experience true freedom.

Humans in the state of nature possessed a type of freedom that made them beholden to no one else; as both independent and self-sufficient, they did not obey anyone but themselves (SD 112). The only limits to this freedom were one's external surroundings and physical powers, but never the *will* of another.[182] Unable to maintain this natural freedom when they enter society, it is only *moral freedom* that can restore the most central features of Rousseau's natural freedom: it replaces a natural equality with a moral and legal equality; it makes one dependent on the community, rather than ensnared in individual or class-based relations of obedience and dependence; and one is never in the situation where one must obey the will of another who is superior, but rather only obeys the laws one imposes on oneself.[183] Moral freedom does not allow individuals to act unchecked, to pursue desires that come at the expense of the community, to act without regard for the common good, or to fulfill desires for ascendancy and domination. In this sense, moral freedom entails stricter limitations than the permissive license found in

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[181] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, "The Social Contract," in *The Social Contract and Other Later Political Writings,* (Cambridge: Cambridge, 2007) Book I, ch. 8. Henceforth *SC.*
[182] Contrast this to the depiction of despotism in SD 136.
[183] Emile's freedom is distinct from mere license because of the way in which Emile's desires have been cultivated, because he avoided error, vice, commanding and obeying. Nonetheless, it is a model of freedom that Emile must eventually transcend—he can only be free so long as he "was bound to nothing other than the human condition." Once he forms strong attachments and desires, Emile must learn a type of self-mastery that resembles the moral freedom in the social contract (E 445). His initial freedom must be regulated, guided and eventually surpassed.

illegitimate regimes.[184] Nonetheless, Rousseau finds alternative forms of freedom to be illusory

and unsustainable, believing that human relationships will degenerate into relations of

competition for ascendancy and domination unless collective life is strictly managed. Only a just

state can provide the type of freedom that best fulfills man's original condition.[185]

Moreover, while it may be possible to attain authenticity through one's personal

upbringing and development, *preserving* those traits that make one authentic is beset by

difficulties in a world ordered by principles of domination and competition—principles that

threaten to denature the self. Indeed, even the well-raised Emile and Sophie are vulnerable to the

corrupting tendencies of society, suggesting that the picture of authenticity presented in *Emile* is

a precarious achievement in a world intent on denaturing individuals.[186] As such, educating

individuals such that they restore and surpass their natural tendencies, though necessary, is not

enough. Humans are too malleable a creature, too attuned to their surroundings, to be able to

guard both themselves and their loved ones against the corrosive effects of an unjust world. To

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[184] Ferrara, *Modernity and Authenticity*

[185] Among those who are attuned to the political dimensions and political requirements of Rousseau's notion of authenticity is Berman, whose entire analysis revolves around authenticity's political implications. Ferrara believes that there is an implicit social critique in notions of authenticity, that they are inherently against "social reproduction through competition" on the grounds that it undermines the individual's ability to be himself. For Morgenstern, personal and political authenticities are both discrete but interlocked—attaining authenticity in the private sphere could start the revolution of authenticity in the public sphere. See Berman, *The Politics of Authenticity*, Ferrara, *Modernity and Authenticity* and Morgenstern, *Politics of Ambiguity*.

[186] This sentence refers to *Emile and Sophie,* the incomplete, posthumously published sequel to *Emile.* After moving from the countryside to the city, the couple became entangled in the intrigues and manipulations of the Parisian bourgeoisie, resulting in Sophie's adultery, impregnation and suicide, and Emile's abandonment of the family. Morgenstern believes that to the extent that Emile was raised to be head of a household and to live in society, his abdication of these roles casts doubt on whether he lives up to his education, and whether his education equipped him for withstanding an unjust society. Wingrove disagrees with this reading, suggesting that it is not unambiguously a lesson about authenticity. See Elizabeth Wingrove, "Interpretive Practices and Political Designs: Reading Authenticity, Integrity, and Reform in Rousseau," *Political Theory* (February 2001) 29: 91-111; Jean-Jacques Rousseau, "Emile and Sophie," in *Emile,* trans. Kelly and Bloom (Lebanon: Dartmouth, 2010).

effectively prevent them from denaturing, to fully nourish and sustain authenticity, society must be transformed as well as individuals.

In the *Social Contract,* Rousseau offers concrete institutional reforms to prevent the "denaturing" that stems from man's social environment: the social and political causes and triggers of his unnatural transformations. Rousseau's most important political reforms are those that address its root causes: a social system in which men must compete for the bases of recognition and self-esteem, exacerbated levels of inequality, and socially entrenched and legally legitimized relations of domination and subordination.[187] These conditions are particularly insidious because they tend to be mutually reinforcing. For example, by allowing pronounced levels of economic inequality, the state legitimates relationships in which the poor man's existence is at the rich man's disposal. The poor man is dependent upon the rich for subsistence, wealth, recognition, and survival; a condition in which the rich feel superior and ascendant while the poor remain miserable and degraded. For Rousseau, both members of the relationship are in a condition of slavery, as neither the relationship, nor the legal arrangements that condone it, enable man to legislate for himself, to formulate his life plan according to rational principles and obey the laws he sets for himself. Instead, both are enmeshed in social relations and hierarchies that they cannot alter or escape, beholden to desires that they must incessantly strive to fulfill.

According to Rousseau, the only way to eliminate these conditions from social and political life is to remove those elements that encourage invidious competition and domination—

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[187] While several of Rousseau's political suggestions could be read in light of attempts to stem inauthenticity, I will only focus on what I take to be the central ones. For example, institutional reforms such as private deliberation (without communication with one another) over the general will might be intended to prevent people form being swayed by other opinions; the idea that if a state were so large that men did not know one another, "talents are hidden, virtues are ignored and vices remain unpunished" (91); a civic education that could provide a proper basis for *amour propre*; a reform of the treasury to prevent the growth of both genuine and false needs, and so on. See *Social Contract, Discourse on Political Economy* and *Considerations of the Government of Poland.*

in sum, to deliberately address and manage inequality, status-seeking, competition, ambition, and any subtler forms of exerting superiority. To bring about such a condition requires the formation of a social and political order in which all relationships are based on the idea that men are beings of equal moral and legal worth. Such a political constitution best restores the natural equality of men. "Natural relations and laws come to be in harmony on all points, so that the law, shall we say, seems only to ensure, accompany, and correct what is natural" (II.11). This requires that firstly, all members of the social body have the equal status of citizen, which is regarded as the most estimable status in the order. This would ensure that the competition for political status is eliminated, as well as the *amour-propre* that arises from different rankings in political life. Instead, conferring the status of citizen upon all members of the state signifies that every individual is worthy of respect and honor, and that each is a person whose needs are to be considered in the formation of law. When man exercises his citizenship by participating in the sovereign body, he manifests his status as a person whose dignity is worthy of consideration, and similarly, he recognizes the equality and dignity of others.

Beyond equal citizenship, all laws and institutions must reflect and enforce this commitment to man's moral and legal equality. Civil laws must be arranged such that all citizens are fully dependent upon the city rather than individual persons and classes. The dependence of each upon all will prevent individual relationships of domination and subordination from forming, as well as hinder the ability of men to fulfill their individual desires at the expense of the community. Such a condition of dependence would redeem and transform the division of labor into a force that brings cohesion and equality unto the people. Finally, the disparity of wealth and power must be collectively addressed and legally enforced (SC II.11). Rousseau thought that laws could only be effective where the rich could not buy their way out of

crimes, and the poor were not so destitute that they felt they had no other option. Such inequality

would not require physically taking away property, but removing the means to accumulate gross

sums, and imposing just taxes.[188] This would allow for some disparities, but not enough to incite

invidious competition, to enable relations of domination and subordination to emerge, or to give

men want to transform themselves.[189]

II. Politicization and its Discontents

In part one, I looked to Rousseau's texts as an example of an appeal to authenticity that

averts the risk of depoliticization. An appeal that treats the authentic self as natural or immutable

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[188] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, "Discourse on Political Economy," in *The Social Contract and Other Later Political Writings,* (Cambridge: Cambridge, 2007), 34-35, and part III. Henceforth *Political Economy.*

[189] Rousseau's prescriptions for the *education* of the citizen differ starkly from Emile's. As discussed in *Poland* and *Political Economy,* the citizen is not raised to be a *man,* but a member of a state. His *amour-propre* is molded to make him sensitive to public approval and patriotic; his *pitié* is stifled towards those he does not live with; his natural self-sufficiency is modified such that he is dependent upon the city for all things, including his sense of self. Even contact with the sentiment of existence is mediated by being a member of a state. In the end, the citizen feels and believes that his existence is tied to the larger whole, and that only his country can make him complete.

Some readers take Rousseau to be saying that man and citizen cannot be realized in the same person—that they are two mutually exclusive identities that represent two of the best possibilities for man in an imperfect world. Others believe that these two alternatives *can* be reconciled, and that their reconciliation is what makes Emile's transformation into a citizen a coherent narrative. *If* man and citizen are ultimately incompatible identities, this raises a set of challenging complications for a Rousseauean ideal of authenticity. It suggests that man must choose between a life of civic devotion or a life of individual fulfillment; that these identities require fundamentally different dispositions. More problematically, it suggests that the traits and dispositions that make civil association possible are not those that allow for authentic individual development. If this is the case, then while an authentic self seems to require a just state with certain political institutions, the central features of authenticity—being raised for oneself, feeling complete within oneself, individual development and flourishing—seem at best in tension and at worst corrosive to a just political order.

On the education of the citizen, see *Political Economy,* p. 15-16, 20; *Poland,* 189-93. For scholars who believe that these alternatives cannot be reconciled see Judith Shklar, *Men and Citizens* (Cambridge: Cambridge, 1968); Victor Gourevitch, "Introduction," in *The Social Contract and Other Later Political Writings,* (Cambridge: Cambridge, 2007) and Allan Bloom, "Introduction" in *Emile.* For scholars who argue that these two identities can be reconciled, see Ferrara, *Modernity and Authenticity*; Dent, *A Rousseau Dictionary*; Neuhouser, *Rousseau's Theodicy of Self Love*; Berman, *The Politics of Authenticity.*

may conceal the political sources of problems with this self, as well as the way this self historically emerges through (and is organized by) social powers. Such a view of the self may also conceal political solutions to these problems by substituting private or emotional remedies for political ones.[190] Rousseau's formulations of authenticity do neither of these things, in part, because he treats the self as malleable and constituted by a wide range of social, economic, and political forces. He frames inauthenticity as political in origins (in hierarchy, and an unequal distribution of recognition), in nature (as manifesting itself as a desire for recognition at the expense of freedom) and in effect. Even though Emile's particular education involved a secluded childhood and family realm, these spaces are designed to foster particular dispositions that will equip individuals to withstand society's denaturing and dispersive tendencies while fulfilling one's civic and political duties. And the work being done in these domains is of great political import to Rousseau, insofar as it staves off the inflammation of *amour-propre* that threatens collective life. Thus, while depoliticization is an inherent risk in authenticity claims, this risk can be averted depending on how we conceive the roots, nature, and effects of the self's inauthenticity—and such claims can potentially broaden what we take to be the scope of the political, drawing in concerns with integrity, feeling, and subjectivity.

In this section, I examine some of the potential consequences of politicizing authenticity. What are the effects of extending the political to encapsulate these interior spaces (whether the home or the self)? Might there be alternative ways, whether political or private, of conceptualizing the origins, nature, and effects of inauthenticity? What if the solutions to these problems are at odds with ideals of justice, community, freedom or equality? To consider these

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[190] I borrow these two facets of depoliticization from Wendy Brown, *Regulating Aversion,* (Princeton: Princeton, 2006), p. 16.

questions, I begin with Rousseau's writings on women and gender, as epitomized in the figure of Emile's wife, Sophie.

4. Sophie: Authenticity's Unemancipatory Tendencies

For Rousseau, chief among the collective institutions and social practices that would sustain an ideal of authenticity are the family and complementary gender roles. Beyond providing the type of upbringing that would allow children to become authentic, the family allows the couple to preserve and fulfill their natural drives as well. Rousseau saw the structures of courtship and romantic love as the vehicles through which sexual desire becomes contained, sublimated, focused on a single person, and fulfilled. For Rousseau, such urges must be managed or they will denature man, permanently enslaving him to passions beyond his control. Yet if these desires are postponed and channeled towards exclusive attachments, the individual will be able to master these desires rather than be dominated by them, thus finding an enduring form of happiness.[191]

Romantic love further sustains authenticity by encouraging and reinforcing a constancy of character: the lover "has new reasons to be himself" (433). "Once fixed by a durable passion, his way of thinking, his sentiments, and his tastes are going to acquire a consistency which will no longer permit them to deteriorate" (416). Romantic love privileges the idea that the central and important parts of a person exist under displays of politeness, customs, and social roles. Thus, Sophie wants Emile to love her for her virtues and not her charms (439, 417); Emile wants Sophie to realize that his character is determined by his virtues and not his station (422); and

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[191] E 316-328, 415-16. Rousseau describes this process as "the most important and most difficult part of the whole of education—the crisis that serves as a passage from childhood to man's estate." (415). For Emile, it is "his first passion of any kind. On this passion… depends the final form his character is going to take." (416).

Emile's tutor worries that Emile has fallen for Sophie without discovering her real character

(448). Underpinning these concerns is the idea that love is supposed to attach itself to those

features of the person that are permanent and central, those that constitute the true self. In

Rousseau's account, romantic love not only finds this self, it helps produce it, encouraging each

person to discover, develop and express their feelings and beliefs, leading to the formation of and

faithfulness to a stable self.

Given the immense importance of family life and domestic education, we can understand

Rousseau's prescriptions for Sophie's education, and thus, the education of all women, as

sustaining authenticity in two senses. First, Sophie's character and dispositions are crafted such

that she can play a crucial role within the family. As a wife and mother, she can educate her

children to sustain their natural dispositions, can complement her husband, and can help both

consolidate their sense of self—all of which secures and sustains the authenticity of her husband

and children (383-4). Secondly, in fulfilling these roles, Sophie lives according to nature's

prescriptions for women and fulfills them. Her education develops those traits that are

particularly and naturally feminine and fulfills nature's intents for all women. According to

Rousseau, it is in accordance with nature that she always obeys her husband,[192] that she pleases

him,[193] that she bears his children,[194] and that she is subjected to him.[195] In stark contrast to

Emile, who is raised for himself, Sophie is educated specifically "to please men, to be useful to

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[192] On nature's intent that women obey, see p. 407: "It is part of the order of nature that the woman obey the man." See also 358.

[193] On natural foundation of obedience, see p. 358: "Once this principle [of natural diversity] is established, it follows that woman is made specially to please man… It is the law of nature."

[194] "Women, you say, do not always produce children? No, but their proper purpose is to produce them." (362).

[195] On women's subjection, see p. 370: "Dependence is a condition natural to women… They never cease to be subjected either to a man or to the judgments of men and they are never permitted to put themselves above these judgments," and p. 396: "Women is made to yield to man and to endure even his injustice."

them, to make herself loved and honored by them, to raise them when young… to make their lives agreeable and sweet" (365).

To achieve these aims, Sophie is raised to be sensitive to the demands of public opinion. Unlike Emile, she is taught "what is thought of her is no less important to her than what she actually is."[196] Rousseau claims that the role of public opinion is necessary in the education and formation of women, since they will inevitably be dependent on and subjected to men. They must be educated in attaining men's good opinion of them, since their survival depends upon it, and they must be educated from an early age to be accustomed to constraint.[197] Since women are not raised to follow their natural urges or to be free from the voice of public opinion, even the best-educated woman will never attain the type of self-harmony that men can: "Amidst our senseless arrangements a decent woman's life is a perpetual combat against herself" (369). Unlike men or citizens, women become skilled at dissimulation and flattery, conditioned to please others, and susceptible to feeling shame and reserve when expressing their feelings.[198]

In this way, Sophie is not as inauthentic as civilized man at the end of the *Second Discourse*—she is not vice-ridden or malicious—but nor is she as authentic as Emile.[199] I argue that Rousseau's depiction of Sophie presents a different formulation of authenticity, a way of developing her dispositions that best fulfilled her as a woman, one that provided the highest form

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[196] P. 364. On the equal importance of seeming and being for women, see p. 361 (reputation is as indispensible to women as chastity), p. 364 ("It is not enough for them to be temperate, they must be recognized as such"), p. 366 (on using women's desire to please to engender good morals).

[197] "They ought to be constrained very early… so that it never costs them anything to tame all their caprices in order to submit to the will of others" (369).

[198] See p. 385 for the claim that women are not born dissimulators, and p. 369 for the presence of such traits in young girls.

[199] Consider here Rousseau's distinction between two types of dissimulation found in women: "The species of dissimulation [characteristic of his female contemporaries] is the opposite of that which suits them and which they get from nature. The one consists in disguising the sentiments they have, and the other in feigning those they do not have." (430). Thus, Rousseau locates in nature a feminine notion of concealment, of hiding one's true emotions—one that is inappropriate for men, but not necessarily vicious in women.

of happiness that she could achieve in society. However, by Rousseau's own terms, the fulfillment that Sophie could attain is different in kind and narrower in scope than Emile's, falling short in personal integrity, inner harmony, and freedom. Sophie's chances for attaining authenticity are slim because she is raised and educated to be less free, less whole, and less individually developed than either men or citizens.[200] By fulfilling her nature as a woman and attaining an authentically *feminine* self, Sophie is raised to be *individually* inauthentic, relinquishing the possibility of existing *for herself*. By being subjected to the opinion and judgments of others, the voice of her *amour de soi* is stifled by the voice of social prejudices and social demands. Since Rousseau believes that any role for women outside of wife and mother is opposed to nature, Sophie will not be raised to be self-sufficient or to develop according to her own sentiments and judgments; she will never be able to be simultaneously natural, undivided and free.

Rousseau's prescriptions for Sophie raise the question of whether the authenticity of some is conditioned upon the inauthenticity of others. They also raise the question of whether authenticity should be pursued if its effects are inegalitarian, disempowering, or unjust. Women's existence as being *for men* helps men better feel their *amour de soi:* Sophie bolsters Emile, she pleases and completes him, she complements his shortcomings. Some readers who engage Rousseau on individual authenticity bracket his claims about women's inauthenticity and subordination—they consider authenticity as it pertains to Emile, and then (implicitly) extend it to women.[201] What makes this last move problematic is Rousseau's claim that these specific prescriptions best fulfill nature's intents and designs—it is because nature provides man with

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[200] Here, I have in mind the education of Emile *and* the education of the citizen discussed in footnote 66 above. As footnote 66 discussed, this distinction will be stronger or weaker depending on whether one reads these identities as commensurable (or not).

[201] For instance, Trilling, *Sincerity and Authenticity;* Taylor, *Ethics of Authenticity;* and Neuhouser, *Rousseau's Theodicy of Self Love.*

original, pre-social dispositions, and demands that he preserve these original dispositions or risk harmful de-naturing, that Rousseau prescribes that men and women develop such that they will fulfill, sustain, and surpass what nature has given them. Thus, it is in accordance with nature's intent that Emile will be raised to develop his capacities and impulses as he feels them, and that Sophie will be raised to fulfill the constraints of her role independent of her inner feelings.

5. Authenticity's Contestability

Rousseau grounds his notion of authenticity in an account of human nature and its fulfillment. Yet why should one believe his account? This question is all the more pronounced given the inconsistencies present in Rousseau's state of nature. In the state of nature, men and women live in a state of equality with one another and have nearly identical attributes.[202] Natural woman is strong, self-sufficient, and self-preserving, and up until she leaves the state of nature "the sexes['s]… way of life had been hitherto the same" (SD 117). Thus, Rousseau's own description of women in the *Second Discourse* suggests that naturally they would be on equal footing with men. However, if women's original dispositions are not so distinct from men's, then what justifies developing their dispositions as Rousseau prescribes? Why does fulfilling nature's demands require inequality and difference between the sexes, and constraint and contradiction for women?

The answer lies, in part, in the way Rousseau envisions the changes that need to take place from leaving the state of nature to the state of society.[203] During this transition, all

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[202] See E 211 for the argument that boys and girls are equal before puberty.

[203] According to O'Hagan, since sexual difference is not grounded in nature, "if it can be justified, its justification must be found in the remarkable change in man (and presumably in women) brought about by socialization." See O'Hagan, *Rousseau.* See also Weiss, "Rousseau, Antifeminism, and Woman's Nature;" Penny Weiss and Anne Harper, "Rousseau's Political Defense of the Sex-roled Family," *Hypatia* Vol 5, Issue 3, 1990.

individuals must transform from being fundamentally asocial, independent creatures into persons

who can exist together in society—all the while curbing the emergence of narcissism, egoism

and competitiveness that is likely to arise. In leaving the state of nature, civilized man leaves

behind natural goodness, natural freedom, natural equality and uninhibited sexuality. He either

trades them in for vice, competition, and slavery (as in the *Second Discourse*) or he transforms

them into virtue, moral freedom, legal equality and familial love (as in *Emile*). According to

Penny Weiss and Susan Moller Okin, the reason Rousseau thinks women ought to be

transformed into creatures such as Sophie is so they can fulfill their roles in the family as

mothers and wives.[204] Rousseau sees the family as essential in producing sociable members of

society, in producing citizens, in teaching love, virtue and authenticity. However, he does not

believe that the family can function unless women and men adopt complementary and unequal

gender roles and unless women are subjected to men: otherwise the sexes will remain too

independent and asocial to form romantic bonds and attachments.[205] Thus, Rousseau's argument

for the development of women is grounded less on a reading of nature, rather than on an

understanding of the social benefits that could emerge only through unequal gender roles. In

order to foster the authenticity of men and prevent the denaturing of all, women must be made

inauthentic.[206]

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[204] Both Weiss and Okin adopt this "functional" reading of gender roles in Rousseau—that woman is prescribed a particular role to fulfill the functions men need in their society. See Susan Moller Okin, "Rousseau's Natural Woman," *Journal of Politics* 41, no. 2 (1979); Weiss and Harper, "Rousseau's Political Defense of the Sex-roled Family," and Weiss, "Rousseau, Antifeminism, and Woman's Nature."
[205] Weiss, "Rousseau, Antifeminism, and Woman's Nature," p. 91
[206] Here, Weiss notes that Emile's education is also limited as well: Emile is not raised to develop himself so as to indulge *any* feeling he might have, but rather to develop those feelings that will enable him to flourish, and to have integrity and virtue. Thus, Emile does not emerge as the smartest, the strongest, or the most perfected human being, but rather as one who is able to attain happiness within his limits. See Weiss, "Rousseau, Antifeminism, and Women's Nature," p. 89; Shklar, *Men and Citizens,* p. 24.

If women's development and fulfillment (or alternately, their subordination and inauthenticity) are grounded not in how they originally *were,* but in how they ought to be, then how is one to understand Rousseau's appeals to women's nature? Weiss suggests that we understand these claims as rhetorical devices deployed to persuade Rousseau's readers, rather than statements of theoretical truth. In a variety of contexts, Rousseau suggests recourse to modes of persuasion that are "neither force nor reasoning… an authority of a different order," a mode of persuasion used in the role of the lawgiver, in his appeals to civil religion, and in the speech of the Savoyard Vicar.[207] By grounding his claims about women, human well-being, and social order a picture of a prior natural state, Rousseau offers his readers a type of "noble lie" that can provide the foundations for his larger arguments.[208]

There are three additional reasons to question Rousseau's account of nature and the role it plays in his formulation of authenticity. First, Emile's education requires a good deal of artifice, manipulation, and deceit in order to "reveal" those natural tendencies that are supposed to emerge spontaneously from birth to age twelve. Many of the urges that *do* reveal themselves—Emile's early attempts to dominate, his laziness and aversion to athletics, his nascent sexual impulses—are rechanneled if not overcome.   Second, given that so many of these natural dispositions arise late in life, it is unclear how Rousseau could argue that one way of developing the individual is more authentic than another by appealing to nature alone. By his own account in *Emile,* many of man's natural dispositions do not solidify until he has developed his capacity for judgment; those related to gender and sex—on his reading— do not manifest themselves until adolescence. How can one distinguish what is natural from what is social after so many years, given how enmeshed a child is in his attachments, his education, his milieu, and (for those who

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[207] See SC II.7 and E 260-313.
[208] Weiss, "Rousseau, Antifeminism, and Woman's Nature."

are not Emile), his community? Third, even if we could know what natural dispositions are, it is less than obvious that Rousseau's suggestions for fulfilling them are the sole possible way. It is conceivable that one's ability to form attachments to one another and to the state are not predicated on experiencing an upbringing like Emile's, just as it is conceivable that one could develop compassion, altruism and care, in ways that support individuals and collectivities, without having been raised into sex roles and gender inequality.

III. Conclusion

The challenges raised by Rousseau's prescriptions for authenticity—that they are contestable, unable to be adjudicated, and potentially disempowering and unjust—are enduring issues for the politics of authenticity. While it is doubtful that such risks could ever be fully precluded, there might be ways of addressing them. While my reading of Rousseau suggests that his claims about nature are rhetorical devices rather than statements of theoretical truth, it also opens up fruitful possibilities for rethinking appeals to authenticity today. If individuals are thoroughly malleable, then we can read his claims as offering an unrealized normative vision, rather than a description of a lost or universal history; if there is no such thing as a natural, universal, pre-social self, then we can read Rousseau's claims about authenticity as less about who we *are* rather than what we might want to *become*.

Such claims would be irreducibly contestable, their persuasiveness relying on our prior commitments and aspirations. This contestability means that individuals will be able to reasonably disagree about the sources of authenticity (whether personal or political), its effects, and even what it *is*. Thus, authenticity may look like uncoerced and unalienated labor done with and for one's community (as with Marx); it may look like living in harmony with one's national

or cultural group (as with Herder); it may look like developing one's inner impulses without external impediments (as with Mill).[209] Without a secure standard like nature against which one can evaluate authenticity claims, one can never be fully sure if one gets it right.

This does not mean that one cannot appeal to authenticity in better or worse ways. Even if one cannot, in the final instance, determine the philosophical status of the "self" being described by such appeals, one can evaluate the effects authenticity claims have in our ordinary lives. This chapter has shown that while certain ways of invoking authenticity may conceal the political origins of and remedies to problems with the self, others can unearth previously foreclosed resources in addressing such problems by connecting one's claims about the self to claims about our shared world. And just as certain appeals to a true self may potentially disempower vulnerable populations, as Rousseau's appeals would disempower Sophie and all women, others may express the belief and aspiration that all individuals should be equal and free. Being more perceptive of these effects may help one better avert or facilitate them—or, at least, better assess the ways in which a true self is invoked.

This reading of Rousseau ends not by arguing for a type of strategic essentialism, however. While the existence of natural, universal, pre-social dispositions is questionable, to say the least, Rousseau uses these notions to direct his readers' attention to the individual's inner realm: to issues of subject, psyche, interiority and feeling. He emphasizes the importance of this domain to political freedom and collective wellbeing. How do we make theoretical sense of such objects? In chapter 3, I consider what becomes of claims to a true self given a thoroughly malleable and discursively constituted "subject." In chapter 4, I consider the authority and authenticity of self-knowledge given notions of social power and the unconscious, notions that

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[209] Karl Marx, "The German Ideology," in *The Marx Engels Reader,* ed. Tucker (New York: Norton, 1979); John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty;* Johann Herder, *Reflections on the Philosophy of the History of Mankind* (Chicago: Chicago, 1968).

always threaten to undercut such claims. In chapter 5, I return to some of the negative political

effects of essentialized authenticity claims, formulating a set of practices for appealing to the

term that can better avert these risks.

CHAPTER THREE
Disassembling the Self: Authenticity After Foucault

"There is therefore no such thing as originality or authenticity in the classic Rousseauean sense. Authenticity, however passionately desired and sincerely sought, is nothing but a culturally specific effect of particular material and discursive practices."
                              --Mariana Valvedere, "Experience and Truth-Telling in a Post-humanist World"

Michel Foucault's theories of sexuality and power in *The History of Sexuality: Volume One* challenge many notions of authenticity, suggesting they may be philosophically untenable, even incoherent. He shows that many of the self-relations advanced by appeals to authenticity, such as being true to oneself, developing one's inner potential, or discovering who one is, may be inadvertently regulatory; that is, rather than offering the subject greater freedom or wellbeing, these self-relations may "tie[] him to his own identity in a constraining way."[210] Foucault's account of power unsettles many notions of an inner self that have served as the basis for authenticity claims, such as an essence, a telos, one's own unique particularity, one's most rudimentary experiences of selfhood, or one's most intense experiences of sexuality. These bases often gained their status as true and normatively compelling by virtue of being cast as beyond power, society, or individual molding.[211] Yet Foucault shows how each of these bases for

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[210] Michel Foucault, "The Subject and Power," in in *Essential Works: Vol 3, Power,* ed. J. Faubion, (New York: New Press, 1994; henceforth *EW3*), p. 330. Works by Foucault will be footnoted, then referred to parenthetically.

[211] See chapter 1 of the dissertation for the features, functions, and diversity of appeals to authenticity during the sixties and seventies. Though Foucault does not explicitly name whom he is critiquing in *Volume One* of the *History of Sexuality* (London: Penguin, 1998 [1977]; henceforth *HS1*) some scholars believe he is addressing the work of "left Freudians," including Herbert Marcuse, Wilhelm Reich, and Freud himself, who all posit a notion of an unconscious that contains the truth of our being. See Joel Whitebook, "Foucault: A Marcusean in Structuralist Clothing," *Thesis 11,* 71:2002; John Forrester, *The Seductions of Psychoanalysis* (Cambridge: Cambridge, 1990); Jacques-Allain Miller, "Michel Foucault and Psychoanalysis," in *Michel Foucault: Philosopher*, (New York: Routledge, 1992). In later works, Foucault explicitly rejects Sartre's notion of authenticity and a popular understanding of self-discovery that he calls "the Californian cult of the self." See "On the Genealogy of Ethics: An Overview of Work in Progress" (henceforth OGE) in *The Essential Works of Michel Foucault, vol. 1: Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: The New Press, 1997; henceforth *EW1*).

authenticity were intensely, relentlessly, and exhaustively constituted by power, implying that

that one can neither speak from nor inhabit a place apart from it.

Is there a way of maintaining the distinction between authentic and inauthentic without

committing oneself to a belief in a subject outside of power? This chapter considers this question

in light of Foucault's ethical writings and interviews.[212] In these works, Foucault provides a

theorization of the subject, freedom, and self-articulation that has promise in resisting or

negotiating the vast battery of powers that mold us. Such a theorization offers a relationship

between truth and the subject that Foucault describes as "diametrically opposed" to authenticity:

a practice of self-creation rather than self-discovery; an ideal of partially overcoming or

"straying afield" from oneself rather than remaining "true" to a prior identity.

This chapter argues that Foucault's arts of the self do not resolve the philosophical or

strategic challenges that arise from his critiques of authenticity. I suggest that this is because his

understandings of freedom and domination do not fully take into account the subject's interiority,

feelings and experience; which in turn, impacts how one can evaluate whether one is being tied

"in a constraining way" to identity. The chapter concludes by offering an anti-essentialist notion

of authenticity that is indebted to Foucault's arts of the self. I show that while Foucault's

critiques preclude appealing to a static or essential self, they do not foreclose other notions of

authenticity, particularly those that refer to a self one wants to become. That is, while Foucault

rejects notions of authenticity that are associated with self-congruence, and while he formulates a

counter-discourse that reconfigures the relationship between truth, ethics, and the subject, this

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[212] Scholars conventionally divide Foucault's works into early (archaeological), middle (genealogical) and later works (ethical). McLaren notes that this periodization is a heuristic with limits, see *Feminism, Foucault, and Embodied Subjectivity,* p. 178. For my purposes, by later or ethical works, I am referring to "The Ethics of the Concern of the Self as a Practice of Freedom," in *Essential Works, Vol. 1,* ed. P. Rabinow, (New Press: 1997; henceforth ECS); "On the Genealogy of Ethics," and *The Use of Pleasures,* (London: Penguin, 1992) and *The Care of the Self* (London: Penguin, 1990), henceforth *HS2* and *HS3*. These works are conventionally referred to as his "ethical" works.

chapter shows how a reformulated notion of authenticity could be a potent discourse of self-making, particularly if it utilized the subject's experience in order to evaluate the ways she makes herself and has been made.

1. The Fiction of Authenticity

Foucault has posed various challenges to the different senses and facets of authenticity, but it is his anti-essentializing and de-naturalizing critique of sexuality that most fully problematizes authenticity's philosophical underpinnings and strategic effects.[213] Conventionally, Foucault argues, sexuality is understood as "authentic" in a variety of ways: as an inner kernel beyond social or individual molding; as rooted in the body; as providing a "truth" about our desires and (hence) ourselves; as granting knowledge about one's body and identity.[214] In the first volume of the *History of Sexuality,* sexuality, like many formulations of authenticity at the time, is positioned on the side of truth, freedom, and the natural, and against social norms, rules and institutions.[215] And just as conventional understandings of sexuality fall prey to what

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[213] The expressed aim of Foucault's work is not to philosophically undermine notions of authenticity, but this has been one of its effects. See Mariana Valvedere, "Experience and Truth-Telling in a Post-humanist World," in *Feminism and the Final Foucault,* ed. Taylor and Vintges (Illinois, 2004) and Charles Guignon, *On Being Authentic* (New York: Routledge, 2004). I argue that *Volume One* of the *History of Sexuality* (London: Penguin, 1998; henceforth *HS1*) provides the most thorough and multifaceted *problematization* of authenticity—it takes into account the body, discourse, the relationship between truth and the self, and freedom. Two earlier works by Foucault would deepen this problematic. In *The Order of Things* (New York: Routledge, 2001)*,* Foucault problematizes the historical emergence of Man in the organic episteme; and this creature's inability to know his "doubles." In *Discipline and Punish* (London: Penguin, 1992; henceforth *DP*), Foucault shows how various aspects of modern identity have emerged through the operation of disciplinary power. I argue that these aspects—the experience of being an individual, the idea of having an inner uniqueness or particularity, the ability to persist throughout time as a stable self—underpin the idea and experience of authenticity. Foucault's later works also have implications for this problematic, which I will discuss in the next section.
[214] For instance, see Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age,* (Cambridge: Harvard, 2007); Douglas Rossinow, *The Politics of Authenticity* (New York: Columbia, 1996)
[215] See Taylor, *A Secular Age,* for the historical claim; See Alessandro Ferrara, *Reflective Authenticity* (New York: Routledge, 1998) and Taylor in *The Ethics of Authenticity* (Cambridge: Harvard, 1992) for discussions of authenticity's "antagonistic" (versus "integrative") stance towards society.

Foucault terms "the repressive hypothesis"—in which power constrains one's identity, and freedom consists in overcoming these constraints—so too do many conceptions of authenticity. In this section, I reconstruct Foucault's arguments for why we should understand sexuality as historically constructed and regulated by power, rather than as the substratum of our being. In doing so, I show how his insights can be extended to any essence or "truth" to an identity that is cast as beyond power, and for that reason, is seen as a basis for authenticity.

To begin, Foucault problematizes the widely held idea that individual sexuality is stifled or repressed—by social customs, laws, the family, religious ordinances, moral standards, and so on—and that this repression prevents us not only from enjoying sex, but also from leading free, happy and fulfilled lives. The "repressive hypothesis" is a way of representing power and its operations which holds that these different institutions exert power upon sexuality by establishing prohibitions or rules that constrain it. Such power always acts negatively, through "rejection, exclusion, refusal, blockage, concealment or mask" (83). According to this hypothesis, the mechanism of power is to constrain and restrict sex, and its sole effect is to render persons obedient. "All the modes of domination, submission and subjugation are ultimately reduced to an effect of obedience" (85). Foucault calls this representation of power "juridico-discursive", since power emanates from a center (a sovereign, a ruling class, a legislator), operates through laws and rules, and generates obedience (82). By this logic, sex is understood as something natural within each individual, "a stubborn drive, by nature alien and of necessity disobedient," that power must constrain (103). While in *HS1,* Foucault considers the repressive hypothesis specifically in relation to sex and sexuality, in a later interview, he suggests that any theory that posits a "base" to be liberated participates in the same myths of power and the subject organized by the repressive hypothesis. "I have always been somewhat

suspicious of the notion of liberation, because… one runs the risk of falling back on the idea that there exists a human nature or base that, as a consequence of certain historical, economic, and social processes, has been concealed, alienated, or imprisoned in and by mechanisms and repression."[216]

While the juridico-discursive model of power may adequately characterize power's nature and operation in earlier times (during the emergence of monarchies, throughout the Middle Ages and Feudalism), and in its "terminal forms" (as it operates through the rule of law, or the sovereignty of state), Foucault argues that power does not solely or primarily operate in this way. Instead, power produces effects, bringing things—and especially subjects—into being.[217] Foucault understands power as relational, exercised by all people who come into contact with it. Individuals are "always in the position of simultaneously undergoing and exercising this power"—it comprises the wealth of strategies people use to effect the conduct of others.[218] Power is not held by a particular class, body, or group, but circulates throughout the population—used by and on people all throughout the social body, and used by and in strategies both micro and global. It is able to circulate through its connection to *discourse*—an assortment of norms, rules, concepts, and values that not only describes the social world, but also represents and constructs it. In part, this is because when people believe in the truths that discourse promotes, they make the world and their lives as if these things *were* true, but also because discourse allows power to operate non-subjectively—through strategies and concepts that were

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[216] ECS 282.

[217] Janet Halley's description of power in Foucault is "the capacity to produce effects" in *Split Decisions: How and Why to Take a Break from Feminism* (Princeton: Princeton, 2008), p. 119.

[218] Foucault, "Two Lectures," in *Power/Knowledge,* Ed. Gordon (Pantheon, 1980), p. 98.

not inverted or intended by any particular person, but have their basis in the truths that discourse produces.[219]

Though sexuality is conventionally cast as being beyond power (at least in Foucault's time), Foucault shows that sexuality is in fact brought into being by it. That is, while sexuality has come to have a real existence within each individual, its existence is historical—laden with and produced by historically specific techniques of power. This is not to say that in the past, sexuality was uninflected by power, "a primitive natural, living energy welling up from below" (81), but rather that sexuality itself is a recent invention, albeit one constructed to seem timeless and natural. In particular, it is "an artificial unity," a conjunction of heterogeneous elements, whose emergence and connections to one another are gradual, contingent, and impermanent. Thus, Foucault argues for conceiving sexuality as a historically constructed "great surface network," in which relations of knowledge and power connect bodies, pleasures, discourses, knowledge, and resistances in a variety of ways.[220] In what follows, I will briefly show how his arguments about sexuality's constitution by power challenge five understandings of authenticity prevalent during his time.

a) *Authenticity as self-discovery and self-disclosure*: During the 1960s and 70s, authenticity was frequently associated with ideals of self-discovery and self-disclosure. Notions of self-discovery were so prevalent during this time that Foucault once referenced them as "the

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[219] Foucault brackets the question as to whether these discourses are theoretically or normatively valid (or produce truths with such validity), and focuses on how they construct different truths according to different rules over time. See "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History" in *The Foucault Reader* (London: Penguin, 1991), henceforth NGH. See also Fraser, *Unruly Practices,* (Minneapolis: Minnesota, 1989).

[220] "Sexuality must not be thought of as a natural given which power tries to hold in check, or as an obscure domain which knowledge tries gradually to uncover. It is the name that can be given to a historical construct: not a furtive reality that is difficult to grasp, but a great surface network in which the stimulation of bodies, the intensification of pleasures, the incitement to discourse, the formation of special knowledges, the strengthening of controls and resistances, are linked to one another, in accordance with a few major strategies of knowledge and power." HS1 105

California cult of the self," in which "one is supposed to discover one's true self, to separate it from that which might obscure or alienate it, to decipher its truths" (OGE 290). Pursuits of self-discovery occurred privately (through the growing popularity of therapy, new age spiritual practices, and returns to one's roots), but also politically, through social movements seeking to discover the "truth" of their identities.[221] Notions of self-disclosure were also connected to an understanding of collective freedom during this time. "Speaking truth to power," "telling it like it is," and "breaking the silence," became popular tropes in 60s and 70s liberation movements, which encouraged individuals to speak openly about their experiences with opporession and injustice as a strategy of resistance.[222] Such strategies figured honest self-disclosure and self-expression to be instances of freedom against a power that constrained people into hiding who they were and what they thought.[223] Such strategies, however, resemble the model of truth and power in Foucault's repressive hypothesis: "it seems to us that truth… 'demands' only to surface; that if it fails to do so, this is because a constraint holds it in place… confession frees, but power reduces one to silence" (60).

Foucault argues that these truths are posited as "hidden" or "deep," because they require overcoming one's reluctance in revealing them. But it would be a mistake to see "constraint" as existing only in the demand to keep silent, and not also in the "injunction" and "imperative" to speak (20). That is, neither self-disclosure nor self-discovery take place apart from or wholly against power, but within it, as part of a "confessional technique," a particular power relation in which the *speaker* is both constrained and transformed as he discloses truths about himself. "One

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[221] I've argued this point in the introduction and chapter 1. See discussion of La Raza and consciousness raising in chapter 1 in particular.

[222] Other critiques of these political practices include Wendy Brown, "Freedom's Silences," in *Edgework* (Princeton: Princeton, 2005) and Joan Scott, "Experience" in *Feminists Theorize the Political* (New York: Routledge, 1988), both of whose arguments are indebted to Foucault.

[223] See discussion of *Black Power* and radical feminist texts in chapter 1.

goes about telling, with the greatest precision, whatever is most difficult to tell… when it is not spontaneous or dictated by some internal imperative, the confession is wrung from a person by violence or threat" (59). For this reason, Foucault describes the act of self-disclosure not as necessarily liberating, but as potentially enabling further regulation by existing norms, powers, and discourses. That is, "the infinite task of extracting [truth] from the depths of oneself" enabled the creation of a "confessional discourse" in which one did not merely describe who one was, but in the act of describing, created oneself as a particular type of subject (59). Thus, the act of self-disclosure subjects and regulates individuals, using their speech to tie them to a particular identity, to "constitute [them] as subjects in both senses of the word" (60).

b) *Authenticity as based on a feeling or experience "beyond power"*: Foucault challenges two ideas that often underpinned notions of authenticity in his time: first, that pleasures have a privileged existence in the body as given and natural, as arising solely from the "inside"; and second, that when power does act upon our pleasures, it does so primarily by repression, by dampening or restricting what we feel.[224] Foucault argues that these ideas miss the complex and generative interactions between power and pleasure. "Pleasure and power do not cancel or turn back against one another, they seek out, overlap and reinforce one another" (48). In *HS1,* he highlights at least four complex operations of power that stimulated pleasure in different ways: the sexualization of different ages (of the infant, the elderly, the child); the sexualization of particular tastes or practices (perversions); the sexualization of relationships (doctor-patient, teacher-student); and the sexualization of particular spaces (the analyst's room, the boarding school). In each of these cases, pleasure seems to emerge naturally or spontaneously, but in

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[224] Perhaps the most noted examples from this time are Herbert Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization* (Boston: Beacon, 1966 [1955]) and *One Dimensional Man* (Boston: Beacon, 1964)

actuality it arises from the particular ways that power invests spaces, relationships, and practices, by stimulating pleasures.

To use one of Foucault's examples, in the nineteenth century, a huge effort was put into eliminating child masturbation. According to the conventional story, power acted to stifle or repress an urge that was natural and inevitable. It enjoined doctors, parents and educators to monitor and keep in check the habits of the child. However, Foucault shows that the purported effort towards repressing the child's "natural" sexuality *also* directly ushered it into existence. Because adults took for granted that child masturbation would inevitably occur, they altered their entire orientation towards the child. Treating masturbation as if it were the child's essential secret, they went about trying to discover it: laying traps, changing how they spoke to children, monitoring and surveying them. This suspicion was manifest even in the absence of adult-child interactions: in the layout of bedrooms and boarding schools, for instance, or in bedtime policies. Once the child was caught, he was not only caught performing a sexual act, but seen as manifesting an entire, particular sexual nature. Under the pretense of merely targeting a sexual act, power was able to branch out and expand this target, creating an entire sexuality that could be attributed to the child—one that included his habits, his dispositions, his nature.[225] Importantly, Foucault is not denying that power represses—indeed, the adult world really did try to constrain and restrict a certain behavior—his point instead is that repression is neither power's sole nor primary operation.

Instead, power elicited and intensified pleasures, giving new meaning and life to what were previously understood as practices, behaviors, eccentricities, bizarre preferences, sins,

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[225] See *HS1* 37-42, 98-99, 104 for the creation of the child's sexuality. Halley, in *Split Decisions*, treats this as well, showing how "a vast battery of big and minute forces" gave the child its "anxious" sexuality; see also Hubert Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow *Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics* (Chicago: Chicago, 1983), pp. 171-172.

crimes, bad habits, weaknesses of the flesh. These things became isolated, distinguished from each other, intensified, consolidated, and then understood as *distinct sexualities*. As knowledge of these sexualities circulated throughout the social body, people sought out telltale signs in others and themselves. Yet this process of search and discovery further intensified pleasures, providing a foothold in the body where sexuality could "implant" itself: sexualities "were solidified in them; they were drawn out, revealed, isolated, intensified, incorporated, by multifarious power devices" (48). Thus, Foucault uses this example to challenge the idea that there were heretofore-undiscovered feelings or pleasures, as well as undiscovered "sexualities," that existed prior to power or that emerged in response to intensified repression.

c) *Authenticity as situated in the unconscious*: Foucault argues that sexuality was invented by the sciences that sought to seek it out—and that by creating knowledge about sexuality, these sciences eventually produced sexuality as embodied and real.[226] This is especially true for the psy-disciplines and their object, the unconscious. According to Foucault, psychoanalysis constructs sexuality as elusive and concealed, existing throughout the entire body as the general cause of neuroses, pathologies, and symptoms. Like other "sicknesses," if left undetected and untreated, sexuality becomes pathological, its symptoms worsen and it affects the whole organism. However, one can only discover that it is at the root of one's malfunctioning through constant and meticulous confession—one must discover, through confession, the "truth" of one's sexuality. By formulating sexuality in this way, scientists were able to posit it as a natural feature of the human body; the source of biological and mental strife; a bearer of the

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[226] Foucault's engagement with the psy-disciplines has a much richer history than I am presenting here. See Joel Whitebook, "Against Interiority: Foucault's Struggle with Psychoanalysis," *Cambridge Companion to Foucault, 2nd edition* (Cambridge: Cambridge, 2005); Whitebook, "Foucault: A Marcusean in Structuralist Clothing,"; John Forrester, *The Seductions of Psychoanalysis*; Jacques-Allain Miller, "Michel Foucault and Psychoanalysis."

subject's secret truths; and one that could only be reached and understood by and through techniques of introspection and decipherment.

By constructing sexuality as hidden and symptomatic, as espousing a secret truth, psychiatrists could formulate an idea of the unconscious, of that area in the mind where each person was opaque to himself. It allowed persons to see and make themselves into creatures of interiority, encouraging an elaboration of one's inner world on the promise of accessing and revealing one's hidden truths. Thus sexuality was at the heart of a knowledge of the subject, in particular, a knowledge of "that which divides him, determines him perhaps, but above all causes him to be ignorant of himself" (70). Yet Foucault argues that such a "truth" is blind to the preconditions of its own existence: it does not see the operations of power that implant it, the relations of power that coercively extract it, or the power-laden discourses that provide the categories with which to understand and assess it. Not only is power at the root of any particular truth that is repressed by our unconscious, it is also at the root of one of our most familiar self-conceptions: that we are beings in possession of untold depths and truths.

d) *Authenticity as rooted in the natural body*: Foucault argues that there is a material reality to the body (and its anatomy, physiology, desires, pleasures), but that it is a material that is inseparable from power.[227] The body always comes into existence being already enmeshed in historically specific power relations, which shape its physical form, its gestures and habits, its desires and pleasures, the meanings and values we attribute to it, and the understandings we have of it. This is especially the case from the eighteenth century onwards, in which new forms of

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[227] See Lois McNay, *Foucault and Feminism: power, gender, and the self* (Boston: Northeastern, 1993), ch. 2. "Power and sexuality are not ontologically distinct, rather sexuality is the result of a productive 'biopower' which focuses on human bodies, inciting and extorting various effects." For McNay, it is impossible to know the body outside of its cultural and historical signification. Cressida Heyes in *Self-Transformations* (New York: Oxford, 2007) has a similar reading: "the 'natural' body we have inherited is the product of three centuries of discipline… and each of our bodies is itself constituted through disciplinary power" (8).

power were especially focused on fostering and controlling the body and its forces.[228] While

modern techniques of power combine the historical and the biological in increasingly complex

ways, it is nonetheless a real, material body that power appropriates, regulates, and brings into

existence.

This being said, Foucault doubts the material existence of "sex-in-itself": the supposed

biological "base" that sexuality appropriates and transforms. For Foucault, "sex-in-itself" is an

artificial unity of "anatomical elements, biological functions, conducts, sensations, and

pleasures" (154). Historically, these elements have been understood in different ways, both on

their own and their interconnections: sexual acts might have been interpreted through a rubric of

madness, the flesh, or mastery.[229] Foucault does not argue as to which of these frameworks is

more accurate or valid, but instead suggests reasons for why "sex-in-itself" historically came to

be formulated as it is—that is, how it came to be posited as a particular object of knowledge, and

one distinct from sexuality. Assembling these elements into a fictitious unity called "sex," and

appropriating the body into this conception, made it possible to regulate, control and incite

individuals in a number of ways; to posit sex as a person's unique essence or truth, "a causal

principle, an omnipresent meaning, a secret to be discovered everywhere" (154), and render sex

as the key to each individual's identity—as that which rendered him particular, as that which

individuated him. Moreover, it was possible to mask the workings of power by rendering sex as

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[228] This is not to say that power did not construct individuals before biopower. Instead, the ways in which power brought the individual into being were less pervasive, less intense, less focused on the body. Under earlier strategies of power, power focused more upon the married couple and their adherence to the laws (*HS1* 39), leaving sexual acts unanalyzed, undifferentiated. Such a power operated discontinuously—when there were breaches in the law, provided that the offender was caught and then punished (*DP* 78-82). It was more concerned with deducting forces than making them grow.

[229] See *HS1*, pp. 57-9 (on Ars Erotica) and p. 156: "We have arrived at the point where we expect our intelligibility to come from what was for many centuries thought of as madness; the plentitude of our body from what was long considered its stigma and likened to a wound; our identity from what was perceived as an obscure and nameless urge." Volumes 2 and 3 of the History of Sexuality show how sexuality was constructed in Ancient Greece and Ancient Rome respectively.

naturally and innately free from it, "as being rooted in a specific and irreducible urgency which power tries as best it can to dominate" (155). With this conception of sex-in-itself, we are inclined to see power as repressively working through laws and taboos, rather than as productive and generative. Foucault's point is not that we lack bodies, nor that our bodies lack pleasures, desires, or anatomies, but that the contemporary tendency to posit a necessary essence or connection between them, imbuing them with an intrinsic meaning, plays into power's larger strategies and designs.

e) *Authenticity as (freedom through) self-congruence*: In particular, power's larger design is to "tie us to our identities," a process known as "subjection."[230] Through subjection, one sees oneself as a creature with interiors and depths, who is self-identical over time. Discourses of sexuality provided the terms by which one was forced to recognize others and oneself, terms that seemed natural and scientific, but concealed the effects and intents of power. Power (specifically in *HS1,* biopower) not only brought these terms into existence and implanted sexualities in individuals, but also used them to regulate and control populations, by way of normalization. [231]

Normalization regulates individual behavior by distributing persons around a norm. A norm establishes what counts as average for a given population—it can be applied to behaviors, bodies, health, aptitude, intelligence, sanity—any attribute of the person can be normalized. Normalization examines the whole of social differences, demarcates what counts as acceptable

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[230] See also SP: subjection is the effect of a form of power that "categorizes the individual, marks him by his own individuality, attaches him to his own identity, imposes a law of truth on him" (331); it "ties him to his own identity in a constraining way" (330).

[231] Normalization and the emergence of sexuality were both at the heart of a much larger strategy of power—what Foucault terms biopower. Biopower sought to bring the whole of life and its mechanisms under calculation and control—it sought to make things live, to sustain and administer life on all scales. Sexuality was a crucial foothold for this power because it was located at the intersection of the individual and the population: applying itself to sexuality enabled power to discipline individuals and regulate entire populations—their birth rate, their life expectancy, their longevity—at the same time. Normalization was the technique of power necessary to achieve both these ends, and to manage the manifold aspects of "life"—it worked invisibly, continuously, and effectively. See *HS1* 135-146.

and deviant.[232] Everything that falls outside the norm is then ordered and ranked by how closely

it approximates or meets the norm, and is evaluated accordingly. For instance, married,

procreative, heterosexual sex is established as the norm, and all other desires, pleasures,

relationships, and activities are evaluated by how far they deviate from it. Normalization also

demarcates "the frontier of the abnormal" (*DP* 182-3), establishing those behaviors, attitudes,

aptitudes and characteristics that are so deviant that they are branded as "shameful" or

"unacceptable." They are then "divided off" from the rest of the population—the mad from the

sane, the criminal from the law abiding, the perverse from the non-perverse.[233] At the same time,

people whose actions deviate in the same kind and degree will form a cluster, which will then

crystallize and form an identity.[234] This happens most obviously and quickly with those who

deviate the furthest from the norm—the delinquent, the pervert, the madman. But normalization

gradually occurs throughout the spectrum of all identities as well, providing names and

categories to those identities that also fall within the norm.[235] In this way, normalization

establishes both regulation and constraint. People will adjust their behavior, appearances,

gestures, and habits without consciousness or intention, simply because the specification of

diverse and perverse identities on a particular spectrum—in this way, they are *regulated*.[236]

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[232] Halley, *Split Decisions*

[233] Foucault, "The Subject and Power," in Dreyfus and Rabinow, *Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics,* p. 208. Margaret McLaren in *Feminism, Foucault and Embodied Subjectivity* (Albany: SUNY, 2002) extends Foucault to discuss concretely the effects that follow marginalization—material effects (less economic power, less access to resources), cultural effects ("less authority to speak"), and psychological effects ("internalized oppression or low self esteem). See p. 123.

[234] See Heyes, *Self-Transformations,* p. 6: "In some cases, degrees of variation from a norm cluster and crystallize to permit a convenient reductionism in which the relationship to a norm becomes an identity."

[235] Thus, in *DP*, it is not only the "shameful" that are singled out, but the "very good," the "good," the "mediocre" and the "bad" (in the Ecole Militare, and later elsewhere). As Halley notes, "Power applies with equal force, with equal productivity, to generate both average and deviant subjects." See *Split Decisions,* p. i.

[236] A fuller account of normalization occurs in *DP* (pp. 177-184), though it differs slightly from the account in *HS1* through its focus on punishment, and its emphasis on contained settings with their own rules. Foucault's depiction of normalization in *DP* takes into account the historical emergence of

Thus, Foucault's problematization of sexuality, and its implications for identities and identity production, unsettles authenticity in a variety of ways. Not only do bodies and minds emerge in relations of power, and not only are individuals constrained to fit into historically available identities and terms of recognition, but any identity one has or could want always stands in some relation to established norms, and is thus *regulatory*. While norms can be productive, they may also work as a constraint, pulling one towards further compliance (the Malthusian couple, a member of the "very good" class), and tying one to an existing identity with all of its "factual" and "evaluative" implications (unhygienic, disgraceful, ill). Given that subjection involves a "tying" of oneself to an identity, a tying that Foucault would later describe as "constraining," the attempt to find freedom in discovering or being faithful to a "true self" only plays into power's larger designs: it *maintains* one as a particularized individual, as having a particular identity, through which one can be regulated and normalized. Not only do various notions of authenticity seem philosophically implausible, because they often rely on fictitious notions of selfhood, experience, and interiority, but appeals to authenticity seem strategically questionable as well, threatening to reinscribe the very unfreedom they seek to resist.

2. Subject Forms Old and New

In his later writings, Foucault thought that one could mitigate the effects of subjection by engaging in "care of the self" —that is, by striving towards certain self-relations and purposefully crafting the self towards a desired end.[237] He describes these self-modifications as "diametrically opposed" to authenticity (OGE 271). In "On the Genealogy of Ethics," he has two

normalization in isolated and peripheral institutions—the prisons, the school, the barrack, whereas in HS1, the standards that normalization operates through are already society-wide—spread across the social body through discourse. In DP, this then leads to docile bodies—bodies that are "subjected, used, transformed and improved." (DP 136)

[237] In particular, OGE, ECS, AE, HS2, HS3 and his later interviews in *EW1*.

understandings of authenticity in mind: first, what he calls "the Californian cult of the self," in which "one is supposed to discover one's true self, to separate it from that which might obscure or alienate it, to decipher its truths;" and second, Sartre's conception of authenticity, in which self-congruence is cast as an ethical imperative, "the idea that we have to be ourselves—to be truly our true self."[238] In this section, I argue that while these two framings of authenticity were popular in Foucault's time (and ours), they are not exhaustive of authenticity's meanings and entailments. Furthermore, I will show that as much as Foucault opposes arts of the self to various notions of authenticity, they nonetheless intersect at various points: they both take the self as its primary object, consider questions of self-congruence and incongruence, and treat one's particular way of relating to the self (including making the self) as implicated in questions of ethics, freedom, and truth.

Before examining the type of self-relation Foucault privileges and its relationship to notions of authenticity, we encounter a conceptual difficulty: how can Foucault conceive of selves or subjects without recourse to essentializing categories? The "self" typically refers to an aspect of the person that remains stable or self-identical across time, the "subject" to an aspect or capacity of personhood that exists ahistorically as the condition of the possibility for knowledge. Both of these concepts suggest the existence of a "substratum" or "base" underlying the individual or all persons, which is then shaped and concealed by historical circumstances. Since Foucault denies the existence of such an underlying substratum in his genealogies, how can he make reference to subjects and selves in his later works?

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[238] OGE 262, 271. Here, I am depicting how Foucault interprets Sartre's notion of authenticity. Some scholars, notably Beatrice Han, disagree with Foucault's reading of Sartre. Han argues that Foucault takes Sartre to be saying that authenticity is the *only* ethical form of relating to oneself, but that Sartre fully admits that there is a multiplicity of forms to understand one's self-relationship. See Beatrice Han, *Foucault's Critical Project*, (Palo Alto: Stanford, 2002), p. 168. My own reading of Sartre on authenticity is found in the dissertation's introduction.

Foucault discusses selves and subjects historically and conceptually; at various points in history, we have used different terms to abstract and conceptualize the human, its interiority, and its essential humanness, and so Foucault can discuss these concepts as historical phenomena. By taking a genealogical stance, Foucault emphasizes how these different terms—"psyche, subjectivity, personality, consciousness"—do not actually refer to the same thing (*DP* 29). They arise out of different discourses that render the terms in different and incommensurable ways: the unconscious is not the same as the Greek psyche, the man of modern humanism is fundamentally different from the immortal Christian soul.[239] While these concepts have a "real" existence within bodies, none of them are universal, ahistorical, or prior to power and experience. Rather, they are implanted in bodies through different techniques of power, much like sexuality.[240] Nor does Foucault think the body can act as an essence, either, since it too does not remain stable or fixed across the life of a species or individual.[241] Like sexuality, Foucault sees subjectivity and the body as intertwined, the product of various and varying relations of power, and thoroughly malleable.

While Foucault claims he does not want to provide another "theory of the subject" (ECS 290), it is clear that there are certain understandings the subject that he rejects, and certain ways

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[239] Foucault develops this point more fully in *DP*: "It would be wrong to say that the soul is an illusion, or an ideological effect. On the contrary, it exists, it has a reality, it is produced permanently around, on, within the body by the functioning of a power… On this reality reference, various concepts have been constructed and domains of analysis carved out: psyche, subjectivity, personality, consciousness" (29). Margaret McLaren's elaboration is helpful here as well"Soul, consciousness, psyche, subjectivity and personality are each specific ways of conceptualizing human interiority. Each way of thinking about human interiority arose at a particular time, within a particular context." McLaren, *Feminism, Foucault and Embodied Subjectivity,* p. 84.

[240] "…a whole set of techniques a whole corpus of methods and knowledge, descriptions, plans and data. And from such trifles, no doubt, the man of modern humanism was born" (*DP* 141). Notice how the change in techniques in power gives rise to a new subjectivity—one that is not the immortal Christian soul that preceded it.

[241] "We believe, in any event, that the body obeys the exclusive laws of physiology and that it escapes the influence of history, but this too is false. The body is molded by a great many distinct regimes" (NGH 87).

in which he himself is making an abstraction of these various abstractions of the person. First, he

rejects "the founding subject," the subject of existentialism and phenomenology, who is able to

determine her own meaning, and speak from a place free from power or discourse.[242] Second, he

rejects the "transcendental" subject—the subject understood as having universal capacities for

reason or experience.[243] Both of these conceptions suggest an aspect of persons or personhood

that is untouched by power, obscuring the ways in which power "constitutes" them—how it

ushers these faculties into being, shapes them, and incorporates them into the body. Thus,

Foucault uses the term "the subject" to refer to diverse and multiple forms of interiority and

embodiment that are constituted throughout history, yet always does so in a formal and nominal

way: the subject "is not a substance. It is a form, and this form is not primarily or always

identical to itself."[244]

Certain aspects of Foucault's conception of the subject-as-form intersect with notions of

authenticity. First, Foucault describes this constitution as taking place within "games of truth"—

that is, the production and verification of true and false statements according to particular

rules.[245] Foucault is particularly interested in those games of truth that regulate how the subject

must recognize herself and others. That is, one of the major functions of truth games is to

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[242] "What I rejected was the idea of starting out with a theory of the subject—as is done, for example, in phenomenology or existentialism—and, on the basis of this theory, asking how a given form of knowledge [*connaissance*] was possible" (ECS 290).

[243] "I do believe that there is no sovereign founding subject, a universal form to be found everywhere." (AE 50)

[244] ECS 290. Foucault seems to retain the term "the subject," in discussing persons and personhood, in part because of its long and familiar history in Western philosophy; and in part because of its connotations: a subject is he who is "subject to" someone else, under their power or authority (the subject of a king); simultaneously, the subject is he who is identical to herself (the subject of a sentence), through conscience and self knowledge (SP 212). Moreover, the term "subject," in contrast to the terms "individual" or "self," emphasizes our produced and constructed nature.

[245] "a set of procedures that lead to a certain result, which on the basis of its principles and rules of procedures may be considered valid or invalid." ECS 290. Compare this description to the one found in "Michel Foucault": truth games show that "the rules according to which a subject can say certain things depends on the question of true and false." See "Michel Foucault," *Essential Works, Vol. 2,* ed. James D. Faubion (New York: New Press, 1998); henceforth F:

organize and structure the possible identities and self-conceptions one can inhabit and the rules by which an individual may or must inhabit them.

Foucault brackets the question of the supposed "truth" of any given truth game, focusing instead on how truth games produce, regulate, and prescribe different self-understandings.[246] In particular, he investigates three different types of truth games: scientific truth games, in which the subject must recognize herself as an object of science or theory; dividing truth games, in which the subject recognizes herself "on the other side of a normative division," for instance, as a madman, a delinquent, a pervert (F 460); and ethical truth games, in which she actively makes herself into a moral agent, "the game of true and false in regard to themselves and what constitutes the most secret, the most individual part of their subjectivity" (F 261). These truth games change over time, and since there is no essence or core to the subject, changes in truth games can transform the subject's very being.[247] Thus, while there may be a "truth" to the subject—as in, she is compelled to recognize herself as truly being a madman, delinquent, or pervert—this truth is not separate from individual, historical truth games, and this truth must always yield to changes beyond the subject's control.

These truth games structure the ways the subject can relate to itself, a concern that Foucault shares with various understandings of authenticity.[248] When Foucault says that the subject is a "form," he means the subject is a self-relation: a mode of relating to oneself, in which the self and its mode of relation alter over time. More precisely, Foucault suggests the subject is

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[246] Foucault, "Technologies of the Self," in *EW1*.

[247] "Nothing in man—not even his body—is sufficiently stable to serve as the basis for self-recognition or for understanding other men." NGH. We can see this process in the emergence of the identities of pervert and delinquent in *DP* and *HS1*, in which people who were merely criminals and sodomites then had to recognize themselves as "delinquents," "perverts" and so forth.

[248] In chapter 1, I argued that contemporary US discourses of authenticity, as they relate to persons and groups, tend to take as their object one's relation to oneself, such as being true to oneself, expressing oneself, etc.

composed of *multiple* self-relations, a series of forms, and that the subject "is not primarily or always identical to itself" (ECS 290).

Not only do truth games vary across time, but there is also a range of truth games available to the subject at any given moment—truth games that determine one as a political subject, a romantic subject, a juridical subject, and so forth. Importantly, Foucault does not see these as different roles or identities that an underlying subject assumes, but as different *forms* of subjects: each occurs in different truth games, each constitutes the subject through different practices, and "in each case, one plays, one establishes a different type of relationship to oneself" (ECS 290). While one of the major effects of modern forms of power is to construct for each subject a stable, unitary identity, in which these forms coexist, Foucault emphasizes the dissimilarities between these forms, the "relationships and interferences," that prevents the subject from coinciding with itself.

Though Foucault uses the language of interference and non-identity to describe the subject, he does not specify how such interference would manifest itself in the subject's experience. One could imagine that such interference denotes a range of experiences: from feeling liberated from oneself, to feeling at odds with oneself, to feeling as if one is fragmented. Recall that in *HS1,* Foucault claims that disciplinary power typically overcomes such dissonance by establishing a stable self and an abiding identity to which the individual can be "tied."[249] Nonetheless, if the subject is constituted within different truth games and to assume different self-relations, then we could expect the discordances between these elements to manifest themselves in the subject's construction, and to be experienced as dissonance or a lack of self-congruence (again, for better or worse). In this way, despite power's frequent operations,

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[249] While I have in mind biopower, this is also an effect of what Foucault calls a new form of "pastoral power," which Foucault discusses in SP 332.

instances of de-centering might be unavoidable, particularly in light of the heterogeneous truth

games that each claim the self.

Given the multiple and contradictory ways that subjects are made, especially in

modernity, it does not seem possible to overcome such discordance once and for all. As in his

earlier work, Foucault rejects the existence of an inner kernel or metaphysical telos to which

congruence or connection could bring about a state of harmony. He claims that this longing for

complete oneness with ourselves, this belief that underneath power and repression lay

undistorted selfhood, is a variation of the repressive hypothesis. "According to this hypothesis,

all that is required is to break these repressive deadlocks and man will be reconciled with

himself, rediscover his nature, or regain contact with his origin, and reestablish a full and

positive relationship with himself" (ECS 282). The fact that power constructs individuals in

inconsistent and dissonant ways, and that it continues to do so, goes against two notions

commonly associated with authenticity: the idea that returning to a prior unity and wholeness

could make one a full and harmonious whole, or that "realizing" one's identity could do the

same. Foucault's distancing of himself from these two notions suggests that the range of

experiences that fall under the heading of being incongruent with oneself—including, in a very

non-Foucauldian vocabulary, feelings of being alien to oneself, or not true to oneself—are

inevitable occurrences, byproducts of the fact that power constructs individuals through a variety

of norms, which may work in contradictory ways.[250]

Not only does Foucault argue it impossible to be congruent with a prior or teleological

self, but he also proposes that this inability is not necessarily unethical, detrimental for the

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[250] Miriam Bankovsky and Alice Le Goff describe this process in Foucault as "agonistic identity construction," in which "mutually recognized norms contain competing elements which are polemic and combative, and consequently produce identities marked by tension and conflict." See Bankovsky and Le Goff "Deepening critical theory: French contributions to theories of recognition" in *Recognition Theory and Contemporary French Moral and Political Philosophy* (Manchester, 2012).

subject, or an instance of unfreedom.[251] Rather, Foucault claims that these "interferences"

between different subject forms provide the space in which we can practice our freedom—they

suggest those places where power's hold on us may be looser and more flexible.[252] To

understand why a lack of self-congruence could be a site for freedom, we must understand a

distinction Foucault makes in his later work between freedom and domination. For Foucault,

domination is characterized as a "frozen" or "immobile" state of power relations, in which

subjects are severely constrained in the type of strategies they can adopt to alter their situation.[253]

On this understanding, the more mobility there is in power relations, the more potential there is

to modify one's situation, and the greater the possibility for freedom. Here, freedom is

understood not as a state, but as a *practice*—as the ability to alter one's standing in a power

relationship, to engage in struggle.[254] Thus, if we understand these dissonances in the self as

arising from the interruptions, contradictions, or weakening in power's construction of the self,

then such dissonances also provide the mobility in those power relations that construct the self,

enabling it to engage in new strategies, to negotiate relations of power more effectively, and to

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[251] Many popular understandings of authenticity associate self-congruence with a centered, unitary subjectivity, one that already exists within the self, or one that the self crafts to be unitary. On such a reading, inauthenticity or self-estrangement involves the inability to abide by or form a stable, unitary identity. Other notions, however, equate authenticity with a more dispersed, fragmented "Dionysian" self—one that either overcomes or fails to develop an individuated or unitary self. See Bernard Williams, *Truth and Truthfulness,* (Princeton, 2004); Ferrara, *Reflective Authenticity;* Lacan, *Ecrits.*

[252] Heyes makes nearly the same point focusing on disciplinary practices: "The very complexity and slipperiness of disciplinary practices prevents them maintaining the degree of coherence required for a situation of complete domination, and it is in these fissures that counter-attack might occur." *Self-Transformations,* p. 8.

[253] "One sometimes encounters what may be called situations or states of domination in which the power relations, instead of being mobile, allowing the various participants to adopt strategies modifying them, remain blocked, frozen. When an individual or social group succeeds in blocking a field of power relations, immobilizing them and preventing any reversibility of movement… one is faced with what may be called a state of domination. In such a state, it is certain that practices of freedom do not exist or exist only unilaterally or are extremely constrained and limited." ECS 283.

[254] ECS 283. Or as he says later, "the art of not being governed quite so much." See Foucault, "What is Critique?," in *The Political,* ed. David Ingram (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), 193.

practice its freedom. In particular, they may help us recognize our constructedness by power, and may facilitate our interrogation of and struggles with it.

Though he is critical of certain understandings of self-congruence and self-discovery, Foucault argues that the type of relationship one assumes to oneself is ethically important, and this concern with the ethical places him again in proximity with various notions of authenticity.[255] While one can assume many different self-relations, Foucault focuses on and privileges ethical self-relations, describing them as "the kind of relation one ought to have with oneself."[256] The goal of all ethical self-relations is for the subject to transform himself into "the moral subject of his own action" or into a "moral agent" through the terms, practices, and truth games historically available to him.[257]

Foucault thought that all forms of ethics were "the conscious practice of freedom," because ethics was a privileged realm in which the subject could exercise her own agency—in which she could create herself and negotiate relations of power as a moral actor. In particular, Foucault believes that ascetic practices of self-making could loosen the hold of subjection or power, though they would stop short of escaping it. Schematically, Foucault upholds two ideals of self-modification that might further one's practice of freedom: first, the creation of a self's own *ethos*, expressive of a style or character, in which the subject can modify what was given to

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[255] For two different ways of framing the relation of authenticity to ethics, see Charles Taylor, *Ethics of Authenticity* and Somogy Varga, *Authenticity as an Ethical Ideal.*

[256] "Sex, Power and the Politics of Identity," in *EW1*. Henceforth SPP.

[257] OGE. While the subject could conceivably form itself in other domains or subject forms, Foucault's later work focuses on self-formation as it applies to the ethical subject and moral action. He also claims that the ethical relation to oneself structures the way in which the subject approaches his other self-relations (as a political subject, as a desiring subject)—in other words, these other domains constitute the "ethical substance" that self-cultivation is supposed to form. For the Greeks in particular, ethical action was supposed to manifest itself in the formation of an *ethos*—"a way of being and behavior… with which he responded to every event" (ECS 286), which suggests that the ethical self-relation overflowed into other self-relations and subject forms. Valverde in "Experience and Truth Telling" takes Foucault's idea a step beyond him and suggests that "the ethical self is not one," that even our ethical self relation can take many different forms *within the same person*, depending on our practice.

her by power and mold it into something new; and second, the "unmaking" of the self, the creation of a particular ethos that allows the self to detach itself from its own identity and thus loosen power's hold. I refer to these respectively as the care of the self, and disassembling the self.[258]

Care of the self refers to those practices that enable the subject to modify itself, attaining a desired self or self-relation. Foucault distinguishes between a negative and a positive pole to these practices. The negative pole sought to minimize developing a normalized relation to self by avoiding ethical practices that were normalizing. For instance, Christian forms of ethics, according to Foucault, emphasized obedience to a code over forms of self-cultivation, and defined the way one recognized oneself as well as the terms by which one was recognized: one's ability and desire to obey the code (*HS2* 29-30). In this way, Christian forms of morality limited and normalized the range of possible self-relations one could assume. Since the Enlightenment, by contrast, such code-centered moralities have declined: we no longer recognize our ethics to be grounded in religion or in a universal truth (OGE). For this reason, Foucault thinks our work lies less in the negative task of resisting normalizing moralities, and more in the positive task of cultivating our own self-relations. In the gap where a code-centered ethics once predominated, we now have the space to develop individualized ethics and self-relations based on aesthetic values rather than true principles. This gap therefore puts us in similar ethical circumstances as antiquity. Because such an ethics is neither universal nor grounded in truth, Foucault thinks it is

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[258] "*Se deprendre de soi-meme,*" found in *HS2* has been translated by Paul Rabinow as "to disassemble the self," by Raceviks as "to take oneself away from oneself," by Thomas Flynn as "thinking otherwise than oneself" and by Robert Hurley as "to get free of oneself." I choose "disassemble the self" to emphasize its contrast with the Greco-Roman Care of the Self, which I see more as a building than an unmaking. See Paul Rabinow, "Introduction," in *EW1*, Karlis Racevskis, "Michel Foucault, Rameau's Nephew and the Question of Identity," in *The Final Foucault,* ed. Bernauer and Rasmussen (Cambridge: MIT, 1988), Thomas Flynn, "Truth and Subjectivation in the Late Foucault" and Robert Hurley's translation of *HS2*.

less ready for capture by normalizing forces (OGE). Instead, individuals can engage in individualized projects of ethical self-modification—projects which seek to manifest the individual's chosen values in his or her life, character, and mode of being.

The connection between freedom and care of the self is historically and culturally variable, encompassing a range of ethical self-relations and understandings of freedom. For example, the Greeks connected care of the self to the political rule of others. Care of the self was premised on one's non-enslavement, and was a way of outwardly manifesting one's qualifications for collective self-rule by demonstrating one's rule over oneself. Thus the ethical self-relations included self-mastery, command over one's desires, or self-possession. Such relations equipped one to rule over others and justified one's participation in the polis (*HS2*). By contrast, care of the self for the Romans entailed an obligation to others, but its primary obligation was to the individual. While these practices encompassed a broader range of self-relations, they were less overtly connected to political life: "retiring into oneself, reaching oneself, living with oneself… enjoying oneself" (OGE 250). By further contrast, for moderns such as Baudelaire, self-crafting was aesthetic rather than social or political, manifesting as a freedom akin to the freedom of an artist who was unconstrained in how he shaped or molded his creation.[259] Foucault acknowledges that there might nonetheless be a social component to this aesthetic freedom, insofar as it attempts to change the terms by which one is recognized—to give one's own life a certain form in which one could recognize oneself and be recognized by others as a certain type of individual (AE 49).

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[259] "This ascetic elaboration of the self, Baudelaire does not imagine that these have any place in society itself, or in the body politic. They can only be produced in another, a different place, which Baudelaire calls art." Foucault, "What is Enlightenment?" in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Rabinow (New York: Penguin, 1991), p. 41. Henceforth EN.

Of the particular self-relations to which one can aspire, we can distinguish "disassembling the self" from other forms of care of the self—even though it is a goal of self-modification achieved through ascetic practices, with the aim of structuring our practice of freedom. This particular relation to the self involves cultivating a "philosophical attitude" of "permanent critique" (EN).[260] The critique is of our present and ourselves: our constitution, our mode of being, and our self-relations, a critique of what we say, think, and do. Such a critique locates freedom at the point of our limitations, particularly our limits of thought and identity, and seeks to determine whether what is "necessary, universal, and obligatory" can be overcome. Such an overcoming is always tentative and experimental: bearing in mind whether change is possible or desirable, and considering the best possible way to undertake it. By attempting to disassemble the self, we gain greater insight into who we are at the moment, particularly the contingency and non-necessity of our particular construction.

At first, what distinguishes disassembling the self from the other strategies above is its relinquishing of the standard of coherence. Disassembling the self is less about what Foucault describes as conversion to the self (as with the Romans) or aesthetic self-formation (as with Baudelaire) as it is about constantly "undoing" the self, stretching it past its own limits, and overcoming aspects of its own construction. According to Foucault, our contemporary limits include how we are "tied" to our identities, and how normalization imposes, regulates, and restricts available forms of subjectivities (SP 330). Thus, disassembling the self may involve trying to embody non-normalized identities and ways of life, trying to loosen or adjust how one is tied to one's own identity, or to identity full stop.[261] For example, Foucault suggests that we

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[260] See a closely related formulation in "The Concern for Truth": "What can the ethics of an intellectual be—if not this: to make oneself permanently capable of detaching oneself from oneself?" p. 263.

[261] This could be a way of interpreting Foucault's oft-cited remark: "Maybe the target nowadays is not to discover what we are but to refuse what we are" (SP 336). A figure like Diderot's "Rameau's Nephew,"

try to proliferate new "bodies and pleasures" rather than new sexual identities or desires, as the latter are easily captured by normalizing powers (*HS1* 157). Such strategies attempt to challenge identity by willfully disrupting power's strategy to impose it. From this, we can see how disassembling the self emphasizes philosophical and political concerns over aesthetic ones. The goal of adopting a philosophical attitude and engaging in practices of self-modification is not only to reveal that one's limits can be surpassed, but also to open the door for new ways of life. Lastly, disassembling the self is the particular self-relation that Foucault himself strove towards, describing it as what motivated his research and his intellectual trajectory.[262]

While Foucault conceives of these self-modifications as "diametrically opposed" to authenticity, I want to suggest that they engage with similar problems and express similar concerns. Though Foucault understands authenticity as assuming a static relation of congruence with or discovery of an essential or teleological self, not all notions of authenticity privilege these modes of self-relations or these understandings of the self.[263] Some use the language of a true self to give fuller content to ideas about thriving, stuntedness, integrity, or freedom.[264] Others seek fidelity not to a prior self, but to a self one creates. Indeed, some notions of authenticity even resemble Foucault's portrait of the disassembled self in that they depict escaping the strictures of self-identity as authentic.[265] By considering the range of self-understandings and self-relationships associated with authenticity, one can appreciate the

who is characterized by a fragmented self that changes from time to time, is an example of someone who resists normalization by disrupting the sense of a stable self that exists underneath. Racevskis discusses Foucault's treatment of Rameau's nephew and Rameau as an example of a non-normalized way of life. See Racevskis, "Michel Foucault, Rameau's Nephew and the Question of Identity."

[262] Foucault makes this points in a few places, including *HS2*, p. 9, and "The Concern for Truth," p. 255
[263] A variety of contemporary thinkers show that authenticity need not assume an essential, prehistorical, or teleological self; see the discussion of Ferrara, Williams, Taylor and Guignon in the Introduction.
[264] See discussion of 1960s US social movements in chapter 1.
[265] These "Dionysian" conceptions include (some readings of) Lacan, as discussed in chapter 4, and some of Nietzsche's writings in *Will to Power,* in particular section 490. See Ferrara, *Reflective Authenticity,* p. 56-57 and Guignon, *On Being Authentic,* p. 107-113 for further discussions of this point.

resemblances between their concerns, motifs, and formulations. Like Foucault's arts of the self, many conceptions of authenticity posit that the relation one assumes to oneself is of ethical importance; for instance, "being true to oneself" is not merely descriptive of a person, but signifies a desirable ethical relation. Like Foucault's arts of the self, many conceptions of authenticity, particularly during his time, express a concern with the self's unfreedom, locating that unfreedom in the subject's heterogeneous and inharmonious constitution. Like Foucault's arts of the self, many conceptions of authenticity hold that a crucial dimension of freedom lies in attaining a different subjectivity, often one that is expressive of the self—even if it only expresses the self's aesthetic values, or the self's commitments to overcoming power's limitations.[266] This understanding of freedom is sometimes described as "self-articulation:" the ability to make and give form to the self in the face of powers and structures that hinder or rival that construction.[267] Thus, while Foucault never parses the problem in terms of authenticity, while he criticizes self-congruence as an ideal and explicitly rejects notions of the self often associated with authenticity, I don't think he is as independent of the concern as he portrays himself to be. Instead, it is plausible to see Foucault's arts of the self and appeals to authenticity as providing alternative theorizations of a similar problematic—one takes as its objects the self's

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[266] Notions of authenticity vary as to what expressing or articulating the self entails. For Rousseau, one would express one's original or natural dispositions, which one must discover or feel rather than choose or articulate. For later theorists of authenticity, such as Ferrara or Williams, authenticity involves expressing a self that is chosen and willed—while recognizing that one always starts from a life that is historically and culturally situated and constructed. Foucault goes further than these later theorists, and may be fruitfully compared to Nietzsche on this regard in terms of willful and deliberate self-creation. Consider Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science,* section 290.

[267] Axel Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition* (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1995) and Axel Honneth, "The Relevance of Contemporary French Philosophy for Recognition" in Bankovsky and LeGoff.

relationship to itself, the forces that structure and constrain such self-relations, and their impact on questions of ethics, truth, and self-fashioning.[268]

3. Constitutive Outsides, Subjected Interiors

In section one, I considered how Foucault problematizes our view of sexuality, and how this conceptualization bears on authenticity in several of its forms. For Foucault, authenticity was a mischaracterization: of the self (as having an essential core beyond the reach of power), of power (as being repressive and constraining), and of the self's feelings of constraint and unhappiness (as deriving from its inability to live out its "true," repressed identity). Moreover, authenticity was a mischaracterization with problematic implications: if we misperceive the relationship between power, truth, and the self, our efforts at liberation may render us increasingly regulated and constrained. In section two, I argued that though Foucault thinks appeals to authenticity mischaracterized power, the subject, and truth, his notion of arts of the self stayed within these coordinates, even as he reconfigured them and sought to depart from them. For this reason, I claimed that Foucault's arts of the self could be read as examining the same phenomena as various notions of authenticity, but also as providing an alternative way to conceive and respond to it: one that included an anti-essentialist, nominal, relational conception of selfhood, and an idea of how the self could overcome its existing self-relationship by engaging in aesthetic practices of self-modification.

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[268] Because of these shared concerns (and despite Foucault's later arguments against authenticity), some writers in fact *attribute* a conception of authenticity to Foucault. In doing so, they tend to draw on his earlier works. Ferrara suggests that Foucault's limit experiences suggest an experience of authentic reality beyond what is socially allowed. This is very close to Lionel Trilling's suggestion in *Sincerity and Authenticity* (Cambridge: Harvard, 1970) that the experience of madness that Foucault describes reaches towards an "authentic reality" that really exists beneath our socialized one. I don't address these two conceptions because by *DP*, Foucault has already shifted his understandings of limit experience, transgression and madness as providing us "authentic" access to reality. (cite interviews)

In this section, I argue while Foucault's critiques of self-congruence and essential modes of selfhood are compelling, his practice of arts of the self incompletely addresses the way he frames the problem with subjection. In particular, Foucault's arts of the self focus too much on the possibilities for and formulations of self-creation, and not enough on the conditions that limit or compromise the self's ability to modify itself. These ideals of self-making are strangely blind to the ways that selves are always already-made and being-made, and how this prior constructedness needs to be taken into account for self making to be effective. By revealing some of the problems with these strategies of self-modification, I show that despite the fruitfulness and innovativeness of Foucault's departure from authenticity, his arguments about self-making could be strengthened by incorporating such a notion.

To begin, the main limit to the care of the self is its anachronistic rendering of freedom's "constitutive outside." If any idea of freedom is carved out against a picture of its opposite—a specter of unfreedom that contours freedom's shape and substance[269]—ancient formulations of the care of the self are demarcated against enslavement to the passions and appetites, and against the contingencies of fate that could cause one to "lose" oneself. Such practices of freedom may indeed render one more self-possessed, more adroit, more equipped to tackle unforeseen circumstances. But they do not grapple with, much less alter, the vast battery of forces that subject and dominate us today, the workings of normalization and subjection that Foucault so meticulously outlines in his genealogies. Despite affinities Foucault identifies between our ethical situation and that of the Greeks—our shared suspicion of code-centered moralities, the

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[269] Wendy Brown, *States of Injury.* (Princeton: Princeton, 1995).

absence of a universal truth to ethics—what separates us is the array of distinctly *modern* powers

that relentlessly subject the individual, much more so and more intensely than the Greeks.[270]

For this reason, both modernist forms of self-articulation and Greco-Roman care of the

self are easily co-opted by larger strategies of power. For example, Cressida Heyes demonstrates

how the language associated with care of the self and self-transformation has been appropriated

by numerous health organizations, cosmetic companies, weight loss centers, and more; and how

this appropriation works in the service of normalizing standards of beauty, health, thinness,

desirability, even inner character.[271] Jean Grimshaw, also considering gendered practices of

beauty and fitness, notes how easily the skills and practices of applying makeup, exercising, and

dressing well can further reinforce normalization as well as norms of questionable worth for

women.[272] In both these cases, not only has normalization co-opted the language and practices

of ascetic exercises and self-transformation, but it has simultaneously reinforced existing norms

and existing technologies of normalization.

Disassembling the self seems to fare better, since it more directly addresses those

contemporary forces that render individuals unfree. However, it too does not fully reckon with

freedom's constitutive outside, focusing too much on the unfreedom that results from power's

individuating functions to the neglect of its other operations. While disassembling the self may

aid us to "get free of ourselves," it too may be co-opted by larger strategies of power that render

us unfree in *different* ways. Take these three illustrations, the first two from within Foucault's

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[270] Consider disciplinary power (*DP*), biopower (*HS1*), biopolitical power (*The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978-1979*), and pastoral power ("Governmentality" and "Omnes et Singulatim: Towards a Critique of Political Reason" in *EW3*.
[271] Heyes, *Self-Transformations.*
[272] Jean Grimshaw, "Practices of Freedom," in *Up Against Foucault,* ed. Caroline Ramazanoglu, Routledge 1993.

own oeuvre.[273] First, as Ella Myers highlights in her reading of *DP*, one of the ways in which

disciplinary power and biopower render us less free is by dissolving "multiplicities"—a term that

refers to anarchic, unorganized masses, but also to cooperative pluralities, "forms of concerted

collective identity," in which people combine to exert a "counter-power" "that springs from [the

people], forming a resistance to the power that wishes to dominate it."[274] Power dissolves such

multiplicities by fragmenting associations into isolated and surveyed individual entities, and by

reconfiguring these separate entities into a new, undifferentiated mass. Thus Myers notes that

both of these operations of power result in "depoliticized forms of human plurality;" something

care of the self cannot address because it figures freedom and resistance in such individualizing

ways. The substantive loss here is a potent site of freedom and resistance, one for which

individual freedom cannot compensate. "Solidarity… is able to produce effects that would not

be possible for individuals acting independently of one another" (140).

Second, disassembling the self is perhaps too compatible with and facilitative of

neoliberal forms of rationality. Under neoliberal forms of governmentality, market metrics and

the idea of "enterprise" permeate and restructure all areas of life, including subjectivity.[275] The

self is reconceived as a multifold of enterprises that invest and calibrate themselves to the

demands of the market. As Trent Hamann notes, "Foucault's emphasis on the care of the self and

aesthetics of existence … lends itself quite nicely to neoliberalism's aim of producing free and

autonomous individuals concerned with cultivating themselves in accord with various practices

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[273] I draw these particular examples from Lois McNay's two articles, "Self As Enterprise: Dilemmas of Control and Resistance in Foucault's The Birth of Biopolitics." *Theory, Culture & Society,* 2009, Vol 26(6): 55-77 and "The politics of suffering and recognition: Foucault contra Honneth," in *Recognition Theory and Contemporary French Moral and Political Philosophy: Reopening the Dialogue.* Ed. Bankovsky and LeGoff (Manchester: Manchester, 2012). Unsurprisingly, we disagree as to the use and potential of authenticity for social critique, see *Against Recognition* (Cambridge: Polity, 2008).
[274] *DP* 219. Ella Myers, "Resisting Foucauldian Ethics: Associative Politics and the Limits of the Care of the Self" *Contemporary Political Theory* (2008) 7, 125–146.
[275] Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978-1979* (Picador 2010)

of the self."[276] Under such a neoliberal form of governance, it is not clear how disassembling the self resists such processes. Open and fluid identities may not only aid but be *required* of this new form of capitalism, in which workers must constantly adjust themselves, their capacities, and expectations according to various shifts in the market. Such disassembled identities "may disrupt norms and challenge state practices that are indeed oppressive, [but] they do not necessarily challenge neoliberalism or disrupt capitalism."[277] As Lois McNay notes, Foucault leaves open the question of how an individualistic ethic or ethos can help us resist a form of governance that works *through* the demand to individualistically and responsibly invest in oneself; one that manages us through that very notion of freedom.[278]

Third, Foucault falters in conceptualizing those instances of non-identity and dissonance as being the sites for the exercise of freedom—as signaling those places in the self where power relations are mobile and flexible, where subjects can exercise power to cultivate themselves. While this interpretation may be true in some cases, and may encourage subjects to engage in such self-crafting, experiences of fragmentation and non-identity might just as easily be indicative of a subject's unfreedom. Thus, critics suggest that the experience of being fragmented, rather than being liberating or exhilarating, can also be the result of trauma, constraint, misery (and can reinforce such conditions), which may preclude or render ineffective arts of the self. "A common characteristic of the lived reality of domination is that it is often

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[276] Trent Hamann, "Neoliberalism, Governmentality, and Ethics," *Foucault Studies,* p. 58. See also McNay, "Self as Enterprise," *Theory, Culture and Society* (1999: 26, 6) "Missing is any indication of how a relatively loose and indeterminate ethos located in everyday life can be mediated into more durable and directed practices so as to constitute part of a concerted 'struggle' against neoliberal governance."
[277] Rosemary Hennessey, *Profit and Pleasure: Sexual Identities in Late Capitalism* (London: Routledge, 2000).
[278] McNay, "Self as Enterprise"

experienced in a fragmented, episodic manner, as 'senseless', as that which eludes coherent expression."[279]

While Foucault sees the types of self-relations promoted by (some) authenticity appeals—particularly self-congruence—as potentially furthering one's subjection, the very notion of being tied "in a constraining way" to one's identity requires an account of the subjective in order to be coherent. Otherwise, how can one distinguish between those forms of "being tied" that make one feel secure in one's identity, constrained by it, fulfilled by it, or diminished by it? While Foucault takes into account the vast battery of forces shaping and constraining the subject, he refrains from explicitly theorizing the wide range of experiences that accompany our making and unmaking, our being made and unmade. Appeals to authenticity have often served as a way of evaluating our constructedness, by bringing the first person standpoint to connect *how* one is tied to one's identity and how one *experiences* that tying.[280] As Ulla Haselstein claims, authenticity can be a language that expresses "a rebellion linked to pathos or feeling, and expressed primarily in the first person."[281]

Engaging such experiences not only could tell us something about the way we are being constructed, but could potentially equip and inform our attempts to alter that construction—which has implications for Foucault's theories of freedom. As discussed in section one, Foucault is distrustful of appeals to feelings and experience because they are discursively constituted and thus can never serve as the foundational basis of an authenticity claim. Yet a feeling or experience may be discursively constructed and still give us insight into power's operation, and the way one interprets those feelings may broaden the array of options at one's disposal. In

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[279] McNay, "The politics of suffering and recognition" Related criticisms on this point are voiced by Jane Flax, *Disputed Subjects: Essays on Psychoanalysis, Politics and Philosophy* (NewYork: Routledge, 1993); Ferrara, *Reflective Authenticity*; and Trilling, *Sincerity and Authenticity*, p. 170-172.

[280] See chapter 1 of dissertation.

[281] Ulla Haselstein, et. al., *The Pathos of Authenticity* (Heidelberg : Universitätsverlag Winter, 2010).

particular, examining one's experience may reveal how power can naturalize and depoliticize the self's experiences (by depicting them as rooted in our human condition, our frailty, our failings), and how such an experience of suffering constructs the self. McNay suggests, for instance, that believing one's suffering lacks social or political roots may increase the likelihood that one will internalize such feelings as natural or deserved, and fail to develop those capacities that would make one a more effective agent. "Inequalities of class and gender can be lived as deep-seated dispositional reluctances to participate in political processes or even perceive one's problems as politically articulable."[282] Such capacities need not be interpreted as essential or metaphysical, but can be interpreted narrowly as the historically particular capacities that render one an effective political agent—those political vocabularies, strategies and virtues that allow one to alter one's station.

Drawing on this last point, I argue that Foucault's mobility metaphor of domination could be fruitfully supplemented by an anti-essentialist notion of authenticity. Such a notion would take into account the subject's experience in order to distinguish between a subjection that is constraining versus one that is desirable, between a fluidity that is exhilarating versus one that feels utterly precarious. Such a notion would also appreciate that domination might, in some instances, be better understood as a *stifling* of the self—not in the sense that it precludes a "true" self from being actualized, but that it prevents a historically situated and constituted subject from actively developing those capacities—however conceived—that enable an effective engagement with power. In this way, we can retranslate the problematization that I ventured was common to certain notions of authenticity and to Foucault's arts of the self: certain self-relations, whether feeling false to oneself or being too closely "tied" to oneself, are experienced as detrimental

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[282] McNay, "The politics of suffering and recognition"; see also Miriam Bankovsky and Alice Le Goff, "Deepening Critical Theory" in the same volume.

because power constructs some subjects in ways that render them ill-equipped to counter or

negotiate those very norms that bring them into existence—that even though we are all

constituted by power, we are not all equally skilled at grappling with it.

4. Rethinking Authenticity With and Beyond Foucault

Among other things, aspirations for self-making connect Foucault's care of the self with

certain notions of authenticity. I have suggested that if one's desire for self-articulation is not

grounded in an account of what constructs us and how, one risks diminishing those capacities

that may allow one to alter oneself. By privileging a resistance to identity over a resistance to

norms, for instance, Foucault leaves intact some of the norms that structure and promote our

unfreedom, and renders them available to coopt the very strategies he suggests. Similarly, by

privileging an ideal of disassembling the self, Foucault overlooks how domination can be both

the cause and symptom of the self's own unmaking. For these reasons, before one can engage in

projects of self-cultivation, one might want to continually recalibrate one's standards for it,

measuring such an ideal against historically situated norms, their functions and operations, and

the larger strategies of power they participate in. One would have to consider whether and how

such norms could be altered in order to shape our lives and worlds in a way that makes us freer.

Having shown that a notion of authenticity may be useful to Foucault's thinking on

freedom and self-articulation, it is fruitful to consider what an anti-essentialist notion of

authenticity would look like. Here, authenticity could be used to critique one's incapacity to alter

those forces that constitute one's life and one's world by connecting those incapacities to the

ways in which power constitutes the self. Such a conception would remain agnostic as to what

those capacities are for effective engagement, allowing them to be defined and assessed relative

to historical practices and regimes of truth; they would also remain agnostic as to anything more than a nominal notion of what "the subject" is. Instead, such a conception concerns itself primarily with the conditions under which the self is constituted and subjected and how those conditions bear on the possible range of the subject's self-relations.

Such a conception would be indebted to Foucault, but also point beyond him. It would affirm Foucault's antiessentializing critiques of the subject, recognizing that subjects are constituted through historically specific power relations and truth regimes. It therefore resists positing an essence or telos that would serve as the measure of attaining of authenticity. Nonetheless, it would recognize, along with Foucault, that subjects are constituted in problematic ways—that the norms and powers that bring them into existence are the same ones that construct them to be subjected and perhaps abject, that may produce their feelings of falseness and constraint. While such feelings have no foundational status, in that they do not announce an experience or a truth beyond power, engaging with those experiences may reveal how subjects are constructed along lines that render them unfree. Yet in order to do so, we would need to look beyond Foucault, to develop languages and categories of interiority—we would need to develop an anti-essentializing and historical vocabulary to describe how domination is internalized within and experienced by the subject.

From Foucault, such a conception upholds as an ideal the ability to construct or articulate oneself according to one's designs. It sees this as a good indicator (but not the sole or a wholly reliable one) that the self has developed those capacities that enable it to negotiate power effectively. At the same time, it realizes that this cannot be the *only* standard—particularly because such an ideal can be co-opted or perverted by certain constellations of power, such as neoliberalism, normalization, or gender. Thus, such a conception would also be attuned to the

norms that construct the subject, as well as the subject's ability in altering and negotiating such

norms. That is, if the self indeed developed those capacities that enabled it to reckon with power,

it should manifest itself in at least a modest ability to construct its world as well as itself. Finally,

such a conception of authenticity could be used for critical purchase, not only in assessing

subject constitution, but also in assessing norms. If we could determine that particular

constellations or operations of norms that constructed the subject such that she was unable to

articulate her experiences of constraint or falseness, such that she was ill-equipped to alter

herself or her world, such that these things appeared to her as utterly beyond her reach or

molding, then such an assessment should serve as the basis for critical engagement with such

norms, if not an enjoinder for collective struggle against them.[283]

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[283] Here, my argument comes close to that of Drucilla Cornell's in *The Imaginary Domain: Abortion, Pornography and Sexual Harassment* (New York: Routledge, 1995).

CHAPTER FOUR
Resignifying Authenticity: Butler's Conceptions of Truth and the Psyche

"…another relation between the conscious and the unconscious, between lucidity and the function of the imaginary, in another attitude of the subject with respect to himself or herself, in a profound modification of the activity-passivity mix, of the sign under which this takes place, of the respective place of the two elements that compose it."[284]

"…how not to be governed *like that*, by that, in the name of those principles, with such and such an objective in mind and by means of such procedures, not like that, not for that, not by them."[285]

Judith Butler is and is not an obvious critic of authenticity. On the one hand, the main targets of her critiques in *Gender Trouble* are notions of naturalized and normalized gender: the idea that within each body, there exists a substantive, gendered core that gives rise to the sexed body, sexuality, and displays of masculinity and femininity. While these critiques may challenge certain feminist appeals to notions of an "eternal feminine" or "true womanhood," they do not seem to overtly bear on many of the ideals commonly associated with the term "authenticity"—such as self-expression, self-actualization, honesty, and being true to oneself. On the other hand, Butler's arguments about gender performativity—and her critiques of a true, inner self outside or apart from discourse and power—have had wider reach than the initial objects of her critique. In particular, they challenge many of the discursive effects produced by appeals to authenticity: their tendency to operate in binary fashion; their ability to cast "authentic" identities as praiseworthy and moral and "inauthentic" identities as deviant and failed; their capacity to construct an inner, true core that can "authenticate" outward displays; and their normative exhortations to be faithful to, develop, or actualize this source. Not all appeals to authenticity do all of these things all of the time, but these effects have been the target for many critics of the

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[284] Cornelius Castoriadis, *The Imaginary Institution of Society*, p. 12.
[285] Michel Foucault, "What is Critique?" in *The Politics of Truth*, eds. Sylvère Lotringer and Lysa Hochroth, (New York: Semiotext(e), 1997), p. 44.

term.[286] Butler argues that the inner source that these appeals refer to is fabricated, that the binary operations of such appeals can be regulatory and stigmatizing, and that the exhortations to develop a particular relation to this source (be true to it, develop it, and so forth) can be constraining. Each of these arguments has challenged the coherence and desirability of various notions that travel under the term authenticity.

Thus, it may come as a surprise that in *Giving an Account of Oneself,* the notion of a "tentative truth" of a person emerges. Here, Butler argues that speaking the "truth" about oneself is an inescapable mode of contemporary moral subjectivation: that is, a practice by which we make ourselves and are made into moral agents. As with her earlier critiques, she highlights the potential for violence in requiring persons to stay faithful to accounts they have given. But implicit in her argument is the idea that this violence stems from a "falsification" of a life—a "falsification" that entails a more complicated relationship between truth and the psyche than her prior critiques suggest. In particular, it suggests that claims to authenticity are not only unavoidable, but may imply a particular violence accompanying subject construction.

This chapter engages Butler's treatment of the psyche alongside her critiques of authenticity in order to understand authenticity's persistence, functioning, and possible value. From this engagement, I argue that claims to authenticity may have continuing appeal and persistence not because they express a true or inner self within us all, but rather, because they may indicate how the psyche and the subject are being integrated—both by larger forces, and by the subject herself.[287] Such uses of authenticity are ambivalent—they might be deployed to

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[286] See the Introduction for the list of critiques, and see and Chapter 1 for my argument about what it means to treat authenticity as a discourse, what features discourses on authenticity have, and what effects these discourses can facilitate.

[287] While "ego," "subject," and "self" are abstractions of the human, they are not reducible to one another—they presuppose different theoretical backgrounds, and they map onto different features and aspects of the human. This point will be more fully developed in section 3.

alleviate a type of violent integration of the psyche, or they might impose such violence on oneself or others; they may be the object or vehicle of critique. While we cannot determine in advance which result they will bear forth, claims to authenticity may have value in two ways: first, insofar as they indicate a type of violence that animates or follows from the integration of the psyche; and second, insofar as they are used to combat restrictive forms of subject formation.

I pursue this claim in four steps. In section one, I reprise Butler's arguments from *Gender Trouble* regarding the political and philosophical difficulties entailed in essentialist appeals to a true self. In section two, I provide a reading of Butler's *Giving an Account of Oneself* that situates the text in a wider debate on narrative identity and violent integration. While Butler's treatment of the unconscious makes it impossible to distinguish a single, final "truth" to the person, the act of "giving an account" produces truths about the person that can integrate the ego—in violent or less violent ways. Section three then examines two figures in *The Psychic Life of Power* whose attempts at constructing their identities, I argue, resemble strategic features of appeals to authenticity: the heterosexual melancholic, whose claims to a "true" gender perpetuate a type of psychic violence on himself and those around him, and the abject subversive, who, I argue, implicitly appeals to a notion of authenticity to diminish such violence and forge a more hospitable place for herself in discourse. The chapter concludes by arguing that it might be problematic to conceptualize "violent integration" too concretely in advance, but that we must still be attentive to when and how it manifests itself—and that appeals to authenticity may be a promising indication of this.

1. Performatively Produced Fabrications: Butler's Critique of Authenticity in *Gender Trouble*

Gender Trouble provides a thorough and multifaceted critique of notions of authenticity

in their various forms: as an inner core; an ideal to which we all should aspire; as characteristic

of those intense, unmediated experiences; as a trait or disposition that "makes" one real or

genuine; as that which fully originates from ourselves.[288] Perhaps its most encompassing critique

involves the performativity of identity, and in particular, of gender. Conventionally, we tend to

think of identity as expressive—that it is a hidden "core" or "essence" that expresses itself

through our actions, bodies, and gestures, the driving force behind our outward displays.[289] This

"core" is conceptualized as the hidden and authenticating truth of the person; when our actions

and bodies "truthfully" reflect this inner core, we are "authentic," or who we "really" are.

However, the expressive model is a ruse, in that such actions do not stem from a true or inner

self, but rather *produce* this self as an effect; "the essence or identity that they purport to express

are fabrications" (185). The expressive model treats identity as a "substantive," a literal thing

existing within the body, but both hidden and ontologically distinct from it. This belief,

however, mistakes the cause for the effect; in place of identity on the expressive model, in which

acts, bodies, and gestures reflect an inner truth, Butler, drawing on Foucault, Derrida, and

Austin, argues for a performative model, in which these enactments create the *idea* of an inner

core. That is, our actions are *performative*, in that they create the identity we presumed was

always already there.

If identity is performatively produced, then one's gender, one's individuality, and one's

"self" have "no ontological status apart from the various acts which constitute [their] reality"

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[288] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York and London: Routledge, 2007 [1990]), p. 200. Henceforth *GT*. In section one, citations will refer primarily to *Gender Trouble* unless otherwise noted.

[289] The most notable proponent of this view is Charles Taylor, who argues that the ideal of authenticity should be conceived primarily as an ideal of "individual expressivisim." See Taylor, *Ethics of Authenticity* (Cambridge: Harvard, 1994); *Sources of the Self* (Cambridge: Harvard, 1989); and *A Secular Age* (Cambridge: Harvard, 2007).

(185).   Thus, there is no abstract, universal self: no "person," "subject" or "underlying substrate" that is common to all individuals, underlying history, culture, experience or action. Drawing from Nietzsche, Butler argues that the expressive model posits "a doer behind the deed:" a self that pre-exists and causes its actions.[290] The structure of our grammar leads us to believe that a substantive, unified "I" is distinct from its various attributes (gender, culture, history). These attributes may situate the "I," even "mire" it, but the "I" is still taken to be ontologically distinct, "a point of agency never fully identifiable with its gender… never fully *of* the cultural world it negotiates" (195). Butler argues that not only is this "I" fully constituted by the rituals it performs, but also these rituals are themselves culturally specific and variable. Thus, there can be no "I" common across histories and cultures; the "self" that is constituted is fully cultural and fully contingent.

In particular, what Butler describes as our conventional, rudimentary understandings of personal identity and gender identity—as "self identical, persisting through time as the same, unified, and internally coherent" (22)—neither universally hold nor logically or analytically follow from the notion of being a "person." Since gender identity operates according to similar norms as personal identity, the two consolidate and reinforce one another. Like personal identity, gender is seen as an essence, emanating from one's biological anatomy ("sex"), and reflecting itself in one's actions, desires, and body. It also operates along lines of coherence— not only as being self-same over time, but also as having an abiding, unified "core" in which gender, sex, and desire reinforce one another. Finally, this core is taken to be one's "inner truth,"

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[290] GT 28. Butler draws this argument from Nietzsche's *Genealogy of Morals* (New York: Vintage, 1967), particularly Essay 1, Section 13, page 45. For an excellent close reading of Nietzsche on this very point, see Robert Pippin, *Nietzsche, Psychology, and First Philosophy* (Chicago: Chicago, 2006). Butler could have also drawn more from Nietzsche's *Twilight of the Idols* (New York: Penguin, 2003), particularly his arguments about the "cause creating drive." (p. 58-65, the section entitled "The Four Great Errors").

the standard by which one is a "real" or a "natural" woman or man. However, if this inner truth of gender is performatively produced, "then it seems that genders can be neither true nor false, but are only produced as the truth effects of a discourse of primary and stable identity" (186). We can best appreciate gender's performative production through a similar and overlapping notion of a "true" sexuality.

Sexuality operates on the substantive model as well, and is frequently conceived as being authentic: that there is an original, natural, or true sexuality within ourselves, one that can provide the basis for claims to authenticity, by virtue of being either "beyond" or "prior to" power. Butler finds instances of this argument in a wide variety of theorists, claiming they posit the existence of a law that represses or distorts an authentic sexuality; this sexuality will be attained once the law is overcome.[291] Butler's main critique of such approaches is that there is no sexuality that could render one totally and radically free from such prohibitions.[292] Drawing from Lacan and Foucault, Butler claims that opposing "the Law"—those prohibitions and restrictions of sex—does not make one free of it. This is not because the Law is immutable or inevitable, but because it inevitably *constitutes* sexuality.[293] According to Foucault, sexuality emerges in a field of power relations, which encompasses not only the Law but also its largely overlooked generative effects, that which curbs, fuels and orients desire, inciting and constituting

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[291] For instance, she directs this critique at Monique Witting's "alternative economy of pleasures" (36-7), Luce Irigaray's alternative female sexuality, Freud's notion of primary dispositions, (on some readings) Riviere's essential unmasked femininity, and unexpectedly, Foucault's non-identitarian pleasures.

[292] She also has another critique, namely that in positing a particular sexuality as "authentic," these thinkers tend to normalize and exclude those women who fall short—those who remain wedded to a "genitally organized" sexuality are "written off" as being "male identified" (41). We will return to this point in a few pages.

[293] Michel Foucault, *Volume One* of *The History of Sexuality* (London: Penguin, 1988 [originally published in English in 1976]). This point receives more development in *The Psychic Life of Power* (Stanford: Stanford, 1997), p. 98-99; henceforth *PLP*; especially chapter 3. For my own reading of Foucault on this point, see chapter 3 of this dissertation.

sexuality.[294] Importantly, power does not only produce those sexualities that are normative and

law-abiding, but also its own "failures." "Unnatural" sexualities, as well as "hidden" and

"repressed" sexualities, are just as much the effect of power, and contribute just as much to

processes of regulation (134). Furthermore, power constitutes its own points of resistance.

These points of resistance are never outside power—that is, they neither originate from nor reach

a place beyond prohibition or the Law—but rather, they emerge as the unpredictable and

unintended effects of power relations, effects that may inadvertently spawn resistance to that

very power. Indeed, appeals to an "authentic" sexuality—in both conservative and emancipatory

guises[295]—are the very effects of such power struggles. However, the idea that we can forge or

inhabit an authentically feminine, human, or power-free sexuality is power's persistent ruse,

concealing and perpetuating power by constructing sex as "a brave but thwarted energy, waiting

for release or authentic self-expression" (129).

Butler argues that these various notions—the subject, woman, sexuality, and so forth—

are *regulatory fictions,* the effects of larger configurations of norms that aim to constitute and

regulate bodies along particular lines. First, these norms seek to promote the idea that sex,

gender, and desire each operate in a natural and regular fashion: they naturally arise, mutually

entail one another, and are internally coherent. Thus, identity categories such as "woman" or

"lesbian" seem to be merely describing ideal, natural types. However, the supposed coherence

of these categories is contingent and constructed, "a culturally restricted principle of order and

hierarchy" (33). In purporting to be coherent, these categories are able to regulate various

attributes along cultural lines, such that sex, gender and desire seem to entail one another.

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[294] Annika Thiem, *Unbecoming Subjects* (Bronx, NY: Fordham, 2008), p. 37.
[295] See in particular Herbert Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization* (Beacon Press: 1974). For more on
emancipatory appeals to authenticity particularly in the context of the American 1960s, see chapter 1 of
this dissertation.

However, this coherence conceals the fact that gender is radically *incoherent,* that gender discontinuities amongst heterosexuals, gays, and bisexuals are "rampant," and that sex, gender and desire frequently operate independently of one another (185). Thus, such norms work to establish a stable and reproductive regime of heterosexuality, rendering it idealized and compulsory, an apparent "fact" or "foundation," rather than an effect of power (184, 202). Finally, in positing not only identity categories but also the idea of a true self and a true gender, these norms hide their contingent and productive effects. "If the 'cause' of desire, gesture, and act can be localized within the 'self' of the actor, then the political regulations and disciplinary practices which produce that ostensibly coherent gender are effectively displaced from view" (186). Thus, these instances of "authenticity" allow regulation to progress without seeming regulative at all, "naturalizing" gender and positing it as an essence, a truth, and a telos.

These practices regulate us in part by producing our experiences of *being* a given gender. Underpinning such experiences are two different notions of an authentic sexuality—one of which is naturalistic (true of human biology and thus pre-cultural, original), and one of which is "authentic-expressive" (reflecting a "true self" of sex, gender and desire) (31). These conceptions validate and are validated by the "authentic" experience of one's gender or sexuality, which is experienced as being immediate and beyond social influence, and then interpreted as natural, unassailably true, and expressive of a truth about oneself. Butler shows that this experience is, by contrast, contingently produced, and is only intelligible given a particular configuration of sex, gender, and desire, one that constructs the hermeneutical lens for that experience. In order to have the experience of being a gender, one must understand one's sexed body as the cause or origin of one's gender and (heterosexual) desire; one must also understand one's gender and desires as expressive of one another. Moreover, while the unified

"experience" of one's gender presupposes that each gender is internally coherent and unified

with respect to sex, gender, and desire, this coherence and unity only make sense in the context

of a "stable and oppositional" heterosexuality, in which each gender has opposite yet

symmetrical configurations. Yet Butler argues that the experience of one's gender or sexuality

can neither be pre-discursive nor separate from power precisely *because* it arises within this

particular heterosexual configuration of gender, sex, and desire. This configuration not only

constructs our notions of these concepts and produces the hermeneutical lens through which we

experience them, but it also *regulates* us through that very experience, maintaining us as

"gendered beings." In particular, the experiences of *being* a particular gender reinforces the idea

that we possess an authentic gendered core, one that serves as the "origin" of our desires and

gendered experiences. Butler argues that there is no single experience—of oneself, one's body,

one's desires, and so forth—that can serve as the basis for claims to authenticity. Regardless of

how immediate and unmediated they appear, they are thoroughly constituted by power.[296]

Butler's arguments about gender performativity further problematize the idea that

authenticity consists in self-congruence, and not only because there is no true or essential "self"

that could "authenticate" us.[297] If these various forms of identity are established performatively,

then for the "I" to preserve its own self-identity, it must repeat itself in a particular way; the

repetition must always produce the effect of self-sameness over time. However, if the "I" must

repeat itself to maintain its self-identity, this not only suggests that self-congruence can never be

fully achieved, but also that it always risks being lost. Strictly speaking, in the interval between

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[296] Thiem (2008) makes much of this point, emphasizing how it Butler's arguments pose deep challenges to those found in moral philosophy, particularly those who want to use the body or the self as "the unambivalent grounds for normative arguments." See chapter 1, particularly p. 35.

[297] Perhaps the two biggest proponents of authenticity as self-congruence ("being yourself" or "being true to yourself") are Marshall Berman in *The Politics of Authenticity* (New York: Verso, 1970) and Alessandro Ferrara in *Reflective Authenticity: Rethinking the Project of Modernity* (New York: Routledge, 2008).

repetitions, self-identical repetition becomes impossible. There always exists an element of

displacement between repetitions that prevents them from being identical with one another—the

"I" who repeats is never the same "I," because it never repeats itself in exactly the same way.

Some of these repetitions may very well constitute "failures," in that the self may fail to repeat,

or it may repeat badly, disrupting the appearance of seamlessness, coherence, or uniformity.

Moreover, even if the "I" "successfully" repeats a norm, and does so in a convincingly uniform

way, this does not guarantee that the *norm* will have remained the same, or that it will

consolidate the "I" in the same way. Since the meaning of a sign is never fixed permanently or

in advance, meanings, like identities, rely on continued repetition to preserve their existence.

Through continued repetition, and in particular, through subversive repetitions of the norm, the

sign can come to take on new senses, values, and meanings—ones that were previously

foreclosed or unintended, "because the term now takes on a life that cannot be, can never be,

permanently controlled."[298]. Thus, in the intervals between repetitions, the meaning of a

particular performance may have altered, and with it, the ways it consolidates and constitutes the

"I.[299]"

  In a slightly different vein, performativity challenges yet another facet of authenticity: the

idea that identity categories ("woman," "heterosexual") have an independent ontological

existence, and that by determining the boundaries or essence of this category, we could specify

what a "woman" or a "heterosexual" really, truly *is*. Butler argues that any attempt to set the

boundaries to the category, to specify precisely who an identity represents, will fail; it will

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[298] Judith Butler, "Imitation and Gender Insubordination," in *The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader*, eds. Henry Abelove et al (New York: Routledge, 1993 [originally published 1991]), p. 310. Henceforth IGI.
[299] William Connolly parses this point quite illustratively. "When the self experiences itself as penetrated too densely by disciplinary powers and standards, even the benefits it receives begin to indebt it too much…anything given might also be taken away… the principles of self-respect can be modified; a hilarious sense of humor can be redefined as sickness; a previous pattern of affection can be redefined as illicit." See *Identity\Difference* (Minnesota: Minnesota, 1993), p. 22.

generate exclusions and refusals from those it purports to represent, because it will effectively

deny the inner complexity and indeterminacy of identity categories. Furthermore, identity

categories that seek to establish themselves through fixed boundaries and exclusions

misapprehend the relationship the identity has to its constitutive outside. What an identity

category excludes ("butch," "femme") is *constitutive* of what the "I" asserts itself to be

("feminine") because we cannot understand femininity, *nor can it exist,* without reference to

some constitutive outside. Thus, Butler notes, "What a tragic mistake, then, to construct a

gay/lesbian identity… as if the excluded were not, precisely through its exclusion, always

presupposed and, indeed, *required* for the construction of that identity" (174). If an identity

category always presupposes and relies upon its constitutive outside, then no identity can claim

to be authentic in the sense that it is "original" or "prior" to other identities. Rather, those

"derivative" identities, those that are "copies" or "fakes," always exist as a prior possibility for

the identity that claims to be "original" or "true"—thus disrupting the authentic/copy binary.

Finally, if there is no "original" or "true" identity existing outside of performance or rituals, then

we can no longer claim that "derivative" identities are mere impersonations of the real. Rather,

all gendering is a form of imitation, one that tries to cast itself as self-originating, but is instead

"always and only an imitation of an imitation, a copy of a copy, for which there is no original"

(IGI 314). Notions of original and copy, authentic and derivative, are therefore not useful for

understanding what gender *is,* but only what gender hopes to *effect.*

Butler also rejects the idea that there is a true origin of sexual difference or sexual

oppression, an account of how a natural "sex" was transformed into a cultural and subordinate

"gender." In some feminist accounts, sexual difference and oppression arise from an ahistorical,

transcultural structure, such as language or the incest taboo. Butler argues that when a single

factor is understood as always and everywhere at the root of sexual difference, the transformation of sex into gender is treated as necessary, "structural," unified, and beyond contingency, thus rendering gendered oppression and gendered difference always and everywhere the same. However, this argument conceals the degree to which gender differences are culturally specific and complexly produced—which, in turn, this conceals the fact that subversion and resistance may arise in various forms. Similarly, Butler finds fault with those approaches that try to locate a specific historical origin of gendered oppression, a specific moment or structure in history that inaugurated gender subordination. Even when the origin story is treated as an historical and contingent event, the end-point, "patriarchy," is not; gender domination comes to exist always and everywhere in the same form, implicitly suggesting that patriarchy is inevitable and uniform. As above, these stories tend to universalize the mechanism by which (natural) sex is transformed into (cultural) gender—implicitly positing a "natural foundation" that upholds the nature/culture distinction (50). Finally, Butler finds fault with those particular normative ideals that tend to underpin origin stories. Given that such "origins" are irretrievable, they are never free from present ideals and future aspirations. "This 'before' is always already imbued with the self-justificatory fabrications of present and future interests, whether feminist or antifeminist," interests which tend to support and even reify "a pre-cultural sphere of the authentic feminine" (49). Their visions for a utopian future tend to be "nostalgic and parochial," constraining what might be imagined for the future, and rendering the task of social transformation that much more difficult.[300] In appealing to a phantasmic past, such

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[300] GT 49. "Mobilizing the distinction between what is 'before' and what is 'during' culture is one way to foreclose cultural possibilities from the start" (106). Perhaps an exception to the conservative bias would be Gayle Rubin, who posits an origin (and end!) to sexual difference that Butler is critical of, but more sympathetic towards. This point is also part of Butler's critique of the Lacanian symbolic on p. 58, and further developed in PLP and *Undoing Gender* (New York and London: Routledge, 2004), p. 44-46; henceforth *UG*.

feminists tend to idealize a notion of femininity that is more uniform and simpler than what is present today.

Thus, authenticity is not only a "performatively produced fabrication," but a fabrication with wide-reaching and potent effects (IGI 318). What Butler lists as the features of personal identity—"self identical, persisting through time as the same, unified and internally coherent"—are the same ones that have historically been associated with notions of authenticity.[301] While Butler does not explicitly link this conception to authenticity per se, she recognizes that these features of personhood are not merely descriptive, but operate as a normative ideal—one that can tie persons to their identity, mark them in relation to a norm, and punish those who deviate from the norm. That is, authenticity gets its traction by designating other things as "inauthentic."[302] By establishing certain identities as "true," "original," "natural," or "real," it creates other identities as "false," "derivative," "unnatural," "unreal."

And yet, "authentic" can only describe impossible identities, places in a discourse that are "fundamentally uninhabitable" (200); we can always and only fall short of it. However, some bodies deviate much further from the norm than others—some are cast as "abiding falsehoods," inhabiting a false, derivative or unnatural place in the discourse; others are cast as *abject*—as unthinkable, unintelligible and excluded from discourse; not even reaching the threshold of an overtly prohibited object.[303] In an article published around the same time as *Gender Trouble,* Butler mentions her own experience of being cast as "inauthentic."

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[301] On this point, see the introduction to this dissertation, and chapter 2 on Rousseau.

[302] Current authors on authenticity today have stressed that authenticity, more so than other concepts, relies on its constitutive outside for its force. See Aleida Assmann, "Authenticity—The Signature of Western Exceptionalism?" in in *Paradoxes of Authenticity: Studies on a Critical Concept,* ed. J. Straub (Transcript-Verlag: 2012).

[303] This is a continuing theme in Butler's work. She describes the abject as "a domain of unviable (un)subjects… who are neither named nor prohibited within the economy of law" (IGI 312). She describes abjects as "those who are not yet subjects… but whose living under the sign of the unlivable is

> I suffered for a long time… from being told, explicitly or implicitly, that what I "am" is a copy, an imitation, a derivative example, a shadow of the real. Compulsory heterosexuality sets itself up as the original, the true, the authentic; the norm that determines the real implies that "being" lesbian is always a kind of miming, a vain effort to participate in the phantasmic plentitude of naturalized heterosexuality which will always and only fail.[304]

Thus, ideals of authenticity not only disavow their produced status and productive effects, but also disavow the "ostracism, punishment, and violence" they inflict.[305] While the most obvious instances of this violence include bodily harm, marginalization, and exclusion, Butler also alerts us to those instances that fall below the radar: the violence of "public erasure" (IGI 311), of existing in a discourse as an abiding falsehood, of being made to feel like one is only derivative.

This concern with the multiple forms of violence, and their production through various discourses of authenticity, persists across Butler's work. As I will show in the following sections, Butler's later work develops and complicates the interrelation between violence and authenticity. Yet I will also argue that her other theoretical commitments—to language and the psyche in particular— allow for a more ambivalent view of this intersection than she herself would avow.

2. Impossible Accounts: Truth and the Psyche in *Giving an Account of Oneself*

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required to circumscribe the domain of the subject." It is thus "inside the subject as its founding repudiation." *Bodies That Matter* (New York: Routledge, 1993), xiii.

[304] IGI 312. Butler makes a similar (though less personal) point years later in *UG:* "being called real or being called unreal can be not only a means of social control but a form of dehumanizing violence… To be called a copy, to be called unreal, is thus one way in which one can be oppressed" (218).

[305] IGI 315. See also GT 90. Because heterosexuality is both compulsory and constraining, McNay defines performativity under these conditions as "the forced reiteration of norms." See Lois McNay, "Subject, Psyche, Agency," *Theory, Culture & Society* 16.2 (April 1999).

Despite her earlier critiques of authenticity in *Gender Trouble*, a notion of the truth of the person emerges in *Giving an Account of Oneself*.

"To hold a person accountable for his or her life in narrative form may even be to require a falsification of that life… we may be preferring the seamlessness of the story to something we might tentatively call the truth of the person."[306]

In this passage, Butler criticizes a norm, prevalent in certain forms of morality and certain schools of psychoanalysis, which upholds increased coherence and narratability of one's life. In particular, Butler is concerned with the violent potential of a particular kind of narrative—an "account" of oneself. An account is a narrative in which one produces and conveys truths about oneself, by connecting oneself to one's actions, and one's actions to their consequences, and making the whole thing seamless. An account may try to disavow or disconnect these links ("I didn't mean for that to happen"), but such a disavowal nevertheless endorses the underlying logic of an account—that one can, in principle, connect persons to their actions and their consequences, that the self "has a causal relation to the suffering of others" (12). In giving an account, one establishes oneself as a moral agent, demonstrating that one can understand oneself as the author of one's actions, and one's actions as bearing forth consequences. Thus, the ability to give an account presupposes certain knowledge about the world and certain worldly capacities: a capacity for self-narration, the ability to persuade, to wield narrative voice and authority, to connect events causally and sequentially.

While Butler sees accounts as necessary for constituting the subject *as* a moral agent, she opposes two trends in psychoanalysis regarding such accounts. First, she opposes a trend that seeks to render everything accountable, that seeks to impose total integration and coherence on a life. "It does not follow that, if a life needs some narrative structure, then all of life must be

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[306] Judith Butler, *Giving an Account of Oneself* (New York: Fordham, 2005), p. 64; henceforth *GAO*.

rendered in narrative form" (52). Butler sees the desire to impose a totalizing narrative structure

as a desire to master the ego, and ultimately, to disavow the unconscious. Such an impulse

contradicts a central tenet of psychoanalysis, namely that there is always something unconscious

at work in the psyche, exceeding one's knowledge and grasp.[307] The "excess and opacity" that

characterizes unconscious material emerges out of one's primary dependence on others, and

continues to structure and interrupt one's narrative throughout a life, always beyond language or

ego. Recognizing this, Butler argues that narrative can never fully capture this "tentative truth"

of a person, a truth that "might well become more clear in moments of interruption, stoppage,

openendedness" (64). Thus, we ought to relax our demand for coherence and self-congruence,

both in others and ourselves. While narrative accounts produce truths about the subject, such

truths are partial and contestable, and the demand for coherence might only be met through a

"falsification" of one's life, one that inflicts "violence."

At the same time, Butler resists a second trend that claims that this tentative "truth" of a

person lies fully outside of narrative structures. Rather than see fragmentation as something we

should celebrate in and of itself, Butler argues that fragmentation, dissociation, and "involuntary

experiences of discontinuity" may cause intense suffering, and that narrative reconstruction may

be important in alleviating it (64). She seems as equally opposed to a conceptualization of the

self based on radical fragmentation as one based on narrative "hyper-mastery" (52). Despite its

falsifications and potential for violence, Butler concedes that a narratable life is a minimum

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[307] For the point that a dynamic unconscious is *the* defining feature of psychoanalysis, see Frosh (1999). In *GAO,* Butler discusses the following unconscious materials that exceed our grasp, yet structure our accounts: one's *exposure,* the irreducible way in which our visible, bodily existence constitutes our singularity and renders us vulnerable (33); irrecoverable *primary relations,* "that form lasting and recurrent impressions in the history of my life" (39); impersonal and indifferent *norms,* which exist beyond the self, but which the self must use to give its account (35); the *structure of address,* which is the person, real or imaginary, to whom the account is given (36); and one's *origins* or prehistory, which is partially opaque (37).

requirement for psychic stability and social existence. "No one can live in a radically non-narratable world or survive a radically non-narratable life" (59).

While Butler bases her criticisms of these two trends explicitly on therapeutic and ethical grounds—they are not "salutary," they can impose "violence" and "suffering," they are not "liveable"—I believe she may also implicitly base her critique on their differing notions of the "tentative truth" of the person, and in particular, on a type of vulnerability that arises from this truth. Consider the notions of "truth" at work in three brief examples, which each embody a particular target of Butler's critique.

First, she seems critical of notions of truth implicit in narrative conceptions of selfhood: the idea that certain narratives about the self better reveal the "truth" of the person, and that in constructing and abiding by such narratives, one actualizes this truth of oneself, that one feels, or is, authentic.[308] A notable proponent of this view is Dan McAdams, who treats identity as "an internalized life story" based on "biographical facts."[309] Building on Erik Erikson's ideas on ego-identity and ego-integration, McAdams claims that the formation of a unified and coherent narrative integrates the "I," transforming it into "an internalized and evolving story" (102).[310]

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[308] Annika Thiem (2008) also sees Butler as arguing that narratives about the self aspire to an impossible type of authenticity. See p. 33.
[309] See Dan P McAdams, "The Psychology of Life Stories," *Review of General Psychology,* 5(2) 100-122.
[310] Both McAdams and Roy Schafer (discussed below) are explicit about their debt to ego-psychology in general and Erik Erikson in particular. Erikson's notion of identity emphasizes the process of ego-integration—the integration of the ego with itself, its drives, and its environment, which results in a sense of unity or "wholeness." While Erikson does not mention narrative as one of the mechanisms of integration, it is not a far leap. Over time, increased ego integration leads to a stable sense of oneself and one's place in one's culture. Erikson's emphasis on integration has a strong developmental thrust, akin to teleological conceptions of authenticity. Indeed, some scholars go so far as to treat "wholeness" as an instance of "authenticity. See Roy Schafer, *Insight and interpretation : the essential tools of psychoanalysis* (London and New York: Karnac, 2003), p. 135; Roy Schafer, *The Analytic Attitude* (London: Karnac, 1993); McAdams, "The Psychology of Life Stories," p. 101; Erik Erikson, "The Problem of Ego Identity," *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association,* (4) 56-121; Lawrence Jacob Friedman, *Identity's Architect: A Biography of Erik H. Erikson* (Cambridge: Harvard, 2000).

While McAdams and other narrative psychologists do not necessarily use the term "authenticity," their claim that unifying one's personal narrative (a narrative grounded in "biographical fact") can have therapeutic or self-actualizing effects on the self suggests that they implicitly hold some notion of it. Indeed, their arguments have been taken up by some moral philosophers as they attempt to reconstruct ideals of authenticity—for these philosophers, authenticity involves imposing a narrative and thematic coherence on a life and consists in self-fulfillment or self-actualization of that narrative, while inauthenticity involves a "false" narrative, one that constitutes the subject "violently" or "coercively".[311] These positions are rendered untenable for Butler by their underlying assumptions about what constitutes the "truth" of the person. Admittedly, these psychoanalysts and philosophers do not treat the "truth" of the person as given; rather, this truth develops from a combination of biographical fact and narrative construction. However, the desire for total integration and coherence seems to presume that the truth of this narrative trumps (or ought to trump) all, and that those character traits, experiences, or rival narratives that resist a given narrative, or resist narration at all, are falsifications. Narrative therefore becomes the single and unified "truth" of the person; in its coherent development resides authenticity as self-actualization.

Secondly, Butler seems to be critical of the idea that truth claims do not matter at all in the process of forming accounts—all that matters is narrative coherence. This type of view is prevalent amongst so-called narrative psychoanalysts, most prominently Donald Spence and Roy

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[311] Thus, Charles Guignon goes so far as to claim that the narrative account of authenticity "is the legitimate heir of what used to be called authenticity" (See *On Being Authentic* (New York: Routledge, 2004), p. 71, see also all of chapter 6). See also Alessaandro Ferrara, *Reflective Authenticity* (New York: Routledge, 1998), pp. 29, 31, 56, 80; Maria Pia Lara, *Moral Textures* (Berkeley, CA: University of California, 1998), especially chapter 4, "Autonomy and Authenticity"; Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard, 1989) and *The Ethics of Authenticity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard, 1992). We might trace the beginning of the narrative self to Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative* (Chicago: Chicago, 1990). Ricoeur reads a very strong narrative project into Freudian psychoanalysis, arguing that case histories ought to aspire to "the sort of narrative explanation we ordinarily expect from a story" (273).

Schafer. These psychoanalytic thinkers tend to see the construction of narratives as both the means and the end of analytic activity. "The very process of psychoanalysis entails the construction of a linear, cogent narrative: the recounting and piecing together of a life. The goal of analysis is to have the patient reconstruct a "better," more cohesive story."[312] Importantly, what distinguishes these analysts from the psychologists and philosophers above is that their narratives are not tightly bound to a notion of actual or "historical" truth. A narrative is validated not by a sense of "what 'really happened,'" but rather by its aesthetic appeal (its "coherence, consistency, comprehensiveness") and its usefulness for the patient (whether it encourages action, responsibility, growth).[313] Thus, there is a sizeable degree of relativism to these stories, with little emphasis on the "truth" of the person or story.[314]

However, this type of "coherence" resembles older notions of an inner truth, in that it exerts the same constraints as a robust notion of truth or essence of the self. That is, the type of narrative coherence promoted by Spencer and Schafer demands that one stay faithful to one's narrative, and this in turn generates what will and will not count as self-actualization. Moreover, following Charles Guignon, it is not as if Butler thinks "any narrative will do," regardless of its truth content.[315] Butler claims that some stories may be experienced as violent, a violence derived not from the uselessness or ugliness of the narrative, but connected somehow to a sense of "falseness."

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[312] Francoise Meltzer, "Unconscious," in *Critical Terms for Literary Study,* Eds. Frank Lentricchia and Thomas McLaughlin (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990).

[313] Roy Schafer, "Action and Narration in Psychoanalysis," *New Literary History* 12(1980), 83.

[314] Indeed, Donald Spence goes so far as to claim that we ought to be very skeptical of "historical truth" (or "what 'really' happened") and that it may be often "of far less significance than creating a coherent and consistent account of a particular set of events." Donald Spence, *Narrative truth and historical truth: meaning and interpretation in psychoanalysis* (New York : W.W. Norton, 1982), 28, 33.

[315] Charles Guignon, "Narrative Explanation in Psychotherapy," *American Behavioral Scientist*, January 1998 vol. 41 no. 4, 574.

Finally, while Butler is critical of narratives that impose too much coherence, she is neither arguing that total incoherence is desirable, nor even more truthful—a position that puts her at odds with Lacan and Lacanians. Lacanians are often interpreted as saying that there is no "truth" to the ego; rather, the ego, and the experience of being a coherent, unified self, is a radical misperception,[316] one that seeks to deny the infant's original experiences of fragmentation, discontinuity, and helplessness, "the body in bits and pieces."[317] The ego arises during the "mirror stage," in which the child sees himself in the mirror and imagines himself as integrated and whole, having overcome his helplessness by having overcome his fragmentation. Lacan emphasizes that this notion of the integrated ego is a fantasy, one that is not only "alienating" and "fictional," but also rigidly and coercively integrating—establishing an image of wholeness and integrity that imposes a "rigid structure" on the whole of psychic development.[318] In stark contrast to narrative conceptions of authenticity, Lacan finds all integrating narratives as falsifications and the ego as inauthentic as such, leading to the "celebration of fragmentation" that Butler wanted to resist on therapeutic grounds. However, Butler might also want to resist this position because it implicitly relies on a notion of authenticity, albeit one that Lacanians would vigorously disavow. As Joel Whitebook shows, Lacan's claim that all coherence is violent and falsifying seems to presuppose that the "truth" of the person lies in the experience of fragmentation and discontinuity. "But why, it may be asked, should the temporal, that is, the developmental, dimension be disregarded and the current fragmented state hypostatized into the

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[316] "*Méconnaissance*" is translated by Alan Sheridan as "failure to recognize" or "misconstruction" (xi). Lacan describes the ego as *méconnaissance* in "Some Reflections on the Ego," *International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 34 (1953), p. 12 and "The Mirror Stage," *Ecrits: A Selection,* trans. A. Sheridan (London and New York: W.W. Norton Press, 1977), p. 6.
[317] Lacan, "Some Reflections on the Ego," 15.
[318] Lacan, "The Mirror Stage," p. 2, 4, 6.

true one? Why, in other words, should there be an essentialization of fragmentation?"[319] That is,

Lacan sides with the early Freud in claiming that the unconscious represents "the core of our

being,"[320] though Lacan interprets this core as being repressed, infantile moments of

fragmentation, and implicitly designates it as "true." While Butler claims that there might be a

"tentative truth" to the subject, the notion that it resides in a place before power or language falls

prey to her earlier critiques of authenticity.

Given that Butler resists these conceptions of truth, what might she mean by a "tentative

truth" of the subject? In contrast to her earlier critiques of authenticity, in *Giving an Account,*

Butler seems more amenable to the idea that the subject is constituted by a variety of truths of

different orders, each vying for center stage. In particular, the subject is constituted and

inhabited by the truths of its own narrative, of truth regimes, and of the unconscious; such truths

are uneasily if not impossibly reconciled, and their conflicting and contradictory status stretch

our conventional notions of "truth."[321] These are the truths produced through giving an account

of oneself: generated through self-reflection, conveyed through the first person, and

authenticated through the authority of the narrating-I.

However, narrative truths are not particularly stable; rather, they are "always undergoing

revision," involving a reconstruction that at times veers into a fictionalization and fabulation.[322]

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[319] Joel Whitebook, *Perversion and Utopia* (Cambridge and London: MIT, 1995), p. 127.

[320] "the core of our being, consisting of unconscious wishful impulses, remains inaccessible to the understanding and inhibition of the preconscious… the unconscious is the true, psychical reality." Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams,* trans. J. Crick (New York: Oxford, 1999) 32.

[321] We can see here an indebtedness to Freud, whose notions of unconscious ideas covers truths that not only contradict the conscious and preconscious truths available to the ego, but also truths that contradict one another as unconscious ideas. See *The Ego and the Id,* trans. J. Strachey (New York: W.W. Norton, 1960), xxxi-xxxii, 5-8.

[322] This is particularly true for any account that tries to capture the self's origins or prehistory, an area so opaque that it is particularly susceptible to multiple, inconsistent truths. "Over wine usually, I tell [the story of my origin] in various ways, and the accounts are not always consistent with one another. Indeed, it may be that to have an origin means precisely to have several possible versions of the origin… Any one of those is a possible narrative, but of no single one can I say with certainty that it alone is true" (37).

Since one is never fully constituted through narrative alone, and since the unconscious always

creates an opacity beyond conscious reach, such accounts can never capture the full "truth" of a

person—this is what Butler means when she claims "any effort to 'give an account of oneself'

will have to fail in order to approach being true" (42). Again, Butler is not denying that there *are*

truths to a person or to an account. Instead, she is claiming that some truths persistently elude

and exceed narrative's grasp, and that "truths" can contradict one another.

The truth of a subject is also produced through "truth regimes," which provide the

conventions and terms by which one can narrate oneself. They provide a framework or point of

reference through which all narration and self-recognition takes place. Such truth regimes

constrain not only what one can truthfully (or even logically) *say* about oneself, but more

fundamentally, what one literally can *be,* "what will and will not be a recognized form of being"

(22). At the same time, truth regimes do not fully determine one's being, and thus a truth regime

may allow for various narratives about oneself.[323] The truths of an account, of the first-person

"I," may stand in tension with how the self is constituted in and by truth regimes, whether the

self recognizes it or not.[324]

Finally, one's account of oneself, and one's relation to a truth regime, are unsettled by an

assortment of unconscious material. Such material is also "true," albeit a truth that exists "in

enigmatic articulations that cannot be easily translated into narrative form" (64). What is

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[323] Thus, as I change my place in a truth regime, I may change as a person; as truth regimes shift, I may also change as a person. "To call into question a regime of truth, where that regime of truth governs subjectivation, is to call into question the truth of myself" (23).
[324] This point is best illustrated in *Excitable Speech* (New York: Routledge, 1997; henceforth *ES*), where Butler shows that the self may not be aware of how it is constituted. "The name constitutes one socially, but one's social constitution takes place without one's knowing. Indeed, one may well imagine oneself in ways that are quite to the contrary of how one is socially constituted; one may, as it were, meet that socially constituted self by surprise… even with shock." p. 31.

unconscious interrupts and exceeds self-identity, compromising one's capacity to give a coherent account and maintain an integrated ego.[325]

Can any of these truths of the self provide the basis for a claim to authenticity? For Butler, it seems that to privilege any one threatens occluding the others. According to Butler, to deny that accounts can produce truths about oneself would be to undo one's constitution as a moral agent, an unlivable situation. To deny that truth regimes can produce truths about oneself would be to deny the power of language and norms; it would deny that one's very being is radically conditioned by norms and terms that exist beyond oneself. And to deny that one's unconscious contains truths about oneself would be to deny one's relational, constituted beginnings, "those primary relations of dependency and impressionability that form and constitute us in persistent and obscure ways."[326] Collectively, these truths must coexist, but can only do so by grating against one another. The presence of multiple, incompatible truths, which taken together defy the logic of non-contradiction, unsettles the idea that authenticity can reside in the fulfillment or actualization of a truth, as our attempts at establishing self-identity—through narrative or other means—continually and predictably fail us.

Despite their different views on the relationship between truth and the psyche, Butler seems to share a concern with these narrative psychoanalysts and Lacanians that a "falsification" of a person's life can be harmful to the self. In describing what makes certain narratives "violent," Butler appropriates Adorno's notion of ethical violence. In his *Principles of Moral Philosophy,* Adorno argues that ethics becomes violent when a universal ceases to hold sway

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[325] This point receives further development in *Psychic Life* in which Butler emphasizes how the unconscious always disrupts and stymies characteristic attempts for narratives and truth regimes to attain coherence and self identity. This point will be further developed in the next section.

[326] *GAO* 58. For the ethical implications of accepting and denying the truths of the unconscious, see *GAO* chapter 2 and Thiem (2008), chapter 4.

with a particular.[327] Universals are not violent by definition, but they become so when their

relation to the particular is indifferent or unresponsive, and they can only impose their claim to

morality in "violent" ways. In particular, the violence that universals impose is "in the form of

an exclusionary foreclosure." "If it ignores the existing social conditions, which are also the

conditions under which any ethics might be appropriated, that ethos becomes violent" (6).

While Butler explicitly invokes Adorno's notion of ethical violence, she implicitly

invokes a notion of violent integration as well, one that is underspecified.[328] Butler describes "a

certain ethical violence, which demands that we manifest and maintain self-identity at all times,

and require that others do the same" (42). At first glance, this seems like an instance of ethical

violence, in which a universal (self-identity) cannot be appropriated by all people at all times.

But is there something particular about maintaining self-identity that makes this universal

especially unrealizable, and thus prone to violence? Later in the text, Butler claims that

"offering a narrative account or issuing a confession" is a way in which "we (violently) require

that another do a certain violence to herself." This violence is an attempt "to reinstall… egoic

mastery" (64). What seems to make the universal of self-identity particularly difficult to

appropriate—that is, what constitutes its violence—is the way in which unconscious material

continually disrupts the stability of the "I". The ego must seek to impose mastery (over itself, its

unconscious) in order to generate a coherent and legible account of itself, and in this impossible

task lies the potential for violence. This violence has less to do with the imposition of an ethical

norm (though it plays a part) and more to do with the interrelations between and constitution of

the parts of the psyche. That is, it seems that this violent potential derives from the ego's

limitations in self-mastery, self-knowledge, and self-integration—limitations that come part and

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[327] Theodor Adorno, *Problems of Moral Philosophy,* trans. R. Livingstone (Stanford: Stanford, 2001).
[328] For more on violent integration from Adorno's frame, see Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (Stanford: Stanford, 2007).

parcel with having an unconscious. While the demands for self-congruence may give rise to an ethical violence, against others and ourselves, it might also give rise to a distinct form of violence as well, namely, a violent integration of the psyche.

However, an important question remains: what makes psychic integration, or particular instances of it, "violent," "false," or "coercive"? Prior theorists who have linked inauthenticity to violence have tended to rely on strong notions of what constitutes the "truth" of the self—an implicit "inner nature" harmed by a false narrative, or narrative *tout court*.[329] Yet if Butler believes in the multiplicity of the subject's truth (and as we shall see in the next section, if she is reluctant to posit strong claims about the psyche), then she cannot ground her argument in these ways. Rather than trying to posit or discover what "inner nature" is—as if one's sense of oneself preceded psychic integration and primary relations, as if it were simply and unproblematically *there*—I suggest we ask how this sense of oneself is *produced*, and how in this production, certain narratives come to feel false, rigid, violent, "not-me."[330] As we have seen, Butler argues that this sense of oneself is produced in varying ways—by narrative accounts, by truth regimes, and by unconscious material; but importantly, it is also produced by a mechanism that is notably absent from *Giving an Account*: namely, identifications. Identifications, as Butler makes clear in *Gender Trouble* and *Psychic Life,* produce the sense of an "I," the sense that some things are "me" and "mine," and others, not; and to the feeling that some narratives genuinely reflect who I am, and others, not. Thus, identifications are paradoxically one of those mechanisms that create

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[329] Two very divergent examples of thinkers who link violence to a false constitution are Alessandro Ferrara and Lacan. For Lacanians, the integrity of the ego and of narratives are not just inauthentic, but violently so, imposing a rigidity on the self that is coercive, constraining future development. Ferrara (1998) argues that inauthenticity involves "a coercive coherence stemming from principles external to the self." Thus he reads Julie, the heroine of Rousseau's La Nouvelle Heloise, as choosing (external) duty over (internal) love, effectively "undermining [her] individual [] identity" (7).
[330] This is not to say that the subject, ego, or "inner nature" are reducible to one another—they may be abstractions of the person, but they are abstractions with different theoretical commitments and entailments, a point which will be addressed in the next section.

the authentic self as an effect. While Butler does not address identifications explicitly in this

text, they seem crucial to understanding how the psyche is integrated, and in distinguishing

violent from less-violent means. In order to examine them, we turn to an earlier work, *The*

Psychic Life of Power.

3. Melancholic Identifications: Psychic Formation in *The Psychic Life of Power*

   Before considering how identifications are produced, it is worth considering how Butler

can use a notion of the psyche without falling into the essentialist claims that she criticizes.

Butler does not treat the psyche as an object or domain that is simply *there* to be discovered;

rather, she investigates how it comes into existence and how the boundaries between psyche and

social, ego and object, are created and maintained. Key to her account is the figure of a subject

"turning back upon itself."[331] Through this turn, a power that was once external—"pressed upon

the subject," "subordinating the subject"—turns into an internal form of power, one that becomes

essential to "the formation, persistence and continuity of the subject… the subject's self-identity"

(3). Butler emphasizes that this figure, that this act of turning, is itself a *trope*, a device used to

refer to something that does not yet exist—a permanently uncertain ontological moment, "the

suspension of our ontological commitments."[332] Importantly, Butler argues that this turn is not

insulated from or prior to regulatory social power. Rather, the turn that inaugurates the psyche

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[331] The figure of the turn is not a purely psychoanalytic or Foucauldian trope. In PLP, Butler examines a variety of thinkers—Hegel, Nietzsche, Althusser—who make recourse to the trope of the turn, "the figure turning back upon itself," in order to explain how the subject is formed in subordination, what butler calls "subjection."

[332] PLP 4. Butler argues that the psyche and its structures are not only tropes, but the "effect" of melancholia, and therefore any attempt to represent, access or explain inner life will be reliant upon (and limited by) such tropes. The depiction of psychic life as split and conflict-ridden seems to arise *after* melancholia has set in, bearing its traces. Thus, a psychic topography cannot fully explain melancholia because this topography is the effect of melancholia. She describes this trope as an "allegory… for something which cannot be described sequentially" (ES 177).

works in tandem with processes of social regulation—meaning that Butler treats the psyche and its formation as thoroughly structured by power.[333]

While the figure of the turn appears in both psychoanalytic and discursive accounts of subject formation, the formation of the psyche is not reducible to discursive construction, nor is the psyche reducible to the subject.[334] As mentioned before, power constructs the appearance of a fixed, necessary, authentic essence; in constituting the subject, it conceals its own workings and the constructedness of what it makes. However, there is something that always resists or exceeds discursive attempts to impose a seamless and totalizing identity, and Butler refers to this as the unconscious.

The unconscious has an under-determined relation to discursive formation. On the one hand, she sees the unconscious as that which exceeds or disrupts subjection: "the psyche is precisely what exceeds the imprisoning effects of the discursive demand to inhabit a coherent identity, to become a coherent subject" (86). On the other hand, she argues that this excess or remainder is not prior to power's workings, but is produced by power, paradoxically, as that which exceeds power's own purposes. Yet, this excess will not necessarily *oppose* power or *resist* normalization—the unconscious does not contain pre-social desires that necessarily resist power.[335] Instead, she argues that the entirety of the psyche, as well as the distinction between psyche and social, is brought into existence through forms of regulatory social power.

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[333] McNay (1999) argues that Butler's intervention provides a much needed corrective to what she sees as a pervasive "ahistoricism" in psychoanalysis, one which made it difficult to analyze gender with any social specificity. In particular, Butler's account of the psyche can explain "the non correspondence between hegemonic gender norms and sexuality."

[334] "Discursive accounts of subject formation" refers to Foucault's account of how discourse forms the subject (PLP 3, 5, 84-88 104). Butler describes discursive construction as too "unilateral" and "mechanistic," and thus in need of an account of the psyche, in "On Speech, Race and Melancholia," *Theory, Culture and Society*, 16.22 (1999).

[335] Here, we can fruitfully contrast Butler's position with post-war theorists of authenticity, particularly Herbert Marcuse and Wilhelm Reich. These theorists thought that the unconscious came into existence

The psyche's emergence through and regulation by power is most evident in her discussion of melancholic identifications. Melancholic identifications inaugurate the ego, producing and regulating our experience of self-identity, of being an "I." At the same time, they are based on the disavowal of foreclosed love objects, each of which continues to haunt and inhabit the ego. Thus, they show how our feelings of being a "true self" arise, while also revealing that there is no single, unambiguous truth to the subject. Melancholic identifications occur through the loss of an external object or ideal. The "ego" refuses to break its attachment to the object, and instead, withdraws the attachment and the object back into itself.[336] The "ego" then tries to substitute itself for the object, creating itself on the model of the lost love object, and in doing so, recognizing *itself* as an object. In seeking to establish what was once on the "outside" now on the "inside," the ego fabricates a new distinction between itself and the object, between inside and outside, between psyche and social.

In withdrawing the object into itself, the ego sets up an inner world structured by ambivalence. The object absorbed, and so are the ambivalent feelings towards it: both love for the object (the desire to preserve the object and the attachment) and rage against it (for loss, if nothing else). In order to prevent the object from being further destroyed by the ego's own rage, the ego takes *itself* as an object, redirecting its rage against itself. In doing so, it generates a psychic topography: a "split" in the ego that distinguished the ego from the superego, allowing

through socially-mandated repression, and that authenticity would involve liberating unconscious, repressed desires. Like Foucault, Butler dismisses this idea. "If the unconscious, or the psyche more generally, is defined as resistance, what do we then make of unconscious attachments to subjection, which imply that the unconscious is no more free of normalizing discourse than the subject?... What makes us think that the unconscious is any less structured by the power relations that pervade cultural signifiers than is the language of the subject?" (88). See PSP 58, 88, 98; GT 98 (in contrast with Foucault). See chapter 1 of the dissertation for analysis on Marcuse and Reich on this point, and chapter 3 of the dissertation for an analysis of Foucault on this point.

[336] Since this turn is tropological, there is no "ego" that exists before the turn, but rather, only a "site" from which an attachment departs and is turned back, a site on which the ego will be formed (171).

ambivalence to take on a new form, "in which different aspects of the psyche are accorded opposing positions" (174). The ego's rage at the lost object is redirected towards the ego itself, such that the ego need not accept that the object is lost; its ambivalence towards the object remains unconscious and is represented as a conflict between parts of the ego. Thus, melancholia creates an inner world in which ambivalence can find an altered existence, one that comes to be represented as a conflict between parts of the ego.

Butler argues that this "turning" is not only psychic, but rather, regulated by social power that determines which losses will and will not be grieved. Foreclosed objects are those that are "rigorously barred:" unspeakable, impossible to be declared as love objects, and pre-emptively lost. If social sanctions produce the domain of possible love objects, foreclosure designates those objects that are "barred from production" as love objects. Despite, or perhaps because of their foreclosure, foreclosed objects come to structure the form that love attachments will take. By regulating which objects come to be seen as objects, and which are pre-emptively foreclosed, social power thus structures melancholic identification and the formation of the ego. When grief for a lost love object is pre-empted, a melancholic identification will form in its place: i.e. I become the woman I could never love. Thus, Butler can claim "the 'truest' lesbian melancholic is the strictly straight woman, and the 'truest' gay melancholic is the strictly straight man."[337] (147). The foreclosed homosexual attachment is never acknowledged and thus never grieved. It is in fact vigorously denied, but preserved and inhabited precisely through the identification.

Thus, identification renders the "truth" of a person an impossible standard, unsettling claims of authenticity based on a correspondence to, or actualization of, an inner truth. However, given that identification is one of the mechanisms through which the ego is integrated, and that it produces and regulates our feelings of self-identity, we can ask ourselves how these

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[337] Or, as in GT, "the stricter and more stable the gender affinity, the less resolved the original loss." (86)

claims to authenticity act in the psyche. That is, might claims about the "truth" of oneself, the "mineness" of one's acts, be a means to integrate the psyche—to establish a distinction between what is central versus peripheral, to impose coherence or self-artistry? I argue that when a person appeals to who or what she "truly" is, we should interpret this act as an attempt at ego integration, at reformulating her account of herself, at subjectivation in a given truth regime. Moreover, I show that in the face of such claims, we should neither try to assess their truth value (an impossible task) nor deny their validity; rather, we should attempt to ascertain why the self is trying to integrate itself through an appeal to an authentic truth, and whether this mode of integration is violent. That is, do claims to authenticity perpetuate a violent integration, or do they represent an effort to diminish such violence?

Consider two "figures" in *Psychic Life of Power,* who could be said to be striving to define themselves in a "truer" way: the heterosexual melancholic and the abject subversive.[338] The heterosexual melancholic is the woman to claims to have never loved (and therefore, have never lost) another woman, and the man who claims to have never loved and never lost another man. Both disavowals belie the fact that for masculinity and femininity to emerge, homosexual attachment must first be foreclosed: lost, disavowed and ungrieved. To become a woman, one must not see other women as objects of desire. These barred love objects, and one's homosexual desire for them, become incorporated into the ego as a feminine identification. Thus, might we interpret the disavowal of the heterosexual melancholic—"I have never loved and I have never lost"—as an attempt to assert the authenticity of her gender identity—"I have always been a woman and I have never been other than that"? Indeed, Butler notes that the more "fierce and

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[338] The "abject subversive" is my coinage—it refers to a particular yet unnamed figure in Butler's work, the unlivable, unviable person (the abject) who engages in practices of resignification (subversion) in an attempt to forge a less hostile place in the discourse, and with it, a new way of self-constitution. Unlike the heterosexual or gender melancholic, the abject subversive is not "named," but, as I will show, inhabits the text nonetheless.

ungrieved" the homosexual cathexis, the more "hyperbolic" and defensive the heterosexual identification (139): "A culture of heterosexual melancholy… can be read in the hyperbolic identifications by which mundane heterosexual masculinity and femininity confirm themselves… what is not most apparently performed as gender is the sign and symptom of a pervasive disavowal" (147).   Thus, the heterosexual melancholic emerges from and continues to be enmeshed in foreclosed desires, which require the constant disavowal of what one is *not.* Such an emergence might explain why appeals to the authenticity of gender defensively assume such essentialist forms—an unassailable femininity, an impenetrable masculinity, and a blind endorsement of gendered ideals.

Do the heterosexual melancholic's claims to an authentic gender—a gender that is both "true" and "truly inhabited"—alleviate a violent integration, or rather perpetuate it? For Butler, it is the latter. The heterosexual melancholic is produced and regulated at the level of culture, through socially-laden ego-ideals that uphold heterosexuality, and through discourses that foreclose the possibility of loving and grieving a homosexual love object. Given the strong heterosexism of ego-ideals and the prevalence of a "heterosexual matrix" in which one can only "be" one gender by desiring the other, homosexual desire "panics" gender. "In a man, the terror of homosexual desire may lead to a terror… of no longer being properly a man, of being a 'failed' man, or being in some sense a figure of monstrosity or abjection" (136).[339] Such prohibitions do not abolish the homosexual attachment, but rather, *preserve* it through the form of an identification. As such, this desire requires continual renunciation and self-beratement from the superego, producing violence in the form of a nameless guilt. Thus, melancholic

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[339] Thus, there is an identification with abject homosexuality, one which "institutes that subjection and sustains it." See BTM 74.

identifications, particularly in their hyperbolic forms, unconsciously drive one to present one's

gender as the authentic truth of oneself—under threat of superegoic violence.

By contrast, the abject subversive—the subject who tries to revalue those terms that

render him "less than human"— might be said to appeal to authenticity in an effort to resist

violent integration; specifically, in an effort to negotiate the tension between his desire for social

recognition and the way norms that structure recognition render him abject. Perhaps he is the

figure in *Excitable Speech* who claims "That is not me, you must be mistaken!" when he is called

by a name he contests (ES 33). Butler frames this problem in terms of Spinoza's *conatus*—"the

desire to persist in one's own being"[340]—which she recasts as a desire for social being and

existence, a desire not only to remain *oneself,* but to be recognized as *a self*: human and

deserving of all of the rights and privileges entailed.[341] This desire can only be fulfilled through

an array of social terms and norms that define and regulate the self. These terms "subordinate"

the self—they are not of the self's making, and exist outside the self, "in a discourse that is at

once dominant and indifferent" (20). They render the self vulnerable in their capacity to injure—

to render the self abject, violable, less than human. However, they also provide the only ways

through which one can attain social legibility—"continuity, visibility, and place" (29). In her

framing of the *conatus,* we can see another instance in which a notion of inauthenticity intersects

with Butler's thinking. Butler and theorists of authenticity are both concerned with how the self

is rendered vulnerable as it attempts to secure recognition, as it attempts to persist as a self *and*

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[340] See PLP 7, 28, 62, 203; UG 31, 198, 235-6; GAO 43, 49. Butler describes the desire to be as a "constitutive desire" (PLP 130). Samuel Chambers and Moya Lloyd criticize Butler for treating the conatus as if it was essential—as if it appeared always and everywhere in invariable form. See Moya Lloyd, *Judith Butler: From Norms to Politics* (Cambridge: Polity, 2007), p. 102; Samuel Allen Chambers, *Untimely Politics* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh, 2003), p. 146.
[341] PLP 28. This takes on further development in Butler's later work, see UG 12-14. 222-223, and GAO 29-31, 61-2, 103-7.

as itself amidst dominant and indifferent social forces.[342] The self is vulnerable to modes of

unfreedom, to harmful self-transformation, to injury, illegibility or violence. The desire to persist

is easily exploited, as it requires the self to submit to a world that is not its own, as the self is

rendered vulnerable in the act of submission, and as the self will readily submit—indeed, will

emerge only in and through this submission—rather than not exist at all.

Thus, all subjects (the heterosexual melancholic and abject subversive included) form an

attachment to their subordination, what Butler calls a "passionate attachment."[343] Specifically,

the subject becomes attached to the very terms that define, regulate and subordinate it. As the

subject submits to these norms, it also comes to internalize them, as they become "psychic" and

come to constitute the self's self-identity. Thus, an attachment to one's subjection will emerge

as an altered form of one's desire for persistence. Regardless of how these terms construct the

subject—as marginal, violable, inferior—the subject would rather attach to a wounded identity

than not attach at all, it would rather live an abject social existence than no existence at all. In

this way, a passionate attachment can "tie" the subject to its identity in a detrimental way,

causing the subject to desire that which regulates, marginalizes and constrains it.

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[342] Chapters 1 and 2 of the dissertation cover various theorists of authenticity—those in the post-war US, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau's, respectively. Recall that in chapter 2, I argued that Rousseau's notion of *amour-propre* problematized as similar desire—the desire for "esteem," "the good opinion of others," a desire ultimately for recognition. The ills that came under the heading of inauthenticity stemmed from the problematic orders of recognition, and the self's deleterious attempts to cope with them—alienation, fragmentation viciousness, unfreedom. Frederick Neuhouser, clearly resonating with Spinoza, Hegel and Butler on this point, argues that what is at stake in *amour-propre* is the self's "moral, or spiritual survival." See Frederick Neuhouser, *Rousseau's Theodicy of Self Love* (New York: Oxford, 2007), p. 73.

[343] Passionate attachments first emerge towards primary caregivers, on whom the infant is dependent. "The child does not know to what he/she attaches; yet the infant as well as the child must attach in order to persist in and as itself" (8). This first passionate attachment conditions future acts of subordination and attachment, including a second form—an attachment to social norms, to the very terms that come to define, regulate and subordinate the subject. This is not to say that the first attachment is prior to norms—an assumption sometimes found in objects relations theory. As I show below, Butler argues that this attachment emerges in the midst of social powers, which constitute, regulate, structure and foreclose any and all attachments.

Passionate attachments are thus problematic insofar as they make us more likely to blindly affirm how power makes us, since each term grants us "place, location and continuity" and constitutes us as who we are.[344] "Because I have a certain inevitable attachment to my existence, because a certain narcissism takes hold of any term that confers existence, I am led to embrace the terms that injure me because they constitute me socially."[345] Thus, we can see passionate attachments at work in the identifications of the gender melancholic, and we can see how they might lead us to endorse an image of ourselves that is violently integrating.

However, passionate attachments might also incite resistance to the ways in which these terms operate, to the violence they impose—and here, we can detect an ideal of authenticity, and an oppositional way it can be deployed. Though Butler would surely resist this, I want to suggest that it is precisely this ideal that is at work in the abject subversive's attempts to resignify her identity. Butler notes that one's desire to persist *as* oneself, and one's embrace of the terms that constitute oneself, can clash with norms that constitute oneself as abject, inferior, marginalized. This incongruence—between the self's valuation of itself and the way it is regulated and constituted by discourse—can impel resistance to such regulation. "Attachment to an injurious interpellation will, by way of a necessarily alienated narcissism, become the condition under which resignifying that interpellation becomes possible" (104). The type of resistance Butler has in mind is resignification, a way of "owning" and "occupying" an injurious term or identity, in which one uses the term for purposes other than it was designed, and in doing so, alters the term, the norm, and thus the way one is regulated.[346]

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[344] Thus, Thiem (2008) argues that the task of critique is to create an "archaeology" of passionate attachments and carefully "undo" them (46-7).

[345] PLP 104. Thus, Thiem (2008) argues that the task of critique is to create an "archaeology" of passionate attacahments and carefully "undo" them (46-7).

[346] Lisa Disch defines subversive resignification as "the insubordinate use of a derogatory term or authoritative convention to defuse its power to injure and expose 'prevailing forms of authority and the

Given her earlier critiques, Butler would likely claim that such a strategy in no way relies upon a notion of authenticity. Indeed, resignification implies that the terms that define identity are unstable, malleable, and open in ways that defy positing an "authentic" instance of the term. To argue that one's understanding or expression of an identity *category* is more authentic than another is a short step away from an essentialism that marginalizes and hierarchizes. But appeals to resignification perhaps intersect or converge with aspects of earlier appeals to authenticity, in that they both try to contest the ways in which social structures define, position, regulate and produce the self; that is, they contest violent integration. Each invokes something different: one, an inner self whose "truth" trumps society, another, rival meanings and significations that have been heretofore repressed or foreclosed. But both insist that the "I" is not, and should not be, reducible to the available terms of a discourse, with its arbitrary restrictions and foreclosures, with its unnecessary integrative violence. Both try to establish a self, or parts of a self, in ways that run counter to or exceed those available discourses. And both hold out hope for a place within the discourse that is more hospitable to inhabit. Such a place cannot be beyond power or discourse (and here is where the earlier theorists of authenticity got it wrong), but must be forged through the gradual bending and slackening of norms. In other words, resignification bears similar strategic features to appeals to authenticity—neither in the sense that one is incongruent with an inner essence nor in the sense that one's "inner feelings" are incongruent with one's "outer expression," but in that there is an incongruence between the terms by which one is made, and one's attachment to those terms and oneself. Thus, resignification allows us to rethink authenticity as having a set of strategic features—resistant, oppositional attempts to articulate an

exclusions by which they proceed.'" "Judith Butler and the Politics of the Performative," *Political Theory* 4(27) 1999: 547; citing ES 157-8.

identity contrary to power's designs—without assuming a prior or essential self to "authenticate" it.

The figures of the heterosexual melancholic and the abject subversive suggest that appeals to authenticity may work in service of a violent integration or to combat it. Such appeals are thoroughly and unavoidably social, having the ambivalent potential to either reinforce or disrupt dominant truth regimes, modes of subjectivation, and culturally prevalent integrative narratives. Thus, appeals to authenticity may vascilate in being the object or vehicle of critique. However, in taking this perspective on authenticity, by asking what it does rather than what it is, we have less of an understanding as to what "authenticity" means. If the self is inhabited by diverse and contradictory truths, could there be such a thing as an authentic self or self-relation?

Perhaps an authentic relation to oneself involves attaining a self-relation that is less rigid, less violently integrating, less coercive of the self. No narrative may be fully or ultimately true, but the goal would be to forge a constellation of psychic and discursive "truths" that do not feel rigid, false, or coercively coherent. Thus, despite their protest to the contrary, the plaits of the heterosexual melancholic are inauthentic, especially in their hyperbolic form—not because they "falsely" represent the self, but rather, because in claiming to inhabit a "true" femininity, they violently integrate us all—tying us too closely to ourselves, creating a distorted or deleterious self-relation. On this understanding, an authentic self-relation does not have prior existence, and thus could not be fully specified ahead of time, but would involve modifying already extant self-relations. Thus, if we consider the epigraphs that began the chapter, authenticity might consist in what Cornelius Castoriadis calls "another relation between the conscious and unconscious;" or, in a Foucauldian vein, it might involve discovering "how not to be governed like that."[347] Neither relation would involve overcoming the constraints of the psychic or the social, nor could

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[347] See citation at epigraph. Here I come close to Whitebook in *Perversion and Utopia.*

we negotiate them apart from one another; but rather, an authentic self-relation would involve finding less coercive means of integrating social with the psychic and the psychic with itself—means that might as yet be nonexistent, but that may need to be actively imagined, desired, and forged.

4. Resignifying Authenticity and the Open-Endedness of Violence

Is such a conception of authenticity as unattainable and as impossible as the old self-acutalization model: self-fulfillment through abiding by and developing a narrative identity? Consider the rejoinder that there is always some violence inherent to the way the psyche is constituted, that if we treat the ego as something to be achieved, such an achievement requires the violence of self-renunciation, of foreclosing of desire, of turning back upon the self. In particular, some psychoanalytic thought suggests that processes of identification always inflict some violence and thus, the very structure of the "I" is the result of a violent forging.[348]

Such a response has a kernel of truth—indeed, Butler's depiction of melancholic identification suggests that the workings of the superego tend to be predominantly violent. However if some psychic violence is inevitable, this does not entail that we should regard all forms and degrees of violence as necessary. Such a response risks masking how violence is socially produced and regulated—through heterosexist ego-ideals, through overly-rigid accounts of oneself, through the socially-laden voice of conscience. Given the social roots of psychic violence, it is worth reminding ourselves that norms and truth regimes change over time, and with such changes, subjects are made more or less susceptible to violence. Indeed, our task may be to critically interrogate those instances of violent integration that portray themselves as

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[348] Diana Fuss, *Identification Papers* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 9; Ruth Leys, "The Real Miss Beauchamp: Gender and the Subject of Imitation," in *Feminists Theorize the Political*, ed. Judith Butler and Joan W. Scott (New York: Routledge, 1992).

necessary and reveal them to be contingent, the product of a particular configuration of social and psychic norms. As with gendered identification, this may involve revealing that some of our most familiar and commonplace forms of integration inflict an unrecognized violence in their wake.

A more trenchant objection might involve the nature of the "violence" in violent integration. That is, can we uphold a distinction between violent and nonviolent integration, while at the same time refraining from making strong claims about the psyche? As we have seen, Butler cannot claim that integration is violent when it imposes *any* structure to the ego, nor when it imposes a "false" narrative on a narrative self, because both claims treat the psyche as composed of a single "truth." In claiming that the psyche is opaque and relational, and constituted by identifications that produce conflicting "truths," can Butler uphold a distinction between violent and nonviolent (or less violent, or differently violent) psychic integration, and if so, where precisely would she draw that line? Again, earlier accounts were less than helpful; for example, in claiming that (nearly) all forms of integration were violent, Lacan was unable to distinguish between better from worse forms of integration, thus limiting the concept's effectiveness in practices of critique. In order to use the term, we would need some understanding of violence's relation to its opposite. Finally, following Whitebook and Weber, even if we could successfully distinguish violent from nonviolent integration, what degree and what sort of integration would be desirable?[349]

Using Butler's arguments on subject construction and resignification, I believe that her notion of the psyche can sustain a distinction between violent and nonviolent integration, but that the meaning of "violent integration" is best left somewhat open. First, the notion of integrative violence is best kept open because subject formation in general, and psychic formation in

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[349] Whitebook, *Perversion and Utopia,* p. 10; Samuel Weber, *The Legend of Freud,* p. 15.

particular, is so difficult to grasp. As we have seen in identifications, the boundary between "social" and "psychic" is not given, but is produced in multiple and contradictory ways. And as we have seen in throughout Butler's work, the formation of a "constitutive opacity," in some shape or form, is inevitable—arising out of our partially irrecoverable origins and our rigorously repressed moments of helplessness and dependency. Just as our opacity limits the accounts we can give of ourselves, it also limits what we can confidently declare about the psyche and the nature of the violence that attends its integration. Such limits should not stop us from theorizing the psyche, but it should encourage us to treat these claims as pragmatic, partial and provisional, for when we talk about subject formation, "we become speculative philosophers or fiction writers" (GAO 78).

This is not to say that all accounts of integration, violence, or the psyche will be equally helpful or compelling. Indeed, if we accept Butler's earlier arguments about performativity, we must limit the claims we make about the "subject" or the "ego" that is injured in violent integration. Such injury cannot be based on the repression or distortion of an original disposition or nature. Nonetheless, we can still say that the psyche is constituted such that it is vulnerable to an integrative violence. Adapting an argument from *Excitable Speech,* we might say that what Butler calls a "prior vulnerability to language" belies a prior vulnerability to psychic integration. For Butler, our vulnerability to language emerges by virtue of "being interpellated kinds of beings, dependent on the address of the Other in order to be" (26). Our vulnerability to psychic integration might stem from these very conditions, and from the idiosyncratic ways in which the psyche is formed in response to them.

Moreover, it seems impossible to stipulate ahead of time whether certain modes of integration will proceed violently. If the psyche is integrated across time, through repeated acts,

then any given attempt at integration has the potential to "fail"—to be integrated differently than intended or than before. Analogizing from Butler's arguments on hate speech, what is "violently" integrative for one person at one point in time may not be violently integrating at another point in time, or for another person.[350] Thus, what counts as "violence" will be, to a degree, subjective—both in the sense of varying from subject to subject, and in the sense of appearing as "violent" in subjective experience—the complex result of how we have psychically and particularly internalized norms. Such subjectiveness derives not only from our particular psychic constitution, but also from the context of a given set of norms, their workings, and constellations. As norms bend and change, so will the ways they constitute us, suggesting we cannot claim ahead of time which norms will impact us violently, or why. Thus, keeping the notion of "violent integration" relatively open can allow us to better grasp the particularistic character and instances of psychic violence, and can guard against foreclosing future instances and meanings of such violence.

To suggest that the notion of "violence" is best kept relatively underdetermined does not deny our vulnerability to how we are constituted; on the contrary, it suggests that our potential for exploitation is in fact heightened. The limited knowledge we have of the psyche, the open-endedness of subject construction, and the gradual fluctuation of norms—all render integration as always potentially violent, and always, to an extent, subjective. Its subjectiveness and open-endedness exhorts us to remain attuned to the particular ways in which violence is experienced and inflicted by the psyche. And in our attempts to understand the workings of psychic integration, and its inherent potential for violence, one of the unexpected vantage points from which we can grasp and assess such violence are these fraught and ambivalent appeals to authenticity.

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[350] ES 19, 38.

5. Conclusion: The Ambivalent Politics of Authenticity

The notion of violent integration gives new weight to the idea of authenticity. It suggests that there is always a potential power struggle, an imposition, an attempt to redefine and re-craft the self, each at work in appeals to authenticity. Rather than attempting the impossible task of assessing the validity of such claims, we ought to examine the contexts in which they arise; that is, we ought to understand authenticity as it bears on subject formation and as potentially indicative of a violent integration. Moreover, if we accept Butler's arguments about the indeterminacy, unknowability, and subjectiveness of subject formation, then authenticity becomes a unique first-person discourse from which to examine violent integration. In other words, it suggests that the self is trying to integrate or even generate an identity, and that violence could be what animates it or what it effects.

Certainly, appeals to authenticity contain risks—they have been used in ways that have marginalized and excluded others, in ways that have inflicted violence of various sorts. However as Butler argues, the danger of the word is not a reason to avoid it, and it is not as if we *could*—the term has become so a pervasive cultural ideal that appeals to authenticity are seemingly unavoidable; indeed, its continued persistence as an ideal may prove to be an effective strategy for opposition and resistance. As such, authenticity's ambivalent forms, its emancipatory aspirations and unintended violences, require that we be attuned to its workings and effects, its protean forms and resignifications. Unable to be dispelled by critique alone, the ambivalence of authenticity requires that we cultivate strategies to counter its political abuses and determine the sources that animate and sustain it. It is precisely this concern that the next chapter will address.

CHAPTER FIVE
Alternative Authenticities: Thinking Transgender Without Essence

"But what is the truth? And what operations of power—and requirements for asserting identity to make sense of one's desire—make some kinds of desire more true—and more coherent—than others?"
– David Valentine, "I went to bed with my own kind."

"But on the inside, where nobody else can see, are you a boy? Or are you a girl?" asked

Venessia Romero.[351] Romero's daughter, Josie, was assigned male at birth, but had been living

as a girl since age six. Josie, who was ten when this interaction was recorded, departed from the

answer she usually gave. "Maybe I'm a boy inside and a girl outside." For the past four years,

Josie had consistently claimed to be a girl: she wore her sister's clothes, played with her sister's

toys, and instructed her parents to use female pronouns when referring to her. Josie's doctors had

diagnosed her with gender identity disorder (now termed gender dysphoria): a condition in which

a person's assigned gender is different from the gender with which he or she identifies.[352] Josie's

claims were so persistent, and voiced with such certainty, that her parents even considered

starting her on hormone replacement therapy. Yet by expressing doubt about her identity, Josie

sent her mother into a panic: "Everything I thought I knew is kind of in question," she told the

reporter. Venessia had accepted the authenticity of her daughter's claims, and of the underlying

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[351] "Living a Transgender Childhood," *Dateline NBC*, July 8, 2012, retrieved from http://www.nbcnews.com/video/dateline/48097362#48097362. I've reconstructed Josie's story using a few television broadcasts and news articles that have reported on her, including Stephanie Innes, "Meet Josie, 9: No Secret She's Transgender," *Arizona Daily Star,* July 25, 2010, retrieved from http://tucson.com/news/science/health-med-fit/meet-josie-no-secret-she-s-transgender/article_62e8719b-5b8d-5f99-80f3-71f00a41c334.html; "Sex, Lies, and Gender," *National Geographic*, April 17, 2010, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vQ7dt5sTDGc&ebc; "Body Shock: Aged 8 and Wanting a Sex Change," Channel 4, October 19, 2009; and "Transgender Children," *The Tyra Banks Show,* January 27, 2010, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nAOFGSHGJlc

[352] American Psychiatric Association, "Gender Dysphoria Fact Sheet," retrieved from http://www.dsm5.org/documents/gender%20dysphoria%20fact%20sheet.pdf. When doctors diagnosed Josie in 2006, the fourth edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual* (DSM-IV) listed her condition as "gender identity disorder." In 2013, the DSM-V replaced GID with an updated diagnosis, gender dysphoria. The new formulation reflects treats gender dysphoria as a condition and not a disorder, seeks to de-pathologize individuals who are transgender, and intends to "better characterize the experiences of affected children, adolescents, and adults."

"self" those claims sought to describe. But now that Josie was wavering—for the first time in her life—Venessia wondered if that earlier acceptance was warranted.

Josie is one of many transgender children whose lives have been recently chronicled in the media.[353] In articulating their ideas about who they were, as well as their experiences of constraint, desire, and wellbeing, these children appealed to a notion of a "true self" differently gendered from the one they had been assigned at birth. Yet the force of their authenticity claims depended on these children conforming to a certain cultural script: that they had always felt this way, that they were certain about their gender identity, and that the gender they wanted to become was easily recognizable as male or female (as opposed to both, neither, or something entirely different). Indeed, when these children departed from such a script, as Josie had, they risked losing the understanding and recognition they had fought to gain. Moreover, while these claims were crucial in helping transgender children escape coerced gender performances, they nonetheless produced inadvertent effects: they bolstered essentializing discourses of selfhood and gender, which in turn could impact how a wide range of authenticity claims were assessed, including those arising beyond the terrains of childhood, gender, and embodiment.

It may seem to be in poor taste to take the language of an undeniably vulnerable population as an object of critique. Many transgender children encounter bullying and harassment at school, rejection at home, and increased odds of becoming clinically depressed or

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[353] Among the subjects of recent documentaries are: Malisa Honda in "Growing Up Transgender: Malisa's Story," *NBC Nightly News*, April 23, 2015; Jacob Lemay in "Life As A 5-Year-Old Transgender Child," *NBC Nightly News*, April 22, 2015; Hailey in "Transgender Child: A Parent's Difficult Choice," *Our America*, February 23, 2011; Zoey in "Born This Way: Stories of Young Transgender Children," *CBS Sunday Morning*, June 8, 2014; Jazz Jennings in "My Secret Self: A Story of Transgender Children," *20/20,* April 27, 2007; "I Am Jazz: A Family in Transition," Oprah Winfrey Network, November 27, 2011 and in "Transgender at 11: Listening to Jazz," *20/20,* January 19, 2013; Skylar in Margaret Talbot, "About a Boy," *The New Yorker*, March 18, 2013; Penelope in "Mom, I'm Not a Girl," *Cosmopolitan.com*, October 12, 2015.

homeless.[354] As this chapter will show, appealing to an inner, hidden, immutable self has proved

incredibly helpful for many children negotiating these circumstances. I am not arguing that these

children are deploying these notions "strategically;" their environments are so saturated with

discourses of gender and authenticity that it is unsurprising that they have absorbed this language

and have used it to articulate what they feel. Further, I am not offering a critique of the children

themselves, but rather, of the discourse that arises from the dominant ways adults read, interpret,

and encourage their claims.[355] This chapter illuminates the often unremarked effects of such

appeals: they may reinscribe a type of suffering they seek to overcome; they may uphold

untenable ideals of self-knowledge and self-congruence; and they may erase the experiences of

queer and gender nonconforming persons.

Despite these politically troubling effects, this chapter is not making a normative

argument about whether children should appeal to authenticity in this or any other way. Given

how entrenched these appeals are in popular discourse, and how potent they can be, such a

suggestion seems unrealistic. Rather, this chapter formulates a counter discourse, that is, first, an

interpretation and theorization of the discourses being used by transgender kids, and then a

reworking and reconfiguration of the dominant terms in these discourses, for identities and ends

that have been largely foreclosed. By encouraging the formation of a counter discourse at the

adult level, we might alter the discursive conditions in which children navigate gender. Such a

discourse is not necessarily better or more accurate than the ones we have, but it could be

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[354] E. A. Greytak, et al, "Harsh Realities: The Experiences of Transgender Youth in Our Nation's Schools" (New York: GLSEN: 2009), http://www.glsen.org/sites/default/files/Harsh%20Realities.pdf
[355] My discussion of Josie works in a similar vein as Richard Ford's treatment of Rene Rogers's claims about essential blackness in the case *Rogers v American Airlines*. As Ford says, "in my discussion of Rogers my goal is not to criticize Rene Rogers; instead, it is to offer up the clash in which she participated… as an example of a larger trend to which it contributes and from which it was produced." Richard Ford, *Racial Culture: A Critique* (Princeton: Princeton, 2006), 28-29.

potentially emancipatory, disclosing new possibilities for subjects struggling with who they are.[356]

1. "I want to be like all the other girls."

Interviewer: "Now what about people, Josie, who watch this and say, 'You know what, she's going through a phase in her life.'"
Josie: "I say no, I'm going to stay like a girl because this is who I truly am."[357]

Over the past five years, several television programs have broadcasted accounts of

transgender kids.[358] In each of these reports, the parents of a transgender child describe how they

came to learn the truth of their child and grew to love and accept them for who they were. These

parents discuss periods of confusion and resistance before describing how they gradually came to

terms with their child's real identity. For many of these parents, telling their child's story on

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[356] This chapter relies on Michel Foucault's notion of discourse, discussed already in chapters 1 and 3. For Foucault, discourse is not simply language or speech, but rather a set of related statements, terms, categories and beliefs that organizes knowledge and generates meanings. Discourses not only describe and represent subjects, objects, and experiences, but also help bring these things into being. It does so, in part, through the dissemination of norms. See Chapters 1 and 3 for a fuller depiction of discourse in Foucault's work; see Joan Scott, "Deconstructing Equality Versus Difference," *Feminist Studies 14* (1988); Wendy Brown, *Undoing the Demos.*

[357] "Living a Transgender Childhood," *Dateline NBC*.

[358] In this chapter, I follow Talia Bettcher, Genny Beemyn and Susan Rankin in using the term *transgender* in an expansive way, as an umbrella term to capture "all individuals whose gender history cannot be described as simply female or male, even if they now identify and express themselves as strictly female or male" (6). This rendering of the term includes identities such as transsexuals, genderqueers, androgynes, bigenders, and more. My reasons for doing so will become clearer as the argument progresses. Some authors use the term *transsexual,* and I follow them in their terminology when describing their work. See Talia Bettcher, "Intersexuality, Transsexuality and Transgender," *The Oxford Handbook of Feminist Theory*, (Oxford: 2015); Genny Beemyn and Susan Rankin, *The Lives of Transgender People* (New York: Columbia, 2011), p. 6. Certain writers resist turning transgender into an "umbrella term," either because they find the term itself laden with narrow meanings, or because they want to emphasize the disjuncture between trans and queer. See Leslie Feinberg, *Transgender Warriors: making history from Joan of Arc to Ru Paul* (Boston: Beacon, 1996), p. x; and Julia Serano: *Whipping Girl: A transsexual woman on sexism and the scapegoating of femininity* (Berkeley, CA: Seal, 2007), p. 3, 26, 364; Vivane K. Namaste, *Invisible Lives: The Erasure of Transsexual and Transgendered People* (Chicago: Chicago, 2000), p. 60-63. Others argue that the term *transgender* should be distinct from *transsexual,* since people may identify with one and not the other. See Jamison Green, *Becoming a Visible Man* (Nashville: Vanderbilt, 2004), p. 14; Viviane K. Namaste, *Sex Change, Social Change* (Toronto: Women's Press, 2005), p. 1.

television is a form of public outreach; they hope to inform other parents with transgender children what gender dysphoria is, its signs and symptoms, and its immutability.[359] Such outreach is important because gender dysphoria is still not widely known, and because transgender children are at risk for forced gender conformity, conversion therapy, and parental and social rejection.

Yet how do these parents come to recognize these claims as true, and what kind of "truth" do they attribute to their children? In this section, I show that there is a tendency to read these children as removed from social and cultural molding, and for that reason, to treat their claims as originating from an inner, gendered core. Such an interpretation is compelling, in part, because it concurs with culturally prevalent ideas that gender is biologically based, true, and immutable. This section examines how this reading of gender identity emerges, and analyzes the various features of this reading that, when combined, reinforce essentialist pictures of authenticity, gender and selfhood. However, as I will argue in section 2, I think these interpretations are best understood as a reading and production of gender, rather than its truth, one that overlooks how these children are navigating existing discourses and norms of gender.[360]

One of the reasons Josie's parents viewed her gender identity as authentic was because they saw it as something emerging early in her childhood and persistent across time. Even

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[359] This is true for the Romeros, see Innes, "Meet Josie, 9." Greg and Jeannette Jennings have also publicized their experience with a transgender daughter in the hopes of educating others about gender dysphoria. See http://www.transkidspurplerainbow.org/about-us/

[360] There is a vast literature on gender's constructed nature, with different ways of parsing what exactly social construction is: Derridean, Lacanian, performative, and intersectional, to name only a few. I adopt the version most commonly associated with Foucault, that gender is constructed and organized by discourses, which disseminate norms, establish deviations, and distribute individuals around the norm. Importantly, this construction does not produce uniform conformity, or else there would not be individuals who fall outside the norm. Thus, gender may "succeed" and "fail" in the same person. See Foucault, *History of Sexuality, Vol 1;* Jana Sawicki, *Disciplining Foucault* (New York: Routledge, 1991); Lois McNay, *Foucault and Feminism* (Boston: Northeastern, 1993); Janet Halley, *Split Decisions* (Princeton: Princeton, 2006); and Susan Bordo, *Unbearable Weight* (Berkeley: Berkeley, 1993).

though she was not diagnosed with gender dysphoria until she was six years old, Josie and her family insist she had always been a girl on the inside. Across various interviews, Josie explains that she "always knew' she was a girl "trapped in the wrong body."[361] "When I was a little baby," she said, "I always used to be a girl, but my momma and dad didn't know that [because] I couldn't talk then."[362] Josie's parents have reread her early childhood in light of her claims, finding ample evidence of Josie's inner femininity. Josie had always preferred her sister's clothes and toys, and would play with them in stereotypically feminine ways, for instance, by breastfeeding her dolls. Moreover, her parents believe that Josie's gender dysphoria was at the root of her early childhood behavioral problems, which were so severe that she was prescribed over a dozen psychoactive drugs. Once she was able to live her life as a girl, Josie's tantrums and crying fits ceased, leading her parents to attribute her earlier psychic turmoil to gender dysphoria. Taken together, these factors led Josie's parents to read her as essentially feminine, and as suffering because she could not express that femininity. "She would cry out," her father claimed, "not in a way for food or I need my diaper changed. It was a different kind of cry... She was crying because she didn't like who she was. And she knew it."[363]

According to a variety of sources, including transgender education centers and the fifth edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual* (*DSM*-V), the main proxies by which parents can ascertain whether a child is "authentically" transgender are "consistent, persistent, and insistent" cross-gender identifications.[364] In both the DSM and in culturally prevalent discourses

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[361] "Living a Transgender Childhood," *Dateline NBC* and "Transgender Children," *The Tyra Banks Show*.
[362] "Transgender Children," *The Tyra Banks Show*.
[363] "Sex, Lies, and Gender," *National Geographic*.
[364] See Colt Meier, "Fact Sheet: Gender Diversity and Transgender Identity in Children," retrieved from http://www.apadivisions.org/division-44/resources/advocacy/transgender-children.pdf; "FAQ," retrieved from http://www.trans-parenting.com/understanding-gender/faq/; Steve Bressert, "Gender Dysphoria Symptoms," retrieved from http://psychcentral.com/disorders/gender-dysphoria-symptoms/; Human

of gender (which scholars have noted mutually influence each other), these traits reinforce one another; they do not work as effectively alone.[365] For instance, if Josie were not consistent in her gender identification, but oscillated between insistently being a boy and insistently being a girl, her parents may have perceived her claims as inauthentic, that is, as not arising from a "real" identity inside. This may be an extreme example, but it illustrates that persistent, sincere declaration is not on its own sufficient to convince others of the truth of one's identity.

These discourses provide the standards by which Josie's parents could assess the "truth" of her gender identity. By examining whether her claims were persistent and consistent, Josie's parents thought they could determine whether Josie's claims were the expression of a "truly feminine" self, or whether they were something else: a phase, or confusion, or something akin to what Bernard Williams calls "propositional moods"—sincere but inconstant assertions that seem subject to "the weather of the mind," and are thus too "unsteady" to be recognized as "truths" of the self.[366] Since Josie and her parents see her identification as early and continuous, they can counter the claim that she is going through a phase. In particular, they stress that she is not the male equivalent of "the tomboy"—that is, her femininity is not a phase she will grow out of once she matures. "Josie will change her mind on many issues in her life," her mother states. "Halfway through grad school she may switch her major... But her blood type will never change, and she'll always be female."[367]

Even though Josie's gender identification is in contradiction with the gender she was assigned at birth, her parents are able to recognize her "true self" because of all the ways it aligns with culturally widespread notions of femininity. "She has her own idea of what femininity is,"

Rights Campaign, "Transgender Children & Youth: Understanding the Basics," retrieved from http://www.hrc.org/resources/transgender-children-and-youth-understanding-the-basics
[365] Spade, "Mutilating Gender;" Butler, *Undoing Gender.*
[366] Bernard Williams, *Truth & Truthfulness: An essay in Genealogy* (Princeton: Princeton, 2002), p. 191.
[367] Quoted in Innes, "Meet Josie, 9."

her mother claims. "And she does pick up things from me. But she's unique."[368] Yet Josie's

femininity is not that unconventional. For one thing, Josie identifies as the "opposite" gender,

rather than a "different gender," thus retaining the binary frame.[369] And indeed, Josie seems

comfortable understanding herself and living her life in this frame. In each interview she gives,

Josie presents herself as unambiguously feminine: wearing skirts and rhinestones, preferring

dolls to trucks, and wanting everything in the color pink. When she imagines her future, she

describes growing breasts and becoming a mother. Her desires are so ordinary that her mother

claims, "Aside from the fact that Josie's transgender, she's not really all that different."[370] Josie

herself claims to feel like any other girl, so much so that she thinks her penis is a biological

mistake, "a birth defect."

Is it because Josie inhabits her femininity so fully and conventionally that her parents are

able to see her for who she "really" is? While binary gender produces the ground for binary

authenticity claims, enabling the term to be used to legitimate transitions to the opposite gender,

where does this leave those children who want to transition to a place outside the binary?

Compare Josie to those children who are considered gender nonconforming, "two-spirited," or

gender neutral, such children are never the subjects of these reports.[371] Gender nonconforming

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[368] "Living a Transgender Childhood," *Dateline NBC*.

[369] "The term opposite establishes permanent polarity, with no room to move between genders, to adopt characteristics of both male and female genders, or to identify as something else entirely." Matt Kailey, *Just Add Hormones: an insider's guide to the transsexual experience* (Boston: Beacon, 2005), p. 5. I take the distinction between opposite gender and different gender from Beemyn and Rankin, *The Lives of Transgender People,* p. ix.

[370] "Transgender Children," *The Tyra Banks Show*.

[371] "Twin-souled" or "two spirit" referred to individuals from Native American groups who had "knowledge of both male and female secrets." See Mildred L Brown and Chloe Ann Rounsley, *True Selves: Understanding Transsexualism* (San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 1996), p. 26; Mercedes Allen, "Trans-ing Gender: The Surgical Option," in *Gender Outlaws: The Next Generation,* ed. Bornstein and Bergman (Berkeley: Seal Press, 2010), p. 102. Innes's article on Josie Romero notes that Josie was a member of a group of Tuscon-area "gender variant children," that includes children who are neither transgender nor cis-gender, but rather "don't feel comfortable with traditional gender norms and labels."

children do not embrace a clear picture of male or female, and therefore cannot be described the way Venessia describes Josie, as "not really all that different." As I will suggest in the next section, gender nonconforming children, unlike Josie, may have more difficulty tapping into the cultural legibility and sanction behind conventional gender identities, and thus may require an alternative discourse to establish their gender identity as real, true, and deserving of protection. Josie's authenticity claims may broaden the category of "girl" by allowing other bodies to be assumed under it, but the ability for her identification to be read as "authentic" may rest on the prior legitimacy of conventional femaleness as an already culturally validated identity.

Apart from how she represents herself and her gender, Josie's claims to authenticity are bolstered by the fact that she articulates them with a clear and forceful certainty. When asked about how she knows she is a girl, Josie answers the interviewer's questions confidently and without pause.

> Interviewer: When you were little, did you feel like you were trapped in the wrong body?
> Josie: Yeah.
> Interviewer: How old do you think you were when you started feeling like that?
> Josie: When I... started to know?
> Interviewer: Yeah.
> Josie: Always. I always knew.[372]

Josie's claims are recognized as authenticity claims not only because of *what* they express—a picture of a stable, recognizably gendered self—but also because of *how* they are expressed, with the insistency and certainty of "here I stand, I can do no other." Yet we might ask here why Josie's insistence and certainty are so closely tied to judgments of her authentic self, as well as what type of knowledge these traits presume. What if Josie had wanted to wear female clothes, change her name, or be referred to with female pronouns? Could she attain those ends without making a strong claim about whether she really felt like girl, about the centrality and persistence

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See also Gary Bower, "An Entire Rainbow of Possibilities," in Leslie Feinberg, *Trans Liberation* (Boston: Beacon, 1998), p. 63-66; and Feinberg, *Transgender Warriors,* chapter 3.
[372] "Living a Transgender Childhood," *Dateline NBC*.

of her desires, or about the ultimate significance of them? And yet, would the absence of such justifications make it any more permissible to treat her desires as any less legitimate, or to push her towards a more masculine gender expression and identification?

While insistence and centrality are often taken to be essential to authenticity claims (in this discourse, if not others), it need not exhaust authenticity's meanings. Such a privileging may narrow the range of actions and identities that are validated as "authentic." One can imagine various cases in which what is authentic is not voiced in self-certain terms, or is not even felt with certainty. For instance, uncertainty about who one really is may be the most honest feeling one can have about oneself, particularly for a child still learning about herself and her world. Opening up the discourse in this way could allow authenticity to be associated with ambiguity, uncertainty, and experimentation. However, given the discursive fusing of authenticity and certainty here, if Josie related to her gender in a more tentative and curious way, or even in a more playful way, her claims would not likely be read as reflecting a true feminine self underneath. Rather, she might be read as going through a phase, as being confused, or as being unruly. Indeed, when Josie expresses uncertainty about her femininity, when she posits "Maybe I'm a boy inside and a girl outside," she inadvertently calls into question the centrality, even the existence, of her underlying feminine self.

Finally, there is a tendency to read appeals arising from transgender children as more genuine than their adult counterparts because such children are removed from power, sexuality, and political commitments, and thus "only" want to express who they are. This tendency points to an underlying cultural distrust over the use of authenticity claims. Such claims can be tremendously potent: for instance, whether she intends to or not, by appealing to the "truth" of her feminine self, Josie is able to change how her parents, teachers, and peers respond to her.

However, because of their potency, even Josie's claims are not entirely immune to doubt and scrutiny: one interviewer wonders whether she is trying to "rule[] the roost" by adopting a new gender identity: that is, whether she is trying to use her diagnosis of gender dysphoria to exercise control over her parents.[373] Similarly, some viewers of the interview wondered whether her desire to be a girl arose from feelings of sibling rivalry that emerged with the birth of her new sister, implying that Josie's desire to be a girl arose not from the inside, but as a response to an external event.[374]

Josie's case shows that authenticity claims are more likely to be accepted when the end goal is self-expression alone, and that they will be read with scrutiny if people suspect they are means to another end. Josie and her parents insist that her appeals to a true self derive solely from a desire to express her feminine identity, and her claim is strengthened, in part, because her age shields her from the charge that she is acting with ulterior motives.

Yet what, exactly, is framed as an ulterior motive, in opposition to (and corrosive of) an "authentic" one? Unlike transgender teens and adults, Josie is too young to have sexual intentions attributed to her. From trans-exclusionary radical feminists such as Janice Raymond and Shelia Jeffreys, to the recent spat of "bathroom bills," a variety of critics have challenged the genuineness of trans appeals to authenticity, claiming that such individuals may secretly harbor predatory sexual intentions, or that they are using their trans status to gain access to "all women's spaces."[375] Similarly, Josie is too young to be seen as having a "political agenda." Even

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[373] "Living a Transgender Childhood," *Dateline NBC*
[374] Walt Heyer, "Josie Romero, The Transgender Child," retrieved from http://waltheyer.typepad.com/blog/2012/07/josie-romero-the-transgender-child-datelines-hota-kotb-reports.html
[375] See Janice Raymond, *The Transsexual Empire: The Making of the She-Male* (Boston: Beacon, 1979) and Shelia Jeffreys, "Transgender Activism: A Lesbian Feminist Perspective," *Journal of Lesbian Studies,* 1:3/4, 1997. The controversies over non-discrimination laws and transgender bathrooms have been described in "For Transgender Americans, Legal Battles Over Restrooms." New York Times, July

though her parents have shared her story as a form of public outreach, Josie herself is portrayed as wanting only to be accepted for who she is.

By contrast, trans individuals who are vocal about their criticisms of gender norms or who are actively engaged in LGBTQ struggles risk having their gender identification perceived to be inauthentic. Dean Spade, for example, describes how he had to bracket his political commitments and history of gender activism when trying to convince his doctor that he was "really" transgender.

> "My project would be to promote sex reassignment, gender alteration, temporary gender adventure, and the mutilation of gender categories, via surgery, hormones, clothing, political lobbying, civil disobedience, or any other means available. But that political commitment itself, if revealed to the gatekeepers of my surgery, disqualifies me."[376]

Spade reports that when he would bring up his political commitments in therapy, his doctors would tell him to "stop intellectualizing," to get at what he was really feeling—as if his desire for transition was beyond his control, irrational, apolitical, and private. Such a reading of gender precludes more "political" ways of understanding Spade's transition: as elective, as a practice of gender self-determination, as a legitimate individual choice, as having implications on larger gendered orders. The fact that the "truth" of authenticity claims is called into question by the sexuality or political commitments of the appellants risks narrowing the range of "legitimate" authenticity appeals and entrenching them squarely in the private realm. It risks bolstering the assumption that the inner true self is devoid of politics, and that the presence of the latter undermines the credibility of the former. Moreover, it risks further depoliticizing authenticity appeals by requiring those who appeal to authenticity to disavow not only the existence of social

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27, 2015. This fear is prevalent enough that transgender activist organizations address it in their pamphlets. See Asaf Orr and Joel Baum, "Schools in Transition," retrieved from http://www.genderspectrum.org/staging/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/Schools-in-Transition-2015.pdf.
[376] Dean Spade, "Mutilating Gender," in *The Transgender Studies Reader,* ed. Stryker and Whittle (New York: Routledge, 2006), p. 321.

powers that bring into being the self, but also certain political commitments that may bring into being new worlds.

2. Essentialism and its Effects

Undoubtedly, many of the gender dysphoric children expressing these essentialist appeals to authenticity have alleviated their situations by doing so. By appealing to an inner and immutable true self, transgender children have been able to articulate their experiences of suffering and constraint in terms that are persuasive and more easily understood. Some scholars and activists believe that essentializing transgender as a medical condition is the best strategy in eliciting tolerance from non-transgender people.[377] These proponents claim that by equating transgender with a psychological condition that is biologically based rather than chosen, and beyond individual control, transgender individuals of all ages may improve their chances at attaining social tolerance—to say nothing of access to the medical and legal means of transitioning. These advantages are not insignificant for a population so undeniably vulnerable. Medical experts argue that when gender dysphoria is not appropriately treated, transgender children are at an increased risk for clinical depression and suicide. A nation-wide survey of transgender kids found that 75% of all respondents reported feeling unsafe at school, and about half had experienced harassment that they felt was due to their gender expression.[378] Various

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[377] Spade in "Mutilating Gender" and Butler in *Undoing Gender* both ultimately disagree with this point, but argue the case (p. 328-9). Spade compares these arguments to those advocating a disease model for addiction and homosexuality. See also Jonathan L. Koenig, "Distributive Consequences of the Medical Model," *Harvard Civil Rights-Civil Liberties Law Review,* Vol 46, 2011.

[378] Jody Marksamer, "A Place of Respect: A Guide for Group Care Facilities Serving Transgender and Gender Non-conforming Youth," (National Center for Lesbian Rights and Sylvia Rivera Law Center, 2011), retrieved from http://www.nclrights.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/A_Place_Of_Respect.pdf.

reports put transgender kids at a high risk for family rejection, homelessness, and juvenile delinquency.[379]

Yet the gains involved in such authenticity claims, as well as their seemingly common-sense character, may conceal some of their problematic effects. Recall that the standards by which the DSM gauges the "truth" of a child's cross-gender identifications are insistent, persistent, and consistent displays of cross-gender identification. What happens when these traits become proxies for the hidden "truth" of a child's gender? While these characteristics enable these transgender authenticity claims—by providing standards for determining whether a child is really, truly transgender—they might also foreclose other ways of understanding oneself and one's experiences. If Josie's parents evaluate the truth of her authenticity appeals against an ideal of consistency, for instance, then anything she says that contradicts or exceeds her prior claims might cause them to call into question who she really is.

However, the demand for a coherent narrative has its own costs: it can constrict how one presents one's life narrative, as well as how one relates to and understands oneself. It can also, as Judith Butler shows, inflict a type of "ethical violence" on the self who is compelled to "falsify" those parts of his or her narration that persistently elude or exceed narrative grasp.[380] For Butler, such a failure is inevitable, since an unconscious will always generate inassimilable and incoherent "truths" of the self. Even Josie, who is only ten, has identifications and desires that exceed the narrative she tells about herself, and by voicing these desires, she risks losing the

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[379] Orr and Baum, "Schools in Transition," p. 10; Caitlin Ryan, Stephen T. Russell, David Huebner, Rafael Diaz, and Jorge Sanchez, "Family Acceptance in Adolescence and the Health of LGBT Young Adults," Journal of Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Nursing 23.4 (2010): 205-213; Joel Baum, Stephanie Brill, Jay Brown, Alison Delpercio, Ellen Kahn, Lisa Kenney, and Anne Nicoll, "Supporting and Caring for our Gender Expansive Youth," Human Rights Campaign Foundation and Gender Spectrum, 2014, http://www.hrc.org/youth-gender
[380] Judith Butler, *Giving an Account of Oneself* (Bronx: Fordham, 2007), p. 42, 52, 64. I engage with this argument in much more detail in Chapter 4.

recognition she struggled to attain. Moreover, one is dependent upon contingent and changing norms to make sense of one's life and oneself; over time, these norms may no longer fit as well as they once did or may take on new meanings—a tomboy, for instance, may find she better identifies as a butch lesbian as she grows into herself, who may find that *he* better identifies as a trans man as the category becomes available to him.[381] Does the existence of these former identities nullify the "truth" of the others, or might they be used to cast doubt on the permanence and fixity of gender?

It is also worth asking why the acceptance of Josie's female self is predicated on the idea that her gender identity is a fixed part of herself, beyond social molding and influence. Imagine the counterfactual: if we could determine that Josie's desire to become a girl had social origins, or that it could be traced back to some particular event in her life, would that excuse her parents from taking her claims seriously? If it were revealed that her gender identity was not fixed, would that make it acceptable for teachers to compel her to wear male clothing to school? While invoking a picture of an immutably gendered self may help children resist compulsory gender performances, we, as adults, might want to ask why such immutability matters in deciding whether forced conformity to gender norms is warranted.

Josie's appeals, like many transgender children's, implicitly claim that what makes someone a man or a woman is one's feeling of being so, and that the truth of the self is located at the register of feeling rather than the body. Such appeals have the potential to open up the category of "woman" by pluralizing the bases of authenticity claims to include one's gender identification, gender imaginary, and feelings of embodiment—a constellation of inner states that

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[381] See Beemyn and Rankin, *The Lives of Transgender People,* p. 109; William Connolly, *Identity\Difference* (Minnesota: Minnesota, 1993), p. 22; Butler, *Undoing Gender,* p. 80. "Life histories are histories of becoming and categories can sometimes act to freeze that process of becoming."

Gayle Salamon calls a "felt sense."[382] Yet in order to establish this felt sense as a rival base for authenticity claims, transgender individuals may feel compelled to render it as permanent and as certain as the body. Recall how Josie portrays herself as always having known she was a girl, even before she could speak or communicate it to her parents; or how her mother believes that Josie's femininity is as fixed and unchosen as her blood type. Both of these claims attempt to endow Josie's gender identification with the permanence and immutability that her body is thought to have, and render her mind as being as far from social alteration as her body.

A "felt sense" may be a helpful notion in formulating a non-essentialist authenticity claim, but I want to caution against two possible ways of deploying it.[383] First, while it has become common and culturally recognized for trans persons to appeal to a felt sense, what they appeal to is neither universally had nor felt.[384] "How do we construct and recognize a particular state as feeling like a woman?" asks Ricki Wilchins. "While one can *be* any of these things [ugly, fat, tall, like a woman], what can it mean to *feel* them as well?"[385] What feels clear and undeniable to someone like Josie may be experienced as puzzling or absent to others. Some of the most prominent trans writers have claimed that they never experienced the sense of "being" a particular gender. Julia Serano wrote that she had never felt like a woman before her transition, and that she was transitioning in order to attain a feeling of comfort in her own body, rather than

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[382] Gayle Salamon, *Assuming a Body* (New York: Columbia, 2003).

[383] Importantly, this is not a criticism of Salamon, who emphatically does not do this, but rather, a reflection of a trend in contemporary discourse to refer to certain experience that trans individuals have, ("trapped in the wrong body," "born a boy" etc) and universalize them to other trans individuals.

[384] Joanne Meyerowitz historicizes the transsexual use of a felt sense, which she describes as "an unshakable sense of an authentic inner self," "a deeply rooted sense of who they were," and a "core identity" by showing how it became popularized in the 1960s, when it became the dominant metaphor to summarize cross-gender identification. See *How Sex Changed* (Cambridge: Harvard, 2002), 138-139.

[385] Wilchins, *Read my Lips,* p. 142.

to express an already existing feminine feeling.[386] Similarly, Kate Bornstein only experienced this "felt sense" negatively.

> I've no idea what "a woman" feels like. I never did feel like a girl or a woman; rather, it was my unshakable conviction that I was not a boy or a man. It was the absence of a feeling, rather than its presence, that convinced me to change my gender. [387]

Though Bornstein describes this as "the absence of a feeling," the feeling that is absent seems to be a positive feeling, that is, the feeling of femininity, or of "being a woman." Yet Bornstein's "unshakeable conviction" that she is neither a boy nor a man may also be described as a felt sense, albeit a negative one. That is, how else could Bornstein *know* she is not a man, in the way she describes it above, if not through a kind of inner *feeling,* albeit a feeling that one is *not* something, rather than that one is? And this is to say nothing of the intersectional claim that one's feeling of being a gender is inextricably tied to one's race, sexuality, class, age, and more. Recognizing that not everyone will have the feeling of *being* a particular gender is crucial, so that such a feeling is not privileged as the sole basis for transgender authenticity claims. To assume the givenness of a felt sense is to risk replicating the injuries that occur when anatomy or biology is framed as the sole authenticating source—namely, by casting those who do not feel it as inauthentic in some way, as not really a woman, or not really trans, or not properly relating to one's gender. Universalizing this felt sense may also be inadvertently depoliticizing. Such a claim may seem counterintuitive: insofar as they claim to speak on behalf of *all* bearers of an identity, appeals to authenticity may gain political traction precisely because they seek to specify the ground of femininity, blackness, or culture.[388] But in treating the authentic self as a pre-social

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[386] Serano, *Whipping Girl,* p. 216.

[387] Kate Bornstein, *Gender Outlaw,* (New York: Routledge, 1994)*,* p. 24.

[388] This point has been made in different domains by different scholars. Some brief examples should suffice. See Michel Foucault, *History of Sexuality, Vol One* (New York: Pantheon, 1978), discussed in detail in chapter 3, as to how discourse creates the sense of an inner, authentic sexuality, one that is seemingly beyond power and individual social molding. See Ford, *Racial Culture* as to how discourse

essence, experienced by all, one risks obscuring the social and political discourses that constitute these identities.

Moreover, there is something troubling about the way these authenticity appeals cast this felt sense as beyond power, discourse and language. As Salamon argues, to claim that a body is "socially constructed" is not only to say that how we conceptualize bodies varies according to place, culture, and time. It is also to say that "what we feel about our bodies is just as 'constructed' as what we think about them."[389] Even though this sense may be experienced as arising entirely from the body, uninfluenced by individual and social molding, it is still linguistically contained and discursively shaped: one's deeply entrenched feelings of masculinity and femininity always arise in a context of culturally specific categories of what male and female are. That is, what we feel about our bodies will always be conditioned and constrained by what we can say, think, or imagine about them.

I will illustrate this point by examining two contemporary discourses that construct the felt sense in transgender appeals to authenticity. These discourses are certainly not exhaustive, and may overlap and intersect with one another, but I have chosen two that I think have impacted the ways adults receive and evaluate appeals from transgender kids. The first is a discourse of selfhood that Cressida Heyes calls "the somatic individual."[390] According to Heyes, this discourse treats the individual as having an inside and an outside, in which the inside is "an a priori truth about the individual," and the outside is the body. In this discourse, what is inside the

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creates the idea of an authentic black culture in the domain of US race relations, and how this takes focus away from issues of racial injustice and racism, and focuses it on an apolitical "culture." See Joan Scott, *The Politics of the Veil* (Princeton: Princeton, 2007) for how a similar dynamic emerges with the construction of Muslim culture in French debates about the *hijab*.

[389] Salamon, *Assuming a Body,* p. 76.

[390] Cressida Heyes, *Self Transformations: Foucault, Ethics, and Normalized Bodies* (New York: Oxford, 2007).

self must be made manifest on the outside.[391] This *must* is both ontological (whoever one is on the "inside" will necessarily express itself on the surface of the body) and ethical (one's body *should* manifest who one really is). By altering the body to reflect what's inside, the somatic individual can more truthfully express herself and elicit more genuine recognition.[392] While Heyes examines this notion in a transgender context—in which practices of bodily modification include sexual reassignment surgery and hormone replacement therapy—she shows that this discourse of selfhood also operates in practices frequently undertaken by cis-gender individuals, such as dieting and cosmetic surgery.

Popularly, the image of the somatic individual is used to articulate experiences of misrecognition and constraint, of being "trapped in the wrong body." It promotes the idea that altering the body will end those painful moments of misrecognition that occur when one's body does not reflect the "truth" of who one is. Yet in practice, such a notion may exacerbate the very suffering it hopes to relieve, since the "inner truths" one hopes to make manifest on the body often replicate the unattainable ideals promoted by disciplinary norms.[393] Since these ideals are so deeply felt, desired, and internalized, individuals may not see them as "coming from the outside:" that is, as circulated by historically and culturally specific discourses. However, as Heyes claims, these inner truths often take "hackneyed and stultifying narrative forms" (5):

> the dieter is a moderate, well-disciplined, and hardworking person, whose moral character deserves to be read from her slender form; the recipient of cosmetic surgery is 'beautiful inside' and wants to be received by others as an attractive and desirable individual.[394]

What these "inner selves" have in common is that they conform to, rather than challenge or extend, conventional ideals of slenderness, beauty, and gender. This might be an ethically neutral

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[391] Heyes, *Self-Transformations*, p. 36
[392] Heyes, *Self-Transformations*, p. 32
[393] Heyes, *Self-Transformations*, p. 5, 23.
[394] Heyes, *Self-Transformations*, p. 22-23

phenomenon but for the fact that when individuals fail to meet these ideals (and who can help but fail?), they may punish themselves for it. The reports on Josie make clear that it will never be enough for her to simply "feel" like a girl, dress like a girl, or gain recognition as a girl. What she so badly wants is for her body to manifest its inner girl-ness. So strong is this desire that her parents have had to warn her of the dangers of performing "surgery" on herself—a worry that they have had since walking in on Josie in the bathroom looking contemplatively at a pair of scissors. Standing in front of the mirror, searching for signs that her body is starting to change, Josie tells a reporter that she dreads the onset of puberty, the moment at which her body will begin to "betray" her. [395]

Another discourse that shapes the felt sense of gender arises from what Spade calls "the medical model of transsexuality." This model, encoded in the *DSM,* treats transsexuality as the manifestation of a medical condition, gender dysphoria, and bases its diagnosis on whether the patient's childhood, sexuality, and life narrative conform to conventional, yet opposite, gender norms. Spade argues that we should see this medical model as a discourse: it is not simply describing an already existing group of people who are transgender, but through this description, it brings them into being—it "produces knowledge, categories, and identities that manage and regulate behavior."[396] For instance, a "symptom" of gender dysphoria in children is "stereotypically inappropriate gender behavior," which is distinguishable (albeit without specifying how) from "normal" gender nonconformity. In this way, the medical model establishes a norm in which those who adhere to stereotypical gender presentation have a "healthy" and "natural" gender, while those who do not are measured by how far, and in what ways, they deviate from the norm. In particular, the medical model establishes the fiction of

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[395] According to Beemyn and Rankin, many of the transgender respondents to their survey felt that their body "betrayed" them during puberty. See *The Lives of Transgendered People,* p. 48-9.
[396] Spade, "Mutilating Gender," p. 318.

"normal healthy gender," treats adherence to gender norms as natural, fortunate, and healthy, and stigmatizes those who do not adhere as pathological, "ill, sick, wrong, out of order, abnormal."[397] Thus, the norm of healthy gender acts as a regulatory mechanism, in which a generalized account of gender transgression encourages doctors, parents, and teachers to seek out transgressive behavior, monitor and speculate upon it, and in doing so, "keep[] both non transsexuals and transsexual in adherence to their roles."[398]

This discourse also regulates transgender adults. Transgender individuals who want access to hormone replacement therapy or sexual reassignment surgery must persuade doctors and psychiatrists that they conform to the medical model of transsexuality. These "gatekeepers" will only authorize treatment to patients once they "prove… membership in the category 'transsexual,'" which they determine by examining the extent to which one's childhood, sexuality, and physical presentation conforms to conventional gender norms.[399] Medical professionals also refuse to perform surgeries that "do not yield membership in a normative gender role." Spade acknowledges that many people's experiences will map onto this depiction, since the medical model is culturally prevalent and thus able to shape the self-understandings of individuals, both trans and non-trans alike. However, when doctors require trans individuals to prove they are "true transsexuals," some individuals will be compelled to lie, to reshape their account of themselves, or to omit details of their biography that do not map onto such narratives, lest they lose access to treatment. This has a huge impact on those who want to transition to places outside of the binary and those who do not understand their transitions as issuing from

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[397] This quote comes from Butler, *Undoing Gender,* p. 76; see also Spade, "Mutilating Gender," p. 329.
[398] Spade, "Mutilating Gender," p. 317.
[399] Spade, "Mutilating Gender," p. 329; Serano, *Whipping Girl,* p. 136-138.

medical necessity: they are cast as "deviant" and denied aid in transitioning until and unless they conform.

Lastly, these appeals may foreclose other identities from gaining recognition and cultural legibility because they are not seen as "authentic." Not only are appeals to authenticity used to adjudicate debates about who is an "authentic" woman or trans person, but they may also be used to adjudicate which ways of life will be seen as valuable and as deserving of respect. Thus, while appealing to an authentic self may bring certain marginalized identities, like the "true transsexual," to the threshold of legitimacy, they may simultaneously render other identities less significant—as phases to be overcome, as aberrations of the norm.

Indeed, some philosophers see this not only as an unavoidable effect of authenticity claims, but a desirable one at that. According to Charles Taylor and Charles Guignon, for instance, all individuals are embedded in "horizons of significance" that provide and limit the array of meanings, life choices, and identities that will be recognized as valuable, as expressions of an authentic self. [400] For instance, when Josie uses the language of authenticity to gain recognition of a hidden, inner femininity, her gender identity is more easily recognized as authentic because it upholds an image of femininity that her culture already deems valuable: one that is conventional, abiding, and posited as the "truth" of her being. However, such horizons of significance must, by definition, deem other identities less meaningful. While both scholars recognize that the norms constituting such horizons are contingent from culture to culture, they do not ask whether and where they generate unwarranted exclusions. To illustrate an extreme case of being outside the horizon of significance, Taylor gives the example of someone who

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[400] Charles Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity* (Cambridge: Harvard, 1992), p. 35-41; Charles Guignon, *On Being Authentic* (New York: Routledge, 2004), p. 70, 80-81.

wants to be recognized for having 3,732 hairs on his head.[401] Taylor treats this example as an

obvious limit case; it is unintelligible to most people why this person would want to define

herself in this way, rendering this identification "trivial." Yet he does not account for those

individuals who are at the borders or the threshold of this horizon, such as people who want to

express a gender that is "beyond language," or relate to their gender in ways that are not

prevalently seen as meaningful. Nor does he recognize how being relegated to the margins of

significance may render one stigmatized, deviant, or vulnerable because they are hypervisible.

While Josie's appeals broaden the range of bodies able to fit into these categories, and in doing

so challenge the boundaries of them, it is unclear whether they will reach so far as to bestow

value on those bodies and identities that have less cultural sanction, that exist on the margins of

significance.

3. Authenticity Without Essentialism

In their more essentialized forms, appeals to authenticity may be potent and compelling,

but they may also harbor inadvertent and overlooked effects. In the context of transgender

children seeking to become the gender they feel they truly are, these appeals may exacerbate the

very suffering they hope to overcome; they may disseminate constraining and narrow standards

of evaluation; they may encourage a false presentation of self in order to elicit rights and

recognition; they may deem certain identities as less real and less valuable. However, it is too

much to ask children to produce a different discourse than the one they are using. Their

environments are so saturated by discourses of authenticity and gender that they cannot help but

absorb them. Like Josie, some of these children pick up the language of authenticity as early as

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[401] Taylor, *Ethics of Authenticity,* p. 36.

age three. Not only are these essentialist formulations incredibly compelling, but they may also help these kids escape coercive gender performances and navigate a world that is often hostile to their very existence. And while their claims may not represent the truth of gender, they almost certainly represent (even as they give rise to) the truth of how these children feel.

Since appeals to authenticity are unlikely to recede from popular discourse and may help subjects who are struggling with who they are, it is worth considering what a counter discourse to these appeals would look like. Is there a way that adults could read and articulate authenticity claims that might alter the discursive conditions in which these kids might find themselves? Such a counter discourse could open up the term authenticity for ends and identities that were previously foreclosed, minimize its delegitimizing effects, and circulate alternative understandings of gender that depart from the idea that it is hidden, true, and immutable.[402] In offering a counter discourse that reconfigures the connections between gender, authenticity, and self-knowledge, I want to emphasize how all counter-discourses emerge out of and in response to existing discourses, and that like the discourses they seek to re-map, the terms of a counter-discourse may be in tension with one another. In the case of Josie, I've argued that two discourses in particular inform her appeals to authenticity: namely the somatic individual and a medical discourse on transsexuality. Other appeals to authenticity will be implicated in different discourses; for instance, some may be implicated in a discourse on racial culture, or phoniness,

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[402] Here, I adopt Foucault's notion of "reverse discourse" from *History of Sexuality, Volume One.* He writes that the emergence of discourses on homosexuality in the nineteenth century "made possible the formation of a reverse discourse: homosexuality began to speak in its own behalf, to demand that its legitimacy or 'naturality' be acknowledged, often in the same vocabulary, using the same categories by which it was medically disqualified" (101).

or universalism, and so while some of my reframings may be extended to other appeals, others will not map on in the same way. [403]

First, authenticity claims need not treat the self as a pre-social kernel. Not only is such treatment ontologically suspect (since it ignores the constitutive impact of power, discourse, history) and not only is it politically risky (as it may be used to constrain and marginalize others), but it also risks privatizing and depoliticizing suffering by treating that suffering as insulated from political and social causes. Take for example the medical discourse on authenticity, which encourages transsexuals to establish the "truth" of their gender identity while simultaneously framing this "truth" as arising from an individual illness or pathology. As Spade shows, this deployment of authenticity forecloses the possibility that transitioning could be a political choice, "a commentary on the inhabitability of dichotomized gender," one that could potentially call attention to the ways normative gender orders establish constraints, inflict violence, render certain lives unlivable (326). Or, take for example how the gender dysphoria diagnosis precludes "a desire for any perceived cultural advantages of being the other sex." Such a regulation assumes that children could learn about gender without learning about a gender hierarchy, privileges, or "advantages;" it also assumes that a desire to overcome gender disadvantages does not count as a legitimate reason for wanting to change one's gender.[404] Bracketing these concerns may indeed have anti-feminist effects, as it requires that one stay silent on issues of gender rigidity and assumes that cultural advantages and privileges are distributed evenly across the gender binary.[405] Put otherwise, trans appeals to authenticity show that while invoking

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[403] Ford, *Racial Culture;* Shulamith Firestone, *The Dialectic of Sex* (1970); "The Port Huron Statement" (1963).

[404] Butler in *Undoing Gender* problematizes these advantages by saying that it is less that one gender or sex has all the advantages, but rather that certain genders and certain practices are permitted only by certain gendered bodies. See p.

[405] Spade, "Mutilating Gender."

authenticity can be used to further the aims of self-expression, the norms undergirding what counts as self-expression may be private and depoliticizing. In this way, recognizing the constructedness of the self need not make these appeals less compelling; rather, it may render the constitution of that self a site for political work.

Second and relatedly, authenticity claims need not promote notions of "the true transsexual" or "natural gender," but could be used to articulate the importance of gender autonomy and self-determination. Again, I am not advocating that the diagnosis for gender dysphoria be disposed of at this time. Even scholars who are critical of the medical model concede that it is the only existing means for poor, working class, and middle class trans people in the United States to afford the exorbitant costs of medical treatment and change in legal status.[406] However, treating transsexuality as the result of a true, unchosen, yet pathologized self forecloses treating it as a "practice of self-determination," and as "one among many human possibilities of determining one's gender for oneself."[407] For the time being, transgender individuals who have wanted access to surgery, hormones, and other sex-change technologies have had to deploy the former set of authenticity claims even when they have sometimes felt or believed the latter.

By departing from the medical model, and introducing alternative ways of conceptualizing and justifying transition, transsexuality could shift from being a pathology that must be corrected to being a valid and authentic choice. Judith Butler offers some alternative reframings here, demonstrating how transitioning could be supported on the grounds that it enables one to flourish, to combat the fear, shame, and paralysis that arises from one's gender

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[406] Butler, *Undoing Gender,* p. 75, 92. Given the way medical treatment and insurance in the US is established, it is unlikely that insurance would even cover the costs of sex-change technologies unless it is cast as medically necessitated, the remedy for a disorder.

[407] Butler, *Undoing Gender,* p. 76; Bornstein, *Gender Outlaw;* Feinberg, *Trans Liberation.*

identification, to form close ties on a more honest footing, to alleviate suffering, to express one's

fundamental sense of self.[408] Of course, these choices are never made outside of social

institutions, shared practices, and culturally specific discourses that condition such choices, that

make possible some ways of life and not others. And, as Cressida Heyes points out, it would be a

mistake to view this self as a totally autonomous subject, unfettered from one's time and place as

well as one's entrenched desires, habits, identifications. [409] Departing from the medical model

fosters the possibility that desires for transition will be treated as legitimate and important, that

they will be seen as the unpathological basis for a choice to transition, and that transitioning

itself will be seen as a worthy form of life.

Third, we could imagine alternative ways of connecting authenticity and embodiment that

do not rely on a notion of the somatic individual. As we have seen, while this discourse has

enabled children to resist compulsory gender performances and elicit recognition of the gender

they feel they are, it may inadvertently encourage them to fear and loathe their bodies. How

could we generate a discourse that would counter the idea that we can (and should) read the truth

of the self off the skin of the body? What kind of discourse would fruitfully loosen the

connection between authenticity and bodily self-congruence?

One way of rethinking this picture of selfhood is to shift the goal of transition away from

attaining a particular body or gender and toward attaining a feeling of comfortable embodiment.

This is not to say that the two are mutually exclusive, or that bodily modification should be

foregone—rather, it is to loosen the link between feeling like a gender and unambiguously

embodying it. In both popular discourse and the medical discourse on transsexuality, there is a

sense that a gender transition proceeds through set stages towards an agreed-upon end: usually

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[408] Butler, *Undoing Gender,* p. 92.

[409] This is Heyes's critique of Kate Bornstein and Leslie Feinberg in particular, see *Self-Transformations,*
p. 51-56.

fully "passing" into the "opposite" gender and attaining sexual reassignment surgery.[410] Rather than adopt a "stage" model, Beemyn and Rankin offer a "milestone model," in which the end goal is not a particular body per se but instead a feeling of "wholeness." Importantly, Beemyn and Rankin do not understand "wholeness" as attaining a body that is the image of one's ideal. Rather, it involves a combination of integrity and comfort— maintaining a sense of who one is, even though one's body, upbringing and experience may differ from other women or men, and even though one might be recognized by others as having been assigned a different gender at birth.[411] That is, the end goal is not a particular body and corresponding way of being seen, but rather, attaining feelings of comfort, acceptance, and completeness with regard to one's body. Beemyn and Rankin recognize that such feelings could be achieved through various different paths—paths which may or may not include hormones or surgery, and which will not all lead to bodies that resemble one another.

Countering the discourse of the somatic individual may reduce the suffering of those who cannot make their bodies reflect what they feel themselves to be, as well as those who do not desire to visibly adhere to gendered norms. However, this argument is not meant to criticize those who desire hormone replacement therapy, sexual reassignment surgery, or any other sex change technologies. Rather, it is to open the space for those who may neither want to nor are able to look like exemplary adherents to the norm, and simultaneously, to loosen the hold of the norm on trans and non-trans people alike.

Fourth, appeals to authenticity need not uphold normative pictures of what makes a "real woman" but could, instead, pluralize and alter this idea. As Heyes and certain transgender writers show, part of our discomfort with our gendered embodiment arises from norms that

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[410] Frank Lewins, *Transsexualism in society: A sociology of male-to-female transsexuals* (Melbourne: Macmillan, 1995); Anne Bolin, *In Search of Eve* (South Hadley, MA: Bergen, 1988).
[411] Beemyn and Rankin, *The Lives of Transgender People,* p. 156.

specify what a "real woman" and a "real man" should look like.[412] Jacob Hale distinguishes between two senses in which the idea of a "real woman" is used: first, in expressing approval or disapproval (in the way a paper plate is not a "real plate"), and second, in determining whether something belongs in a category or not (in the way copper is not "real gold"). In the latter case, when determining whether someone is a woman, Hale shows that there is no single or necessary criteria, but rather, a range of defining characteristics that make one a woman—including biological markers, (hetero)sexuality, gender attribution, and gender identity.[413] Part of why the somatic individual is so persuasive is because the biological markers of womanhood are more heavily weighted in determining whether one is within the norm of "woman;" whereas other characteristics, such as "occupation" or "leisure pursuits," function to determine how closely one adheres to the norm.

Appeals to authenticity can counter this trend by pluralizing the "authenticating sources" that make one a woman: by recognizing in speech (as we already do in practice) that what makes a woman is not simply one trait, but a constellation of characteristics, none of which on its own can guarantee membership in the category. Such appeals could very well open up the category of "woman" by giving added weight to inner sense and feeling—by claiming, for instance, that one's gender imaginary and gender identification should weigh as much, if not more, than one's biology or gender role. Such a weighting may open up the category of woman to those who identify but have been heretofore denied recognition; moreover, it may also reduce the normalizing effects on those who have been excluded from being "real women" for not adhering to particular gender norms.

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[412] Serano, *Whipping Girl;* Bornstein, *Gender Outlaws;* Wilchins, *Read My Lips.*

[413] Jacob Hale, "Are Lesbians Women?," in *The Transgender Studies Reader.* Hale intends for his arguments to only extend to the contemporary US, and recognizes that in other cultures, places, and times what determines gender will be different.

Fifth, a reverse discourse can counter some of the restrictive and marginalizing effects of these appeals by invoking authenticity to usher new identities into existence. Such a suggestion seems counterintuitive, since notions of a "true gender" and a "true identity" have often cast others as mere impersonations of the real.[414] Indeed, a risk of invoking notions of authenticity is that bearers of hegemonic identities will use them to cast their identities as intrinsically and exclusively true, as the sole bearers of what is good, necessary and natural. As William Connolly rightly notes, this way of deploying authenticity can thwart the politics of becoming—the process by which an emergent identity crystallizes and crosses the threshold of legitimacy, in turn altering how already established identities see themselves.[415]

However, there might be other ways of invoking a true self that may aid the politics of becoming, particularly notions of truth and selfhood that forego claims to being the sole or necessary truth, and posit, instead, a deeply entrenched contingency that has become fundamental to oneself. Connolly acknowledges that these entrenched contingencies come to "feel" like "deep truths" in that they have become central to a person's sense of self and resistant to modification. Yet the recognition that something is true or central to oneself need not entail positing the other as false or marginal. Instead, one could come to recognize that plural "truths" exist, that they constitute what is fundamental for the thriving of other individuals or groups, and that they need not be posited as exclusive, necessary, universal or beyond contingency in order to be true. Engaging the experience of having a true self, and imagining analogous experiences to others quite different from oneself, may foster the civic virtue that Connolly calls critical responsiveness, which is an openness to altering the terms of one's own self-recognition in order

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[414] Butler, "Imitation and Gender Insubordination;" Connolly, *Identity\Difference,* p.
[415] See William Connolly, *Why I Am Not a Secularist* (Minneapolis: Minnesota, 1999), p. 10-11 and chapter 2, as well as the 2002 preface to *Identity\Difference,* p. xxviii. In *The Ethos of Pluralization* (Minneapolis: Minnesota, 1995), Connolly describes this using the language of the politics of enactment, see p. 190-193.

to facilitate the crystallization of emergent identities.[416] In other words, the experience of one's identity as intrinsic but contestable may be mined in order to extend empathy to emergent identities attempting to cross the threshold of legitimacy.

Finally, there might be other ways of appealing to authenticity that reduce the reliance on a felt sense, or that expands the range of feelings and choices that come under the term "authentic." Josie, like many of the other transgender children depicted in the media, parses her claims in the form of what I call a positive appeal to authenticity. Positive appeals tend to specify the ground of an identity—an inner "authenticating" source—and the type of relationship one ought to assume to that source. For instance, Josie claims that her true self is feminine: on that basis she wants to express and develop her feminine self (through attire, choice of toys) rather than hide it; she wants to actualize her feminine self (through growing breasts and becoming a mother) rather than stifle it; and she wants others to recognize her as the girl she knows she is. In each of these illustrations, the truth of Josie's feminine self prescribes how she and others should best preserve, develop, and actualize it.

It may be tempting to describe these positive appeals as essentialist, but they need not be. As our engagement with Connolly showed, a deeply entrenched contingency may come to feel like an "intrinsic truth," even if it was produced by power, discourse, or life accident. Yet its ultimate status or permanence need not make it any less crucial to one's sense of self, or any less fundamental to one's thriving. And as we have already considered with regard to Josie, regardless of whether her gender identity could be molded or pressed into conformance, its malleability would not make such external coercion any more warranted. Even Butler, who in earlier works described how manufactured and fictive gender is, recognizes how important the

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[416] See Connolly, *Identity\Difference,* p. xviii-xxix; *The Ethos of Pluralization,* xv-xix, 64-72, 92, 180-188; *Why I Am Not a Secularist,* p. 16, 62-68.

experience of inhabiting one's gender can be, "how essential becoming a gender is to one's very sense of personhood, one's sense of well being, one's possibility to flourish as a bodily being."[417] A positive appeal to authenticity can be anti-essentialist if it takes as its truth something that is fundamental yet contestable, contingent yet central to one's integrity, impermanent but necessary for one's thriving in the here and now.

These positive appeals do not necessarily foreclose other ways of understanding and appealing to authenticity; but they may occlude the possibility of invoking authenticity in a more negative or indirect way. One need not rely on positive notions of selfhood to describe threats to the integrity of the self, experiences of constraint, or the desire to become something other than whom one currently is. An alternative framing to positive appeals might be more honest to the experiences of those who shift across categories during their lives. I describe these appeals as negative appeals.

Negative appeals to authenticity depart from this form in at least two ways. First, negative appeals often do not specify who one is, but focus on who one is not. For example, nearly a hundred respondents to Beemyn and Rankin's survey reported that language did not fully capture their gender identity: they knew they were not male or female, but they did not specify what this then made them.[418] Or recall Bornstein's claim that "it was the absence of a feeling, rather than its presence, that convinced me to change my gender." These claims do not give us positive truths of the self as much as negative truths: that certain gendered performances are experienced as unwanted, coercive, alien. Secondly, rather than emphasizing how the self can be developed or actualized, negative appeals detail and seek to overcome experiences of inauthenticity, whether in the form of fragmentation, a distorted self-relation, falseness, or

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417 Butler, *Undoing Gender,* p. 100.
418 Beemyn and Rankin, *The Lives of Transgender People,* p. 1

constraint. They emphasize the processes that render the self as inauthentic: for instance, through misrecognition or non-recognition, through enforced conformity to gender roles or the stigmatization of who one is. While these claims may presume a notion of authenticity—in the way that sickness presupposes something like health—they leave such a notion underdefined.

These two forms of appealing to authenticity are not mutually exclusive, but rather, they represent two opposing tendencies in how authenticity appeals are framed. Yet positive appeals tend to eclipse negative appeals in popular discourse, to the extent that negative appeals are rarely recognized *as* authenticity claims: they are rarely portrayed in the media, are not encoded in the *DSM*, and do not have the political legibility and potency of more positive appeals to authenticity. However, this way of invoking authenticity may more truthfully describe how one understands and feels about oneself, and when such appeals are minimized or foreclosed, they are met with less cultural validity and recognition.

Moreover, one's reluctance to embrace the terms culturally available may suggest a problem in one's world rather than in oneself. That is, one's reluctance to transition, or to identify as trans, cannot be understood independently of the norms that render transsexuality a pathology, a marker of stigma. One's dis-identification from male or female cannot be isolated from the relative rigidity of these norms, their content, and meaning. A negative appeal to authenticity may indicate that the range of possible, inhabitable gendered lives is too narrow, that our collective gender imaginary too impoverished.[419] Even if negative appeals to authenticity lack the force of "here I stand, I can do (or be) no other," even if they do not specify the "I" that is standing or the ground upon which it stands, such appeals may be more honest than their

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[419] Butler, *Undoing Gender,* p. 94-95; Spade, "Mutilating Gender," p. 329.

positive counterparts, may reveal just as much in terms of the nature of social power and its workings, and may be politically potent in their own ways.

4. Conclusion

In this chapter, I've suggested that authenticity could contribute to a counter discourse that could open up gender in non-binary ways. To illustrate how such a discourse could disclose new possibilities and inaugurate new understandings of oneself and one's world, recall that we began with the scene in which Josie told her mother that she was not sure she was a girl, but that she might be "a boy inside"—that is, maybe she is not really transgender after all. How might this counter discourse enable us to reinterpret this scene, and how might it equip Josie with new strategies in negotiating it?

To begin, such a discourse might relax the expectation that Josie will fully adhere to a single gender norm, whether male or female. Spade suggests that to view transgender as the identity that contains all gender distress and exploration is to treat cross-gender behavior and identification in non-trans kids as foreclosed possibilities.[420] Yet what if we believed that transgressing sexual and gender norms was always a possibility, for both trans and non-trans people alike? Such a counter discourse might diminish the threat of diagnosis and stigmatization that currently accompanies "failed performances" of gender. If Josie felt as if her doubts about her gender and her narrative were not pathological, perhaps she (and others) might be more willing to express those moments of contradiction and incoherence, to avow them, and to relate to them without shame and regret.

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[420] Spade, "Mutilating Gender," p. 319.

An alternative discourse may confer legitimacy to a wider range of gender expressions than what is currently deemed acceptable, including those that go beyond the grammar of male and female. While authenticity is often used to exhort a faithfulness to one's roots, the discourse suggested here would seek to loosen the link between the gender one is assigned and the gender one can become. In other words, appeals to authenticity could be used to keep open-ended both the identity of "woman" as well as the possibility of other identifications—whether those that are being embodied and lived or those that are emergent and futural. Doing so might reduce the demand for self-congruence that is often associated with authenticity claims, as well as the notion of the somatic individual that accompanies it. If Josie is provided the space to explore her gender in playful and creative ways, rather than encouraged to consistently express it and legibly manifest it on her body, she might be more comfortable with those moments of dissonance and incoherence—moments that, again, emerge in all children. If these behaviors and identifications are not immediately cast as "failed performances," she may come to find them as more comfortable, and perhaps more authentic, places in between the norms; places that she can inhabit, explore, and potentially thrive.

There is a risk that by encouraging an openness and suspension of judgment in evaluating Josie's gendered declarations and behavior that her claims might not be taken seriously. After all, if her parents did not believe that Josie's female identification was an abiding and integral part of herself, they might not have been as willing to change her name, allow her to attend school in feminine clothes, or consider hormone treatment. Yet negative appeals to authenticity may act as an effective bulwark here. Just because one suspends judgment about who Josie is, or who she might become, does not mean that one should neglect Josie's appeals *not* to be called a boy, or wear male clothes, or play with male toys. One can recognize the importance of the integrity of

Josie's self, and the importance of not compromising that integrity by a coerced gender

performance, without making claims as to the ultimate status or permanence of that self.

CONCLUSION
W(h)ither Authenticity?

"The worst injury is feeling you don't belong so much to you." –Claudia Rankine, *Citizen*

This dissertation has examined the political potential of appeals to authenticity by examining certain works of political theory and various discourses in which the politics of authenticity operated or continues to operate. By arguing that reformulated discourses of authenticity may help construct more emancipatory futures, this project differs from much of the existing work being done on authenticity today. As discussed in the introduction, over the past four decades, thinkers from across the humanities and social sciences have criticized the effects of authenticity claims: such claims may stigmatize those deemed inauthentic, regulate subjects to act or speak in normative ways, facilitate forms of capitalism, and reproduce existing stereotypes. Scholars have also been critical of those notions of authenticity that continue to rely on untenable philosophical foundations, such as notions of unmediated experience, essential identity, or transparent self-knowledge. At the same time, a handful of scholars have offered recent defenses and reformulations of authenticity. While some of these scholars have addressed certain political criticisms of authenticity—most frequently, that it may facilitate a socially corrosive form of individualism—they have mostly responded to philosophical critiques, and therefore, have focused on constructing new legs on which a notion of authenticity can stand.

My project has drawn on both critical and reconstructive approaches to authenticity, and has also sought to chart a course between them. From authenticity's defenders, I take seriously the argument that there is something valuable to authenticity claims. However, I depart from these scholars in terms of how they conceptualize authenticity, how they assess its value, and what role they think it should play in political life. While many of these thinkers recognize the

plurality of authenticity appeals, they tend to advance a single articulation, ideal, or notion of authenticity, and cast the others as "distortions," or as philosophically implausible versions.[421] Yet by focusing on rehabilitating a single version of authenticity, they eclipse some of the operations and effects that other articulations have in political life. Authenticity is not a single or unitary concept, and does not play a single role in political discourses. It does not even always manifest itself as an ideal in discourse; for instance, various "postmodern" discourses in the 1990s were often thought to eschew authenticity for pastiche, hybridity, and camp.

By examining how authenticity operates in discourse, my project has offered a slightly different argument for authenticity's value than in the existing literature. I recognize, along with both defenders and critics of authenticity, that appeals to the term do not always yield the political outcomes one wants. However, as I suggested at the end of chapter 1, I do not think this means the term itself, or certain versions of it, ought to be jettisoned: many of our political commitments—from freedom, to feminism, to democracy—harbor the potential of being deployed for ends one disagrees with or in ways that seem contrary to the value's inner purpose. Rather than advancing a particular understanding of authenticity, I have argued that there may be something valuable in assessing authenticity claims in all of their plurality, in attending to their different contexts and effects, and to the different ways they constitute and govern subjects. In particular, reckoning with authenticity's protean nature may inspire us to envision fairer and more emancipatory ways in which it can be deployed. Thus, rather than offering a normative or philosophical reconstruction of authenticity, as other scholars have done, my project has sought to assess the value of authenticity claims by imagining the different forms they can take, the different effects they can yield, the different subjectivities they can engender. Given the

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[421] See here Charles Larmore, *The Practices of the Self;* Charles Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity*

temporary, contradictory and historically situated nature of discourses, such assessments of authenticity's value are likely to be local and provisional, and may not easily travel from context to context. However, I do not think that an endorsement of authenticity's value must be limited to its strategic effects. As I argued in chapter 1, and as I hope to show below, some of the effects generated by appealing to authenticity—including fostering personal integrity and pride, and articulating and overcoming certain dimensions of oppression—are tied to espousing certain beliefs about the value, centrality, and nature of oneself.

<p style="text-align:center">*   *   *</p>

Regina Bendix argues that "the notion of authenticity relies on the existence of its opposite, the fake, and this dichotomous construct is at the heart of what makes authenticity problematic."[422] One can see how this might apply to American discourses of blackness. Various critics allege that notions of authenticity—the authenticity of individual black men and women, of black culture, of "blackness"—tend to do more harm than good. The critiques here are many; I will recount only a few. The writers of the National Black Feminist Organization Statement argue that notions of black authenticity excluded many black women, since figures of authenticity and inauthenticity were often gendered as male. They questioned what role they had in the pursuit of authenticity, beyond embracing black cultural nationalism and support of black men.[423] E. Patrick Johnson argues that conceptions of black authenticity—of what "real blackness" is—are illusory, since there is no fixed nor stable meaning to blackness; blackness is

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[422] Regina Bendix, *In search of authenticity: the Formation of Folklore Studies* (Madison: Wisconsin, 1997)

[423] National Black Feminist Organization, "Statement of Purpose" in *Feminism in Our Time* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994).

variable both inside and outside of black culture, and has always been contested.[424] Toure claims

that the attempt to define blackness, both from within and outside of African American culture,

creates "strictures" or constraints on individual blacks. Drawing on Henry Louis Gates, Jr. he

argues against designating anyone or anything as "inauthentically black," and suggests replacing

notions of authenticity and inauthenticity with a notion of black identity that is plural, broadly

encompassing, and individually determined.[425] Tommy Shelby argues against tying notions of

authentic blackness to a "thick" black identity, arguing that identification with black culture is

not the only means by which individual black men and women can feel fulfilled or authentic, and

that the demand for cultural identification may actually hinder the emergence of black

solidarity.[426]

These authors show us that there are good reasons to be wary of how authenticity

operates and intersects with notions of blackness: discourse of black authenticity may

marginalize gay, lesbian, and middle-class blacks, they may reinforce racist stereotypes, they

may hinder racial solidarity by prescribing a single norm of "blackness" against which all blacks

are measured. Yet is Bendix correct in claiming that authenticity constructs "fakeness" as its

opposite in every context, or with regard to every object? What about when inauthenticity

implies bad faith or self-deception, as with Existentialism? What about when it connotes pastiche

or camp, as with postmodern pop culture discourses? Moreover, is the equivalence of inauthentic

and "fake" always problematic in racial discourses? Might there be other discourses in which

authenticity intersects with blackness, in ways that generate more emancipatory effects? While

critics have shown how authenticity may generate problems in designating some blacks as not

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[424] E. Patrick Johnson, *Appropriating Blackness: performance and the politics of authenticity,* (Durham: Duke, 2003), p. 4, 11.

[425] Toure, *Who's Afraid of Post-blackness?* (New York: Free Press, 2011), p. xv, ii.

[426] Tommie Shelby, *We who are dark: the philosophical foundations of Black solidarity* (Cambridge: Harvard, 2005)*,* p. 172-181.

being "really" black, or as being unfaithful to their community or roots, there may be contexts in which notions of inauthenticity and falseness can have critical and emancipatory purchase in racial discourses. In what follows, I consider two texts responding to some of the circumstances animating the recent Black Lives Matter movement in order to show how alternative discourses of authenticity might advance emancipatory causes without positing an essentialized notion of blackness.

In *Citizen,* Claudia Rankine begins her portrait of Serena Williams with Hennesy Youngman's discussion of "black anger."[427] Youngman, a YouTube star, argues tongue in cheek that black artists are expected to perform anger as a spectacle for their audience. Rankine implicitly characterizes this anger as inauthentic: it seems "purely exterior" and "surface" level as opposed to "actual anger," and is something "commodified" and "performed" that does not capture "the emotional state of particular individuals in particular situations" (23). In order to distinguish performed black anger—the deliberately crafted presentation of anger by rap artists performed for an audience—and genuine anger, and in order to make the point that the former is welcomed, commodified, and even expected, whereas the latter is frequently punished, Rankine paints a portrait of the career of tennis star Serena Williams.

According to Rankine, Williams is often denigrated for the way she expresses anger, even though that anger is both sincere and, in the context of the poem, a justified response to racist treatment. In *Citizen,* whenever Williams expresses anger, such anger is constructed by whites as "immature," "classless," "insane," and "lacking in dignity." Even when Williams does not overtly manifest her anger, such as in her twelve-year boycott of Indian Wells Masters

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[427] Claudia Rankine, *Citizen*

Tournament, the implication that she *may* be angry is received as illegitimate and petty, as "only stubbornness and a grudge" (35).

Citizen recounts penalty after penalty Williams receives: penalties for expressing her anger, penalties for distracting her opponent, penalties which seem to far outweigh the crime. Williams, for instance, is fined $82,500 and two years probation for shouting at a line woman; even though, according to Rankine, this outburst comes after years of unfair calls that seemed to be motivated by racial prejudice. Rankine's poem raises the question of whether the exhortation to conceal one's anger—an exhortation quickly reinforced by punishment—is not only tied to the likelihood of punishment, but also to the fact that such anger is apprehended as less valued than anger expressed by non-blacks. In this way, one can distinguish two notions of authenticity at work in Rankine's portrait. First, there is the way in which William's anger is received as inauthentic—it is not real or justified, but is constituted as a kind of tantrum, a grudge, or an indication of poor character. Rankine suggests that the way black anger is constituted as inauthentic—as not genuine or legitimate anger— is tied to a racist double standard: a set of norms that constitutes anger, when arising from black men and women, as less real and less valuable than anger when expressed from non-black subjects. Perhaps this construction of anger arises from the tennis world's obliviousness to the racialized sources and nature of this anger: while the tennis world views this anger as an overreaction to a minor infraction, Rankine situates this outburst as an anger "built up through experience and the quotidian struggles against dehumanization every brown or black person lives simply because of skin color" (24).

Secondly, the constraint that Williams is under to repress her emotions, on threat of penalty, invokes a slightly different notion of authenticity. Not only does the tennis world interpret Williams's displays of emotion uncharitably, but in doing so, they encourage her to hide

or constrain herself. When she expresses outrage at racist treatment, when she expresses jubilation through a "crip dance," even when she silently boycotts a tennis tournament, Williams becomes the subject of criticism if not penalty, and this encourages her to eventually reveal less of herself, to "split herself off from herself and create different personae" (36).

Viewed in the context of the rest of *Citizen,* one can read the vignette about Williams as representative of a much larger trend of black self-expression and self-assertion being met with unjust penalty and the demand to censor oneself. Rankine herself analogizes Williams's experience to racism in other contexts: "randomly, the rules everyone else gets to play by no longer apply to you" (30). Indeed, the implication throughout the portrait of Williams is that white players are less likely to have their actions interpreted uncharitably (such as Caroline Wozniacki's impersonation of Williams), to be on the receiving end of unjust calls (such as in the 2009 US open), and to be so vulnerable to penalties for "bad sportsmanship." In the rest of *Citizen,* Rankine explores how a whole range of actions, gestures, clothing, and statements, when received by the white world, is likewise interpreted unfairly, but since it is outside of the tennis world, is often met with violent, deadly consequences.

A similar insight is thematized in Ta-Nehisi Coates's *Between the World and Me.*[428] In one scene, Coates brings his teenage son, Samori, along with him to interview the mother of a slain black teenage boy. The boy, who was unarmed, was shot over an altercation over whether he was playing his music too loudly. The man who shot him was acquitted because he claimed that the boy had a shotgun. No shotgun was found.

After talking with Coates about her son, the mother of the slain boy turns to Samori and says the following:

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[428] Ta-Nehisi Coates, *Between the World and Me*

You exist. You matter. You have value. You have every right to wear your hoodie, to play your music as loud as you want. You have every right to be you. And no one should deter you from being you. You have to be you. And you can never be afraid of being you. (113)

As discussed in chapter 1, even though she does not use the term *authentic,* the mother's words imply a notion of a self that is valuable, that ought to be nourished and sustained, and that is threatened by various forces that aim to stifle it. In chapter 5, I suggested that such a notion of selfhood could be described as a negative appeal to authenticity. In that chapter, I argued that while positive appeals to authenticity sought to express, realize, or tap into an already defined inner self, negative appeals have a far less definitive authenticating source, and often proceed by expressing an inability to become authentic. The mother of the slain boy is clearly not saying that "wearing a hoodie" or "playing loud music" are the essence of blackness, or even the essence of her son's personality. Rather, these traits represent modest attempts at self-fashioning, attempts that have been violently received and responded to. As a negative appeal to authenticity, the mother's claim focuses less on establishing who her son really truly is, and more on her desire for her son to have the opportunity to explore what he likes and who he is, to express whatever he feels or believes, in a space that will allow for such exploration and expression.

One can read the mother's speech as an appeal to authenticity that casts being authentic not so much as self-fulfillment or self-actualization, but as a form of modest self-assertion, a way of claiming that one is a person whose needs and actions ought to count as much as anyone else. What her son expressed was a modest desire to assert himself, to claim that he is a person who has the right to play loud music just as much as anyone else. What makes this form of authenticity so difficult to attain is how violent the consequences of such modest self-assertion may be. As the discussions in chapters 3 and 4 argue, what is key here are the norms that construct one's efforts at self-making, one's emotions and oneself, and whether those norms will

encourage such exploration and expression. How will one's attempts at self-making be met, if one's actions are predisposed to be seen as violent or inferior? How will one relate to oneself if this image is reflected back in routine social interactions?

Yet read in the context of the entire scene, the speech by the mother of the slain boy is not a straightforward appeal to authenticity. She, along with Coates himself, has clearly struggled with the consequences of telling their sons to simply be who they are, to act spontaneously and to express honest emotion. Whereas earlier discourses of authenticity would often mention the "rewards" of being inauthentic—esteem, in Rousseau's work, "getting along" in various social movement texts—here, the stakes are much higher: indeed, they are one's life. The mother of the slain boy wonders aloud if this was the right advice to tell her son. "She had wanted her son to stand for what he believed and to be respectful. And he had died for believing his friends had a right to play their music loud, to be American teenagers" (11). Yet what would the alternative be if the mother told her son that he should stifle what he thought, that he should demure to the demands of others? Might such advice discourage him from having integrity—from saying what he thinks and how he feels? Might it have a detrimental effect on his inner life, fostering what Rankine describes as the "dissociation" that consists in "split[ting] herself off from herself and creat[ing] different personae"? (36).

One can read this scene as an ethical dilemma: should one raise one's child to be authentic—understood in this context as to modestly assert the worth of one's personhood through self-expression— and in doing so risk his life? Or should one raise one's child to constrain his actions and feelings in a world that will uncharitably interpret them and violently respond to them? How might a lifetime of such constraint effect the way one sees oneself and one's value? Alternatively, one can read this scene as an intractable dilemma, since, as Coates's

portrait of his own slain friend makes clear, simply being in the wrong place at the wrong time may be "cause" enough bear the brunt of violence, regardless of how one acts or constitutes oneself? Alternatively still, one can read this scene as a political critique of existing racial norms: norms that construct black modest self-assertion as violent and irrational, and in doing so, foster and legitimate the killing of black bodies. This is not merely or simply a point about how there is a racist double standard, but about the way in which black emotion, action, clothing, and gestures are constructed through this double standards, and make blacks vulnerable to losing their very lives if they stray from a narrow range of acceptable self-presentation. And here, we can see how this critique relies on a notion of authenticity to have its bite. For if honest self-expression was not valuable, if modest self-assertion had no connection to one's integrity as a person, or if being able to live as who one is was not a worthwhile goal, then the first dilemma above is mitigated: then one might not need to struggle over the choice to raise one's children to sacrifice what they think and feel, to continuously alter their self-presentation in anticipation of the world's uncharitable response, in the hopes of avoiding violent, perhaps deadly confrontation. But because "being who one is" is seen as valuable, because it is connected to a feeling of comfort in one's person and one's skin, and because the "right" to be who one is (as the mother of the slain boy puts it) denotes a marker of equality with others, the mother of the slain boy is led to wonder aloud how to weigh this value against life itself.

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This dissertation has argued that in order to fully grasp the value of authenticity requires understanding the many things that appeals to the term can do. They can articulate the value of

different "selves," sometimes by upholding the equal worthiness of difference, and other times by asserting a universal sameness beneath social roles and conventions. They can foster pride in being who one is, especially with regard to aspects of identity one may consider most central. These appeals can generate emancipatory visions of selfhood and community, legitimate marginalized identities as valuable, and enable individuals to counter oppressive representations of themselves. They can also facilitate compelling forms of social critique, particularly by casting those social roles and norms that allowed certain individuals to thrive while others remained stifled, or that allowed certain individuals to express themselves while others remained constrained, as fundamentally opposed to our notions of freedom, equality, and fairness, and as falling short of our democratic ideals.

Finally, while appeals to authenticity have often been criticized for invoking a fixed, inner, essential self, I have shown that this is not always the case. Some appeals may attempt to create a self that does not yet exist, or one that can more readily be endorsed or affirmed. While the rhetoric of a "true" or a "real" self is often used to compel assent to these claims, what may be at stake may be the integrity of the self, rather than its truth. Authenticity claims can provide a way of politicizing the relationship one assumes to oneself, and in doing so cast various forms of "hiding oneself," such as phoniness, civility, conformism, and assimilation as instances of constraint. They could politicize the ways prevalent norms of race, sexuality, and class communicated messages of inferiority, and in doing so, damaged individuals' relations to themselves. In other words, appeals to authenticity may draw the psychological into the social and the political, and in doing so, may treat one's inner world and its formation as constitutive of human flourishing, and as key domains of freedom and unfreedom.

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