

Authenticity and Enhancement

by

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Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of Doctor
of Philosophy in the Department of
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ABSTRACT

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Abstract

Recent accounts of authenticity have defined the concept in terms of self-creation, self-discovery, or some combination of the two. While these accounts get something right about the concept, I argue that they fail to capture all the elements of authenticity that an adequate account ought to capture. In this dissertation, I develop and defend a novel account of authenticity that preserves some features of previous accounts while also introducing new ones. My account is two-pronged (recognizing what I term the ‘target’ and ‘response’ dimensions of authenticity), and through it I come to the conclusion that authenticity is best characterized as the practice of living in accordance with one’s values. After outlining and defending this account, I consider how it might impact or inform current debates regarding how the use of psychoactive drugs for so-called ‘enhancement’ purposes affects users’ authentic selves.

Dedication

For Wilma & Erma Jean

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Introduction

This dissertation aims to articulate what we mean by the term ‘authentic’ when we use it to describe an individual who is true to herself. The philosophical treatment of this kind of authenticity dates back at least as far as Kierkegaard and Heidegger, but there remains little consensus about what authenticity means or whether it is an ethical ideal worth pursuing. In what follows, I aim to provide a plausible account of what authenticity means and to showcase how it might be practically employed to help guide our decisions in the so-called ‘real world’ that is often seen as antithetical to philosophy.

I begin by surveying the contemporary literature on authenticity and showing how (and where) different philosophers’ accounts fit into the self-discovery/self-creation framework that has dominated recent treatments of the subject. Having mapped out the current terrain, I will then argue for why we ought to understand authenticity to depend more heavily on self-creation. While this gets us closer to understanding authenticity, it does not get us all the way; at the end of Chapter One, I will explain why an account relying only on the self-discovery/self-creation framework is inadequate.

In Chapter Two, I introduce and defend my own account of authenticity, one that makes use of some of the elements of the accounts discussed in Chapter One but also introduces new features. Most importantly, my account includes a bi-dimensional framework that I argue better includes all of the relevant features of authenticity. In addition to this bi-dimensional framework, I put forth and defend the claim that

authenticity is best understood as 'living in accordance with one's values.' In the final sections, I anticipate and address some of the implications of this definition.

Ethics is not meant to exist in a conceptual vacuum, so I turn in Chapter Three to a practical issue that I hope my account can shed some light on. As medical advancement has occurred at an increasingly rapid pace, debates about the permissibility of pharmaceutical agents for so-called 'enhancement purposes' have emerged. One dimension of this debates has regarded the question of whether or not use of enhancement technologies undermines the user's authenticity. In this chapter, I assess the question "Do pharmaceutical enhancements threaten authenticity?"

1. Chapter One: What is Authenticity? An Overview

1.1 Introduction

A glance at contemporary society would lead most people to believe that we have a preoccupation with authenticity, which is often characterized as ‘being true to oneself’. For the social media-savvy among us, there’s the popular hashtag #liveauthentic. Restaurants tell us that *their* establishments serve real, authentic Italian food. Nutrition experts tell us to eat real, authentic food and ditch the processed, fake stuff. Travelers want to have ‘authentic’ experiences when they voyage to distant places, rather than be mere tourists. We prefer being around ‘authentic people,’ over fake ones. People are willing to pay more for an ‘authentic’ product. I’ve even seen candles advertised as having ‘authentic’ aromas.

We also see this preoccupation in literature: in Polonius’ counsel to Laertes in Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*, “This above all: to thine own self be true,¹” and in Capote’s *Breakfast at Tiffany’s*, where Holly Golightly is confusingly described as not just a phony, but “a real phony.”² In a time when worry and disagreement about such mammoth concerns as economic growth, access to healthcare, and abortion rights were at an all-time high, concerns about authenticity leading up to the 2016 U.S. Presidential Election played a rather surprising role. Hillary Clinton’s level of experience and record of public service

¹ William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, ed. Ann and Neil Taylor Thompson (Tavistock : Northcote House, 2005), I, iii, 79.

² Truman Capote, *Breakfast at Tiffany’s: A Short Novel and Three Stories* (New York, Random House, 1958), 32.

were at times overshadowed by what the media termed her “authenticity problem.”³ With her experience, some alleged, came a stodginess and awkwardness on camera that was not shared by the less experienced Bernie Sanders or Donald Trump. Some worried she was untrustworthy, and not just because she lied about Benghazi or exercised poor judgment when sending emails; her flaw, some people alleged, was deeper and more pervasive than a series of discrete (though troublesome) failings. Clinton’s inauthenticity, the critics said, made her less likable and more deserving of suspicion. The catch-22 of her situation was that any visible effort she expended to come across as more authentic, more genuine, just increased the odds that she would be classified as trying too hard. Which is just another way of saying that such efforts would make her look even *more* inauthentic. No doubt there were many factors that led to Donald Trump’s surprising victory in November 2016. But Clinton’s perceived inauthenticity—and the media’s focus on it—may have played a role in her defeat.

Perhaps most compellingly, there is evidence that authenticity is on the minds of those at the ends of their lives. Bronnie Ware, a palliative care nurse in Australia, began asking her patients about any regrets they had about their lives, or any things they would have done differently if given the chance. The number one regret she witnessed was “I

³ Brendan Nyhan, "Hillary Clinton’s Authenticity Problem, and Ours," *The New York Times*, October 1 2015.

wish I'd had the courage to live a life true to myself, not the life others expected of me."⁴

The preoccupation with authenticity thus seems deep-seated.

But why do we care about authenticity? We can characterize our interest in authenticity in at least two ways:

- 1) Intrapersonal—we don't like the feeling of presenting ourselves in a certain way while actually being a different way. It's stressful, it makes us feel like we're committing some moral transgression. And we are troubled by people who don't have qualms about this. We see fidelity to oneself in matters of self-presentation as morally good.
- 2) Interpersonal—we don't like interacting with inauthentic people. We don't trust them. We worry they will renege on their word; they aren't reliable like authentic people are. Instrumentally speaking, inauthentic people are less useful to us than authentic people.

Widespread discussion of a concept is not, of course, evidence of that concept's importance. Nor is the prevalence of authenticity-talk in our culture evidence that, when we talk about authenticity, we're always talking about the same thing. But we shouldn't, as philosophers, automatically dismiss this prevalence, either. Indeed, it is my conviction, and underlying motivation for this dissertation project, that authenticity matters. There is something to be gained, from both philosophical and ethical perspectives, from investigating authenticity with an eye toward its involvement in and implications for moral philosophy.

⁴ Bronnie Ware, "Regrets of the Dying," *Bronnie Ware*, 2009, bronnieware.com/blog/regrets-of-the-dying/.

I believe that authenticity matters, in particular, in the realm of ethics, because to be an authentic individual, make authentic choices, or live an authentic life means that one is in some ways (at some times) doing something more choiceworthy than any of the inauthentic alternatives. Authenticity is not the only value that matters when deciding what actions to perform or how to live one's life, but it is *a* value that matters. Being authentic is one way (perhaps *the* way) that we show our values and display our commitment to those values.

As we will see in this chapter, this concept has been widely discussed among philosophers from various backgrounds. I begin with an overview and discussion of concepts related to, but distinct from, authenticity. Doing so will elucidate some important distinctions among concepts, and it will also help set the stage for the authenticity-focused discussion that follows. Next, I will begin my discussion of authenticity with an overview of the account introduced by Charles Taylor, who is noteworthy for his efforts to “recover” the concept in its modern iteration, and I will begin to flesh out its contents. I will then discuss more recent contributions to the authenticity literature before going on to offer my own account.

1.2 Related Concepts: What Authenticity is *Not*

An explication and analysis of the concept of authenticity should not be done in a conceptual vacuum. Many other related concepts—included, but not limited to such things as autonomy, sincerity, and self-fulfillment—play a crucial role, both in others'

discussions of authenticity and in the concept itself. In the subsections that follow, I will provide an overview of how I think we ought to understand these different, albeit related, concepts, and the ways they relate to authenticity.

1.2.1 Autonomy

If authenticity's tagline is 'being true to oneself,' then autonomy's is commonly understood to be 'ruling oneself.' In the contemporary philosophical literature, there are two main accounts of autonomy: the Hierarchical Account and the Historical Account. I will provide an overview of each of these, as well as an overview of a more recent account, before describing how I think we ought to understand the concept.

1.2.1.1 The Hierarchical Account

One common way of understanding autonomy is to define autonomy as that which exists when a certain sort of hierarchical configuration of a person's desires exists. Gerald Dworkin and Harry Frankfurt each take this approach in their respective discussions of autonomy.⁵ Importantly, neither of these philosophers emphasizes the *way* a desire was acquired when making an assessment as to whether or not an action stemming from that desire is autonomous. Rather, they focus exclusively on the individual's present-day relationship to and appraisal of the desire.

⁵ Gerald Dworkin, "The Concept of Autonomy," *Grazer Philosophische studien* 12, no. 1 (1981); Harry G. Frankfurt, *The Importance of What We Care About : Philosophical Essays* (New York : Cambridge University Press, 1988).

Both Dworkin and Frankfurt argue that autonomy is best understood by observing that a person can have higher order desires as well as lower order desires. Lower order desires are simply the desires to do or not to do something. Lower order desires are the objects of higher order desires, meaning that higher order desires are desires about one's lower order desires. Dworkin spells out the way in which an individual can be autonomous by stating that

A person is autonomous if he identifies with his desires, goals, and values, and such identification is not influenced in ways which make the process of identification in some way alien to the individual. Spelling out the conditions of procedural independence involves distinguishing those ways of influencing people's reflective and critical faculties which subvert them from those which promote and improve them.⁶

This passage suggests that autonomy exists when an individual's lower order desires are endorsed by her higher order desires, such that she desires to have the lower order desires that she possesses (and in turn desires to *act* on these lower order desires).

Unique to Frankfurt's discussion of the hierarchical view is his inclusion of coercion⁷ in the discussion. Views like Dworkin's leave open the possibility that an individual may meet the criterion of his lower order desires being endorsed by his higher order desires, but this endorsement could be the product of the coercive practices of

⁶ Dworkin, 212.

⁷ In labeling this additional feature 'coercion,' Frankfurt means to include both external forces (e.g. being forced to make a phone call) and internal forces (e.g. compulsions stemming from kleptomania).

others. According to Dworkin's view, we would be forced to declare such an individual 'autonomous,' even though coercive practices seem intuitively to be incompatible with autonomy. Frankfurt prevents us from being forced to this conclusion because he stipulates that one does not act autonomously when one is being coerced. He claims that "A coercive threat, like a coercive offer, is only coercive because it also violates its victim's autonomy,' and for this reason, coercion cannot co-exist with autonomy."⁸

But even with the more nuanced Frankfurtian hierarchical view, we are still left with a conception of autonomy for which it is the present-day mental states of the agent that dictate whether a given attitude or desire is autonomous. This might pose a problem in cases where prior mental states seem to suggest that a desire did not arise autonomously. Furthermore, though Frankfurt acknowledges the objection that his view creates an infinite regress problem, he has nothing satisfying to say in response.⁹ John Christman takes issue with this limitation of the hierarchical view, and proposes his historical account as an alternative.¹⁰

⁸ Frankfurt, 42.

⁹ Frankfurt's response seems, at best, to be a hedge: "There is no theoretical limit to the length of the series of desires of higher and higher orders; nothing except common sense and, perhaps, a saving fatigue prevents an individual from obsessively refusing to identify himself with any of his desires until he forms a desire to the next higher order. The tendency to generate such a series of acts of forming desires, which would be a case of humanization run wild, also leads toward the destruction of a person." "Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person," *The Journal of Philosophy* 68, no. 1 (1971): 16.

¹⁰ Actually, it is unclear to me whether Christman means his account as an alternative to the hierarchical view or as a supplement to it.

1.2.1.2 The Historical Account

In an effort to avoid the problems that arise if we adopt a hierarchical account, Christman proposes an alternative conception of autonomy. Given the problems associated with the hierarchical account (namely, its complete ignoring of how an individual might have come to have particular desires), Christman says that “the central focus for autonomy must make particular reference to the processes of preference formation”.¹¹ By adopting this approach, Christman thinks that he can avoid the problems that Dworkin’s and Frankfurt’s accounts have, since a focus on the ways in which desires come into existence allows us to avoid having to conclude that certain actions are autonomous despite having arisen from heteronomous forces.¹² Christman also thinks that this account eliminates Dworkin’s and Frankfurt’s problem of an infinite regress, since the relevant endorsement in Christman’s account is of a backward-looking sort. Finally, he states that “the motivating idea behind his theory is that autonomy is achieved when an

¹¹ John Christman, "Autonomy and Personal History," *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 21, no. 1 (1991): 10.

¹² Christman says that identification occurs when an agent reflects critically on a desire and, at the higher level, approves of having the desire. A problem arises, however, because there are two ways we can understand the identification criterion of autonomy: identification as acknowledgement or identification as evaluation. If we understand identification simply as acknowledgement, then we are forced to conclude that an individual can readily identify with (i.e. acknowledge having) a desire that is the product of heteronomous forces. If we understand identification the second way, as an evaluation, then an agent must not only acknowledge but also approve of having a desire. And yet this understanding commits us to the view that, in order to be autonomous, one must somehow be perfect, “since it would be conceptually impossible to have an autonomous desire of which [an agent does] not approve” (5-6). Regardless of which understanding we adopt, Christman thinks we run into problems, since either understanding of identification seems to conflict with our intuitive sense of what autonomy is.

agent is in a position to be aware of the changes and development of her character and of why these changes come about.”¹³

Christman lays out the following conditions for autonomy:

(i) A person P is autonomous relative to some desire D if it is the case that P did not resist the development of D when attending to this process of development, or P *would not have* resisted that development had P attended to the process.

(ii) The lack of resistance to the development of D did not take place (or would not have) under the influence of factors that inhibit self-reflection.

(iii) The self-reflection involved in condition (i) is (minimally) rational and involves no self-deception.¹⁴

What this account indicates is that, for a person to be autonomous, he need not presently ‘endorse’ desires, attitudes, or actions that he currently has or performs. Rather, he is autonomous with regard to a particular desire so long as he did not resist (or would not have resisted) its emergence *at the time of its development*. So while Dworkin’s and Frankfurt’s views are present-oriented, Christman’s view is past-oriented. Christman’s second criterion incorporates something akin to Frankfurt’s coercion criterion by labeling as heteronomous those actions or desires that emerge under the influence of forces preventing the process of self-reflection. And finally, the reflection that occurs in response

¹³ Christman, 11.

¹⁴ It is important to note that Christman is primarily concerned with autonomy in regard to how the self is formed and less concerned with autonomy as it relates to acting autonomously.

to the development of a particular desire must bear some degree of rationality and be free of self-deception.

One more thing should be noted about Christman's view. There is a counterfactual component to Christman's account that is not present in the hierarchical accounts of autonomy. Christman thinks that it would impose too strict a requirement to say that one must endorse (or not resist) the development of some particular desire, and as such, he claims that a desire will still be appropriately labeled 'autonomous' if its possessor *would have* endorsed (or not resisted) the desire's formation. While this counterfactual move widens the scope of what counts as an autonomous desire and also enables Christman to avoid certain problems (such as being forced to declare, due to (iii), that all desires formed before a certain age are heteronomous). Though Christman acknowledges that we are often brought up to have values and desires whose formation processes we were not autonomously involved with (consider the inculcation of values in young children), we nevertheless have the ability to decide whether or not we ought to act on these values and desires. But Christman's inclusion of this counterfactual feature also raises new problems, by forcing us to make shaky assessments about counterfactual situations.¹⁵

¹⁵ It is worth pointing out that, at the end of the paper, Christman uses the language of "autonomy" and "authenticity" seemingly interchangeably, and it is difficult to conclude whether this commingling of terms is meant to suggest synonymy, or whether it was a slip-up on his part. For example: "it is still an essential part of any normative political theory to have an account of the *authenticity* of desires and values of the individual (23, emphasis added). And again: "My contention that the formation of desires is what is crucial to their *authenticity* is similar to the claim

1.2.1.3 Bublitz and Merkel

More recently, Jan Bublitz and Reinhard Merkel have put forth an account of autonomy that has as its criteria 1) that the agent participate in the action voluntarily and 2) that the agent identifies with the results of that action. If both of these criteria are met, then the action undertaken by the agent is autonomous, and the agent is autonomous with regard to that action.¹⁶

Elsewhere, they define autonomy as existing when agents “possess the capacity for discerning right from wrong, are reasons-responsive, have a minimal level of self-control, have a minimally proper understanding of the world around them, have not been manipulated...and identify with their traits.”¹⁷ While Bublitz and Merkel intend for their account to be an alternative to the Hierarchical and Historical accounts, they acknowledge that their account does resemble the Historical Account. Where their account differs is in its inclusion of additional criteria that are not present in Christman’s Historical Account—in particular, the epistemic condition of understanding the world and the criterion of self-control, which Christman’s account seems to suggest is a consequence of autonomy rather than a prerequisite.

that...” (23, emphasis added). It is my view that the concepts should be treated as related, but distinct.

¹⁶ Although Bublitz and Merkel explicitly introduce these two criteria as necessary and sufficient, they later suggest that there are some cases in which criterion #1 is not necessary (see p. 373).

¹⁷ Jan Christoph Bublitz and Reinhard Merkel, "Autonomy and Authenticity of Enhanced Personality Traits," *Bioethics* 23, no. 6 (2009): 361.

1.2.1.4 My Proposed Understanding of Autonomy

Bublitz and Merkel claim that authenticity is conceptually irrelevant to autonomy. I disagree; as I see it, ‘being true to oneself’—the tagline of authenticity—is a requirement for ‘self rule,’ the tagline of autonomy.

Now, just because both of these definitions contain the word ‘self’ is not sufficient to show that autonomy requires authenticity. The ‘self’ in ‘self-rule’ could mean the true self, or it could mean any of the (non-true) selves that a person might have at any point in her life. In this latter case (self-rule being done by *any* self), then autonomy could exist without authenticity. And even if we stipulate the ‘self’ in ‘self-rule’ is the true self, we still cannot immediately conclude that authenticity is entailed by autonomy. For we first need to raise the question of whether the ‘true self’ of autonomy is the same as the ‘true self’ of authenticity, or whether the meanings of ‘true’ in each of these cases are unique. ‘True self’ is a way of privileging a self, but just because the same language is used in both cases does not mean that the privileging has to be the same. According to Bublitz and Merkel, the true self and the rule of the self never overlap; from what I have said thus far, it is clear that they *can* overlap, even if that overlap is not necessary.

As it turns out, I think we have reason to believe that autonomy does require self-rule to be done by the *true* self, and thus, that autonomy does require authenticity. As I will go on to argue in Chapter Two, authenticity is best understood as ‘living in accordance with one’s values,’ and I thus think autonomy can be best understood as authenticity plus

endorsement of those values. My thinking on this matter can be understood as analogous to Frankfurt's discussion of the distinction between second-order desires and second-order volitions in "Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person." According to Frankfurt, second-order volitions are the subclass of second-order desires that an individual wants to be his will (i.e. she wants to turn that desire into action).¹⁸ Frankfurt's relevant insight here is that we can distinguish desires about desires (which I understand to be values¹⁹, *simpliciter*) and desires about desires that are also willed (which I and Frankfurt understand to be the key feature of autonomy). Note that having a desire about a desire (e.g. desiring a cigarette and also wanting to have that desire, because you like the feeling of rebellion that arises each time you light up) appears to be equivalent to saying that you value the practice of smoking cigarettes. But one can endorse or fail to endorse one's values; this phenomenon is what Frankfurt captures by introducing the second-order volition, which requires desire, to the discussion of second-order desires, which are not necessarily endorsed.

Like Frankfurt, I hold the view that autonomy requires endorsement of one's values. In Chapter Two, I will defend an account of authenticity that treats values as a constitutive feature of the self. Endorsement of one's values, in turn, translates in my account to meaning endorsement of one's self. And endorsement of one's self seems to

¹⁸ Frankfurt, "Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person," 10.

¹⁹ As we will see in Chapter Two, values play a prominent role in my account of authenticity.

require that the self in question be the *true* self. This will become more clear once I have fleshed out my account of authenticity in the next chapter, but because endorsement is a type of valuing, and my account of authenticity relies on values, then endorsing one's self will require that the self being endorsed is the true self. Thus, I understand autonomy to require authenticity plus the endorsement of one's values (the endorsement of one's authentic self).

1.2.2 Sincerity

Lionel Trilling is considered by many to be the 'gold standard' thinker with regard to sincerity. Trilling (1972) states that sincerity "refers primarily to a congruence between avowal and actual feeling," and he worries, much in the same way as we will see that Charles Taylor does about authenticity, that the concept (and the culture more generally) has become more means-oriented and that the ideal has suffered as a result.²⁰ When sincerity is understood as Trilling defines it, it can in turn be contrasted with authenticity, which Trilling thinks "requires a more strenuous moral experience than 'sincerity' does, a more exigent conception of the self and of what being true to it consists in."²¹ In an effort to further distinguish the two concepts, Trilling introduces the concept of grief, and declares it "absurd" to question whether an individual's grief is sincere, since the individual

²⁰ Lionel Trilling, *Sincerity and Authenticity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1972), 2.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 11.

“and his grief are one.”²² But grief *can* be authentic or inauthentic, and it is in this way that we can “ascribe some high value to a grieving father.”²³

So while sincerity can be achieved so long as there is a correspondence between how one feels and how one claims to feel, this criterion alone will not render someone (or someone’s feeling) authentic. Feelings (and inner states more generally) are inside the scope of sincerity but outside the scope of authenticity, since authenticity hinges on what the person’s self truly is and not merely what he feels his true self to be. In order for the sincere individual to also be authentic, he must not only *feel* that something is in line with his true self, but it must also actually *be* in line with his true self. Thus, according to Trilling, one can be sincere without being authentic (e.g., one can sincerely believe and avow that he is meant to be a philosopher, even if such declaration is not consistent with his authentic self), but one cannot be authentic without also being sincere.

I agree with Trilling that what is critical for sincerity is a correspondence between one’s inner states (feelings) and one’s outer states (avowals or actions); one’s actions and declarations must accurately represent the individual’s private thoughts and feelings. Sincerity is the practice of accurately representing your inner states to others. One is sincere when the attitudes, beliefs, thoughts, or feelings that one outwardly conveys are in fact representative of one’s *real* (inner) attitudes, beliefs, thoughts or feelings.

²² Ibid., 93.

²³ Ibid.

Morally speaking, sincerity can be thought of as an executive virtue, so we have at most only a *pro tanto* reason to be sincere. Sincerity can also be thought of as a moral amplifier; it makes a good deed that much better and a bad deed that much worse. A comforting word to a person in distress is often considered a kind gesture, but the gesture is considered all the more kind when the comforting word is uttered sincerely. An unkind word is a moral bad, even if the utterance is made by mistake; but it is even worse when the unkind word is said sincerely.

What exactly is the descriptor ‘sincere’ doing in such cases? We characterize a kind word as a *sincere* kind word when the utterer’s internal thoughts and feelings correspond with²⁴ the thoughts or feelings that she communicates outwardly. This correspondence criterion is what differentiates sincerity from authenticity, because with sincerity, unlike with authenticity, we are only concerned with this correspondence. In the case of authenticity, we are also concerned with *content*, namely, that the content one is aiming at is indeed a feature of one’s true self.

Note that the correspondence criterion of sincerity does not depend on the *accuracy* of one’s attitudes, thoughts, or feelings. If I believe that Thomas Jefferson was the first

²⁴ Some might think that, for words or actions to be sincere, they must be *identical* to one’s inner thoughts or feelings, but I think such a standard is too strict. Adopting this more stringent standard would make it unclear whether an outward action that omitted *any* of the actor’s inner thoughts or feelings could be considered sincere. And this strikes me as too high of a bar.

president of the United States, and I profess this belief to a friend, then my statement is sincere even though it is inaccurate.

An inaccurate statement can be sincere, but no sort of statement can be accidentally sincere, and this is another way that sincerity differs from authenticity. I might arrive at accuracy accidentally—as when my exclamation “It’s raining in Memphis!” just happens to be true—but I cannot similarly arrive at sincerity via happenstance. Acting in a way that corresponds with²⁵ my thoughts or feelings means that I must have some knowledge of what those thoughts or feelings are.²⁶ An agent need not have a full-blown, comprehensive understanding of these inner states, but there is some baseline degree of self-awareness that is required. As a result, sincerity requires a certain degree of self-awareness and intentionality; if my statements to a friend correspond to my inner states, but that correspondence is entirely unknown to me, or I am unintentional in exhibiting that correspondence, then I am not being sincere.²⁷ But this person *is* being authentic, as will become clear after my discussion in Chapter Two.

²⁵ I am using ‘correspondence’ in a way that I mean to be distinct from ‘consistency.’ As I see it, we tend to deem two things consistent even when their consistency is accidental. But when we invoke a correspondence relation, we tend to be incorporating some degree of intentionality or deliberateness.

²⁶ Lionel Trilling defines sincerity as “congruence between avowal and actual feeling” (*Sincerity and Authenticity*, 2). Here, the emphasis on *actual* feeling likewise indicates that the congruence between outward behavior and inward state must be based on some degree of self-awareness.

²⁷ I’m not necessarily being *insincere*, either; it’s just that an assessment of sincerity or insincerity is not appropriate since I don’t have the prerequisite (some baseline self-awareness and intentionality—either to accurately reflect my inner state [sincerity] or not [insincerity]) for either.

Sincerity is only concerned with the interpersonal, but authenticity concerns both the interpersonal and the intrapersonal. When we talk about whether or not someone has acted sincerely, we make our assessment based on the manner in which she has presented herself to others. If we deem that her self-presentation is consistent with her inner thoughts and feelings, then we label her 'sincere'; if we think that her outward actions belie her inner thoughts and feelings, then we deem her insincere. But in the case of authenticity, there are interpersonal *and* intrapersonal dimensions. When assessing whether or not an agent has acted authentically, we are not looking to whether her outward behavior corresponds with her inward states; rather, we are assessing whether her outward behavior corresponds with her true self (which may or may not be reflected by her current thoughts and feelings). And making this authenticity assessment requires knowing both something about a person's inward (intrapersonal) state and the way she outwardly (interpersonally) presents herself to the world.

Sincerity and authenticity are not just different concepts; they are also completely independent concepts. A person can be insincere and authentic, and a person can be inauthentic and sincere. To understand the phenomenon of an insincere yet authentic person, consider the following. My grandmother has dementia. Caring for her can be a very taxing process, and she can do things (ask the same question over and over again, express disapproval over what we're eating for lunch, etc.) that can try one's patience. As a result, my mother is sometimes at her wits' end with my grandmother. But she never lets

my grandmother know this. My mother treats my grandmother with patience and respect, even when my mother is seething on the inside.

In doing this, my mother is being insincere and authentic. My mother feels one way on the inside (frustrated, enraged), but behaves as if the opposite were true. By radiating patience and contentment when feeling quite the opposite, my mother is being an admirable type of insincere. But insincerity need not indicate inauthenticity, as this example illustrates. My mother's self is that of a kind, patient, and understanding person, so by behaving insincerely in this case she is nevertheless behaving authentically.

To understand the phenomenon of a person who is both authentic and insincere, we can consider an alternative scenario in which my mother *does* lash out at my grandmother. In that case, she would be providing an accurate outward representation of her inner feelings, and she would thus be acting sincerely. But because this behavior is not in line with her true self, she would not be acting authentically.

1.2.3 Self-Fulfillment

According to Charles Taylor, the connotation of self-absorption that the term 'self-fulfillment' often has in contemporary culture represents not a necessary feature of the concept, but rather, a bastardized version of the ideal. But Taylor thinks that, rather than being self-centered, the concept of self-fulfillment is actually self-defeating if it does not occur within the context of other individuals (via dialogical relationships) and their influences on us. Taylor clearly thinks that self-fulfillment and authenticity are closely

related, since he claims that the “moral ideal behind self-fulfillment is that of being true to oneself.”²⁸ And part of what makes self-fulfillment unique in the present day is that self-fulfillment (e.g. through one’s career) is something that present-day individuals *deliberately strive for*. This is not necessarily the case for authenticity. It’s not that self-fulfillment did not exist or was not attainable in the past. But much less emphasis was placed on its deliberate cultivation.

Full understanding of Taylor’s distinction between authenticity and self-fulfillment is difficult to come by, but he does say that self-fulfillment “is the background that gives moral force to the culture of authenticity.”²⁹ But authenticity is not intrinsically connected to the concept of self-fulfillment. Taylor might argue that *true* self-fulfillment in the ideal sense requires that an individual be true to herself, but debased versions of self-fulfillment—which, like debased versions of authenticity, Taylor believes are prevalent—need not require that one be true to herself. But he does seem to think that the *proper* ideal of authenticity in its non-debased form does require that one also be fulfilled. As evidence of this, he says that “the goals of self-fulfillment or self-realization [are ideals in which authenticity] is usually couched” and that self-fulfillment is thus a necessary feature of authenticity (and perhaps, too, that authenticity is a necessary feature of self-fulfillment).³⁰

²⁸ Charles Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), 15.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 29.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

I agree with Taylor that it would be nice if being true to oneself were a prerequisite for possessing self-fulfillment. And in the ‘ideal’ sense of self-fulfillment, it may be the case that a precondition of authenticity is built into the concept. But strictly speaking, authenticity and self-fulfillment are conceptually distinct. This can be seen most clearly by pointing to the intuition that self-fulfillment is a feeling, whereas authenticity is not. One can certainly ‘feel authentic,’ but authenticity does not require that a particular feeling-state accompany the act of being true to oneself. Self-fulfillment, on the other hand, seems to require that one *feel* fulfilled in order for self-fulfillment to obtain. It would be strange for who said “I feel completely unfulfilled at work” to not be the authority on her own fulfillment; to reach self-fulfillment is to feel a certain way—to have a feeling that one’s hopes or desires are being met. While it is true that one’s hopes and desires could be met without one realizing this, I still don’t think we would label that individual ‘self-fulfilled’ if she did not avow to feel that way. Instead, we would say that her feelings of unfulfillment are real, but that she is mistaken about some significant facts.

Authenticity, on the other hand, is not a feeling, but rather a disposition. This will become more clear in Chapter Two, but what this means with regard to self-fulfillment is that an agent can feel self-fulfilled while nevertheless being inauthentic (and vice versa).

1.2.4 Final Thoughts on the Related Concepts

It is worth noting that the philosophical discussion of each of these terms is fraught and varied. Here, I have selected particular definitions of these concepts that are

illustrative or helpful in illustrating my own preferred definitions, but it is difficult to provide definitions of these terms that are both substantive and representative, precisely because there is so much variation in their understanding when they are fleshed out. To a certain extent, the fact that there is this much variation in definition does not matter here. The main aim of this discussion is to make it clear that authenticity is one concept among many that interact, overlap, and relate in different ways. It also serves to illustrate why it is important to be clear and precise when discussing these terms in the context of philosophy, since there is such widespread variation in how the terms are used. Furthermore, the concepts have evolved over time³¹ and will probably continue to do so.

1.3 Contemporary Accounts of Authenticity

Authenticity has been a topic of modern discussion at least as far back as the existentialist tradition. I will begin by summarizing one of the most prominent and influential views in recent analytic philosophy—that of Charles Taylor—before turning to views that are even more recent and heavily influenced by him.

1.3.1 Charles Taylor's Account

In *The Ethics of Authenticity*, Charles Taylor states that authenticity, or being true to oneself, emerged as an ideal fairly recently and in tandem with the rise in the valuation of human individuality. His writing is an attempt to reclaim authenticity, which he thinks

³¹ For example, Taylor believes that the concepts of both authenticity and self-fulfillment have evolved over the years.

has become a “deviation into the trivial,” as the focus of modern society has shifted too much in the direction of self-fulfillment.³² Social atomism has become the norm, as individuals are more likely to live in large cities and, as a result, have frequent but “more impersonal and casual contact” with other people, “in place of the more intense, face-to-face relations in earlier times.”³³

As a result of these cultural shifts, Taylor thinks that the ideal of authenticity has been debased; certain elements of it have been championed, while others have been ignored, and these trends are problematic. So as a way of ‘retrieving’ the ideal in its non-debased form, Taylor provides an account of what he takes the *proper* conception of authenticity to consist of.

As part of his account, Taylor characterizes authenticity as a dichotomy, with components he labels ‘(A)’ and ‘(B).’ In what follows, I will be referring to Taylor’s ‘(A)’ as the subjective component and to his ‘(B)’ as the objective component.

According to Taylor’s subjective component, authenticity involves “(i) creation and construction as well as discovery, (ii) originality, and frequently (iii) opposition to the rules of society and even potentially to what we recognize as morality.”³⁴

The subjective component is further broken down into sub-components. In (A) (i), Taylor indicates that authenticity requires an individual to be introspective, to go through

³² Taylor, 57.

³³ Ibid., 59.

³⁴ Ibid., 66.

steps of both creating, and also discovering³⁵ parts about, herself. Authenticity cannot be realized by sole devotion to the creation or curation of one's identity; there is a certain nature with which we are all born, and part of coming to occupy a place of authenticity is displaying openness to, probing, and recognizing this aspect of our respective natures. (A) (ii) echoes this sentiment by indicating that we must not accept the status quo as (morally) authoritative, nor can we look exclusively to the views that others have about us in determining what is authentic for ourselves. Similarly, (A) (iii) indicates that we cannot appeal to the societal status quo in order to determine what is moral, and thus, what comprises our authentic selves. From the subjective features of authenticity, we can conclude that Taylor believes authenticity to be constituted by an inward-looking creation, analysis, and discovery of oneself. As we will see, this emphasis on self-creation and self-discovery will be picked up by the analytic philosophers following Taylor who also discuss authenticity.

But Taylor also thinks that there is a second, objective component to authenticity, whereby authenticity also requires "(i) openness to horizons of significance (for otherwise the creation loses the background that can save it from insignificance) and (ii) a self-

³⁵ I find it rather strange that Taylor opts to include self-discovery in the (A) side of his analysis, since his emphasis in (B) is on looking outwardly in order to discover things about oneself that are not the exclusive choice of the individual. Given that the (B) side centers on the objective components of authenticity, I would advocate moving the criterion of self-discovery from the (A) side to the (B) side of his analysis.

definition in dialogue.”³⁶ These features of authenticity emphasizes the objective nature of the ideal.³⁷

The objective component of Taylor’s definition, however, indicates that arrival at one’s authentic self also requires that one look *outwardly* (suggesting discovery of some sort) and relinquish the idea—which Taylor thinks has led to the debasement of the ideal—that authenticity is a purely individualistic, self-centered ideal. Taylor builds up to his notion of horizons of significance by positing that “When we come to understand what it is to define ourselves, to determine in what our originality consists, we see that we have to take as background some sense of what is significant.”³⁸ Furthermore, he claims, “Things take on importance against a background of intelligibility” which he terms a “horizon.”³⁹

Thus, a horizon of significance, which Taylor claims in (B) (i) plays a crucial role in achieving the ideal of authenticity, is an *external* element that *limits* an individual’s choice in the ways in which authenticity can be realized. For, Taylor argues, it is only by having external background conditions (e.g. conditions prescribing what is moral) that an individual’s self-discovery and self-creation can have any meaning. Without some external structure limiting the choices that an individual makes about what is authentic for her,

³⁶ Taylor, 66.

³⁷ And it is for this reason that his discussion of self-discovery would be better placed in the (B) component.

³⁸ Taylor, 35.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 37.

those 'choices' cease to have meaning against a background devoid of objective (moral) structure.

(B) (ii) brings to light the other external element that Taylor thinks is crucial in proper realization of the ideal of authenticity. This element, which he terms the fundamental 'dialogical character' of human life, plays a critical role in an individual's realization of authenticity because individual identity (and authenticity) can only be achieved in the context of the individual's relationships to (and conversations with) others. As Taylor claims, "We define this [our identity] always in dialogue with, sometimes in struggle against, the identities our significant others want to recognize in us."⁴⁰ It is through this definition-by-others of identity that one comes to become one's authentic self, and in doing so, to realize the ideal of authenticity. The external constraints in the objective component of Taylor's account thus place limits on what can count as an individual's authentic self—the ideal of authenticity, while perhaps allowing for pluralism, cannot be a strictly subjective matter.

Taylor concludes his summary of authenticity's two main components by acknowledging "That these demands may be in tension has to be allowed. But what must be wrong is a simple privileging of one over the other."⁴¹ A discussion in abstract terms will not, according to Taylor, allow us to arrive at a definitive answer of whether one

⁴⁰ Ibid., 33.

⁴¹ Ibid., 66.

should privilege the subjective features of authenticity or the objective ones.⁴² When faced with a decision of, e.g., whether pursuit of a doctoral degree in philosophy would be in accordance with one's authentic self, should that decision be made more squarely on the basis of one's introspective ponderings (subjective component), or rather by contemplating how that decision, and its consequences, would situate oneself with regard to one's horizons of significance (objective component)?

Taylor's point is that there is no easy answer, and indeed, that even when situations are evaluated on a case-by-case basis, determining what actions most align with or promote authenticity will still be difficult. But this, he thinks, is as it should be. For in carving authenticity into these two dimensions, he means to illustrate that both sides have some force behind them. And it's not simply the case that both elements of Taylor's definition have intuitive pull (though he thinks this is likely true); Taylor also thinks that both sides have substantial *moral* force. We *ought* to weigh all of the facets of authenticity that Taylor describes, and it is for this reason that any emerging tension "has to be allowed."⁴³

1.3.2 Accounts Coming After Taylor's

As indicated in a previous section, contemporary accounts of authenticity vary in how their proponents understand the concept of authenticity. However, a number of these newer discussions share core common features. One of these features is these

⁴² Per my discussion in note 35, I am treating 'self-discovery' as an objective feature of authenticity.

⁴³ Taylor, 66.

accounts' investigation and/or repurposing of Charles Taylor's inclusion of self-creation and self-discovery as necessary elements of authenticity. Some of these contemporary philosophers go on to endorse this dual understanding of authenticity, while others, though understanding of the temptation to see the concept in this way, go on to argue for why either self-discovery or self-creation is the sole constituent of authenticity. Among those who believe authenticity to consist of both self-discovery and self-creation, there is wide discrepancy regarding which feature is deemed more central to authenticity. Likewise, there are a number of different names given to these two 'poles' of authenticity: self-creation vs. self-discovery (DeGrazia); creativity vs. gratitude (Parens); and existentialist vs. essentialist (Bublitz and Merkel). But all of these philosophers mean very similar things by their varying terminology. Authenticity, they all agree, can be viewed as a concept that bears a tension between deliberate self-cultivation on the one hand and deference to external determinants of the self on the other.

Here and in what follows, I will adopt DeGrazia's terminology of self-creation and self-discovery, but Parens' terminology and the terminology of Bublitz and Merkel can be understood to be synonymous. What all of these philosophers have in common is the belief that authenticity is best understood via a two-part analysis in which the authentic self is realized by some combination of self-creation and self-discovery. These philosophers (and others) disagree about the extent to which self-creation and self-discovery contribute, but almost all think that authenticity consists of some combination of the two.

1.4 Categorizing Contemporary Accounts Along a Spectrum

1.4.1 Overview

In this section, my aim is to further analyze the components that many have championed as necessary features of authenticity—self-creation and self-discovery—in order to understand each of these components better and also to see whether conceiving of authenticity as a combination of self-creation and self-discovery provides a sufficient account of the concept. I will first say a little bit more about how we should understand philosophers’ use of ‘self-creation’ and ‘self-discovery’ in the context of authenticity, and I will then move to what I term a ‘five-pronged analysis’ of the different ways philosophers have conceived of the respective contributions of self-creation and self-discovery.

The dichotomy of self-creation vs. self-discovery is grounded in the distinction between subjective and objective that also goes back at least as far as Charles Taylor. Recall Taylor’s breakdown of authenticity into subjective and objective components. According to Taylor’s account and to the more recent understandings of authenticity, authenticity-as-self-creation implies that the authentic self is subject to the desires of the agent. Authenticity-as-self-discovery indicates that an individual becomes authentic not by creating whatever sort of self she desires, but by looking inwardly (introspection) or outwardly (to family, religion, or culture) to unearth wherein her authenticity lies.

Authenticity-as-self-discovery and authenticity-as-self-creation can be placed on a continuum from objective to subjective. At the objective pole is the ‘discovery’ option, and

at the opposite, subjective pole is the ‘creation’ option. The nature of the self—the entity these accounts of authenticity are focused on—can appear anywhere along this continuum of objectivity and subjectivity, of self-discovery and self-creation. Thinking in terms of this continuum can help us understand the different combinations of self-creation and self-discovery that might lead to authenticity. Different philosophers have understood the contributions of self-discovery and self-creation differently, and some even think that authenticity consists of only one of these components. In the following section, I will provide a further breakdown of this continuum into five ‘prongs’ and attribute each of these prongs to a different modern philosopher. Doing this will show how differently authenticity can be understood, even when there is consensus that it consists of self-creation and self-discovery. It will also serve to give evidence of my claim in the subsequent section that the self-discovery and self-creation approach provides an insufficient account of authenticity.

1.4.2 Analysis of the Self-Discovery-Self-Creation Continuum Along Critical Points

1.4.2.1 Prong One: Authenticity as Exclusively Self-Creation

In positing that authenticity, properly understood, exists somewhere between the poles of self-discovery and self-creation, I am consequently suggesting that there is a conceptual continuum, and various philosophers have staked their understanding of

authenticity at different points along this continuum. It will be useful to examine these various accounts of authenticity and situate them along this conceptual continuum.

At one extreme pole of the authenticity continuum is the understanding of authenticity as comprised solely of self-creation. To conceive of authenticity in this way is to say that being authentic is exclusively the result of a creative process; one begins life with no pre-ordained purpose, identity, or self, and there are therefore no restrictions on which creative processes result in authenticity.⁴⁴

One of the most famous accounts of authenticity in all of Western philosophy belongs to Jean-Paul Sartre. Sartre's account is also among the most radical, as his view of authenticity, and indeed, his whole existentialist project, is founded on the assertion that we are devoid of essence. As such, it is our duty to self-create, as indeed, there is nothing else that we *can* do. As Neil Levy so nicely describes Sartre's view, "The authentic individual recognizes that *nothing*—not their genes, not their past history, not their social relationships or their talents and skills, not morality and not God—stands in the way of their self-creation."⁴⁵ To deny this radical freedom and instead behave as though the self

⁴⁴ This may immediately strike readers as wildly implausible. How could there be absolutely no restrictions on what counts as authentic? This problem with the Authenticity as Exclusively Self Creation prong is indicative of why the 'one-dimensional' accounts of authenticity currently on offer are inadequate, a matter I will take up later in this chapter and in Chapter Two. In the two-dimensional conception that I endorse, it is possible for authenticity to consist exclusively of self-creation *and* for there to be restrictions on self-creation (though I will still advocate against saying that Authenticity as Exclusively Self Creation is the correct position).

⁴⁵ Neil Levy, "Enhancing Authenticity," *Journal of Applied Philosophy* 28, no. 3 (2011): 311.

possesses any essential features capable of discovery is to act in bad faith. Bad faith, for Sartre, is the antithesis of authenticity; it is the practice by which one denies, ignores, or is otherwise unaware of the ontological reality that human beings have no pre-existing essence and must therefore create their own identities. Our facticity, or the circumstances with which we are born and in which we live, does not place a limit on this radical freedom and radical responsibility to forge our own identities. Rather, Sartre states that “it is we, ourselves, who decide who we are to be,” that “We can define man only in relation to his commitments” and not in relation to any essential, preordained characteristics.⁴⁶

We can thus understand Sartre to be promoting a version of authenticity whereby self-creation is the only appropriate (and defensible) means through which one can avoid bad faith and thereby be authentic. The self-discovery element of authenticity implies that there is something outside the individual’s control that constitutes her identity; for there to be anything to discover requires that there be some pre-determined, pre-constituted feature of the self that came about independent of the individual’s actions or agency. But this is precisely what Sartre rejects; there is *no* essence that precedes existence, no nature or aspect of the self that exists independent of the identities we create for ourselves.

⁴⁶ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Existentialism Is a Humanism*, trans. Carol Macomber (New Haven : Yale University Press, 2007), 34; 46.

1.4.2.2 Prong Five: Authenticity as Exclusively Self-Discovery

At the other extreme pole is the understanding of authenticity exclusively as self-discovery. To conceive of authenticity in this way is to say that authenticity is achieved not by deciding what sort of person one wants to be, but by seeking out and being open to signs pointing to one's pre-ordained self.

Michael Sandel occupies this other extreme position of the spectrum, arguing that authenticity consists exclusively of self-discovery. Sandel begins the final chapter of *The Case Against Perfection* by stating that “[t]o believe that our talents and powers are wholly our own doing is to misunderstand our place in creation, to confuse our role with God’s.” Lest the reader think that theism is a prerequisite for taking his view seriously, Sandel is quick to add that “religion is not the only source of reasons to care about giftedness,” for “the moral stakes can also be described in secular terms.”⁴⁷ From the very beginning of this chapter, Sandel lets the reader know that his view is going to be critical of human attempts at self-creation.

The chapter's title, “Mastery and Gift,” shows yet another way that philosophers have articulated the distinction that I have characterized as self-creation vs. self-discovery. Mastery, for Sandel, is the stance we take when we make it our task to change or create ourselves. In contrast, the stance of the gift (or giftedness) is one that is taken when we

⁴⁷ Michael Sandel, *The Case against Perfection: Ethics in the Age of Genetic Engineering* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007), 85-6.

view our (divinely-or-otherwise) endowed traits, talents, and personalities as gifts for which we are grateful and which we in turn seek to discover.

Sandel thinks that the mastery stance is incompatible with understanding the realities of our places and roles in the universe, and as such, it is incompatible with authenticity. If authenticity is the practice of ‘being true to oneself,’ then it is impossible to be authentic if an individual is fundamentally mistaken about how his self is constructed and how it is situated within the world. A person cannot be true to himself if his attempts to do so are built on a foundation of untruth. And Sandel thinks that adopting the Mastery stance and thereby seeing the authentic self as the (partial) product of self-creation is a false foundational belief upon which nothing authentic can be built.

That leaves us with the stance of giftedness, which we can understand as synonymous with the self-discovery framework. To approach life from this stance is to eschew what Sandel calls the “myth of the ‘self-made man’” and to properly view our talents and circumstances as gifts rather than achievements.⁴⁸ As such, Sandel thinks that we should operate exclusively from the stance of giftedness and the framework of self-discovery. The respect for ‘the given’ that Sandel thinks is an obligatory moral and epistemic stance is incompatible with even a modicum of self-creation being part of the definition of

⁴⁸ Ibid., 86.

authenticity.⁴⁹ We have been endowed with our authentic selves,⁵⁰ and to think otherwise or attempt to change our attributes via self-creation is an exercise in hubris and self-deception.

1.4.2.3 Preliminary Analysis: One and Five Fail

I will now build the case for why we should believe that an accurate account of authenticity will incorporate elements of both self-discovery and self-creation. Both play crucial roles in how we understand the self. To dispose fully of the authenticity as self-discovery would be to discount the very real fact that there are core features of our identities that are not for us to decide upon, and there are limitations to the sorts of self-creation we can accomplish. We are not capable of everything—genetics, environment, physical constitution, and other constraints exist that limit the ways in which we can alter and shape our selves or our identities.

But to dispose of authenticity as self-creation would be to suggest that we are endowed with our ‘authentic selves’ in a way that is totally independent of our wills, aims, or desires for our self-constitution. This seems difficult to reconcile with evidence from evolutionary biology, which would suggest that we are not endowed with any ‘essence(s),’ and it also seems to undermine our capacity for reasons-responsiveness and subsequent

⁴⁹ Michael Sandel, "What's Wrong with Enhancement," 2019, no. January 21 (2002).

⁵⁰ As indicated earlier, Sandel does not think that belief in this ‘endowment’ requires us to also endorse some form of religion. I am skeptical of this claim, but since Sandel *does* in fact endorse a form of religion (Christianity), we can evaluate his argument on those grounds.

change in light of evidence compelling us to behave in a new or different way. While it seems clear that there are limitations to the sorts of tasks we can complete and the sorts of individuals we can become, it also seems clear that there are ways in which we *can* deliberately bring about self-change in ways that promote authenticity.

For these reasons, to dispose of either the self-discovery or self-creation elements, as Sartre and Sandel have done, is to start from an inaccurate assumption about the human self. Having disposed of the two 'extreme' options, we can now consider prongs Two, Three, and Four, which each contain a different combination of self-creation and self-discovery. From here, the challenge becomes that of determining how much of each of these features belongs in a proper account of authenticity. Does each feature contribute equally? Or does one feature of authenticity play a more significant role than the other?

1.4.2.4 Prong Three: Authenticity as a 50/50 Combination of Self-Creation and Self-Discovery

Erik Parens speaks in the language of gratitude and creativity in his discussion of authenticity, but we can understand this terminology to be synonymous with talk of self-discovery and self-creation. As is true of Carl Elliott, Parens' discussion of authenticity is situated within a discussion of human enhancement. He comes at the so-called enhancement debate with the goal of diagnosing the source of stark disagreement between those who characterize authenticity as self-discovery (gratitude framework) and those who characterize it as self-creation (creativity framework).

Through his diagnosis of the debate among the proponents and opponents of the enhancement debate, an account of authenticity emerges that sees the creative and discovery processes as equally important. As part of his diagnosis, Parens states that he has “come to think that these different understandings of authenticity grow out of” what he calls “two different ethical frameworks.”⁵¹ The first of these, the framework of gratitude, has as its chief worry that “if we forget that life is a gift...we will make a mistake about the sort of creatures we really are and the way the world really is.”⁵² Those who operate from the gratitude framework worry that we may fail to recognize the degree to which we are not creators of our destinies or our selves. Proponents of the gratitude stance think that we should be appreciative of who we are and the circumstances that—through God or chance—have been bestowed upon us. As such, we should do work to explore and *discover* these attributes and make the most of them; to try to alter ourselves is to cease to be who we really are.

The second of these frameworks is the framework of creativity, and those operating from this framework believe that human beings are obligated to “use our creativity to mend and transform ourselves and the world.”⁵³ To operate from the framework of gratitude—sitting back and letting the world and ourselves just happen, as it were—is to shirk a

⁵¹ Erik Parens, "Authenticity and Ambivalence: Toward Understanding the Enhancement Debate," *The Hastings Center Report* 35, no. 3 (2005): 37.

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 38.

fundamental human responsibility. According to the creativity framework, we become authentic through the work of transformation via self-creation. To create our selves is to become our authentic selves.

Parens characterizes this disagreement between adherents on each side as a “fertile tension,” and he argues that gratitude and creativity are on equal footing. The ambivalence he sees so many people feeling in regard to the proper definition of authenticity is, he thinks, a sign of enlightenment rather than confusion. He says:

Anyone who has used the word ‘authenticity’ or has tried to track how others use it knows how slippery it is. It is tempting to say that we use it in different ways at different times because we are confused...I have tried to suggest, instead, that its slipperiness reflects the fact that we think about authenticity in different ways.⁵⁴

Furthermore, Parens does not think that it’s just the case that we *happen* to think about authenticity in different ways. He also thinks that we *should* think of authenticity in these two ways. The best understanding of authenticity is one that recognizes the importance of *both* the gratitude framework—through which we accept that we are not solely responsible for our existence and work to discover the kinds of people we are—and the creation framework, through which we recognize that we have agency and are responsible for creating our identities and shaping our futures.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 41.

Parens classifies this preferred way of thinking as ‘embracing binocularity’ a metaphor by which he means that we must be able to approach difficult conceptual questions through two different ‘lenses’ at the same time.⁵⁵ Analogous to the fact that visual input from two eyes (binocular sight) allows us superior depth perception than were we to have only one eye, Parens thinks that our depth of understanding in the matter of conceptual problems is heightened through a conceptual binocularity. It is through an integration of two ‘conceptual systems’—authenticity as self-discovery and authenticity as self-creation—that Parens thinks we can arrive closest to the truth. He maintains that both sides of the debate get something right and that we are best off when we recognize the virtues of each side. He thinks that each side is equally valuable (just as contributions from each eye is valuable for binocular vision), and as such, he is best characterized as holding the position that authenticity consists of an equal blend of self-discovery and self-creation.

1.4.2.5 Prong Four: Authenticity as Mostly Self-Discovery

Carl Elliott is best interpreted of holding the view that authenticity is best characterized as ‘mostly self-discovery,’ and his stance toward authenticity becomes clear through his numerous publications about some of the unique features of American culture. Though Elliott equivocates in various places⁵⁶, a holistic analysis of his books,

⁵⁵ Erik Parens, *Shaping Our Selves: On Technology, Flourishing, and a Habit of Thinking* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

⁵⁶ Parens also diagnoses equivocation, but he says that Elliott does “get clear on a fundamental worry that helps us infer what he thinks authenticity is.” I agree with Parens on this point. "Authenticity and Ambivalence: Toward Understanding the Enhancement Debate," 36.

articles, and chapters indicates that what I am calling “Prong Four” is where he best fits—and where *he thinks* he fits—on the continuum.

Elliott’s main way of approaching authenticity comes through his interest in 1) some of the unique cultural norms in the United States and 2) our use of medical interventions. He expresses deep concern regarding the extent to which modern-day Americans, facing alienation and dissatisfaction, have availed themselves of pharmaceuticals and cosmetic treatments. Part of this concern can be attributed to his worry that these technologies merely put a Band-Aid on—or worse, perpetuate—problematic cultural norms or aspects of our society or environment.

But Elliott’s worries are not limited to fear of these consequences. He is also worried about the ways in which use of so-called enhancement technologies may deceive us or alienate us from ourselves by rendering us less authentic than we were before we used them. Although many people purportedly use these technologies to better themselves or find themselves, Elliott maintains that these efforts cause problems of identity even if they are deemed ‘successful’ in other ways.

It’s not that Elliott is against projects of self-betterment. Indeed, he sees great value in efforts of self-improvement; but it is *self-discovery* that he deems “crucial to this project.”⁵⁷ And Elliott’s chief worry is that self-discovery is being ignored or abandoned in favor of

⁵⁷ Carl Elliott, *Better Than Well : American Medicine Meets the American Dream* (New York : W.W. Norton, 2003), 35.

denial, quick fixes, or self-deception. Those who think that self-creation can (or should) play the dominant role in being authentic are simply mistaken, for Elliott asserts that “[t]he ethic of authenticity tells us that meaning is not to be found by looking outside ourselves, but by looking inward” and that “[t]he meaningful life is an authentic life, and authenticity can be discovered only through an inner journey.”⁵⁸ The inner journey that Elliott has in mind is the activity of introspection. In order to be authentic, one must first turn one’s gaze inward so as to discover who one really is; it is only then that one can see what one ought to be doing with one’s life (and therefore *act* authentically).⁵⁹

Self-discovery is the chief component of authenticity according to Elliott, but it is not the only component. Elliott knows that some will read his account’s emphasis on self-discovery and accuse him of holding an essentialist view of the self. He states explicitly in *Better than Well* that one can ‘buy in’ to the concept of an authentic self without in turn having to endorse an essentialist view of the self. And as becomes clearer in his other writings, it is because authenticity also has an element of *creation* that he says we are able to avoid a slide into essentialism.

Understanding how self-creation applies to Elliott’s view requires a little bit of explanation. We might simply conclude, based on his assertion that his view is not an essentialist one, that there must therefore be a non-fixed (i.e. non-discoverable) element,

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 43.

and this element could be reasonably understood to be an element of self-creation. And I think this inference is a fair one to make; it is certainly consistent with Elliott's view. But Elliott also gives us a more explicit account of what this creative element is and how it fits in to his view.

We can see this creative element emerge through Elliott's assertions that identity can never be fully inwardly generated and that the construction of one's identity is not simply a private decision that an individual makes for herself.⁶⁰ For all his emphasis on the importance of introspection, Elliott is also attuned to the fact that with whom we interact and how we interact with them also shape us in significant ways. Echoing Charles Taylor, Elliott believes that the self can never be "wholly inwardly generated" but rather must be "developed in dialogue with others."⁶¹

How this dialogue with others amounts to a self-creation element requires some unpacking. It is fairly clear that an account of authenticity that incorporates interactions with others thereby incorporates a creative element; what is less clear is how this creative element can in turn be understood as *self-creative*. That dialogue with others is partially constitutive of one's authentic self suggests, fairly straightforwardly, that other people have a say in what we are (or what we can be). As Elliott discusses, other people can fail to recognize one's identity, and this failure of recognition can in turn *impact* that identity.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 41; Carl Elliott, "Enhancement Technologies and the Modern Self," *Journal of Medicine and Philosophy* 36, no. 4 (2011): 366.

⁶¹ *Better Than Well : American Medicine Meets the American Dream*, 41.

Someone may insist that she is a Southerner, but if others fail to recognize her as such, there is a sense in which her self-reported identity as a Southerner is diminished. As a result, we can understand Elliott to be saying that an individual's identity is in part *created* by others.⁶² Others do not have complete or even majority say in who an individual is, but they are also not immaterial to the identity (and authentic self) of the person with whom they interact.

How, in turn, can we understand this to bring about *self-creation*? One way this self-creative element emerges is through the practice of cultivating your life in such a way that you maximize your chances of being perceived in the way you want to be perceived. Self-discovery is an introspective activity, whereas an engagement in dialogue with others necessitates that one *create* a persona. This persona can be better or worse at conveying the discovered elements of one's identity, and success in conveying the right persona will require one to be creative in the representation of the self. This practice of cultivating your life in the way you want to be perceived, as well as the practice of accepting and utilizing the feedback you receive from being in dialogue with others, is the self-creative part of Elliott's conception. Through introspection, Elliott seems to be hoping that we will gain self-awareness; and this self-awareness will, in turn, allow us to be more attuned to the impact that others have on us. Our ability to synthesize and internalize this impact

⁶² That others have a say in the constitution of one's self indicates that the concept 'self-creation' is ambiguous since, for Elliott, creation of a self by others, even if only partially, is sufficient to qualify as 'self-creation.'

requires creativity on our part: how do we incorporate others' feedback into the process of self-discovery, and into the proper expression of our authentic selves? It is only through practicing self-creation that we are able to do so. After we engage in introspection and discover who we are, we must exercise creativity so as to present ourselves in the most accurate way to others. The feedback of others, in turn, helps to create us, and the creative contribution of others in turn spurs further creativity on our part.

1.4.2.6 Prong Two: Authenticity as Mostly Self-Creation

Prong Two—the view that authenticity consists primarily, though not exclusively, of self-creation—is exemplified by David DeGrazia. In “Prozac, Enhancement, and Self-Creation,” he argues, *pace* Carl Elliott, that efforts of creating oneself—even if that creative process leads to dramatic change—are perfectly compatible with authenticity. According to DeGrazia’s interpretation, Elliott wrongly assumes that the self is preordained, or a “given, static, something there to be discovered.”⁶³ In contrast, DeGrazia sets out to defend the thesis that authentic self-creation is indeed possible, though there are some constraints on our abilities to create our (authentic) selves.

To reach this conclusion, DeGrazia first specifies the areas in which he agrees with Elliott. Like Elliott, DeGrazia thinks that “life is a project whose meaning depends on how

⁶³ David DeGrazia, “Prozac, Enhancement, and Self-Creation,” *The Hastings Center Report* 30, no. 2 (2000): 35. As argued in the previous section, I understand Elliott to hold the view that authenticity is *mostly* self-discovery (i.e., that the self is *mostly* static). This puts DeGrazia and me in slight disagreement, but his commentary on Elliott’s view, while a bit overstated, is still useful.

we live and for which we are largely responsible” and that “figuring out how one should live requires introspection, because there is no unique external standard for living meaningfully.”⁶⁴ But DeGrazia characterizes Elliott as thinking that this responsibility and introspection is present in the context of a static self, and it is precisely this idea of a static self that DeGrazia rejects.

In addition to the static self, DeGrazia also believes we have good reason to reject the view of others (like Sartre) who claim that the self is extremely malleable and comes about exclusively through the process of self-creation. Instead, DeGrazia argues for a middle ground, stating that a “little reflection suggests that we can reshape ourselves *to some extent*.”⁶⁵ He thinks that we can be true to ourselves even when we are actively seeking to change who we are. And because this change is brought about, at least in part, by our agency (and not, say, social forces or one’s genetic composition), we have good reason to think that self-creation plays an important role in the nature of the self. Indeed, DeGrazia thinks “part of the human endeavor is deciding and trying to become who one will be.”⁶⁶

But DeGrazia describes himself as holding a “moderate view,” so he does think that this capacity to self-create is constrained in significant ways. He takes it to be self-evident that the “possibilities for self-creation are limited by its enmeshment with other crucial processes and factors” like the inevitable aging process, the types of caregivers we have as

⁶⁴ Ibid., 36.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 37.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 34.

children, and “the unexpected, random, though momentous consequences of the things we choose.”⁶⁷ DeGrazia thinks that facts of reality that are external to the self simultaneously open up and constrain the possibilities available to us; while self-creation is the main driver behind becoming our authentic selves, there are options that are simply unavailable to us, and there may be some features of ourselves that are simply recalcitrant to change; it is these unmovable features of our selves that we are best off discovering and learning to accept.

One more feature of DeGrazia’s view warrants discussion, as it will become relevant in Chapter Two of this dissertation. Given the seemingly wide range of ways in which one can successfully be authentic on DeGrazia’s view, how are we to evaluate—either in ourselves or in others—whether the self that one has created is in fact an authentic self? DeGrazia thinks that we must look to the values of the individual in question in order to make this assessment. Using the example of two inveterate smokers, both of whom are considering kicking the habit, DeGrazia says that whether or not quitting smoking—creating themselves anew as non-smokers—is authentic will depend on whether or not they identify with the identity of ‘non-smoker’. DeGrazia gives the example of one woman who, given her delight in being contrarian when she lights up, would be rendered *inauthentic* were she to quit smoking, even though doing so might be sensible for health or financial reasons. But another person, with the same smoking habit, might very well become more

⁶⁷ Ibid., 37.

authentic when she quits smoking, if she does not identify with the habit and finds that her habit of smoking feels alien. In this case, we have two different individuals with the same habit but who identify with their habit in very different ways. And DeGrazia thinks that whether or not a person identifies with a particular habit, trait, or behavior depends on her *values*. The difference in the way these two women identify with their smoking habit depends on their value systems; in simplest terms, one values being a contrarian while the other does not. According to DeGrazia, “who we are has everything to do with what we value;” who we authentically are depends on what we do and do not identify with, which is founded on what we do and do not value.⁶⁸

1.5 Prong Two as the Most Plausible Account

Having already argued that the extremes of Prongs One and Five are inadequate accounts of authenticity, I will now argue for why we ought to endorse Prong Two, where authenticity consists primarily of self-creation while also having a minority self-discovery component, as offering the best account of authenticity out of the five prongs.

Recall that when all of these philosophers discuss self-creation and self-discovery, they are doing so with regard to the self; their aim is in determining the extent to which the authentic self is created, discovered, or some combination. J. David Velleman and Alasdair MacIntyre have both presented narrative views of the self. According to

⁶⁸ Ibid., 38.

Velleman, the self has qualities both of a narrative and of a narration, meaning that it has qualities of a story and of the process of being told, with the possessor of the self being the storyteller. As a result of this classification, Velleman considers the self to be a process or activity whereby one narrates her life. In chapter fifteen of *After Virtue*, Alasdair MacIntyre argues that humans are “story-telling animal[s].”⁶⁹ For MacIntyre, each individual’s life is a narrative, with that individual’s self at the center of that narrative.

If we adopt this understanding of self as narrative, we can see why Prong Two seems to offer the most plausible composition of authenticity. When it comes to crafting a narrative, there is a lot of creative license afforded to the author. But the creative license of the author does not extend to *everything*; there are certain factual constraints on a narrative that one cannot change, no matter how much he might want to. When narrating, there are certain features of a story or experience that, if told truthfully, are not subject to human creativity (e.g. basic facts about one’s experience, the order of events). But a lot is up to the creativity of the narrator, like how the story is told, how the narrator chooses to respond to certain facts, what points of the story the narrator chooses to focus on, or her assessment of certain facts.

Understood in this way, Prong Two is the clearest fit to this conception of the self. With its majority component of self-creation, Prong Two mirrors the fact that much of

⁶⁹ Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue : A Study in Moral Theory* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007), 216.

narrative crafting is left up to the creative discretion of the narrator. But the minority component of self-discovery mirrors the fact that there are certain facts-of-the-matter that a narrator cannot alter without also altering the truth. Committing to this view means that the self will be more expansive than if we adopted a view whereby there was a larger component of self-discovery attached to authenticity. Because I hold the view that majority share of authenticity consists of self-creation, an individual's proper target will (chiefly) be constituted by her own creative processes. This implies that more options will be available to her than if authenticity consisted chiefly of self-discovery. Because this conceptualization endows the individual with a high degree of agency in becoming authentic, there will be a range of targets (i.e. a range of selves) that might meet the criteria of authenticity. But since authenticity contains *some* degree of self-discovery, we know that the self must be fixed in some (minimal) way: while there may be many different selves that could be deemed authentic for any one individual, there will be *some* targets that will be off-limits in regard to authenticity. While Prong Two allows for many target options, it does place some limits on what can be deemed an authentic self.

1.6 The Limits of Prong Two

In all the accounts of authenticity that I have discussed in the Five Prongs section, their advocates have all been focused on the *self* and the appropriate amount of self-creation and self-discovery that must be undertaken to arrive at the true self and thereby be authentic. But exclusive reliance on the self-discovery/self-creation framework is

insufficient for crafting a comprehensive and robust account of authenticity. When we evaluate whether an individual is authentic, we care not only about the self at which he is aiming (and whether that self constitutes his ‘true self’) but also about the sorts of actions and projects the individual undertakes so as to realize that true self. Determining what combination of self-creation and self-discovery underlies the true self and finding an individual whose conception of her self reflects this appropriate combination does not necessarily mean that we will be inclined to deem that individual authentic. Intuitively speaking, when we talk about authenticity, we want to know more: not just whether the individual in question has arrived at her true self, but *how* she has arrived at this true self.

The determination of what combination of self-creation and self-discovery properly characterizes the self is but one component of an account of authenticity; I label this component the ‘Target Dimension’ because it captures what an individual is *aiming at* (i.e. the true self). In order to improve on the limitations of the contemporary accounts of authenticity that rely exclusively on the target dimension, I advocate the inclusion of another dimension—which I term the Response Dimension—to a proper account of authenticity. The response dimension captures *how* the individual goes about being true to her self. I will more fully flesh out what I mean by the Response Dimension in the next chapter.

2. Chapter Two: Authenticity: A Novel Account

2.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I focused on an overview of others' accounts of authenticity and an assessment of those accounts. I indicated that prior accounts have characterized authenticity exclusively in terms of what I am calling the 'target dimension,' and I indicated that their accounts provide an incomplete account of authenticity. I also explored the distinction many contemporary accounts make between authenticity consisting of 'self-discovery' or 'self-creation' (or some combination), and I presented and defended the view that authenticity consists primarily of self-creation but also contains a minority self-discovery component.

In this chapter, I will build on the previous chapter's discussion by first introducing the crucial missing piece—what I term the 'response dimension'—that other accounts have left out. After describing this missing piece and indicating why it is a necessary component of a convincing account of authenticity, I will propose a new way of understanding authenticity in light of my discussion. The remainder of the chapter will be devoted to further exploration of some of the questions naturally arising from my account and discussion of some implications of my account.

2.2 A Proposed Tagline Amendment

As indicated in the previous chapter, others' accounts of authenticity have neglected a key component of the concept. In a way, this is puzzling, because the tagline of authenticity as 'being true to oneself' emphasizes precisely the truth relation that is lacking in others' discussions of authenticity. Because my version of authenticity involves two truth relations—the target dimension and the response dimension—I propose that we amend the tagline of authenticity to read “being true to one’s *true* self.” This reformulation highlights that the element of ‘truth’ occurs in two separate instances (the target and the response), and that each instance of the modifier ‘true’ connotes a different meaning. The ‘one’s true self’ captures the target dimension and indicates that there is an objective entity to which one’s actions must cohere in order for one to be authentic. The ‘being true’ component captures the response dimension and indicates that there are objective criteria in place for evaluating whether the process by which one attempts to arrive at the target is authentic. It is to a discussion of the response dimension that I now turn.

2.3 The Response Dimension

I can now elaborate more on the ‘being true’ element that I am terming the response dimension. Once the target of a given individual has been set, only part of the authenticity equation has been solved. When we talk about authenticity or make assessments about authenticity, we care about not only the goal or outcome that an individual is pursuing, but also about *how* an individual brings about the relevant goal or

outcome. As far as authenticity is concerned, it matters not only what the true self is but also how this self is realized. As discussed in Chapter One, an account of authenticity that focuses only on the target dimension provides us with counterintuitive results when employed to make assessments about authenticity.

This ‘how’ element is captured by what I term the ‘response dimension’ of authenticity. If authenticity is understood as “being true to one’s true self” then the response dimension captures the “being true” element. When we assess the authenticity of an individual, we care not only about the self that he is aiming at; we also care about the *manner* in which an individual aims at that target, i.e. his behavior or the actions he performs in pursuit of the target. An agent can set an appropriate (authentic) target through self-discovery and self-creation, but we don’t simply care about the target-setting step; we also care about the manner in which one pursues or realizes that target, and we think (both with regard to our own targets and our assessments of others) that some methods of aiming at the target are authentic, while others are not. An individual with an authentic target can fail to be authentic (or can be only partially authentic) if the means through which he arrives at the target are not themselves authentic.

Some examples will help illustrate the intuition that content (the target) as well as the means (the response) matter when making judgments about authenticity. I will present and analyze three examples to motivate the claim that introduction of the response dimension can ameliorate problems that arise as a result of focusing only on the target

dimension. These are: a case of internal inconsistency, a case of external inconsistency, and a final case to help illustrate the point that my points apply regardless of whether an individual's authentic self and behavior are morally permissible.

2.3.1 Internal Inconsistency

Let's first look to a case of internal consistency with regard to authenticity—where an individual's target and the response by which she aims at that target intuitively give rise to a problem of consistency with regard to authenticity. Darryl determines through the appropriate combination of self-creation and self-discovery that his true self is that of a generous person. As a way of being true to this authentic self, he donates money to a number of charities whose missions he supports. In making these donations, he succeeds in 'hitting' the target—his donations are an act of generosity, so his true generous self is realized.

However, we come to learn that Darryl acquires his largesse through embezzlement of funds from the charity at which he is an employee. This information poses a problem for our understanding of Darryl's generosity as well as his authenticity. Is the outcome (the target dimension) really generous (authentic) if the means by which the outcome is achieved (the response dimension) are conceptually inconsistent with the outcome? If we assess authenticity merely by appeal to the target dimension, we are forced to declare that Darryl is authentic; he does, after all, succeed in bringing about his true self, that of a generous person. And yet this conclusion conflicts with our intuitions about Darryl's

actions, which seem to render his 'good deed' inauthentic because the embezzlement of funds is contrary to the aim of generosity. But if we introduce the response dimension and assess whether the *means* by which Darryl arrives at his generosity are in line with his true self, we have the conceptual latitude to conclude that they are not. While Darryl may be authentic when we appeal to the target dimension, he is not authentic when we appeal to the response dimension. The introduction of the response dimension into my account of authenticity allows us to give a more fine-grained assessment of agents and their behavior, and this ability helps to produce more intuitive conclusions.

2.3.2 External Inconsistency

We can also see how introduction of the response dimension can help in cases in which the inconsistency with regard to authenticity emerges as a result of an external inconsistency, wherein multiple aspects of one's true self generate a conflict. Shirley may determine, through the appropriate combination of self-creation and self-discovery, that her being true to herself requires that she prioritize her children's welfare. The goal of 'prioritizing her children's welfare' characterizes the target dimension, since it is that at which the individual is aiming. If she hits this target, and we are assessing authenticity with exclusive appeal to the target dimension, then she is by definition an authentic individual.

But individuals will have more than one component of their true selves, and this can make things more complicated for assessing authenticity exclusively from the vantage

point of the target dimension. If Shirley also determines that her true self involves her being an honest individual, then, intuitively speaking, certain responses to the target of prioritizing her children's welfare will be inauthentic. For example, if Shirley were to promote the welfare of her children by stealing resources from her neighbor, this would seem incompatible with her authenticity even though the target (promotion of her children's welfare) is achieved. Introduction of the response dimension allows us to characterize *why* there is a strand of inauthenticity in the case of Shirley stealing so as to promote her children's welfare. Even if the target is successfully hit, and their welfare is promoted, the means by which this outcome is achieved is inauthentic, since her actions are in violation of another aspect of her authentic self, honesty.

This presents a case of 'external incompatibility' because one feature of Shirley's authentic self—that of someone who brings about her children's welfare—is at odds with another feature of her authentic self—being an honest person. As with the previous example, introduction of the response dimension allows us to analyze this scenario in a way that renders an assessment more in line with our intuitions about authenticity.

2.3.3 Immoral Authenticity

The previous two examples have presented authenticity in ways that have been aligned with morality. But this need not be the case; indeed, adherence to one's true self can sometimes require that an agent do something morally impermissible.

To illustrate this point, consider the example of the Authentic Plagiarist. Melanie is a college student who values turning in timely and polished work. Melanie herself, and those who know her well, consider this quality an authentic feature of who she is. Amidst the chaos of a busy schedule, Melanie forgets about a paper until the night before the assignment is due. She determines that the only way to turn in a polished paper on time is to buy a paper online. In this example, the target dimension—the self to which Melanie seeks to be true—is that of a person who turns in timely and well-crafted work. But in these particular circumstances, the only way that she can fulfil the dictates of the target—the only response that will render her authentic—is an act of plagiarism, which is morally frowned upon. Nevertheless, the authentic response in this case would be the morally impermissible one¹.

Notice how values have cropped up in the discussion of these previous two examples, and I will speak to values' relationship to the self in a subsequent section. This will be useful to keep in mind as we consider this question: what is it, exactly, that makes a response authentic? We can begin by asking a more general, but related question: why do we consider some strategies, but not all strategies, acceptable for arriving at a specified (and acceptable) goal? I submit that most people are not Machiavellian 'the end justifies the means' sorts precisely because their value systems prevent them from being this way. For

¹ I am assuming here that there are not any competing authentic targets (e.g. the target of being an honest person) which might in turn impact the authentic responses available to Melanie. I will return to the question of conflicting targets and responses later in the chapter.

most people, having a targeted goal or outcome—even one that is itself acceptable—does not guarantee that it will be viewed as acceptable once there is also knowledge of the means by which the outcome is realized. The values systems that lead people to prefer certain outcomes over others are the same values systems that make people care about *how* their preferred outcomes are achieved, and they also account for why people sometimes regret that their preferred outcomes have been achieved². Most individuals who care about succeeding in a particular way (e.g., in producing an effective piece of art) care not only about the outcome of the effective art, but also about the way the artwork is created. For most, copying the artwork of another, even if it resulted in an effective piece of art, would render the success less preferable (or perhaps not preferable at all).³ Our values exist as a web, and can thus be in tension or competition with one another; as such, they can either succeed or fail to interact in ways that we globally assess as being preferable.

In general, values are concerned with both the outcome and the means of producing or generating the outcome. We can see this by revisiting our examples. In the case of the woman concerned with prioritizing her children’s welfare, I suggested that we are not only concerned with the targeted outcome of ensuring that the needs of her children are met, which is itself an indication of her values (since one of her chief values just is to ensure that her children’s needs are met). I claimed that we also tend to be

² i.e. if their preferred outcome comes about via means that they are not proud of.

³ Perhaps because the act of copying seems to render the piece non-art (if we have the intuition that for something to be art, it must be organically created and not copied from another artist’s work).

interested in the manner in which that target is realized—realizing that target via embezzlement of employer funds would indicate a certain value or set of values (at minimum, that this action is, all things considered, permissible), and realizing that target through another action, like taking on a second job to make extra money, would indicate a different set of values. A woman might care deeply about the welfare of her children but feel deep regret if her children’s welfare is promoted via her commission of a crime. This might be because she *also* values living above the law, which in turn constrains the sorts of actions she can perform, in service of promoting her children’s welfare, while still remaining true to her values.

This more general discussion of values can be helpful in understanding our intuitions about authenticity. When appraising ourselves or others with regard to authenticity, we have a similar concern with not only the targeted goal or outcome but also the response by which that target is realized. In considering authenticity specifically, the concern that the response must be in line with a certain set of conditions becomes, analogously, the concern that the means by which the individual aims at the target are themselves subject to the criteria of authenticity. Both the fact that she cares about her children’s welfare and the fact that there are certain things she will and won’t do to promote her children’s welfare are indicative of the fact that she possesses certain values. Her valuing of her children and of life above the law will interact to render certain actions for the sake of the welfare of her children off-limits to her.

We can further explore how the target and response dimensions interact and how these interactions inform our intuitions about authenticity by again looking to an example. Consider an individual who, through a combination of self-discovery and self-creation, determines that she will not live a life that is authentically hers unless she lives in accordance with the value of gender equality⁴. While being introspective enough to recognize that a particular value is part of one's true self⁵ is already an accomplishment, we do not yet have enough information to determine whether devotion to gender equality is enough to render this individual authentic. In order to assess the authenticity of this individual's actions or overall self, we must evaluate not only the target dimension (in this case, the true self as comprised in part by valuing gender equality) but also the response dimension—i.e. how she behaves in virtue of her devotion to the value of gender equality and how she aims at the target of promoting gender equality. For our hypothetical individual might aim at this target in myriad ways, and not all of these responses will render the agent (or her actions) authentic. Since the way the individual arrives at the target matters for authenticity, certain responses—ones that would conflict with the value

⁴ By this, I mean that she acts in a manner consistent with genders being equal, treats people equally regardless of gender, and challenges instances of sexism that she encounters.

⁵ Note the distinction between adhering to a given value and having a value be part of one's true self. A value can be adhered to for a variety of reasons—sloth, convenience, peer pressure, etc.—that do not make that value a part of one's self. In order for a value to constitute part of one's true self, it must actually be possessed by the person in question. But recall that it need *not* be endorsed by its possessor, as doing that gets into the territory of autonomy.

supposedly being aimed at or ones that seem to bear no relation to the relevant value—will be inauthentic.

Even if a response is reasonably aimed at a target, that response might still fail to be authentic if it is not aligned with the (other) values of the self. If a response violates or is inconsistent with *another* value that the individual possesses—for example, the value of honesty—then that particular response will fail to be authentic.⁶ Thus, if our individual's response to the target of gender equality were that she impersonated a man so as to gain credibility, this would be inauthentic because it does not successfully aim at the target (championing gender equality by eschewing your gender seems to create an internal tension) and misrepresentation of herself is inconsistent with her other value of honesty. The target dimension—one's true self as a valuer of gender equality—might be satisfied, but the response dimension—how this individual acts in light of this value—might not be satisfied. In such a case, we might want to say that the intentions/setting of the target or goal are good (authentic), but the means through which the agent aims at the target undermine the goodness (authenticity). The target is indeed an authentic one, but the response is inauthentic; a global assessment of this individual would render her only partially authentic.

⁶ More precisely, that particular response will fail to be *globally* authentic. We may still call it 'authentic with respect to gender equality,' but typically when we are making assessments of authenticity we are doing so globally.

Conversely, one might aim at an inauthentic target via authentic means. Consider a case in which an individual decides to attend law school so as to become a prosecutor. In aiming at this target, the individual makes particular sacrifices, exercises significant self-discipline, and takes a financial hit. Even if we judge (or the individual comes to judge) the pursuit of a J.D. a mistake (one that, as it turns out, is not an authentic pursuit⁷), this doesn't automatically mean that the efforts expended so as to become a prosecutor were themselves misplaced or inauthentic. Such efforts could very well have been authentic, but simply misplaced—perhaps the same ones could have served the individual in a truly authentic pursuit, e.g. a career in business. The actions this individual took and the sacrifices he made to become a prosecutor may have been authentic responses to his targeted goal of being a prosecutor even if it turns out that his authentic self (target) is that of a businessman and not a lawyer.

The takeaway here is that the target and response dimensions are completely distinct—one can set an authentic target but fail to arrive at that target in an authentic way. Conversely, one can aim at an inauthentic target via a response that itself is authentic.⁸

⁷ One might reasonably ask how (or according to what criteria) a particular career is or becomes a part of one's authentic self. It might be better to say that an individual's career choice can be consistent or inconsistent with her authentic self (as opposed to the career itself comprising part of the true self). If so, then the career of a lawyer is authentic for an individual iff. the relevant aspects of lawyering are consistent with the values of the individual/one's true self.

⁸ Some may raise questions about how the targets vs. the dimensions are classified. For example, 'honesty' might reasonably be construed as either a target or a response, depending on the context. I acknowledge that there might be times when determining whether belongs in the target or

2.4 How Are We to Understand the Self?

Looking back to my modification of authenticity's tagline to read 'being true to one's true self,' we can now see that I have addressed both truth relations involved in my conception of authenticity. There remains, however, a component of the reformulated tagline that I have yet to address. In order to fully flesh out my preferred version of authenticity, I need to provide *some* account of the self, even if it will be incomplete, as a full account of the self is beyond the scope of this dissertation. What I hope to accomplish in the subsequent discussion of the self is to provide a sketch of the self that has support in the philosophical and psychological literature *and* that is intuitively compelling.

My modified conception of authenticity as 'being true to one's true self' still leaves us with a major question to explore: how should we understand the self?

Discussion of the self in the philosophical tradition is both ubiquitous and enigmatic. For all the attention the concept has garnered, there is little consensus on even its most key features.⁹ As Owen Flanagan has stated,

The word 'self' has many meanings – personality, character, an individual's central character traits, the way(s) one carries oneself in the world, the way one represents oneself to oneself and to others, the dynamic integrated system of thoughts, emotions, lived events, and so on, that make up who one is from the God's eye point of view. All these senses are useful.¹⁰

response dimension is difficult. However, the fact that there will be some difficult cases does not mean that the framework that I am proposing is not a useful one.

⁹ For example, there is not even consensus on whether the self even exists. See Daniel C. Dennett, *Consciousness Explained* (Boston : Little, Brown and Co., 1991).

¹⁰ Owen J. Flanagan, *Self Expressions : Mind, Morals, and the Meaning of Life* (New York : Oxford University Press, 1998), vii.

Developing a robust, fully-formed and fully-defended conception of the self is beyond the scope of this project. My aim here is to give an account that is supported by some of the philosophical and psychological literature and that is also intuitively appealing. Doing so will help further unpack and advance my account of authenticity by revealing another way of understanding the tagline and of understanding the bi-dimensional conception that I am advocating. From this overview and discussion, we will come to see the crucial role that values play in the composition of the self. As I hope to demonstrate, values are born out of the self as a result of cognitions, emotions, and experiences one has interacting with the world. The self is a pre-requisite for values, but the self is not the only necessary component of values. Possession of values also requires experience and interaction with the world. Furthermore, a value is something that one endorses¹¹; to value requires that one have the ability to rank or prioritize.

I think that these claims are 1) intuitively appealing and 2) supported by a significant portion of the psychological and philosophical literature. I will take up each of these in turn.

¹¹ This is distinct from the type of endorsement that is present in the case of autonomy. The endorsement component of values is first-order, whereby an individual says (e.g.) that X has relative merit over Y. The endorsement component of autonomy is second-order or higher, meaning it involves an endorsement of one's endorsement.

2.4.1 The Intuitive Appeal

In discussing the self to which the authentic person is true, I am characterizing the self as the core component of who a person is—who she is in the most fundamental sense.¹² The ‘true self’ or ‘self to which a person is true’ is conceptually distinct from the ‘current’ self, in that the self a person currently has or embodies need not be her true self. Typically excluded from popular understandings of the self are things that we see as immaterial to or on the periphery of who a person is in the relevant ‘true self’ sense; characteristics like a person’s shoe size, the color of her hair, the type of house she lives in...these might be cited as facts of a person or even aspects of her identity, but it would be strange for someone to say that they were features of her *self*.¹³

Indeed, we can look to places like religion, literature, and character education to see that a significant amount of effort has been spent on advocating *against* treating peripheral or material features of a person as features of the self. In the Old Testament, God instructs Samuel, “Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The LORD does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.”¹⁴ And we can look to numerous places in

¹² The ‘true self’ or ‘self to which a person is true’ is conceptually distinct from the ‘current self’ in that the current self is merely a description of a person as she currently is or is behaving. The ‘true self’ has an aspirational component to it, and authenticity, in being what emerges when a person is true to her true self, also has an aspirational component.

¹³ People disagree about how to carve the distinction between ‘self’ and ‘personal identity;’ my preference is to say that one’s personal identity is her *perception* of her self.

¹⁴ *The N.I.V. Study Bible*, ed. Kenneth L. Barker (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), 1 Samuel 16:7.

literature, including Hugo's *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*, and Walker's *The Color Purple*, to see characters and plots designed to reveal that the core features of one's identity depending not on the trappings of wealth, beauty, or social status but on the so-called 'what's on the inside'¹⁵: things like how one treats others, how one treats oneself, what one sets as his priorities. We teach our children that numerous forces in the world might value 'shallow' things like appearance and wealth, but the things that really matter are matters of character and one's priorities. Character and one's priorities are further broken down in both formal and informal character education to include things like work ethic, kindness toward others, and acceptance of individuals from different backgrounds.

Character education works by first instructing children, sometimes in a way akin to 'rote memorization' about what sorts of actions are and are not (e.g.) kind. As young children, our agency and our understanding are limited, and our moral education is based on 'rules' that are based on the traits and behaviors that adults want us to exhibit (e.g. kindness toward others, a strong work ethic). The hope is that, as children mature, they begin to value things like 'behaving kindly' in and of themselves, and perform kind actions because they believe that they ought to behave kindly and not merely because they were instructed that they ought to behave kindly. We think more highly of the person who has

¹⁵ Things that might be characterized as 'what's on the inside,' but which do not concern me, include things like physical sensations (e.g. hunger pangs) and fleeting thoughts (e.g. considerations of what to eat for dinner).

integrated the moral ‘rules’ learned as a young child into a moral system than we do of the person who merely does the right thing without really valuing or understanding the reasons or motivations behind the actions.

It is by coming to internalize the values we’re taught as young children that we come to be seen as having personality traits and values as adults. The two bear a codependent relationship: values are often manifestations of personality traits (e.g. one with the personality trait of kindness tends to value being kind to others) or shape personality traits (e.g. one who values being kind can work to cultivate a personality of kindness). Likewise, personality traits can shape one’s values (e.g. a naturally introverted person may value time alone reading) and they can also be manifestations of one’s values (e.g. a person may come to have a kind personality because of her valuing of being a kind person). These things—personality traits and values—are commonly seen as being core features of a person, that is, core features of her self. And personality traits can be further understood as reflecting an individual’s values, in the way that a person who is characterized as having a generous personality is (generally) understood to have that personality trait because she values generosity or being generous.

2.4.2 The Psychological Literature

In addition to the intuitive appeal of the claim that an individual’s values are the core feature of her self, there are numerous proponents of this view in the philosophical and psychological literature. Steven Hitlin argues that “values are a cohesive force within

personal identity,” and personal identity is in turn a component of the self.¹⁶ He thinks that “[c]onceptualizing values as *the core of one’s personal identity*” provides the best empirically supported account of an individual’s social identities, and ultimately, her self.¹⁷ Hitlin notes that “[h]istorically, values have been important to scholars exploring the nature of the self,” but he wants to bridge the theoretical and empirical gap between values and what he considers the current two most influential models of the self, namely, identity theory and social identity theory.¹⁸

Abraham Maslow famously postulated the Hierarchy of Needs, the apex of which is the process of Self-Actualization, through which a person arrives at individual sovereignty. Less well-known is his account of how values relate to the self and to the achievement of self-actualization. In *The Farther Reaches of Human Nature*, he speaks of ‘specieshood’, which we can reasonably interpret as synonymous with the self,¹⁹ as

what you peculiarly are, how you are, what your potentialities are, what your style is, what your pace is, what your tastes are, *what your values are*, what

¹⁶ Steven Hitlin, "Values as the Core of Personal Identity: Drawing Links between Two Theories of Self," *Social Psychology Quarterly* 66, no. 2 (2003): 118. It is important to note that Hitlin is using the term ‘personal identity’ differently from how I have elsewhere defined the term. Hitlin characterizes personal identity as the unified, coherent self, as distinct from ‘the current proliferation of self-processes’ (e.g. self-esteem, self-actualization, self-efficacy) that treat the self as fragmentary. As such, his definition of personal identity is akin to my conception of the self.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, emphasis mine.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 119. Identity theory and social identity theory both connect “the individual to the social world through a conception of the self composed of various social identities,” where identity theory often focuses on roles and social identity theory often focuses on social groups.

¹⁹ Elsewhere, in discussing the spiritual life, Maslow says “It is a part of the *Real Self*, of one’s identity, of one’s inner core, of one’s *specieshood*, of full humanness,” suggesting that these terms are synonymous (or near-synonymous). Abraham H. Maslow, *The Farther Reaches of Human Nature* (New York : Penguin, 1993), 314. Italics mine.

direction your body is going, where your personal biology is taking you, i.e., how you are *different* from others²⁰

I contend that we can best understand Maslow as attributing the values to the self; furthermore, his writings indicate that values are an *integral part* of the self, since they are what the self-actualized person (a person at the pinnacle of needs-fulfillment, according to Maslow) is successfully integrating into his life. If values are an integral part of the self (or the 'Ideal Self' for Maslow), and the achievement of one's best self is what Maslow identifies as self-actualization, then it is reasonable to conclude that Maslow views the self-actualized person as someone who has become her true self through understanding, and subsequently living out on, or in accordance with, her values, and this authenticity is brought about by an individual's being true to the values that comprise the self. For Maslow, the self-actualized person is the authentic person.

Finally, we can look to the work of Carl Rogers for another defense of the position that values are intimately connected to the self. Rogers describes values as a part of one's 'self-structure,' and he views the development of the self to be a process whereby values shift or, in more dramatic cases, are transformed. As the self develops, Rogers says that the individual "perceives and accepts into his self-structure more of his organic experience," while throwing the views, opinions, and values of others to the wayside.²¹ In doing so, the

²⁰ Ibid., 187. First italics mine.

²¹ Carl R. Rogers, *Client-Centered Therapy, Its Current Practice, Implications, and Theory* (Boston, Houghton Mifflin, 1951), 522.

individual replaces the value system that was thrust upon him by his upbringing and social circumstances with one that is reflective of his unique experiences. It is by coming to discover which values are uniquely *his* that the individual achieves a higher level of self in Rogers' schema. Furthermore, Rogers says that an individual ceases to be himself by becoming estranged from himself when, through the pressures of society, he abandons some of his values in order to maintain positive appearances or relationships with others.

2.4.3 The Philosophical Literature

Drawing on the work of Gary Watson and Harry Frankfurt, philosopher Paul Litton has concluded that "we cannot understand, identify, or define an agent's true self apart from her deeply held values."²² Watson and Frankfurt thus represent a segment of the population of ethicists who view values as a crucial part of the self.

In his essay "Free Agency," Gary Watson makes it his aim to "develop a distinction between wanting and valuing" because he is worried about people conflating free action and intentional action.²³ In mapping out the ways in which wants and values differ, Watson notes that both wants and values can move a person to action, but that it is the *long term* aims that we are willing to defend on principle that constitute our values. For Watson, our values are the normative judgments we have that we are willing to defend and that, unlike wants, do not disappear once they are satisfied. Watson claims that an agent's

²² Paul Litton, "A.D.H.D., Values, and the Self," *The American Journal of Bioethics* 5, no. 3 (2005): 66.

²³ Gary Watson, "Free Agency," *The Journal of Philosophy* 72, no. 8 (1975): 206.

valuational system constitutes her standpoint, which we can understand to be synonymous with her self because Watson understand the standpoint to be 1) the viewpoint from which one judges the world and 2) something from which an individual cannot dissociate without forfeiting one's identity as an agent.²⁴ Watson characterizes 'standpoint' as a core and stable feature of a person, and he cashes out an individual's standpoint in terms of the evaluational system that she has. Without this evaluational system, a person will cease to be an agent capable of supplying reasons for action. We can thus fairly interpret Watson as holding the view that values comprise a core feature of an individual's self.

We can also infer this position from Harry Frankfurt, who also discusses the self in the context of freedom of action and the will. According to Frankfurt, the essential feature of a person is that person's possession of higher order desires in addition to his first-order desires. As we saw in my discussion of autonomy in Chapter One, the objects of a person's higher order desires are his lower-order desires, and a person's first-order desires (the lowest rung of his lower-order desires) are desires about things other than one's desires, e.g. a desire to buy a horse, a desire to do well on a test, a desire to steal your sister's birthday money. We can understand Frankfurt's higher-order desires to be values because, in being 'desires about desires,' higher-order desires capture the evaluative capacity an agent has to form preferences, attitudes, or judgments about her lower (often flighty, unprincipled, or not full formed) desires. One can have a desire without identifying with it, as would be the

²⁴ Ibid., 216.

case of a frustrated teacher having the desire to slap a student. The teacher need not identify with this desire (we certainly hope he doesn't!) in order to have it, and we would not attribute the mere desire to act in this way to the teacher's value system, especially if he does not act on the desire.

Desires about desires, however, do require identification with a desire, and this capacity to experience 'identification with' in turn requires evaluative judgment. In order for the teacher to have a desire about his desire to slap his student, he must form an evaluative judgment: does he value the desire of slapping the student, or doesn't he? Deciding on this requires that he tap into his value system so as to form the judgment: would slapping the student be in line with his values, or would it be contrary to them? Frankfurt thinks that this ability to tap into one's values is what distinguishes a person from a wanton; a person has second-order desires and can thus evaluate her lower-level desires, while a wanton's essential characteristic is that he does not care about whether he is moved by (or identifies with) his desires. A wanton either does not have evaluative capacities at all or has evaluative capacities that are so flighty that no dependable evaluative system exists; a wanton either does not have values or does not care what his values are.

Frankfurt goes on to say that "the essence of being a person lies not in reason but in will," and we can understand the will to come about via the agent's evaluative system that manifests in his higher-order desires.²⁵ It is this evaluative capacity that, for Frankfurt,

²⁵ Frankfurt, "Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person," 11.

is critical to the concept of a person; the self of a person, then, is composed of the capacity to value.

2.4.4 My Synthesis and Supplement in Light of the Psychological and Philosophical Literature

My own supplement to these views would be to say that values are born out of the self and emerge as a result of cognitions, emotions, and interaction with the world. The self plays a significant role in the inception and development of values, but also required are 1) interaction with the world and 2) awareness of yourself as an entity distinct from others. The requirement of individuation will be addressed in a later section of this chapter. The requirement in 1) that interaction with the world is required for the cultivation and development of an individual's values exists because values are not developed in a vacuum; to have the capacity to value requires that one be exposed to situations in the world that call upon the individual to utilize and act from those values. Experiences, in turn, shape an individual's values by providing the individual with new information that must be assessed and synthesized, and in turn incorporated into the self. Experiences shape the self and are a critical feature of it, because they impact the values that an individual possesses. Because experiences ultimately impact the values of the individual, values can be properly understood to be the 'core' component of the self, even though experiences also play a role in individuation of selves and in impacting values.

Accepting the claim that values comprise a significant part of one's self entails that values comprise the majority share of the target dimension, since the target dimension just is the self. The response dimension, in turn, involves 1) successfully hitting whatever the specified target is²⁶ and 2) doing so in a way that is compatible with and follows from the values of the self (which may not be made explicit via whatever the current characterization of the target is at the particular time in question).

Note that 1) and 2) can come apart: if the target is set as 'be charitable,' whether or not the response dimension (action) one undertakes so as to successfully hit that target is an authentic one depends on whether the selected method is in line with the agent's values (any values embodied by 'be charitable' as well as the other values the individual has). If an individual is a Marxist and endorses the claim that 'property is theft,' then it will be perfectly compatible with his values to steal from his rich neighbor in order to give to the less fortunate, thereby authentically hitting the target to 'be charitable.' But a God-fearing Christian would likely not be acting in accordance with her values were she to steal from her rich neighbor, since she would *also* have as one of her values—stemming from the Ten Commandments—that theft is impermissible. She might successfully hit the target of charitable donation by giving stolen goods to a charity, but to do so would be inauthentic

²⁶ Note that this 'content' may very well be attributable to the agent's values (and this makes sense, given my claim that values are a constitutive feature of the self). For example, if we characterize a particular target as 'being a dutiful daughter,' we can further explain this target in terms of values—the values of abiding by one's perceived duty, of respecting one's elders, etc.

since her means of donation (the response dimension) conflict with her values. Her 'true self' might be realized in that the target of charity is realized, but the 'being true' element of authenticity would not obtain because the outcome would come about through actions that directly contradict her values.

In summation: values play a prominent role in the target dimension of authenticity, and they are relevant to the response dimension insofar as the response dimension must be compatible with and entailed by the individual's values in order for her to succeed in being authentic.

2.5 Does Authenticity Motivate its Possessor?

In characterizing authenticity as living in accordance with one's values, I have yet to indicate whether authenticity *helps* its possessor in any way (akin to how courage *helps* its possessor follow through on the preferred outcome in the face of danger) or whether it is instead merely a descriptor, wherein it serves as a way of labeling individuals who are being true to their true selves without supplying any new or independent content. This section will be devoted to answering the question "Does authenticity motivate its possessor?"

To begin this investigation, we can look to what John Rawls and Bernard Williams have said about topics and concepts similar to authenticity. In *A Theory of Justice*, Rawls introduces the concept of a "virtue of form" in order to characterize integrity and the associated virtues of "truthfulness and sincerity, lucidity, and commitment, or *as some say*,

authenticity.”²⁷ According to Rawls, a virtue of form is something an individual who ‘practices what he preaches’ possesses, in virtue of which he acts in a manner consistent with his values. This sounds a lot like how I have defined authenticity.²⁸ Rawls further characterizes virtues of form as being completely independent of the values that the possessor of a virtue of form acts in accordance with, since “their definition allows for almost any content: a tyrant might display these attributes to a high degree.”²⁹ Rawls thinks it is “impossible to construct a moral view from these virtues alone” because their possessors can act morally or immorally.³⁰ Thus, they are necessary but not sufficient for an adequate account of morality. Part of the reason Rawls views them as insufficient is that they do not contain moral content, and as a result, can be used for entirely immoral purposes, as is the case when a tyrant acts authentically. Because they can be used for moral or immoral purposes, Rawls concludes that virtues of form do not motivate their possessor to do the right thing. He leaves it as an open question whether virtues of form are motivating in general.

Bernard Williams is more less sanguine regarding authenticity’s potential to motivated. In *Moral Luck*, he argues that integrity (and related virtues, like authenticity) should not be classified as virtues at all because they “do not themselves yield a

²⁷ John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge, Mass. : Harvard University Press, 1999), 455. Emphasis mine.

²⁸ And recall that I define integrity slightly differently in Chapter One.

²⁹ Rawls, 456.

³⁰ Ibid.

characteristic motive, but are necessary for that relation to oneself and the world which enables one to act from desirable motives in desirable ways.”³¹ Instead, they are admirable human properties that allow an individual to “act from those dispositions and motives which are most deeply his, and has also the virtues that enable him to do that.”³² While admirable for others reasons, virtues of form, according to Williams, neither motivate action nor are the origin of the actions that an individual performs. So like Rawls, Williams thinks that virtues of form do not motivate individuals to do that right thing. But Williams goes one step further by also explicitly endorsing the position that virtues of form do not motivate *at all* (as mentioned, Rawls equivocates on this matter)

While I agree with Rawls and Williams that authenticity is completely divorceable from morality, I want to resist Williams’ explicit conclusion (and Rawls’ likely conclusion) that authenticity, as a virtue of form, is therefore not motivating. In the remainder of this section, I will build a case for why we ought to view authenticity as having a motivational component.³³

To motivate the claim that authenticity is itself motivating, let’s look to an example that is intended to be a case of authenticity being motivating when it seems that nothing

³¹ Bernard Williams, *Moral Luck : Philosophical Papers, 1973-1980* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 49.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ In arguing that authenticity is motivating, I do not mean to suggest that one must be *deliberately* acting from authenticity (or be acting with authenticity explicitly in mind) in order for their actions to be motivated by authenticity. As I will discuss in a later section, one can be ‘accidentally authentic’ or ‘unintentionally authentic.’

else is motivating. Consider the case of Rochelle, a girl who has, over a period of several years, cultivated an identity whereby she wears a blue cape to school every day. This ‘signature look’ has become a part of who she really is; she values the way wearing the cape makes her feel, how it sets her apart from the predictable styles of her peers, how it makes her feel like a bit of a superhero on the playground. Other students make fun of Rochelle for her unusual fashion sense, and a group of especially pugilistic children threaten to beat her up if she wears the cape to school the following day. Faced with the reliable threat of physical harm, Rochelle nonetheless wears her beloved blue cape the next day.

How are we to understand the motivations undergirding Rochelle’s decision?

Some will want to say that her decision to remain true to herself and her values stems not from authenticity’s motivational ability, but from the motivational ability of something else—courage. There are two possible responses to this claim. One is to grant that courage can *also* be invoked as one of Rochelle’s motivator, and indeed, so can many other dispositions, like grit, resilience, or determination. This is because many of our descriptors overlap in such a way that it can be hard to disentangle them in a way so as to show how they are conceptually distinct. Is the man who picks up the \$5 I drop in the grocery store and hands it to me being honest or courteous (motivated by honesty or courtesy)? He’s both—the same action can often be accurately described using multiple descriptors. And this is more than a matter of mere semantics. For it is also possible for the agent being described to actually be motivated by *multiple* things. Rochelle may be motivated by both

courage and authenticity, just as it is unremarkable to consider the man in the grocery store to be motivated both by honesty and by courtesy. People's actions and their motivations are complex, and there is no reason to think that our designations should not allow for this complexity.

While I certainly think it's true that our terminology (and specifically, our virtue terminology) overlaps, I think that a compelling explanation of Rochelle's behavior that does not involve an appeal to courage can be made. This response would be to *deny* that Rochelle's action is courageous at all, and instead to classify it as foolhardy. Courage is, after all, the fearing and withstanding of the *right sorts* of things.³⁴ One might plausibly interpret Rochelle's story to indicate that she did not feel the appropriate amount of fear in light of her peers' threat, and as such did not behave courageously. And even if she *had* been fearful in the circumstances, her behavior could still be plausibly interpreted as not courageous because one might think that her peers' credible threats about her clothing choice were not the 'right sorts' of things for her to withstand. With the stakes seeming to be pretty low or trivial, one might think that the prudent thing to have done would have been to stop wearing the cape.

If we adopt this latter interpretation—that Rochelle's action was not courageous—then we are left with the need to explain what *did* account for her behavior. In a situation

³⁴ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. Christopher Rowe (Oxford : Oxford University Press, 2002), 1116b17-19.

where no other disposition is a clear candidate for having motivated Rochelle to act in the way that she did, she still exhibited the disposition to be true to herself—to be authentic. And it is *this* disposition that grounded her decision to keep wearing the cape, despite the personal costs incurred. Given that *something* has motivated Rochelle to continue wearing the cape (since she is aware of the negative consequences stemming from its continued wear), it is hard to see what, besides a commitment to authenticity, could have motivated her.

My view is that authenticity does more than serve as mere description; it helps its possessor by providing a ‘disposition to live in accordance with X,’ where X is the value under discussion. A person possessing the value of honesty will be more likely to act in accordance with honesty if she also possesses the trait (virtue?) of authenticity. In the same way that things like courage, self-discipline, grit, stamina, or resilience can help an agent behave in X way in circumstances where having X feature (e.g. honesty) alone would not be sufficient to produce the desired action, authenticity helps an agent live in accordance with her values in circumstances in which acting against her values would be convenient (e.g. because doing so would improve her reputation, avoid conflict, avoid the pain of being honest with oneself).

It may at times be difficult to determine what sort of motivational virtue is present to help an agent behave (e.g.) honestly when honesty alone is not sufficient, since a number

of motivational virtues can serve that purpose. But this difficulty should not be seen as a strike against my view that authenticity contains a motivational element.

2.6 Authenticity as Living in Accordance with One's Values

Having surveyed some ways in which the self is conceptualized in both academic and non-academic contexts, I can now (finally) introduce what I advocate as the best understanding of authenticity that incorporates the target and response dimensions and also remains consistent with a commonsensical conception of the self.

If the self is best understood, as I have argued, as consisting of values that are borne out by and shaped by one's experiences, then we can now see that authenticity can be understood as being true to those values. Recall that, in an effort to capture both the target and response dimensions of authenticity, I modified its tagline to say that authenticity is 'being true to one's true self.' Given that values are an integral part of the self, and that many of our actions are carried out *because of* our values, we can now introduce yet another formulation of authenticity: authenticity as living in accordance with one's values, where the 'in accordance with' designation is defined as "in agreement with and following from." Thus, another way of defining the authentic individual in the ethical context is to say that the authentic individual is an individual who aims at a goal or target that is consistent with her values and whose actions toward that goal or target follow from the values that she has. We can revisit the example of the woman who determines that being true to herself requires that she prioritize her children's welfare. We can now discuss

this example with regard to her values. In this case, this individual *values* her children's welfare, and it is thus a priority of hers to ensure that their welfare is promoted. Her values (help to) set the target in this case, the goal of having children who thrive. But this value of prioritizing her children's welfare is one value of hers among many. If she also values, as many do, the values of honesty and fairness, then certain responses to the target of prioritizing her children's welfare will be off-limits to her if she is to generate an authentic response. Embezzling funds from work to put toward her children's education, for example, will not be authentic, since doing so would not be in accordance with her values of honesty and fairness. In the sections that follow, I will build further on this understanding of authenticity as 'living in accordance with one's values' and discuss some of its implications.

2.7 What are the Proper Considerations of Scope and Degree?

Even after defining and defending what a proper understanding of authenticity is, there are still unanswered questions regarding how to evaluate an individual in terms of her authenticity (or lack thereof). How, then, are we to use my account of authenticity in order to reach conclusions about whether a particular agent is authentic? In this section and the sections that follow in this chapter, I will address some of these questions and discuss their answers' implications.

One question that immediately arises is whether authenticity is an all-or-nothing concept³⁵: can individuals who fall short of perfect authenticity still be labeled authentic (albeit with the relevant caveats about when and how they are authentic)? I want to allow for this possibility for two reasons: first, it enables us to give a finer-grained description of an individual than that allowed by an all-or-nothing concept, and second, it has the practical benefit of making people more inclined to strive for authenticity. If the bar is set extremely high, wherein authenticity is an all-or-nothing attainment, then many people will see the dictates of authenticity as too demanding and give up any efforts to be authentic.

If a more fine-grained analysis of individuals is warranted, how do we allow for this? There are two considerations that can help provide the opportunity for this more fine-grained analysis. The first of these is the question of scope, which captures the range of situations across which an individual is authentic. The scope of authentic action is wide when an individual behaves authentically across a broad range of situations. If, for example, a person is observed as behaving authentically while with her friends, while at work, while interacting with strangers, and while on vacation, she can be said to have behaved authentically across a range of environments. Presumably, each of these environments places different demands on her and has different defining features, so the

³⁵ Of course, if one buys into Rawls' and Williams' claims that authenticity is a virtue of form, then one might already assume that authenticity can come in degrees.

fact that she behaves authentically in each of them says something about the flexibility of her ability to be authentic.

But note that her ability to be authentic across a range of situations says nothing about the *reliability* of her behavior. A one-time observation that she has acted authentically in varied conditions is perfectly consistent with her behaving inauthentically in these same circumstances even more often than she behaves authentically. To tackle this question of consistency or reliability, we need to introduce the criterion of depth. The depth criterion addresses the question of whether an individual will be consistently authentic in a particular circumstance or class of circumstances. We can imagine an individual who consistently behaves authentically in his home life but who constantly succumbs to pressure at work and in social situations to act in ways that are antithetical to his true self. So while this individual acts authentically in only one third of the environments under investigation, the depth criterion allows us to ask whether he is consistently and reliably authentic in his home life. If the answer is yes, then he is an individual whose authentic behavior is narrow in scope but ample in depth.

As this latter individual's situation indicates, the scope of one's authentic action and the depth of his authentic action are completely separate. An individual can act authentically across a wide range of situations but do so unreliably, and an individual can also act authentically in only a narrow range of cases but do so extremely reliably.

In this respect, my account echoes much of the virtue ethics literature: in the same way we can deem an agent honest in a particular case (or in a given set of circumstances) without that entailing that she is honest writ large, we can deem an individual authentic in a narrow way without having to conclude that she is globally authentic. Knowing that someone has acted authentically in a single case allows us to conclude that he has exhibited authenticity in a discrete instance, but we are unable to conclude anything more broadly regarding either the flexibility or the reliability of his behavior. It is only after having accumulated a large data set, in which we know about his tendency toward authenticity in a wide variety of cases *and* a large number of similar cases, that we can make any global assessments about his status with regard to authenticity.

From this discussion, we can return to the matter of authenticity being a spectrum concept or an all-or-nothing concept. I have already stated that it is a spectrum concept, and this discussion allows us to now see why and in what ways this is the case. By recognizing that individuals can act authentically in certain instances and not in others, and by discussing authentic action in the contexts of flexibility and reliability, we can see that there are multiple dimensions against which an individual can be evaluated. Obviously, if an individual behaves authentically all of the time or none of the time, then it is easy to reach a verdict on whether, all things considered, she is an authentic individual. But if she behaves authentically *some* of the time, then the introduction of the scope and depth criteria allow us to provide a more precise description of the patterns or trends of

her authentic behavior. This in turn allows us to assess and describe the authenticity of an individual in the 'gray area' between no authenticity and full authenticity.

In conclusion: authenticity is *not* an all-or-nothing concept, which means that an individual can be more authentic or less authentic. Introducing the criteria of scope and depth allow us to provide a more robust description (and diagnostic) of an individual's authenticity (or lack thereof). However, introducing scope and depth as assessment criteria nevertheless still leaves us with questions regarding how to characterize individuals who fall into the 'gray area' between non-existent authenticity and full authenticity.

There is room for reasonable disagreement regarding where to place the threshold between authenticity and inauthenticity when making global assessments. Conceptually, it seems at the very least that an individual's discrete actions will have to be authentic more often than not in order for him to be labeled globally authentic. But other, non-conceptual concerns, might point to setting the bar even higher.³⁶

Thus far, this section's discussion has focused on the possibility of authenticity being a spectrum concept when we're discussing or analyzing various actions. But what about the possibility of those individual actions themselves being analyzed via a spectrum

³⁶ Again, I see connections to the debate within virtue ethics regarding how attainable (or not) to make the designation 'virtuous person.' In these cases, conceptual and practical commitments often conflict. I suspect this same type of tension exists in setting the threshold for authenticity. Conceptual commitments may point toward characterizing virtue as a rigid and unattainable ideal (if, for example, that is where rigorous conceptual analysis points), but practical commitments may point toward a laxer version of the concept, if it is believed that doing so will have a desired practical outcome (e.g., will make more people strive to be virtuous).

conception of authenticity? Since authenticity is the phenomenon of living in accordance with one's values, and one can have different (and at times competing or even contradictory) values, then is there a reason to think that a version of the spectrum conception of authenticity might also apply when we are looking at individual actions and deciding whether they are authentic?

Determining whether authenticity is a spectrum or an all-or-nothing matter is trickier in this case. For the question of whether or not an individual is acting in accordance with her values in a specific instance is not always easy to answer. No doubt the answer will sometimes be an easy 'yes' or 'no,' but I suspect that, more often than not, our assessments will turn up a mixed bag of results. Perhaps an individual acts in accordance with *some* of her values in a particular instance while also acting contrary to other values. In cases like this, we appear to have three options for how to conceptualize the phenomenon:

- 1) *The Stringent Standard:* If the individual is not true to *all* of her (relevant) values in a particular instance, then the action is not authentic.
- 2) *The Qualitative Majority Standard:* If the individual is true to her most core (or most important) values, then the action is authentic.
- 3) *The Quantitative Majority Standard:* If the individual is true to more values than not, then the action is authentic.

Note that adopting the Stringent Standard prevents individuals who hold inconsistent values from ever being authentic. Having inconsistent values would mean that

an individual is unable to live in accordance with all of them simultaneously; but since the Stringent Standard requires that an individual be true to *all* of her values, an individual with inconsistent values would be unable to satisfy this standard of authenticity. Since I have already said that my account of authenticity *does* allow for inconsistency³⁷ of values, we can reject the Stringent Standard.

Adopting the Qualitative Majority Standard is problematic because it begins to encroach on autonomy's conceptual territory. By incorporating an evaluative stance toward one's values into the appraisal of authenticity, this approach winds up assessing autonomy, not authenticity. Recall from Chapter One that in order for any given action of an agent to be autonomous, the action must be authentic and the agent must reflectively endorse the values undergirding the performance of the action. By asking whether an agent was true to her most core values, the Qualitative Majority Standard is asking for an evaluative judgment regarding which of her values she most endorses. As a result, we can reject the Qualitative Majority Standard as a candidate for how to conceptualize authenticity in 'gray area' cases.

This leaves us with the Quantitative Majority Standard. This approach has the virtue of allowing an individual with conflicting values to still be authentic. It also remains focused on the question of "is this an instance of an individual acting in accordance with

³⁷ Such inconsistency might be 'bad' or undesirable for other reasons, but this would in regard to something other than authenticity.

his values?” while accommodating the possibility and reality that the answer might be more complicated than a simple ‘yes’ or ‘no.’ This allowance for nuance jibes with our intuitions about the inconsistent nature of human priorities and commitments, and it is also consistent with the spirit of the motivations behind allowing for considerations of scope and degree to be a part of the conception of authenticity. As such, this is the standard that I endorse.

2.8 How Do We Individuate Selves?

Given that the value of ‘it’s what’s on the inside that counts’ is pretty universally endorsed, one might wonder how selves with similar or identical sets of values are individuated. There are two reasonable responses to this concern. The first is to point out that values form only one *part* of the self, and we might thus look to other aspects of the self (e.g. memories, feelings, responses to events) to supply the individuating features. One might also solve the individuation problem by pointing to the fact that people with identical values can still go about their lives in dramatically different ways—one’s self might be individuated from all others through the unique set choices that he makes in light of his values. Likewise, individuals with identical values can perceive themselves and their relationship to the world in dramatically different ways; this, too, can serve as the basis of individuation.

2.9 Where Do Values Come From?

The question of whence values come has long interested philosophers, and the discussion of value provenance (are they inherited, learned, created, or something else?) can be traced all the way back to Plato.³⁸ This set of questions is particularly relevant to my discussion since I am claiming that values provide us with the best way of understanding and evaluating authenticity and since I argued in Chapter One that authenticity consists primarily of self-creation.

In this section, I will defend my conclusion that values *can* be created, but that they are also often learned or derived from socialization or social observation. I will also argue that, even when values are not created, the process by which a value comes to be possessed by an individual is often a creative process.

Discussion of values provenance (and, more generally, the provenance of knowledge) has often been couched in terms of the nature vs. nurture debate; those on the nature side maintain that we are hardwired to acquire values systems in a particular order or a particular way (see, e.g., Kohlberg, Piaget), though the particulars of one's environment may impact the level of moral development one attains. Understanding how values come to be acquired—which involves understanding how we come to be moral agents—can help us answer the question of whether values are created, discovered, or both.

³⁸ Plato, *Republic*, trans. G.M.A Grube (Indianapolis : Hackett Pub. Co., 1992).

My own view, which is compatible with those of Kohlberg and Piaget, is that values are typically *learned* when we are children, but they are often amended, modified, or altered when we are adults in a process that involves both learning and executive decision-making. These values can be learned via explicit means (e.g. formal school curriculum on moral education) or implicit means (e.g. through observation of how parents handle conflict).

Values are typically learned, but there is more than mere rote acquisition that takes place. Individuals integrate values into themselves by practicing the behaviors that the values dictate and by coming to view their values as principled reasons for action rather than things they subscribe to because of rote memorization or the influence of others.³⁹ It is through these processes that creativity, if not creation, plays a role: values rarely dictate a single course of action, and so the individual has some creative discretion regarding how her values will be upheld through her behavior or action. Furthermore, the process of integrating values into the self is a creative process because the individual must determine how and why to accept or reject a particular value. Even if a particular value exists prior to or external of the self, making the value *one's own* is a generative process that involves

³⁹ I do not mean to suggest that there are not people whose values are merely the (unreflective) product of peer pressure or socialization, but rather that this is not the status of *everyone's* values.

creating the value *in oneself*. In addition, individuals have some⁴⁰ say regarding which values from prior periods of her life she chooses to maintain, alter, or dismiss.⁴¹

It is important to distinguish between the individual creation of values and the social creation of values. If values were entirely socially created, there would be no room for the objective discovery of values, which I maintain is a minority component of selfhood. But because the values that are socially created and that one adopts through the process of moral development are subject to revision, replacement, or abandonment by the individual, the potential for objective discovery is preserved. It is *also* important to distinguish between the creation of values and the creation of a self. Even if no values were created, an individual's self could still be created because that individual could still choose *which* values possess as comprising his self. Even though values comprise a substantial component of the self, a self can nonetheless be created out of discovered values.

One's process of self-creation will be mediated by his values even if those values are not themselves created. The individual can nonetheless make his unique portfolio of values, and this portfolio *is* (by and large) created. But there is still room for certain values to be discoverable parts of oneself as well. And this fits well with the conception I have

⁴⁰ I include this qualification because I am not convinced that we as individuals have full authority over which values we do and do not possess. Our social/cultural milieu will limit the possibilities that seem available to most people, but within those parameters there will still be a plurality of values for one to be exposed to and ponder.

⁴¹ As noted in Chapter One, this issue of endorsement is relevant when making appraisals of autonomy.

sketched whereby authenticity consists of a combination of self-creation and self-discovery *and* can be properly understood as living in accordance with one's values. Given the critical role of values in my conception of authenticity, it is unsurprising that values would be involved in both the self-creation and self-discovery processes.

How might we understand the way a value relates to self-discovery? Analogous to my discussion of value and creativity, I do not mean to focus on the possibility of values being discoverable entities out in the world.⁴² But it does seem true that an individual can discover that a value is a part of her. She may, for example, come to realize that no amount of wishing or trying otherwise can shake her conviction that honesty is a value by which she must abide. She may feel that this value of honesty does not originate from within but rather from external forces like her culture, her particular upbringing, or the sort of education she has received. This value need not *feel* foreign to her even if its origin is outside of her. The fact that she claims or acknowledges it as her own entails that it is not foreign to her, even if had origin in things classified as outside of her (e.g., through education in elementary school). Certain preferences (e.g. the avoidance of pain) might be in place innately, but what we choose do with these preferences (honor them, reject them, ponder them) is under our conscious jurisdiction and highlights the role that choice (and creativity) have in values formation and acquisition while still acknowledging some innate

⁴² Likewise, I don't intend to entirely rule out this possibility, but it seems that instances of values being 'discovered' from outside of oneself would at best comprise a small sliver of values.

(discoverable) characteristics and the possibility that milieu plays a significant role in shaping the values that we have.

2.10 Can One Be Authentic and Have Awful Values?

As noted in a previous section, defining authenticity as living in accordance with one's values allows us to provide some content to the concept. But this is compatible with the possibility that much of what it is to be authentic will depend on features unique to a particular individual's circumstances.⁴³ Furthermore, having argued in Chapter One that authenticity consists of mostly self-creation, I can now state that, as a result of the self-creation component, there will be a degree of subjectivity regarding the content of an individual's authentic life. This subjectivity will be kept in check by other objective components (the self discovery component), but it will be present.

Some may worry about the amount of personal latitude afforded by my conception of authenticity. If authenticity involves living in accordance with one's values, and if one is given (some) free reign over which values to possess, then might we discover that certain people would have to behave in morally reprehensible ways in order to be authentic? Surely *that* is not an outcome we want to entertain. Indeed, authenticity is often spoken of (in colloquial terms, at least) as uniformly positive.

⁴³ Depending, of course, on how we answer the questions put forth in the discussions of the target and response dimensions.

I don't really think we need to be worried by this. While acting authentically is a value (and an admirable one at that), it is certainly not a value that is incompatible with vice. While my account of authenticity leaves open the possibility that one can be authentic while having horrible values, I think this is a favorable attribute of my account rather than a problem to be avoided. It is a favorable attribute because 1) it accounts for and is consistent with our observations of other people, and 2) it allows for the possibility that authenticity is not a universal good.

In allowing for the possibility that one might be authentic AND (e.g.) a jerk, we avoid the possibility of painting a condescending picture of human will and agency. It is only if we adopt a very narrow, very essentialist conception of authenticity that we are left with a situation in which an individual might always be inauthentic except in cases where she is behaving in a morally upright way. Put another way: we might avoid the perceived problem⁴⁴ of the Authentic Asshole (a person who is authentic but possesses bad values) if we craft a concept of authenticity whereby it is only possible for people to value things that are indeed morally valuable.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ By 'perceived problem,' I am referring to the commonplace usage of 'authenticity' where it is assumed that being authentic is a uniformly good thing (often because it is assumed that authentic pursuits or actions are also morally good ones). But I mean to challenge the view that the label 'authentic' only applies to people or actions that are morally unproblematic.

⁴⁵ A la Plato's conception of moral motivation, whereby knowledge of the good is itself motivation for *doing* the good.

Doing this would go against empirical observation and give a caricatured and constrained picture of human agency. When we describe people as being authentic or acting authentically, we are not necessarily indicating that these individuals are acting in morally praiseworthy or even morally neutral ways. In fact, many ascriptions of authenticity bypass or avoid the issue of morality altogether. For all the discussion of Donald Trump's authenticity (and how this quality may have contributed to his political victory in 2016), this quality is rarely cited as evidence that Trump is in turn an admirable moral agent or doing the right thing.⁴⁶ More often, his authenticity is cited in conjunction with his predilection for lying, his preoccupation with repeating irrelevant and often fictitious information about his victory, and his disregard for or disinterest in even the most mundane of facts. Trump's so-called authenticity is not evidence of his upstanding character, but quite the opposite. It signals one aspect of his behavior while not entailing anything about his moral character. If anything, these accounts highlight the fact that one can be authentic—perhaps supremely authentic!—and very flawed morally.⁴⁷

2.11 How Strong are the Reasons to be Authentic?

In light of the prior section's discussion, we are now equipped to explore the question of how strong the reasons to be authentic are. Given that being authentic is no

⁴⁶ Jennifer Szalai, "What Makes a Politician 'Authentic'?", *The New York Times*, July 5, 2016.

⁴⁷ See Oliver Hahl, Minjae Kim, and Ezra W. Zuckerman Sivan, "The Authentic Appeal of the Lying Demagogue: Proclaiming the Deeper Truth About Political Illegitimacy," *American Sociological Review* 83, no. 1 (2018).

guarantee that one is morally good or acts morally well, then ought we strive to act authentically? Is there a normative force to the concept and its cultivation, or is it good only insofar as the values it helps promote are themselves good?

My stance is that we can endorse authenticity's moral impetus without in turn concluding that being authentic is always morally preferred. There are *pro tanto* reasons to be authentic, but these reasons can be overridden. Looking to the concepts of Rawlsian virtues of form and executive virtues can provide a helpful illustration of authenticity's *pro tanto* reasons and limitations.

Executive virtues like courage and conscientiousness are typically defined as dispositions or character traits that help an individual live out other, more substance-based virtues (e.g. kindness, generosity). Executive virtues are typically understood as having some value independent of their content, though this is a point of contention⁴⁸; their chief value is nonetheless universally understood to be their role as an adjunct in helping an agent execute on another virtue, i.e. on what she believes she ought to do. Telling the truth might be especially difficult for a whistleblower, but if he possesses the executive virtue of courage, he is more likely to follow through on the virtue of honesty.

⁴⁸ In the case of courage, for example, Geoffrey Scarre holds the view that courage is admirable even when used for unadmirable ends, while Aristotle holds that the aim of the courageous action must itself be something good: "But courage is noble. Therefore the end also is noble; for each thing is defined by its end." Geoffrey Scarre, *On Courage* (New York : Routledge, 2010); Aristotle, Book III, Ch. 7.

We might similarly conceive of authenticity as a disposition whose principal utility comes not from its own contents but from what it allows an agent to accomplish. And since I have suggested that we understand authenticity as the phenomenon whereby an individual lives in accordance with her values, it makes sense to think of authenticity in this way: authenticity, when present, is a trait that helps ensure that an individual follows through on other values that she has.

But note that this characterization of authenticity says nothing about the actual values that the authentic person is living in accordance with. As discussed in the previous section, an individual might have terrible values, but if she lives in accordance with them, then she is authentic. Similarly, saying that someone possesses the virtue of courage says nothing about whether or not she acts admirably; courage can be used in the service of vicious aims (e.g. to overcome one's fear of robbing a gas station) as well as admirable ones.

To the extent that we think authenticity bears some good in and of itself, we will have *some* reason to praise the authentic individual, regardless of what ends that authenticity helps achieve. But we can value authenticity in and of itself while also endorsing the claim that much of its value rests in the results it brings about, which in turn depend on the actual values that the authentic individual possesses. We can recognize that an individual who lives in accordance with her troubling values is authentic (where this authenticity morally counts for something) *and* also morally bad insofar as those bad values reflect bad traits of character or produce bad outcomes. This is similar to the courageous

individual who uses her courage to help her do vicious things; while we may view courage as possessing some good in and of itself, because courage indicates *something* good or admirable even when put to use for immoral ends, we are inclined to discount its goodness in this case since its presence is helping the individual act on vice and produce bad results. Similarly, we can recognize the value of authenticity in and of itself while also recognizing that there are limits to its goodness or desirability when put into practice.

So the question then becomes: is authenticity valuable in and of itself, or is it only valuable (or not) in proportion to the goodness (or badness) of the values the individual is living in accordance with? Answering this question will require that we also address the question of whether authenticity is *doing something* for the agent or whether it is simply a description indicating a correspondence between values and actions.

So we might reasonably understand the value of authenticity to be circumscribed by the particular values that an individual possesses. To the extent that an individual's values are good (appropriate, acceptable, etc.), then that individual ought to behave authentically because 1) doing so will promote the good ends associated with her good values and 2) acting authentically is itself a valuable endeavor. If an individual has good values but lacks the trait of authenticity, then an effort to become authentic would bring about two positive outcomes: it would result in the good in itself of being authentic, and it would also make her more likely to consistently and reliably act in accordance with her good values. In the case of individuals with bad values, we might very well hope that they are inauthentic

because this will decrease their chances of acting on these values, and the inauthenticity may perhaps point to some trepidation about their values that gives us reason to hope that they will alter their values. But we might also reasonably admire their authenticity to some extent since, after all, it indicates *some* sort of commitment in the face of adversity and will become a practical assess if only they can change their values. In the case of an authentic individual with less-than-desirable values, we can acknowledge the goodness of the authenticity without having to claim that authenticity in that instance is, all things considered, a good thing.

Note that this understanding of the *pro tanto* reason to behave authentically allows us to remain agnostic on what the proper conception or conceptions of value are. This has the virtue of allowing us to offer some practical guidance on the cultivation of an authentic self without having to make questionable or unsupported claims about the values that undergird authentic action.

2.12 Concluding Remarks

How, then, should we understand authenticity in light of this chapter's discussion? While I think that much of the fuss over 'being authentic' or 'building an authentic life' is overblown, I do not mean to suggest that valuing authenticity or prioritizing its attainment are fully misguided. Authenticity has *some* weight and value, but it is not as morally significant of a concept as many others have conceived it to be. We should be careful to properly prioritize authenticity among the suite of other conceptually adjacent items.

In particular, my formulation of authenticity as living in accordance with one's values indicates that we would be better off by paying less attention to authenticity and more attention to the things that are conceptually one degree above (autonomy) and one degree below (values). As indicated earlier, the value of authenticity emerges primarily as a function of the particular values that an individual possesses; the better the values, the more *morally* valuable the authenticity is in the role it plays in bringing about those values (and therefore, the greater the reason to *be* authentic). Much of the popular focus on authenticity seems to presuppose that whatever outcomes will be produced by authentic action are themselves good. But this risks fetishizing the concept in a way that is unhelpful and inaccurate. Before championing the cause of individuals being authentic, we need to work to ensure that the values undergirding authentic action are themselves choiceworthy. The concept of autonomy (and its desirability) can help here, since autonomous action requires that an individual be authentic and endorse her values, thereby including a reflective process in the concept. With this emphasis on reflection comes an emphasis on agency, and so we would perhaps also do better to focus less on authenticity and more on autonomy.

In sum, we would benefit from focusing less on authenticity and more on ensuring that the values to which an authentic agent is true are indeed good ones (according to whatever preferred moral system) and that the values she possesses are ones that she reflectively endorses. This is not to say that there is no moral value to authenticity or no

practical lesson to be learned from prioritizing it. But it does mean that its value as an ethical ideal has been overstated among the non-philosophy community and by many within the philosophical community. When we deem authenticity valuable, it is primarily because, in any particular case, the values that undergird authenticity in that particular case are themselves good. The primary weight of authenticity comes from the values themselves, not the authenticity relation whereby one is true to those values. There is an important distinction between the value of one's values and the value of living in accordance with those values. The values themselves represent the most significant moral feature, with the value of living in accordance with those values having some significance (but not a lot). There is something valuable to be gained from an exploration of authenticity. In particular, authenticity is still very deserving of attention in the realm of personal values (i.e. things that primarily impact the individual who possesses them, but impact others only indirectly or not at all).

In the next chapter, I will consider how my account of authenticity might help to shed light on some practical problems that are concerned with personal values. Specifically, I will discuss the relationship between authenticity and the use of so-called human enhancement technologies.

3. Chapter Three: Authenticity and Enhancement

3.1 Introduction

The accelerating pace of medical and technological development has resulted in unprecedented options available for humans to alter, prolong, or radically change the direction of their day-to-day lives. In lockstep with these options is an exploding number of ethical questions that come to the fore as a result of the advancements that make these new options possible. So far, my discussion of authenticity has been comprised primarily of a theoretical discussion of how we ought to understand the concept (what it is, and just as importantly, what it *isn't*) so as to properly employ it in ethical and philosophical discussion.

But a good ethical theory should be able to be employed in service of real-world problems and dilemmas, and it is to this practical application of my conception of authenticity to which I now turn my attention. In this chapter, I will focus on an area of medical science and clinical practice where philosophers have raised concerns about the role that certain medical interventions have on the authentic self: so-called enhancement technologies.

Here, I consider how my account of authenticity might impact or inform current discussions of the effects of psycho-pharmaceuticals on the authentic self. As medical advancement occurs at an increasingly rapid pace, debates about the permissibility of such agents for so-called 'enhancement' purposes have emerged. I begin this chapter by

providing an overview of how others have characterized medical enhancement, how it has been understood to differ from medical treatment, and why this distinction is thought to matter when determining the permissibility of certain medical interventions in relation to authenticity.

I next provide an overview of and commentary on what others have written about the interplay between enhancement technology and authenticity. People who take part in this discussion can be sorted into three categories: the Conservatives (those who think that use of enhancement diminishes authenticity); the Liberals (those who think that use of enhancement technologies can promote authenticity); and the Ambivalents (those who either remain uncertain in their verdict or who think that assessments must be made on a more granular basis)¹. Talking through what others have said on the subject will help to make the ethical concerns and considerations more salient.

I next describe how my account of authenticity allows for a more nuanced appraisal of enhancement technologies' effects and permissibility by enabling us to tailor our appraisals to the particular values of the individual. This has the consequence of making general ethical or policy prescriptions more difficult to develop, but it has the virtue of allowing us to provide a more nuanced and accurate account of enhancement technologies'

¹ The designations "conservative" and "liberal" should not be understood in this context to correlate with conservative and liberal political views. There are individuals with conservative political views who are liberal with regard to enhancement (e.g. John Danaher) and vice-versa (e.g. Carl Elliott).

relationship to the authentic self. I then provide three case studies—one on the use of SSRIs as mood or personality enhancements, another on the recreational use of stimulants as cognitive enhancements, and the final on the futuristic enterprise of moral enhancement—to illustrate how my understandings of enhancement and authenticity pan out in practical bioethical discussions. I conclude the chapter with a discussion of some of the practical and generalizable implications of my account.

3.2 What is Enhancement?

Before digging in to the question of how enhancement interacts with authenticity, it is first necessary to define what is meant by ‘enhancement.’ This is no easy task, as different people define the term differently, and those various definitions all have advantages and disadvantages. Referencing the fraught nature of the term, Erik Parens has noted that “some participants think the term *enhancement* is so freighted with erroneous assumptions and so ripe for abuse that we ought not even use it. My sense is that if we didn’t use the term enhancement, we would end up with another term with similar problems.”² In a similar vein, Paul Root Wolpe has said that enhancement is a “socially constructed” term that will ultimately fail as a concept “because concepts such as disease, normalcy, and health are significantly culturally and historically bound, and thus the result

² *Enhancing Human Traits : Ethical and Social Implications*, ed. Erik Parens (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1998).

of negotiated values.”³ Going even further, James Canton classifies enhancement as a relative concept, noting that the “future may hold different definitions of human enhancement that affect culture, intelligence, memory, physical performance, and even longevity. Different cultures will define human performance based on their social and political values.”⁴

Given this pessimism and the disagreement over even the most basic features of the concept, it may seem as though there are no points of convergence among the various conceptions of enhancement. But this is not true; although there is wide ongoing debate about how to best understand the term, there are some general points that can be made about the ways in which enhancement has been characterized.

The most popular approach to defining enhancement has consisted of a strategy where enhancement is contrasted with treatment or therapy.⁵ Whereas therapy and treatment are usually understood as being interventions aimed at restoration to normal or baseline, enhancement is often defined as an intervention aimed at going *beyond* normal

³ Paul Root Wolpe, "Treatment, Enhancement, and the Ethics of Neurotherapeutics," *Brain and Cognition* 50, no. 3 (2002).

⁴ James Canton, "The Impact of Convergent Technologies and the Future of Business and the Economy," in *Converging Technologies for Improving Human Performance : Nanotechnology, Biotechnology, Information Technology and Cognitive Science*, ed. Mihail C. Roco and William Sims Brainbridge (Boston: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2003).

⁵ In what follows, I will be using ‘therapy’ and ‘treatment’ interchangeably.

functioning or *beyond* any restoration to normal.^{6,7} The treatment-enhancement distinction is sometimes hashed out in terms of the proper work of medical professionals: treatment is the proper work or aim of the medical profession, whereas enhancement is the work of rogue physicians or is otherwise beyond the scope of proper medical practice.⁸ I will be understanding the distinction in this way in what follows.

3.3 Problems with the Treatment-Enhancement Distinction

Despite the initial intuitive appeal of invoking the treatment-enhancement distinction as a way to define enhancement, this approach has a number of problems. First, the claim that the treatment vs. enhancement distinction lines up with a morally permissible vs. morally suspect normative distinction can be readily disproven. There are a

⁶ Along these lines, Eric Juengst has said “The term *enhancement* is usually used in bioethics to characterize interventions designed to improve human form or functioning beyond what is necessary to sustain or restore good health.” Eric T. Juengst, “What Does Enhancement Mean?,” in *Enhancing Human Traits: Ethical and Social Implications*, ed. Erik Parens (Washington D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1998). And Edmund Pellegrino has similarly stated that enhancement “carries the connotation of going ‘beyond’ what exists at some moment, whether it is a certain state of affairs, a bodily function or trait, or a general limitation built into human nature...enhancement will signify an intervention that goes beyond the ends of medicine as they have traditionally been held.” “Biotechnology, Human Enhancement, and the Ends of Medicine,” The Center for Bioethics and Human Dignity, 2004.

⁷ Other, less illuminating, ways of defining treatment include: those interventions that maintain or restore good health; those interventions that are the proper work of medical professionals; those interventions that are in response to disease or disorder.

⁸ While the therapy-enhancement distinction is by far the most common way of defining enhancement, this is not the only contemporary approach to crafting a definition. Julian Savulescu (“Justice, Fairness, and Enhancement”) offers a helpful taxonomy of various approaches. In addition to the therapy-enhancement distinction approach, he also notes that enhancement has been defined via sociological-pragmatic, ideological, and functional approaches. See Julian Savulescu, “Justice, Fairness, and Enhancement,” *Annals of the New York Academy of Science* 1093 (Dec 2006).

number of non-controversial instances of human enhancement, and there are also instances of controversial medical therapies. The use of cosmetics to favorably alter one's appearance, the use of caffeine to favorably alter one's alertness, and the use of education to favorably alter one's cognitive features are all widespread strategies that human beings use in order to alter themselves beyond 'normal' or 'baseline.' As such, they seem to be excellent candidates for classification as enhancements. Despite this status as enhancements, they are among some of the least controversial daily practices of human life.

Conversely, there are interventions that seem to be obvious instances of treatment *and* morally questionable. First, consider the case of using 'heroic measures'—say, in the case of cardio-pulmonary resuscitation—to preserve the life of an elderly person who is suffering and seems to be at the end of her life. Even without additional details about the person's wishes or the presence of an advance directive, these sorts of situations are controversial at best. Second, consider the case of a blood transfusion—standard treatment for anemia, acute blood loss, hemophilia, and numerous other diseases and disorders—on someone who is a Jehovah's witness.⁹ Medical personnel and the courts are conflicted about what to do in these situations and whether a transfusion deemed necessary for survival or restored quality of life is permissible, required, or impermissible when the patient is a Jehovah's Witness. What does *not* seem debatable in these cases is whether the

⁹ The case is further complicated if the Jehovah's witness is also a *child*. See, e.g., S. Woolley, "Children of Jehovah's Witnesses and Adolescent Jehovah's Witnesses: What Are Their Rights?," *Archives of Disease in Childhood* 90, no. 7 (2005)..

status of a transfusion for (e.g.) sickle cell anemia constitutes a treatment or an enhancement.

As these examples illustrate, we cannot accept that the line traditionally drawn by the treatment-enhancement distinction also serves as a clear line between permissible intervention and impermissible intervention.¹⁰ But these examples do not yet illustrate why the therapy-enhancement distinction is *itself* suspect.

To do that, we need to critically examine the supposed descriptive distinction between treatment and enhancement. One way to undermine the supposed metaphysical distinction between treatment and enhancement would be to show how the status of a particular intervention has changed over time (or has possibly changed over time). To do that, we can first consider the rather mundane example of eyeglasses. Poor eyesight may have once been considered normal or a normal variation, especially prior to the advance in human knowledge of optics and the subsequent development and refinement of corrective lenses. In the present day, however, viewing the prescription of glasses as anything other than a treatment for deficient vision (one that is very cheap, and can have a life-transforming effect, as I have personally experienced) seems like a stretch. It may very well

¹⁰ One might object that, while enhancement is not necessarily morally suspect, *biomedical* enhancement is morally suspect by definition. Such a response would bypass my conclusion, since the examples of non-controversial enhancements I cite do not appear to be biomedical enhancements. But a proponent of this view is left with the task of explaining what it is that is internal to the concept 'biomedical' such that all enhancements of this sort are morally off-limits. And this, I think, is simply trading in one problem for another.

be a normal, unremarkable occurrence for a person to have blurry eyesight, but we don't consider the blurry eyesight to be *functionally* normal such that correcting it with glasses constitutes an enhancement as opposed to a treatment.¹¹ And I'd like to suggest that at least part of the reason why correction of blurry vision (which, as commonplace as it is, could be understood to be a variation on normal) is considered a treatment is because it is nowadays very effectively and cheaply corrected. The development, reliability, and accessibility of glasses make us more inclined to view blurry vision as a condition to be treated rather than a normal variation to be enhanced.

For an example that has more recently been transformed from an enhancement to a treatment, we can consider gender confirmation surgery. Gender confirmation surgery, and related concepts of transgenderism and gender dysphoria, have only recently entered the common vernacular and common consciousness. Perhaps unsurprisingly, and I would argue relatedly, gender confirmation surgery is coming to be seen less as an enhancement and more as a medical treatment for the people who seek it.

What accounts for these changes in classification? It seems highly unlikely that the change in classification is the result of any metaphysical shift. Rather, it seems much more likely that the state of medical advancement and/or norms of society and medicine have shifted. For example, before the discovery that eyesight could be reliably manipulated

¹¹ Alternatively, correction of eyesight may be viewed as an instance of enhancement, albeit a non-controversial one.

through the use of lenses, blurry vision might have been deemed ‘normal’ by society, and thus manipulation of it might not have been considered a treatment or therapy. In the case of gender confirmation surgery, it would seem that improved understanding of gender dysphoria, loosening of attitudes regarding gender fluidity, and improvements in surgical technology have all contributed to the beginnings of an attitudinal shift whereby gender reassignment surgery is seen as a morally required means of providing relief for those who request it.¹² As the distress felt by those experiencing gender dysphoria has been taken more seriously, it would seem that attitudes regarding the medical status of surgery has changed—from that of an enhancement or frivolity to that of a treatment.

The point of this discussion is to demonstrate that one of the chief assumptions of those promoting the therapy/enhancement distinction—that the distinction points to a real, non-arbitrary, substantive difference between the two types of intervention—is questionable. By discussing two cases in which classification of an intervention has shifted from ‘treatment’ to ‘enhancement’ over time, I hope to have cast doubt on the assumption that ‘treatment’ and ‘enhancement’ are metaphysical categories as opposed to categories of a more fluid, ambiguous, socially constructed, or relative sort.¹³

¹² See, for example, the Pentagon’s decision to cover the costs of gender-reassignment surgery for an active-duty service member. That member’s doctor deemed the surgery “medically necessary.” Helene Cooper, "Pentagon Approves Gender-Reassignment Surgery for Service Member," *The New York Times*, November 14 2017.

¹³ An incomplete list of non-metaphysical ‘things’ that shape the therapy-enhancement distinction include: advances in medical science; changes in features of the population (e.g. weight, eyesight, habits); shifts in attitudes about what is considered ‘normal’; the introduction of new disease terms

3.4 The Problem with 'Normal'

Imbedded in conceptions of enhancement that rely on the treatment/enhancement distinction and in many conceptions of enhancement that do not rely on the treatment/enhancement distinction is the term 'normal.' The account of enhancement I've thus far been discussing that relies on contrasting enhancement with treatment-based interventions relies on a conception of 'normal' insofar as it conceives of treatment as a restoration to normal and enhancement as an intervention that has as its result something 'beyond normal.' And the concept of 'normal' also pops up in accounts of enhancement that do not make use of the treatment/enhancement distinction¹⁴; thus, the reliability of the term 'normal' is critical to numerous conceptual accounts of authenticity.

Because of the dependence of so many views on the term 'normal,' problems with making use of the concept of normalcy will in turn cause problems for many accounts of enhancement. In this section, I aim to show that the term 'normal' brings with it several problems, and because of this, accounts of enhancement that rely on the concept of normalcy should be viewed with suspicion.

The term 'normal' is notoriously difficult to define, and this difficulty extends to discussions of enhancement that rely on 'normal' as making sense of enhancement. As the

(often in lockstep with developments in pharmaceuticals); changes in public attitudes; changes in the costs of interventions; changes in attitudes about what is considered acceptable suffering.

¹⁴ See, e.g., functional approaches like that of James Sabin and Norman Daniels. James E. Sabin and Norman Daniels, "Determining "Medical Necessity" in Mental Health Practice," *The Hastings Center Report* 24, no. 6 (1994).

following discussion will indicate, making use of the concept of ‘normal’ requires that one make evaluative assumptions, but it is not immediately clear what grounds or justifies these assumptions.

‘Normalcy’ in the context of enhancement discussions tends to center on the concept of ‘normal health’ or ‘normal functioning.’ But how do we define a normal or normally-functioning state in the context of health? It is not immediately clear. One method often employed is to use a distribution curve and designate as ‘normal’ relative to a certain trait or traits anyone who falls within a certain number of standard deviations (usually two) from the mean. But this cutoff is arbitrary; what makes the customary cutoff, as opposed to one slightly more or less inclusive, the one that designates the bounds of normalcy? It is not clear that cutoffs of normalcy are the product of anything more than an arbitrary statistical decision that has become customary over time.

And even if we were to grant the authority of the standard deviation conception of normalcy, we would still encounter further complications. The designator ‘normal’ is always meant to classify something as normal *relative to* a different something. So when we talk about normal human functioning, we need to ask “normal relative to what?,” and there is no clear, non-arbitrary way to answer this question. An evaluative judgment will have to be made in order to determine what is an appropriate point of comparison. For example, in designating an individual ‘normal’ with regard to cognitive capacity, are we designating that person normal with regard to other individuals of similar age, background,

education, etc.? Or are we designating them as 'normal' with regard to their cognitive capacities five years ago? Capacities vary not only among individuals but also within an individual over her life span. Thus, an 80-year-old with minor cognitive decline may be 'normal' relative to other 80-year-olds but 'abnormal' relative to her cognitive state at age 50. Depending on how we answer the question 'normal relative to what?' for this individual, an intervention returning her cognition to what it was when she was 50 could be viewed as either a treatment (something restoring her cognition to her normal baseline) or as an enhancement (something taking her beyond what is normal for people her age). And it is unclear how answering the 'relative to what?' question could be done in a way that is non-evaluative.

Nick Bostrom and Rebecca Roache discuss a similar example that is also illustrative of the problems inherent in arriving at a definition of 'normal.'¹⁵ In their thought experiment, there are two individuals, each with an IQ of 100. As it so happens, one of these individuals previously had an IQ of 150 but has since sustained a head injury that diminished her IQ. The other individual has always had an (average) IQ of 100. Such a case raises the following question: if it would be acceptable to administer a drug to the first individual so as to restore her IQ to its previous level, why is it not also permissible to administer the same drug to the individual whose IQ has always been 100, so as to increase

¹⁵ Nick Bostrom and Rebecca Roache, "Ethical Issues in Human Enhancement," in *New Waves in Applied Ethics*, ed. Jesper Ryberg, Thomas S. Petersen, and Clark Wolf (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

his IQ to 150 as well? The conventional response would be to say that giving the drug to the first individual counts as 'therapy,' but giving the same drug to the second individual constitutes 'enhancement,' on the grounds that the former restores to normal while the latter takes the recipient 'beyond normal.' And since therapy is universally acceptable while enhancement is not, it is permissible to give the drug to the first, but not to the second, individual.

While some will deem this an acceptable response, others will not; after all, the two individuals would experience identical effects from the drug, and it is difficult to articulate a reason why the individuals' unique histories make a *moral* difference here. This case forces us to think about where (if anywhere) a principled and agreeable line can be drawn between 'normal' and 'beyond normal.'

As these examples illustrate, defining the term 'normal' is very fraught, since assessing the normalcy of a particular trait must be done relative to a point of comparison, and the selection of this point of comparison has a major effect on whether the trait is deemed normal or not. In addition to the problems already discussed, what counts as 'normal' will vary depending on the vantage point of the individual making the assessment. If one is occupying the vantage point of a physician (i.e. is concerned with looking at health trends in an individual), something might be deemed abnormal that a person operating from the vantage point of a public health official (i.e. someone looking at trends in a population) would deem a normal variation.

And even from the vantage point of the public health official, appraisals of ‘normal’ will depend on the historical time frame one uses when establishing the bounds of normal. ‘Normal’ weight, for example, when defined as the mean or median weight of U.S. adults, has changed dramatically over the past 50 years. Just because something is ‘normal’ in the sense of being close to the mean or median of the sampled population does not mean that it is ‘normal’ with regard to a larger sample size or with regard to optimal health or functioning.

In sum: given the widely different ways the term ‘normal’ can be used and the varying points of comparison it can be assessed against, generalizability is very difficult to come by. To the extent that the term ‘enhancement’ depends on an agreeable conception of ‘normal,’ defining enhancement will in turn face conceptual difficulties.

3.5 Are There Accounts of Enhancement that Avoid These Problems?

Before wrapping up the discussion of others’ accounts of enhancement, it is worth considering whether there are any accounts of enhancement that avoid characterizing it in terms of ‘normal’ or in terms of its difference from treatment and that thus avoid the problems I have described above.

There is at least one account that does not operate from either the framework of the treatment-enhancement distinction or the framework of normal, and I will now discuss that account. Julian Savulescu introduces what he calls the “Welfarist Definition” of

enhancement in an effort to develop an account that avoids having to make commitments about definitions of ‘treatment’ or of ‘normal.’ According to the Welfarist Definition, “Any change in the biology or psychology of a person which increases the chances of leading a good life in circumstances C” constitutes an enhancement.¹⁶

There are several things to note about this definition of enhancement. First, it relies on *any* change in a person’s biology or psychology as the basis upon which to judge whether enhancement has occurred. This means that relatively minor or trivial things—e.g. seeing a cute puppy on one’s chilly walk to work, a spontaneous increase in alertness during an important exam—will be enhancements according to Savulescu. Second, Savulescu’s definition implies that these changes need not arise as the result of deliberate action, but instead that an enhancement is present any time there is a change to someone’s biology or psychology, regardless of that change’s provenance. Thus, a drug that increases the concentration of serotonin in an individual’s synapses constitutes an enhancement for Savulescu, but a spontaneous change in one’s serotonin concentration will also count as an enhancement according to Savulescu’s definition.

These observations point to what I consider to be one problem with Savulescu’s view—the problem of ‘profligate enhancement.’ Savulescu’s definition may dodge the problem of relying on the use of ‘normal’ as a basis for determining what constitutes an

¹⁶ Savulescu, 324.

enhancement, but it does so with the consequence of making all sorts of counterintuitive things qualify as enhancements.

Savulescu may be willing to bite this bullet, but I think we have good reason to resist adopting his version of enhancement. It does not seem particularly sensible to avoid the problem that comes with properly defining ‘normal’ by casting so wide a net as to label *any* change in biology or psychology an enhancement.

3.6 Is There Something to be Said for Preserving the Concept of Enhancement?

Given the problems with enhancement as well as the problems with accounts, like Savulescu’s, that aim to solve the problems inherent in more traditional conceptions of enhancement, it worth asking whether there is anything to be said for preserving the concept of enhancement. Might it be better (or no loss) for us to abandon the conception altogether, and instead speak in more general terms of ‘intervention’?

Allen Buchanan is skeptical of the philosophical usefulness of the distinction, noting that even when a principled line between therapy and enhancement can be drawn, “it is of limited use from the standpoint of moral guidance.”¹⁷ This is because, as Buchanan rightly notes, there might be reasons to resist proliferation of certain types of enhancement technology, but these reasons will rely on something other than the mere fact

¹⁷ Allen E. Buchanan, *Beyond Humanity?: The Ethics of Biomedical Enhancement* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 26.

that the intervention in question is an enhancement. For example, we might resist the use of germline ‘enhancement’ technologies, but our reasons for doing so would not be due to concerns with it being an instance of enhancement but rather other reasons (e.g. it would further promote inequality, its safety profile remains unknown, the individual being impacted has not given her consent).

I agree with Buchanan that, philosophically speaking, maintaining the treatment-therapy distinction is unhelpful when addressing moral concerns.¹⁸ If it were helpful, then we would have to view with ethical suspicion such things as literacy and the development of agriculture. Furthermore, preserving the treatment-enhancement distinction in my discussion of authenticity will not be helpful because the authenticity-affecting concerns that are often raised in the context of the enhancement debate are concerns that apply more generally to some types of intervention in the practical realm.

It is worth noting, however, that some version of the treatment-enhancement distinction might be usefully preserved in the practical realm. Some practical matters, e.g. insurance billing, policies regarding what sorts of interventions government insurance programs will cover, or how limited medical resources will be allocated, may use the distinction as a shorthand way to draw a line between treatments appropriate and

¹⁸ I’m inclined to go even further and say that, because we can debunk the view that there is a metaphysical distinction between treatment and enhancement, there is no meaningful philosophical distinction at all. But the weaker claim that there is no meaningful ethical distinction will suffice for the remainder of my discussion.

inappropriate for coverage. I say a ‘shorthand way’ because I suspect that, even in the case of practical concerns, something other than the treatment-enhancement distinction will be the actual basis of decision-making, with colloquial understanding of the treatment-enhancement distinction acting as a shorthand way of capturing the relevant difference.

3.7 How We Should Understand Enhancement, In Light of This Discussion

Given the discussion in the previous sections, I will now describe how I think we ought to understand enhancement (and how I will be understanding it in subsequent sections of this chapter). For reasons that I will highlight below, I think that when we are discussing authenticity with regard to enhancement, we are better off speaking in terms of ‘intervention’ in a way that will capture a number of interventions that are sometimes understood to be ‘therapeutic.’ We can further limit our discussion to ‘biomedical intervention’ in an effort to capture the sorts of interventions that most interest me and others who contribute to philosophical discussion of enhancements. This, I think, allows us to talk readily about what we actually care about and also allows us to speak in ways that are true to our intuitions or prior commitments.

This approach is preferable in part because the distinction between therapy and enhancement points more to cultural artifacts than to a principled philosophical (conceptual) distinction. One way of understanding this point is to think about the distinction that is often made between a medication’s effects and its side effects.

Metaphysically speaking, there is no distinction between a medication's effects and side effects; both just are *effects* that a medication produces when introduced to the human body. What distinguishes effect from side effects is a *normative* distinction that is based on practical considerations: e.g. what the intended vs. unintended effects of a medication are, what the desirable vs. undesirable effects are, what the expected vs. unexpected effects are, what effects bring about positive outcomes vs. what effects bring about negative outcomes. Analogously, the distinction between 'treatment' and 'enhancement' is not metaphysical, but instead based on norms, expectations, and 'background conditions' that are deemed relevant.

Furthermore, we can note how changes in diagnosis and diagnostic practice (sometimes termed 'overpathologizing') can impact whether we view something as a treatment or enhancement. Consider the cases of relatively new diagnoses like binge eating disorder (BED), low T syndrome in men, and social anxiety disorder (SAD). Prior to the birth of these disease classifications, interventions like Vyvanse (for BED)¹⁹, testosterone supplementation (for low T), and SSRIs (for SAD) would have been considered—at least by the medical community, and likely by the more general population—'enhancements.' But once these clusters of symptoms are deemed a disease or disorder, perception quickly shifts from seeing those interventions as enhancements (or illicit) and

¹⁹ Furthermore, using Vyvanse in this situation might even be classified as an instance of abuse, since it is an amphetamine and thus carries a high risk of abuse.

seeing them as treatments for diseases or disorders.²⁰ There is no consensus regarding whether diseases are ‘real’ categories, and this is especially true in the case of psychiatric diagnoses. As changes are made to disease classification, changes in perception of what counts as a treatment or enhancement also occur.

Given that there are numerous non-metaphysical considerations that factor in to our intuitions regarding when to classify something as an enhancement, and given the shifting status of interventions as enhancements vs. treatments, I think it makes the most sense, for the purposes of a discussion centered on authenticity, to abandon the use of the term ‘enhancement’ and to instead speak more broadly in terms of intervention. Just because something is an enhancement does not necessarily make it morally suspect, and just because something is considered a treatment doesn’t mean that it *isn’t* morally suspect. And because the concern when assessing authenticity is whether the individual in question is living in accordance with his values, it would seem that there is fruitful discussion to be had both with regard to things seen as paradigmatic examples of enhancements and things seen as paradigmatic examples of treatments. And because there are so many interventions whose classification is debatable, but for which it would be worthwhile to discuss

²⁰ It is also worth mentioning that when the opposite happens—when conditions once classified as diseases are de-medicalized (e.g. hysteria) or classified in a new way (e.g. Asperger syndrome and autism being re-classified as Autism Spectrum Disorder)—perceptions (and the availability of support services) can also shift.

implications for authenticity, adopting the strategy of speaking in the broader terms of 'biomedical intervention' will suit my purposes in what follows.

3.8 How Have Others Characterized the Interplay of Enhancement and Authenticity?

Before beginning my discussion of case studies, it will be useful to get a sense of what other philosophers have said about the interplay between enhancement (what I will terming 'biomedical intervention' in my discussion) and authenticity. Those discussing this relationship can be divided into three broad categories: the Conservatives, the Liberals, and the Ambivalents. I will discuss each of these in order.

3.8.1 The Conservatives

I am labeling as 'conservatives' those individuals who believe that enhancement technologies will uniformly diminish the authenticity of their users. Conservatives caution against the use of enhancement technologies because they believe that the adoption of enhancement technology will erode human society and, indeed, what it even means or is to be human.

Carl Elliott's writings are a paradigmatic example of the conservative viewpoint. His discussion explores enhancement technology's authenticity-diminishing properties from a non-theistic, non-essentialist, politically liberal vantage point. In *Better than Well*, Elliott provides a rich but inconsistent discussion of many of the social and personal factors that lead people to seek the aid of enhancement technologies. Much of his discussion is

centered on the role that authenticity plays in contemporary American society and, subsequently, on uses of and attitudes toward enhancement technologies.

Elliott adopts an angle on authenticity that explores the role of enhancement technologies in terms of their embeddedness in the mechanisms of capitalism and consumerist culture. As discussed in Chapter One, Elliott is deeply concerned about the Band-Aid effect of biomedical enhancements, whereby the use of these technologies merely masks the real problems with American society (e.g. consumerism, the isolation of suburban life) that we ought to be solving. Elliott sees enhancements like cosmetic plastic surgery, steroids for muscle growth, and Prozac for shyness as evidence that people are striving to conform with societal pressures or the dictates of culture, as opposed to their true selves. As evidence for this point, he cites with suspicion the claims that women have made that “I’m doing it for me” when they avail themselves of makeup or a breast augmentation.²¹ Elliott further claims that this sort of characterization of one’s use of enhancement—that the enhancement is used not in response to social pressure but as a matter of personal preference—has been co-opted by ad campaigns to sell anything from at-home hair dye to ‘feminine’ cigarettes. He further opines that “[t]he irony of this particular sales pitch is that it uses deeply held cultural values in order to sell the idea of the individual transcending his or her culture.”²²

²¹ Elliott, *Better Than Well : American Medicine Meets the American Dream*, 113.

²² *Ibid.*, 115.

Elliott's implicit argument here is that the modern-day use of enhancement technologies is motivated not by the goal of finding or improving one's true self but is instead motivated by the desire to make oneself more acceptable or admirable socially. And because cultural values are so deeply ingrained, and so well utilized and manipulated by the companies who profit from the use of these enhancements, the realities of these motivations are oftentimes undetectable by the users of these technologies. Enhancement users might genuinely think that they are availing themselves of enhancement technologies in order to engage in the project of self-discovery (which Elliott thinks is the chief component of authenticity), but Elliott thinks that the motivations to take enhancements and the 'quick fixes' that enhancements bring about render them unable to be used as vehicles of self-discovery. Because of Elliott's conviction that enhancements are the consequences of corrupt and misguided social forces and not tools for self-discovery, he thinks that they are by definition antithetical to authenticity. Furthermore, they are not even tools for self-creation, which he acknowledges is a small component of authenticity, since they represent the desire to conform with society or ameliorate one's socially-caused pain, as opposed to a desire to creatively shape one's self.

Implicit in Elliott's argument is the premise that any attempt to enhance oneself that is motivated, either implicitly or explicitly, by the values of society, necessarily promotes inauthenticity. It may be true that the use of enhancement technologies breeds self-deception and alienation from our true selves, but it is hard to see how this can be seen

as the unique consequence of enhancement technology. Adopting Elliott's logic about the role that advertising, media, and public opinion have on our (false) perceptions about our motivations and true selves, it seems that his critique of enhancement would apply equally to, e.g., a person's decision to dine at a popular restaurant. The individual may genuinely believe herself to be motivated by such internally-derived things as her personal taste preferences or her ability to know good Italian food when she tastes it. But a critic may demur, instead attributing her restaurant selection to such outward pressures as the town's identification of this restaurant as the best in the area, her perception that the restaurant is frequented by respected community members, or her friend's insistence that she give the restaurant a try. Elliott certainly doesn't reject this possibility, but he does treat enhancements as if they are somehow unique in their position amidst consumer culture. Once we see that the worries about societal pressure that Elliott invokes are also concerns in matters unrelated to enhancement, it is difficult to be convinced that enhancement technologies hold this unique position.

Furthermore, Elliott's insistence that authenticity depends on ensuring one pursues an identity that is unadulterated by the influence of society or capitalism seems inconsistent with his claims elsewhere that seem to presuppose a role of the external world in shaping or validating one's self. In his discussion of consumer culture and the role of the self, Elliott says that "identity is not merely something that anyone can simply decide

upon and create,” but rather that it is “dependent on the recognition of others.”²³ Here, Elliott argues, as mentioned in Chapter One, that if one identifies in a way that is not detectable by others, then there is a crucial sense in which that identity is inauthentic. Using the example of a “ninety-pound weakling” who wants to recreate himself as a body builder, Elliott claims that this individual will not be an authentic body-builder if he is not recognized as a body-builder by others.²⁴

How should we evaluate Elliott’s claim that authenticity is dependent on the recognition of others in light of my proposed account of authenticity? Elliott’s claim is, strictly speaking, compatible with my account, but he and I have significantly different views regarding the *extent* to which the recognition of others mediates the authentic self. Recall from Chapter One that Elliott conceives of authenticity as consisting of a majority share of self-discovery and a minority share of self-creation, while I have argued that the inverse is true. The input of others can be understood to belong to the self-discovery component of authenticity, and since both of our accounts contain a self-discovery component, the recognition of others can play a role in both of our accounts. But my

²³ Ibid., 116-17. Note that, for Elliott, being ‘motivated by’ society is distinct from being ‘recognized by’ society. To be motivated by society is to be mistakenly motivated by social forces to do something that is not really a manifestation of your true self. As such, to be motivated by society is, for Elliott, necessarily inauthentic. To be recognized by society, however, does not entail inauthenticity; to the contrary, Elliott thinks it is a substantial requirement of authenticity.

²⁴ Ibid., 117.

account will grant the recognition of others a much smaller role, since self-discovery is the non-dominant feature of my account and the dominant feature of Elliott's.

Some might question how the recognition of others could relate to self-discovery, since self-discovery seems to imply an inward-looking, as opposed to an outward-looking, gaze. An inward-looking gaze is certainly one way to go about the self-discovery process, but it is not the only way. Our selves are situated in a world, and that world is populated by others. As I have already indicated elsewhere, we are shaped by numerous external influences—our parents, our communities, the environments in which we live. In light of this, it should not be surprising that self-discovery can also involve looking *outward*—to see how our actions impact others, to receive feedback on whether the people we think ourselves to be are actually the people we are. The feedback of others is not the decisive factor of our authenticity—and it is on this point that Elliott would perhaps disagree—but that doesn't mean that the recognition of others plays no role to our authenticity.

Furthermore, my conception of authenticity as living in accordance with one's values suggests the potential for a limited role of the input of others. Our values do not develop in a vacuum; not only are we taught many of our values by others (e.g. our parents, our teachers), but we are constantly interacting with others in ways that can shape and alter our values. To cite one famous example, C.P. Ellis, a member of the Ku Klux Klan in North Carolina, came to view Ann Atwater, a black civil rights activist, as a friend after having viewed her with hatred. This unlikeliest of transformations came about as the result

of their sustained interaction as members of the local school board. Interaction with Ann dramatically changed his view of her and, as a result, his broader values regarding the moral personhood of African Americans.²⁵ This example is meant to illustrate that our values are validated, shaped, or challenged—sometimes quite dramatically—by the people we encounter. This influence of others that I am describing is a broader phenomenon than the ‘recognition by others’ that Elliott describes, but the recognition of others is one way that our values, while our own, are connected to other people.

Thus, parts of Elliott’s discussion indicate that he holds some beliefs about authenticity that are consistent with my view. But on the whole, he offers an interesting but incomplete and unsatisfying argument for the claim that use of (modern-day) enhancements leads to inauthentic consequences. He may very well be correct in observing that our decisions are often motivated by exogenous and morally questionable forces, but it is unclear how his discussions uniquely apply to enhancement technologies. And his claim that identity requires the recognition of others, while insightful and compelling is at odds with his general position about authenticity and outside influences. Elliott is clearly wary of the negative effects he thinks enhancement technology will have on the authentic self (and, more broadly, on American society), but he does not always provide a consistent argument as to why we should also be worried.

²⁵ Osha Gray Davidson, *The Best of Enemies: Race and Redemption in the New South* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2007).

Although they do not frame their discussions in terms of authenticity, Leon Kass and Michael Sandel reach conclusions similar to Elliott's and warn against the use of all biomedical enhancements because they believe these enhancements will bring about exclusively negative results for the human species. Both Kass and Sandel believe that enhancements will undermine such properties as naturalness, human dignity, and non-alienation from our biological processes, and they argue that diminishment of any of these things is a mistake. Kass thinks that anything intended to take its user 'beyond therapy' will ultimately diminish human agency, and Sandel similarly concludes that using enhancement as a means of chasing perfection will result in a diminishment of human effort and agency. Both men seem most worried about inauthentic achievement²⁶ arising as the result of our use of biomedical enhancements and what they believe to be its concomitant disrespect for human naturalness. Kass and his coauthors express such worries when they say that enhancements bring with them "challenges to what is naturally human, what is humanly dignified, or to attitudes that show proper respect for what is naturally and dignifiedly human."²⁷ In a similar vein, Sandel thinks that human agency will be diminished because "as the role of enhancement increases, our admiration for the

²⁶ I will have more to say about inauthentic achievement in Section 3.9.2.1.1.

²⁷ Leon Kass et al., *Beyond Therapy : Biotechnology and the Pursuit of Happiness* (Washington, D.C.: The President's Council on Bioethics, 2003), 286-87.

achievement fades,” with the result being that enhancement will “threaten our humanity by eroding human agency.”²⁸

For both men, their conclusions about enhancement’s impermissibility rests less on argument and more on their apparent hopes that their audiences will be sympathetic to the generally unsubstantiated claims that they make about enhancement and human nature. Both seem to conceive of ‘humanity’ in essentialist terms, and neither acknowledges that human culture, psychology, and even biology have changed over time. One who does not buy into their rather flimsy conception of ‘human nature’ is unlikely to be convinced by their discussions.

Although they do not invoke authenticity, as Elliott does, in justifying their positions against the use of biomedical enhancements, Kass and Sandel reach the same conclusion as Elliott via their different approach. All three men conclude that using biomedical interventions to take oneself ‘beyond therapy,’ to overly strive for perfection, or to make oneself ‘better than well’ will always have untoward effects, and as a result, we ought not to use biomedical enhancements.

²⁸ Sandel, *The Case against Perfection: Ethics in the Age of Genetic Engineering*, 25.

3.8.2 The Liberals

I am labeling as ‘liberals’ those individuals who believe that enhancement technologies will sometimes have an authenticity-promoting effect.²⁹

Allen Buchanan fits the ‘liberal’ designation because he claims that “Authenticity might require using biomedical interventions” in some circumstances, for example “to avoid attractions that are not expressions of our identity.”³⁰ Buchanan structures his argument around three types of inauthenticity that are purportedly brought about by enhancement technologies: inauthentic selves (or lives), inauthentic relationships, and inauthentic virtues. In all three of these categories, Buchanan argues that we have no reason to believe that uses of enhancement will always result in inauthenticity (though they may *sometimes* result in inauthenticity). Buchanan indicates that he will be operating according to a definition whereby authenticity is understood as “living in accordance with one’s identity.”³¹

²⁹ It might be tempting to think that liberals would be those individuals who think that enhancement technologies will always promote authenticity, since they are being contrasted with conservatives who think that enhancement technologies never promote authenticity. But no one actually holds the view that enhancements are always authenticity-promoting, as Allen Buchanan has noted in *Beyond Humanity*.

³⁰ Buchanan, 108.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 102. The reader may observe that “living in accordance with one’s identity” looks a lot like “living in accordance with one’s values.” What is the difference? DeGrazia says that “personal identity...is connected with our self-conceptions—with what we consider most important to who we are, our self-told narratives about our own lives...It is what comes apart when a person has an identity crisis, when she is left wondering, in an important sense, who she is” DeGrazia, 36. So identity, for DeGrazia appears to include values as well as other things. DeGrazia appears to use ‘self’ and ‘identity’ interchangeably, though this is not completely clear. Recall from footnote 13 of Chapter Two that I view one’s personal identity as one’s *perception* of her self..

In the case of enhancement technologies leading to inauthentic people or selves, Buchanan endorses the view of David DeGrazia, who Buchanan says holds the view that a transformation brought about by an enhancement can be authentic if the choice to use the enhancement “was a voluntary expression of one’s identity.”³² Buchanan indicates his agreement with this view, but does not say anything to spell out his rationale for adopting this position.³³ He does propose an ‘epistemic proviso’ to DeGrazia’s view, since Buchanan worries that it allows for an individual with grossly inaccurate beliefs about himself to be authentic. This proviso is meant to eliminate this possibility by saying that “authenticity, in the sense worth caring about, is more than simply congruity between one’s behavior and *some* conception of what sort of person one aspires to be”; authenticity also requires that this conception be somewhat accurate, though Buchanan does not flesh out what the threshold of appropriate accuracy is.³⁴

³² Buchanan, 102.

³³ Recall from Chapter One that DeGrazia believes we can shape ourselves to *some* extent. Because he also rejects the view of a static, stable self, he thinks that one’s self can change over time and still be authentic. Given this ability of the self to change, what becomes the arbiter of which changes are authentic and which changes aren’t? According to DeGrazia, it is the agent’s appraisal of the traits—*whether or not she identifies with them*—that determines whether they are authentic.

³⁴ Buchanan, 102. It is worth emphasizing how interesting it is that Buchanan builds in this accuracy condition. Because he is liberal with regard to enhancement’s ability to promote authenticity, one might expect him to be liberal in terms of what ‘counts as’ authentic. But by imposing the condition of accuracy, he dramatically limits what can count as authentic for any given individual. This serves as a reminder that someone can be liberal in one area of the debate without necessarily being liberal in another area. Relatedly: one can be a liberal with regard to enhancement’s ability to promote authenticity while also believing that authenticity consists of self-discovery; enhancements can be viewed as tools of self-creation *and* self-discovery.

From here, Buchanan diagnoses the problem with enhancement conservatives' views thusly: he says that conservatives begin with a worry (or assertion) that biomedical enhancements are instances of inauthenticity, and they make these broad claims without the support of any empirical evidence that these interventions actually act in ways that decrease human authenticity. What we need, according to Buchanan, is to evaluate these claims through the use of empirical evidence. Whether or not something undermines authenticity is not an exclusively theoretical matter; we must actually study the effects of biomedical enhancements on the individuals who use them in order to determine whether or not authenticity has been undermined.

Once this empirical investigation is undertaken, Buchanan thinks that we will realize that, contrary to the worries of enhancement conservatives, there will be numerous instances in which using biomedical enhancements actually helps to promote authenticity. It is in his discussions of inauthentic relationship and inauthentic virtues that he offers evidence of this claim. Regarding inauthentic relationships, Buchanan responds to worries that so-called enhancement 'love drugs'—typically oxytocin or vasopressin, administered nasally—might result in inauthentic relationships. Critics worry that use of these drugs to preserve a relationship will remove the effort and commitment necessary to sustain a relationship, and that this effort and commitment are required for the relationship to be authentic. Buchanan responds to this by noting that other less technological interventions are already used to sustain pair bonding—e.g. alcohol, vacations, marriage counseling.

Furthermore, oxytocin and vasopressin are already present in our brains, so Buchanan says that the charge that such means are “unnatural” is not compelling. Empirical investigation of so-called ‘love drugs’ reveals that the enhancing drugs are agents already present in human brains, and it also reveals that there are already perfectly acceptable ‘short cuts’ that humans take in order to maintain relationships. From these revelations, Buchanan deems it proven that enhancement technologies can promote authentic relationships, assuming the drugs are taken voluntarily and by people with minimally accurate self-conceptions.

Buchanan’s argument has the virtue of recognizing that enhancement technologies are taken for drastically different reasons and can have drastically variant effects on their users. As such, his insistence that we need to look to empirical evidence in order to determine whether enhancements actually lead to inauthenticity is well-taken. However, he seems to think that this empirical evidence will allow us to draw generalizable, broad-sweeping conclusions about the impact of particular enhancement technologies on human authenticity, and this seems mistaken. Because my definition of authenticity is individual-specific, i.e. defined relative to a particular individual in terms of her values, what is inauthentic for one person may not be inauthentic for another. This includes enhancements—while use of a ‘love drug’ might promote one individual’s authenticity, that fact tells us nothing definitive whether it will impact the authenticity of someone else. Of course, empirical research could reveal that a certain enhancement tends to promote authenticity for a large group of people, but this still does not tell us anything definitive

about how that enhancement will impact any particular person; at best, it reveals the statistical likelihood that she will be affected in a particular way. Because of this, we will not be able to draw any blanket conclusions (e.g. “Prozac promotes authenticity!”) from empirical studies like Buchanan seems to think we could.

At first pass, it might seem as if Buchanan could justify his apparent belief that broad conclusions about the role of enhancement technologies on authenticity if he were someone who believed that authenticity consists exclusively of self-creation. After all, that prong on the continuum results in there being no restrictions on what can be authentic. If one were to hold this position, it would perhaps be plausible for them to say that broad conclusions about authenticity and enhancement technologies can be drawn. But Buchanan is clearly *not* an endorser of this position. Recall that DeGrazia, whose account he defers to, thinks that authenticity has a self-discovery component. And Buchanan goes on to impose an even stricter proviso regarding the accuracy of one’s self conception, indicating that he is even more committed to the role of self-discovery than DeGrazia is. Because Buchanan so clearly imposes restrictions on what counts as authentic, and these restrictions will require us to know specifics about an individual in order to make a proper assessment, it is puzzling that he is so sanguine about our ability to draw broad conclusions about a particular enhancement’s impact on authenticity, if only we were to get more empirical data.

Additionally, Buchanan is correct to point out the discrepancy between how some ‘love drugs’—e.g. alcohol and nasal oxytocin—are treated. Arguments for why alcohol is compatible with authenticity while nasal oxytocin is not are likely to say that alcohol is a ‘natural’ intervention, while oxytocin is not, and that this explains their different treatment with regard to authenticity. However, this type of argument is flawed for at least two reasons. First, one can rather obviously object that naturalness is completely distinct from most accounts of authenticity (including mine). Second, the argument’s crucial claim turns out to be completely false, since oxytocin occurs naturally in our bodies, whereas alcohol does not.

Thus, Buchanan is right to identify many of the arguments against ‘love drugs’ as flimsy. However, he can be right about this flimsiness *and* it can also turn out that, for a lot of people, ‘love drugs’ diminish their authenticity because taking them (or the effects of them) are not in accordance with many people’s values.

Finally, Buchanan’s account can be criticized because it relies too much on the voluntariness of the choice to use the enhancement and not enough on the effects brought about by the enhancement. While I probably agree with Buchanan that authentic enhancement requires that the enhancement be taken voluntarily, it is unclear to me how this fact, when combined only with a stipulation about a minimal requirement of accurate self-conception, is sufficient to guarantee authenticity. Voluntary use of an enhancement does not entail that one knows the *outcome* of the enhancement, and so it seems that one

could be wrong about the outcome in a way that does not violate the requirement of minimal accuracy of self-conception. The decision to use an enhancement can be authentic without the results brought about by the enhancement thereby being authentic, and Buchanan's account fails to note or address this important distinction.

3.8.3 The Ambivalents

There are some philosophers and ethicists who do not fit into either the conservative or liberal category because they are either ambivalent about the effects of enhancement technologies on users' authenticity or because they think that assessments regarding an enhancement technology's effects must be made on a case-by-case basis. In this section, I will discuss one such person, Peter Kramer.

In his landmark book *Listening to Prozac*, psychiatrist Peter Kramer conveys his ambivalence about enhancement (or, to use his term, cosmetic psychopharmacology) through discussion of a number of the patients he has seen over his years of practice. Kramer very clearly asserts that he believes Prozac to have a transformative effect on some patients, saying that "There really is no way to assess Prozac without confronting transformation."³⁵ What he remains ambivalent about is whether or not this transformation amounts to an alteration of the self that thereby renders the transformed user inauthentic. Rather than being written in an argumentative style familiar to

³⁵ Peter D. Kramer, *Listening to Prozac* (New York: Viking, 1993), 268.

philosophers, Kramer structures his book as a series of discussions and analyses of a number of his patients. What follows these discussions is not a knock-down assessment of Prozac's effect on the self, but rather a number of observations, worries, and conjectures that never arrive at a consensus. Through his keen insights and observations, Kramer effectively raises concerns and doubts about the effects of Prozac and related drugs on both the self and the greater society, but he fails to offer a definitive conclusion about whether Prozac does in fact alter the self in its transformative cases.

Through discussions of patients Tess and Sally, Kramer suggests that Prozac may *improve* one's abilities to be authentic, while his discussion of patients Philip and Sam raises concerns about Prozac's authenticity-diminishing capabilities. Through his discussions of Tess and Sally, Kramer appears to be cautiously optimistic about the potential for non-therapeutic use of Prozac to be authenticity-promoting. Noting his decision to administer Prozac to Tess non-therapeutically, Kramer says that he prescribed Prozac "not to transform Tess, but to restore her," thereby indicating that his hope was that the drug would allow Tess to return to her true, authentic self.³⁶ After nine months on Prozac, Tess—who was never clinically depressed, but did exhibit signs of malaise and had a family history of depression—felt considerably better and discontinued use of the drug. Eight months after that, Tess returns to Kramer's office and emphatically tells him "I'm not myself."³⁷ At this

³⁶ Ibid., 7.

³⁷ Ibid., 10.

point, Kramer reports that he felt faced with a dilemma: “Confronted with a patient who had never met criteria for any illness, what should I be free to do? If I did prescribe medication, how would we characterize this act?”³⁸ Kramer’s sense that he is facing a dilemma arises because he is grappling with the question of whether it is permissible to provide an enhancement that promotes authenticity, or whether doing so is against the medical code of ethics. He further seems to be questioning whether providing Tess with a prescription for Prozac would actually be a case of enhancement (one that changes her self) or whether it would be an act of restoration (bringing her self back to its true state). On one hand, because Tess was never diagnosed with depression, and Kramer is adamant that she does not fit the diagnostic criteria, this seems a clear case of enhancement and not treatment. On the other hand, Kramer seems to be wondering whether giving Tess the prescription would be treatment for something, albeit not for a medical or psychiatric diagnosis. Though Kramer believes Tess when she indicates that taking Prozac non-therapeutically will allow her to be more authentic, he is nonetheless ambivalent about prescribing it to her.

Kramer also remains ambivalent about providing Prozac to Sally, though he also thinks that doing so will allow her to be more authentic. Unlike Tess, Sally did meet diagnostic criteria for depression, and as a result, Kramer “prescribed Prozac for Sally with an eye mainly toward her depressive symptoms but also with some hope of making a more

³⁸ Ibid., 15.

profound difference.”³⁹ His hopes are realized: he observes that “Prozac had let [Sally’s] personality emerge at last,” with Sally making the self-assessment that “she had not been alive before taking an antidepressant.”⁴⁰ Sally certainly thinks that her authentic self has emerged as a result of taking the drug, but Kramer is more doubtful. He notes “concern that Sally may have ‘overshot,’ that this new personality was too different from her old one,” despite Sally’s insistence that Prozac had let her true personality finally emerge.⁴¹ Specifically, Kramer worries that Sally’s shyness, which seems to have been inhibited by the drug, is a part of her true self, even though Sally denies this. In a manifestation of his ambivalence, Kramer gives in to Sally’s insistence that he keep prescribing the drug, but he compromises by lowering the dose.

To see the other side of Kramer’s ambivalence, we can appeal to his descriptions of Philip and Sam. With Philip, Kramer believes that Prozac led to an increase in well-being but a decrease in authenticity. Kramer describes Philip as “moderately depressed” but with “moodiness and irritability [that] were comfortable to him, because they represented his legitimate suffering and rage.”⁴² Philip is what the medical community would describe a “good responder” to Prozac, meaning he tolerated it well and benefited from it. But Kramer says that while “Philip felt better than well, he hated it” because he felt phony and

³⁹ Ibid., 146.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 148.

⁴¹ Ibid., 147.

⁴² Ibid., 291.

noted a decrease in his ability to trust himself.⁴³ Philip was relieved to finally discontinue the drug and “resume his bitterness,” despite the fact that he seemed to benefit from its use.⁴⁴

Kramer indicates ambivalence about what to do and how to feel in the case of a patient whose functioning and well-being are undeniably improved on a drug but who does not identify with the sort of person he is while on the drug. Are the features of Philip’s that the drug seems to alter—his moodiness and bitterness—aspects of his true self, or does he falsely believe that they are authentic features of his personality and foolishly cling to them as a result? Despite the fact that Kramer’s prescription of Prozac to Philip is a clear case of therapy (since Philip meets the criteria for moderate depression), the dramatic and unwelcome (according to Philip) effects of the drug lead him to question whether an ethically dubious form of enhancement has simultaneously taken place. Should Kramer trust Philip’s testimony about what comprises his true self, or should he trust his clinical judgment about what is best for Philip in order to determine what constitutes Philip’s authentic self?

Finally, Kramer’s discussion of Sam suggests that he has reservations about the ability of Prozac to promote, rather than diminish, the true self. According to Kramer, Sam was “grateful for the relief Prozac gave him” but nonetheless disconcerted by the

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

changes brought about by the medication “because the medication redefined what was essential and what was contingent about his own personality.”⁴⁵ Put in authenticity terms, we can understand Sam to be concerned with the medication’s effect of altering (the perception of) his self. Sam likes the way he feels and functions on Prozac, but he has grave concerns about the way the drug has altered his conception of who he is. Kramer shares this concern, though he equivocates on whether he thinks Sam’s sense that his self has been altered is mere perception or indicative of a real phenomenon.

Kramer concludes with the following:

In the end, I suspect that the moral implications of Prozac are difficult to specify not only because the drug is new but because we are new as well. Like so many of the ‘good responders’ to Prozac, we are two persons⁴⁶, with two senses of self. What is threatening to the old self is already comfortable, perhaps eagerly sought after, by the new. Here, I think, is Prozac’s most profound moral consequence, in changing the sort of evidence we attend to, in changing our sense of constraints on human behavior, in changing the observing self.⁴⁷

It is clear that Kramer thinks that the use of Prozac is here to stay (and his prediction, made in 1993, proved perhaps even more true than he could have imagined at the time). But what remains for his readers is whether he thinks the transformative effects

⁴⁵ Ibid., x-xi.

⁴⁶ Elsewhere, Kramer claims that when a patient is transformed on Prozac, there are “*almost two different persons*,” further obfuscating his view of Prozac’s impact on the true self (p. 268, emphasis mine).

⁴⁷ Kramer, 299-300.

of Prozac, in threatening the old self, are giving birth to a new self that is authentic or that is an aberration to the former (real) true self.

It is difficult to evaluate Kramer's noncommittal answer beyond pointing out that it is noncommittal. But it is worth mentioning that Kramer brings the important perspective of clinician to the discussion. Many who work in the ethics of pharmacological enhancement lack clinical experience, and as such their predictions about Prozac's effects may reflect fanciful inaccuracies. Kramer notes that there is a problem with theorizing on this issue that "[has] to do with the vast discrepancy between what the ethicists were imagining and what [he] was seeing in the office."⁴⁸ It may be that precisely the point Kramer is attempting to make through his noncommittal stance is that secure commitment to one side of the debate is hard to come by, in part, because of the individuality and nuance observable to those who work not just theoretically, but also clinically.

3.9 Enhancement Case Studies

Having mapped out much of the terrain of the philosophical discussion of enhancement, I will now provide three case studies as a way of analyzing, in more specific detail, how authenticity is or is not compromised, according to my understanding of the concept, in the instances of two commonplace instances of enhancement via pharmaceuticals. The first of these, enhancement of personality or mood via selective

⁴⁸ Ibid., 257.

serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs) will prove illustrative of most of the relevant considerations of a good analysis of pharmacological intervention according to my account of authenticity. These same points could be illustrated through examples using other types of enhancement drugs, but I defer to the example of SSRIs because of their widespread discussion in the literature and widespread use in the United States.⁴⁹ The next intervention, cognitive enhancement via the wakefulness agent Modafinil or through psychostimulants, like Adderall, will help to make a few additional points. I will conclude this section with consideration of a third, currently more theoretical type of enhancement, moral enhancement, which raises special issues with regard to authenticity.

In the first two case studies, I will begin by giving an overview of each drug's mechanisms, therapeutic uses and side effects, and use(s) as an enhancement. For all three case studies, I will subsequently discuss what some of the salient considerations will be when we make assessments of authenticity with regard to these particular interventions. I will also indicate what general types of conclusions, if any, we can make about these interventions and their authenticity-promoting or -diminishing abilities.

One final note: as I have already mentioned, I think we are better off speaking in terms of 'biomedical intervention' as opposed to 'enhancement.' But in what follows, I

⁴⁹ According to a 2017 report by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), one in eight Americans over the age of twelve used an SSRI between 2011 and 2014. Laura A. Pratt, Debra J. Brody, and Quiping Gu, "Antidepressant Use among Persons Aged 12 and Over: United States, 2011-2014," ed. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, August 2017).

will at times use the term ‘enhancement’ in order to mirror usage by others writing in this area.

3.9.1 Mood Enhancements (SSRIs)

3.9.1.1 Overview of Use and Mechanism

SSRIs (e.g. Prozac, Celexa, Zoloft) are a class of drugs predominately used for the treatment of anxiety disorders and major depressive disorder (MDD), though they are also prescribed off-label for a number of other disorders. These drugs work by blocking the reuptake of the neurotransmitter serotonin in the brain, which results in its increased concentration in neural synapses. Individuals with depression are believed to have a suboptimal concentration of serotonin in their synapses, and concentration of intra-synaptic serotonin is thought to correlate with feelings of well-being and happiness. SSRIs are not considered addictive, but they are known to cause withdrawal symptoms in many individuals who discontinue their use.⁵⁰

Because of the potential benefits of SSRIs and their relatively low side effect profile, they are ripe for use by individuals who do not meet the diagnostic criteria for anxiety, depression, or any of their off-label therapeutic indications. Some of the documented

⁵⁰ The National Institute of Mental Health, "Anxiety Disorders," 2019, no. March 7 (2018); "Mental Health Medications," updated October 2016, 2016, accessed March 7, 2019, <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/mental-health-medications/index.shtml>; *Antidepressants : Past, Present and Future*, ed. Sheldon H. Preskorn et al. (New York: Springer, 2004); Michael Kotlyar and John P. Vuchetich, "Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitors (SsrIs)," in *Encyclopedia of Behavioral Medicine*, ed. Marc D. Gellman and J. Rick Turner (SpringerLink, 2013).

effects of SSRIs, e.g. decreased inhibition and increased extroversion, are being sought by individuals who are characteristically shy or pessimistic in order to alter their personalities or temperaments. And there is at least some preliminary data to suggest that use of an SSRI like Prozac by healthy human subjects leads to an increase in extroversion and a decrease in some aspects of neuroticism.⁵¹ In another study, sertraline was demonstrated to increase adaptive traits like social charm and interpersonal and physical boldness and decreased maladaptive traits like impulsivity and externalization in persons with MDD.⁵² Might similar effects obtain in members of the population who do not have a psychiatric illness?

As we saw with Peter Kramer's patients Tess, Sally, Philip, and Sam, some 'healthy' individuals report dramatic changes in their personalities when on an SSRI. Within that category of individuals, some, like Tess and Sally, report the change bringing them closer to their true selves while others, like Philip, characterize the change as one of alienation from the true self.⁵³ Given anecdotal reports that label the non-therapeutic use of SSRIs as both authenticity-promoting and authenticity-diminishing, how are we to characterize their

⁵¹ Irena Ilieva, "Enhancement of Healthy Personality through Psychiatric Medication: The Influence of SSRIs on Neuroticism and Extraversion," *Neuroethics* 8, no. 2 (2015).

⁵² Boadie W. Dunlop et al., "The Effects of Sertraline on Psychopathic Traits," *International Clinical Psychopharmacology* 26, no. 6 (2011).

⁵³ It should be emphasized that these are *self*-reports, and as such, they are liable to all of the questions one might raise about the factual reliability of self-report. Self-report of 'feeling authentic' is not the critical judgment for authenticity on my view, but it may nevertheless play a role.

overall effect(s) on authenticity?

3.9.1.2 Mood vs. Personality

In the enhancement literature, SSRIs are cited as being used for both mood enhancement and personality enhancement. It is important to be clear on the distinction between these two different targets of enhancement via SSRIs. Mood is often defined as a frame of mind or feeling-state that is temporary, while one's personality encompasses more stable and enduring characteristics of thinking, behaving, and feeling.⁵⁴ One's tendency toward certain moods can be a feature of one's personality.

Despite this difference in definitions, these concepts share one feature that is important for my discussion. Mood and personality share the commonality of characterizing internal features of an individual while also having external (behavioral) consequences. Someone in a foul mood is more likely to lash out at his loved ones, and someone whose personality includes the trait of friendliness is apt to smile at strangers. It is important to keep in mind the core internal features of mood and personality as well as their external manifestations because consideration of both will prove important when assessing the impact that use of an SSRI has on authenticity. When assessing whether use of an SSRI for mood or personality enhancement is in accordance with an individual's values, we need to assess not only whether the internal changes it brings about are in

⁵⁴ It is worth pointing out that personality fits into the Target Dimension, whereas values are not entirely in the Target Dimension—they verge into the Response Dimension as well.

accordance with the individual's values but also whether the external consequences that result from the alteration are in accordance with the individual's values.

3.9.1.3 Assessing whether SSRIs for Mood or Personality Enhancement Promote or Diminish Authenticity

In my view, the place to start when determining whether a particular individual's use of an SSRI is authentic is to ask whether the new internal features and their external consequences are in accordance with the individual's values. But already, we need to disambiguate two things.

The first of these is the (perhaps rather obvious) point that my account of authenticity requires⁵⁵ us to make assessments on an individualized basis; this is built into the definition in that the definition defines authenticity in terms of a particular individual's values. This means that we will not be able to make broad-sweeping claims about the impact of a particular intervention on authenticity (e.g. "Prozac for increased extroversion erodes the authentic self!"), which some may see a drawback of my view. While it would certainly be nice to be able to make such broad claims, I think it would be a mistake to think that such a claim could ever be accurate. Indeed, it is surprising that there is *any* account of authenticity that claims to be able to make broad, non-individualized appraisals. When we consider our subject matter, authenticity, our intuitions incline us to think that it is a deeply personal matter. We tend to think of

⁵⁵ With perhaps one exception, which I will address in the third case study.

authenticity as being a very individualized trait, in the same way we think of people themselves as individuals. It is thus a red herring to think that there could be a plausible account of authenticity that accurately characterizes, in detailed and precise terms, what it would be for a large swath of the population to be authentic. As convenient as it might be if such a conception of authenticity existed, I don't think it's reasonable for us to think that it could exist, given the sorts of intuitive commitments we have about authenticity. So while I acknowledge this aspect of my account that some may see as a limitation, I also want to explain that I think this is a necessary feature of a good account of authenticity.

The second thing worth noting at this early stage is that there is an important distinction between an authentic *person* and an authentic *action*. While someone with a track record of performing authentic actions is apt to be an authentic person, the two are completely separable. Performing an authentic action is not sufficient to make someone an authentic person, and a person can be globally authentic while failing to perform an authentic action in any particular situation. Recall my discussion in Chapter Two where I endorsed the Quantitative Majority Standard, which says that an action is authentic if it is true to more values than not. As a corollary to this, I define the term 'authentic person' to mean someone who performs authentic actions more frequently than not. We can assess an action as authentic without necessarily assessing the individual performing the action as authentic, since it may be the case that her performance of inauthentic actions is infrequent. But in order for an individual to be authentic, she must act authentically more

often than not.

What this means for our discussion of SSRIs is that there is a distinction between the *use* of the SSRI being in accordance with a person's values (the action) and the resulting *individual* being in accordance with her values (the person). The act of taking a pill to alter one's personality may be entirely consistent with one's values, but the resulting personality may not be.⁵⁶ When making assessments about authenticity, we need to address both of these. While the outcome of taking an SSRI can be anticipated, it cannot be definitively known.⁵⁷ So a prediction about something promoting authenticity can be wrong. In such cases, we can say that we genuinely expected the intervention to promote authenticity, but that, upon seeing its actual effects, we determined that it did not promote authenticity.

3.9.1.4 More on the 'In Accordance With' Relation

Thinking in terms of using an SSRI for enhancement purposes can help to illustrate what the 'in accordance with' relation designates. X being in accordance with person Y's values is different from X being consistent with Y's values. To see the

⁵⁶ While the distinction between action and person is important, there will be times when, admittedly, the two begin to run together. In the case of taking an SSRI for enhancement, the actual action of taking the pill will be a frequent (e.g. daily) occurrence. The more frequently the action takes place, the less significant the distinction in assessment between authentic person and authentic action will be. As the number of actions being assessed increases, it becomes easier to make an assessment of a person based on the preponderance of evidence emerging from the assessments of the actions.

⁵⁷ Recall my assessment in Section 3.7.2 that Buchanan failed to note this distinction.

significance of this distinction, we can imagine a case where someone taking an SSRI to become more extroverted also experiences some mild side effects (e.g., nausea) as a result of taking the drug. The nausea he experiences is an ‘internal’ outcome of the drug, just as the resultant extroversion is. It is unlikely that anyone values a side effect like nausea, but nausea can very plausibly be *consistent with* one’s values, meaning that the presence or absence of nausea just isn’t a salient consideration going in to the decision of the prospective SSRI user of whether or not to take the drug. The nausea may, of course, get bad enough that he decides that, all things considered, the drug is no longer worth taking, but the question of “is this worth taking?” is not directly related to the ‘in accordance with one’s values’ relation or to authenticity. Nausea can be *evaluated*—one can weigh the extent to which it speaks against taking a drug—while still being neither here nor there in relation to one’s values. But this does not require any statement regarding the relationship of nausea and values. Thus, something can be consistent with one’s values without really having anything to do with one’s values.

The ‘in accordance with’ relation, on the other hand, says something stronger than the ‘consistent with’ relation. For something to be in accordance with one’s values indicates that that something is endorsed by or expressive of one’s values. When we test for the authenticity of an action, my position is that we are testing for whether or not the action is endorsed by or expressive of one’s values. Thus, to assess whether our hypothetical SSRI user’s action of taking the SSRI is authentic, we should ask whether his

actions and their likely or intended consequences (in this case, increased extroversion) are endorsed by or expressive of his values.

But what exactly does it mean for an action to be endorsed by or expressive of one's values? I've already indicated that it is to express something stronger than a mere consistency relation, but what makes it stronger? An action is endorsed by or expressive of one's values when it is performed on the basis of a value that the individual possesses. For an action to be in accordance with an individual's values is not the same thing as saying that an individual values the action. To say that an individual values something is to imply that the individual has an awareness about the fact that she values that something. But we often value things we are unaware of (or that we wish we didn't value), and actions performed on the basis of these sorts of values are still authentic according to my conception. The 'in accordance with' relation captures this.

Thus, the 'is in accordance with one's values' relation captures something that is stronger than saying "is consistent with one's values" but is weaker than saying "is valued."

3.9.1.5 Disentangling your Values from the Values of Others

It would be naïve to assume that the proliferation of interest in mood and personality enhancement has been motivated only by the recent availability of pharmaceutical agents that can alter mood and personality. As Carl Elliott aptly points out, there has been increasing pressure, beginning in the latter part of the twentieth

century, to be happy, outgoing, and enviable.⁵⁸ And as Taylor pointed out a decade before Elliott, self-fulfillment has shifted from a welcome byproduct of life one's life and avocation to something that is deliberately sought out. In more recent years, cultural commentators have pointed to social media as a culprit for making college-age adults feel an increasing pressure towards perfectionism, including the need to appear (and actually be) happy and outgoing.⁵⁹ The simultaneous cultural shifts toward greater unhappiness and greater pressure to appear to 'have it all' makes it little wonder that SSRIs have become popular among those with as well as without psychiatric diagnoses.

This begins to highlight a practical complication with assessing the authenticity of a person or action: How are we to determine, through our own introspection and in our evaluation of others, whether a person is operating from her own values or from the values of an external entity (e.g. parents, friends, society)? Obviously, this determination is consequential, since an individual acting in accordance with *someone else's* values is not authentic on my conception (or on most any other conception).

Although no foolproof formula exists to filter one's own (true) values from the values of society or the values one feels pressured by society to possess, there are some questions that can help to distinguish the values that are truly a person's own from the

⁵⁸ Elliott, *Better Than Well : American Medicine Meets the American Dream*.

⁵⁹ Jane Adams, "More College Students Seem to Be Majoring in Perfectionism," *The New York Times*, January 18 2018; Julie Scelfo, "Suicide on Campus and the Pressure of Perfection," *ibid.*, July 27 2015.

ones that are not:

- 1) Does the value persist regardless of the environment one is in?
- 2) Does the value persist over time?
- 3) Does the value seem to belong, upon honest reflection, to oneself?

Getting affirmative answers to these questions does not, of course, guarantee that the person in question is acting from his values and not someone else's. But these questions do prompt the right sort of thinking about how someone's real values might manifest in ways that values originating from some outside source do not. While I can offer no definitive litmus test here, I do think it is important to point out that it may, in many cases, be difficult to disentangle the values of society from the values that one truly possesses or endorses. In the words of John Donne, no man (or woman) is an island, and even the values that most unequivocally belong to our true selves can have roots in our upbringing or environment. While honest reflection on our motivations can help shed light on the source of the values motivating action, it will not always provide a definitive answer. And this is especially the case for things like mood and personality enhancement, which is so closely tied to feelings of well-being (which many value) and is *also* so likely to have modern-day external pressures point in its direction.

3.9.1.6 Final Remarks

I have raised a number of issues that arise when assessing mood enhancement via SSRIs using my account of authenticity. But what is my final diagnosis of mood

enhancement as it pertains to authenticity? In this section, I will provide a summation—with as much definitiveness as possible—of what we should deem the ‘verdict’ on the authenticity of mood enhancements to be.

First, we have every reason to think that there will be some cases in which use of SSRIs for mood enhancement is compatible with or promotional of authenticity. Theoretically, it seems perfectly reasonable to assume that there will be certain individuals for whom taking an SSRI and the effects brought about—e.g. more assertiveness, less anxiety when in novel situations—allow for them to better live in accordance with their values.⁶⁰ In addition to the theoretical plausibility, we also have good clinical evidence to suggest that there will be cases in which SSRIs are authenticity-promoting (and recall how Buchanan says that this sort of empirical evidence is necessary for a proper evaluation). A number of the patients Kramer describes in *Listening to Prozac* report that they feel more like their true selves when taking Prozac. Self-report is not the critical judgment for authenticity according to my view, but it may be relevant to the extent that it can reliably give us information about an individual’s values. But self-report is not, and cannot be, decisive according to my view without information about values, and the individual’s behavior in relation to those values, also being brought in. And while Kramer does not get

⁶⁰ It should also be pointed out that a mood enhancement could have an occasional authenticity-diminishing effect while still being, on the whole, authenticity-promoting. Recall the Quantitative Majority Standard that I introduced in Chapter Two; we can similarly imagine that an enhancement is authenticity-promoting if it promotes authenticity more often than not.

into a discussion of whether *he* thinks self-report in these circumstances should always be treated as authoritative, it stands to reason that at least *some* of the people who report feeling more like their true selves on an SSRI are correct in their assessment.

But Kramer's discussion also makes another thing clear: use of SSRIs as enhancements will not *always* be compatible with authenticity. We can look again to his patients Philip and Sam to see testimonials of people who, though cognizant of the fact that Prozac improved their lives in certain ways, nevertheless despise the medication because they no longer feel like themselves. Again, we can raise the possibility that their self-reports of authenticity document perceptions and not necessarily facts, but it seems reasonable to take their protestations at face value, especially since they are perceptive enough to recognize that Prozac *has* benefited them in significant ways.

Recall that I said we should not equate "Y is in accordance with X's values" with "X values Y." For something to be in accordance with your values does not require that you (explicitly) value that something. Recall also the distinct but related point from Chapter Two that an individual can possess values—and possess them robustly—without those values being readily apparent to that individual. What are we to make of these points vis-à-vis the authenticity of using SSRIs as mood enhancements?

The fact that an individual's values may be inscrutable to her does not bar her from possibly becoming more authentic on SSRIs.⁶¹ But it would seem that anyone deliberately *aiming* to become closer to her true self by taking an SSRI would have to have some minimal degree of self-awareness in order to be able to determine that the use of this type of enhancement is even a viable candidate for this purpose. Self-awareness, then, would seem a boon to anyone hoping to come closer to, or at least not stray from, her authentic self. Developing capacities for self-awareness or self-reflection⁶² will help someone using a mood enhancement to be able to decide whether taking an SSRI will be in accordance with her values and/or will have effects that promote her authenticity. 'Ownership' of one's authenticity seems to require that one have some awareness of her values. And there is even evidence to suggest that SSRIs can help with this, at least when taken therapeutically for conditions like MDD or anxiety. It might likewise be the case that the anxiolytic properties of SSRIs can promote users' abilities to become more self-aware, which would in turn promote their ability to deliberately strive for authenticity.

⁶¹ Though the inscrutability of values would certainly call into question the value of self-reporting as the exclusive means of evaluating whether one has become more or less authentic on a drug. In light of this, we can conclude that self-report cannot be the end-all-be-all when assessing authenticity; other things (e.g. other people's observations and perceptions of the individual's values) would need to be investigated further.

⁶² Developing these capacities will *also* help an individual work toward becoming autonomous. Recall that I define autonomy as authenticity + endorsement of one's values. Endorsement of one's values requires, as a preliminary step, that one have an accurate conception of what those values are. And gaining this accurate conception, in turn, requires some minimal level of self-awareness.

Ultimately, it will be difficult to assess whether use of a mood enhancement promotes an individual's authenticity because it can be especially difficult in this domain to disentangle one's individual values from the dominant values of society. Many of the common outcomes of mood enhancements—less inhibition and listlessness, more extroversion and assertiveness—are things valued by our competitive and outcomes-driven Western society. As Carl Elliott has pointed out, it can be very difficult to “[throw] off the oppressive limitations imposed by others, whether they be the government, the establishment, the patriarchy, the church, the rigid dictates of social class, or majority tastes.”⁶³ The fact that this difficulty exists indicates that proper assessment of authenticity will require that we have a reliable way to differentiate the values that truly belong to an individual from those that only appear to.

3.9.2 Cognitive Enhancement (Modafinil and Psychostimulants)

Modafinil (Provigil) is a wakefulness-promoting drug of the eugeroic class. It is prescribed to treat narcolepsy, shift work sleep disorder, and obstructive sleep apnea. Current research indicates that it works by blocking serotonin transporter molecules, though how this mechanism generates alertness and concentration is not well understood. Militaries from various countries have expressed interest in using this drug as a wakefulness aid as an alternative to the amphetamines that have historically been used for this purpose.

⁶³ Elliott, *Better Than Well : American Medicine Meets the American Dream*, 113.

Its propensity for addiction is not well understood, though it has a similar mechanism to highly addictive substances like methamphetamine.

Modafinil is often taken off-label for cognitive enhancement purposes. It has been demonstrated to improve working memory, though there is some evidence to suggest that its benefits may be limited to individuals who are considered 'low performing.' Nonetheless, many people champion it as a safe, reliable cognitive enhancer, one whose use can be promoted precisely because its side effect profile is limited.⁶⁴

Dextroamphetamine-Amphetamine (Adderall) is a central nervous system stimulant of the phenethylamine class that is frequently prescribed to treat Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and narcolepsy. Its mechanism is twofold: first, it works by increasing the activity of the brain's levels of norepinephrine and dopamine. In addition, it triggers the release of additional neurotransmitters (serotonin and histamine). Like modafinil, it is often used off-label as a cognitive enhancer or study aid. In particular, it is very frequently used by college students for enhancement purposes. It is considered addictive when used at high (recreational) doses.⁶⁵

⁶⁴ Veljko Dubljevic and Christopher James Ryan, "Cognitive Enhancement with Methylphenidate and Modafinil: Conceptual Advances and Societal Implications," *Neuroscience and Neuroeconomics* 4 (2015); "F.D.A Data on Modafinil," updated October 2010, accessed March 7, 2019, https://www.accessdata.fda.gov/drugsatfda_docs/label/2010/020717s030s034s036lbl.pdf; "Modafinil," Medline Plus, updated February 2016, 2016, accessed March 7, 2019, <https://medlineplus.gov/druginfo/meds/a602016.html>.

⁶⁵ "Dextroamphetamine and Amphetamine," MedlinePlus, 2017, accessed March 7, 2019, <https://medlineplus.gov/druginfo/meds/a601234.html>; "Amphetamine," accessed March 7, 2019, <https://pubchem.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/compound/3007#section=Top>; L. Cinnamon Bidwell, F.

As mentioned, use of both of these drugs for enhancement purposes is already very common. The enhancement-level doses, when combined with the particular brain chemistries of those using these drugs recreationally, often lead to troubling side effects like heart palpitations, dyskinesia, or seizures.

3.9.2.1 Issues that are Particularly Salient in the Case of Cognitive Enhancements

The issues addressed in the mood enhancement section certainly apply to other cases of enhancement, including cognitive enhancement via agents like stimulants and modafinil. But there are three additional issues that become especially salient in the case of cognitive enhancement. I will address each of these in turn.

3.9.2.1.1 Fairness and Authentic Achievement

A particular type of authenticity that is often discussed in the context of cognitive enhancement is ‘authentic achievement.’ While this version of authenticity is distinct from the type that I am focused on, it will be worthwhile to make this difference explicit and to discuss the ways in which this different stripe of authenticity nonetheless relates to the type that most interests me.

When ‘authentic achievement’ is invoked as a concern about the use of enhancements, it is best understood as referring to an achievement that is worth

Joseph McClernon, and Scott H. Kollins, "Cognitive Enhancers for the Treatment of A.D.H.D.," *Pharmacology, Biochemistry, and Behavior* 99, no. 2 (2011); Matthew D. Varga, "Adderall Abuse on College Campuses: A Comprehensive Literature Review," *Journal of Evidence-Based Social Work* 9, no. 3 (2012).

celebrating. Managing to win a 1600-meter footrace in which all of my opponents are kindergarteners might be an achievement, insofar as I have accomplished something, but it does not seem to be an achievement *worth celebrating*. In a similar vein, some would argue that an achievement attained while taking Adderall is not an achievement worthy of celebration, because it eliminates the effort normally required or it stacks the deck unfairly against any opponents. Means matter to many moral systems, and so some people worry that, by reducing the effort necessary to accomplish a goal, enhancements may make the outcomes of enhanced people's actions cease to be authentic achievements. This worry is often invoked in relation to the use of cognitive enhancements because some philosophers think that the effort that goes into the products of cognitive labor is a large part of what makes such endeavors valuable.⁶⁶ Relatedly, there are often concerns raised about fairness, since many cognitive efforts—writing a prize-winning book, becoming valedictorian—are viewed as competitive and/or zero-sum. Cognitive enhancements are thus seen as cheats or inappropriate shortcuts that enable their users to bypass the rules that govern the endeavor.

Determining whether or not recreational use of stimulants or modafinil by, e.g., college students constitutes cheating is beyond the scope of this dissertation, but a convincing answer will have to rely on more than deferral to current intuitions or attitudes. This concern is nonetheless worth discussing more broadly, because concerns with

⁶⁶ There are some philosophers (e.g. the 'enhancement conservatives') who feel similarly in the case of mood enhancements. Thus, they eschew SSRIs but endorse psychotherapy because of the effort that successful psychotherapy requires.

authentic achievement are often conflated with concerns about authentic actions and authentic people. I suspect that this conflation occurs because authenticity's positive valence is falsely assumed by some people to be inconsistent with negatively valenced terms like 'cheating' or 'unfair advantage' that so often accompany the idea of an inauthentic achievement. But even if we assume that use of cognitive enhancements *does* constitute cheating or the gaining of an unfair advantage, this says nothing one way or the other as to whether or not the use of these enhancements constitutes an inauthentic action or renders the user inauthentic. If someone values being at the top of her class at all costs, then using an enhancement, even if doing so constitutes cheating, is apt to promote her authenticity, since both improved performance and cheating are in accordance with her values. This person exemplifies the Authentic Asshole, as mentioned in Chapter Two, insofar as she lives in accordance with her bad values.

Conversely, *not* using a cognitive enhancement will be inauthentic if an individual who values succeeding with the minimal effort decides to forgo using a cognitive enhancement that is readily available to her. Though cognitive enhancement technologies are especially likely to raise concerns about fairness, cheating, and achievement, these concerns are conceptually distinct from concerns about authenticity. Cheating *can* be inauthentic, as it is when it is in conflict with one's values, but it is not necessarily so.

3.9.2.1.2 Enhancement of Children

In all of my discussion thus far, I have been focusing on authenticity and

enhancement of adults. But what can be said about the role of enhancements on authenticity in children?

While this discussion could be made in reference to many different types of pharmaceutical intervention, I place it in the section on cognitive enhancers because of the high number of children who take stimulants like Adderall in response to their diagnosis of ADHD.⁶⁷ In addition to the worries that some have about the drugs' role on brain development and socialization, some people, like Ilina Singh, have conducted empirical research to evaluate the perceptions that parents of medicated children have about the role stimulants have on their children's authenticity. Singh concludes that "[p]arents' definitions of authenticity shift according to what parents value in particular contexts."⁶⁸ They tend to view stimulants as authenticity-promoting during the week, when focusing on schoolwork is important, but as authenticity-compromising on weekends, when focus and academic performance are less important. In light of this, Singh rejects the claim that authenticity is a static norm.

Empirical investigations like these have an important role to play as we seek to determine how desires for authenticity relate to and compete with other desirable ends in

⁶⁷ The C.D.C. estimates that, in 2014, 11 percent of U.S. children were taking stimulant medication, up from 3 to 5 percent in 1990. See Casey Schwartz, "Generation Adderall," *The New York Times Magazine*, October 12, 2016. And given the increasingly competitive nature of even the lower grades of education, we can imagine parents whose children do not have ADHD being interested in giving them the drug to enhance their academic performance.

⁶⁸ Ilina Singh, "Will the 'Real Boy' Please Behave: Dosing Dilemmas for Parents of Boys with ADHD," *The American Journal of Bioethics* 5, no. 3 (2005): 45.

children's lives. But it is worth stepping back and asking, in theoretical terms, whether it even makes sense to speak in terms of authenticity when talking about young children.

Since I define authenticity in terms of an individual's values, whether or not a person can even be authentic depends on whether or not she has values that can be considered truly her own. Recall that in Chapter Two, I discussed through the lens of developmental psychology the way that one comes to have values. As young children, we are taught right and wrong in such a way that we first do the right thing because we are told to do it; it is only later that we come to see the right thing as something that is good in and of itself. Young children share their toys because they are instructed to do so or threatened with consequences for not doing so; it is only as they mature and advance in their moral development that they are able to actually *value* the practice of sharing.

A child who does the right thing because he has been told to do so cannot really be said to possess the relevant value that, for an adult, would internally motivate the same action. As a result, we cannot attribute moral values to children in the same way that we can adults.⁶⁹ This, in turn, limits a young child's ability to be authentic. This is not to say that young children are by default inauthentic; rather, I mean to say that the terms

⁶⁹ Some may object to my claim that young children do not have the capacity to value, citing such things as a child's preference for new crayons over old ones or cupcakes over broccoli. I concur that children can have preferences for certain things and that they can desire some things more than others. But preferences and desires are distinct from values, as values require a reasons-based justification that preferences and desires do not require. And it is this reasons-based component that I am saying young children do not possess.

‘authentic’ and ‘inauthentic’ are not properly applied to young children.

What, then, does this mean for children whose parents might be tempted to administer a medication to them for enhancement purposes? Enhancement cannot be said to promote *or* diminish young children’s authenticity, because authenticity is just not a relevant feature of people who have not lived long enough to have developed a true self. However, this should not be taken to suggest that use of enhancement technologies on children is therefore recommended or unproblematic. There are a number of factors to weigh when deciding whether use of an enhancement is appropriate for *anyone*; the enhancement’s effect on authenticity is but one point of consideration.

3.9.2.1.3 Inconsistencies in Classification

Cognitive enhancement via psychopharmaceuticals is also uniquely suited to highlight the inconsistency in how we classify interventions. For all the moral outrage that cognitive enhancements like Adderall and modafinil can elicit, there is a ubiquitous cognitive enhancer that does not anything like the same degree of moral consternation: coffee.

As with the prior discussion, it is not my aim to diagnose the source of the inconsistency or to provide a way that we might overcome it. But it is nonetheless worth pointing out and discussing because the obvious inconsistency in the treatment of caffeine vs. more newly discovered cognitive enhancements is illustrative of the more general point that opponents of enhancement often seem keen on avoiding: our lives are already

permeated by instances of non-controversial enhancement, with coffee perhaps the most widespread example. This phenomenon in part explains my preference, mentioned earlier in this chapter, for speaking in the broader terms of ‘intervention’ instead of enhancement when discussing the relationship between authenticity and substances or practices aimed at improving an individual. An intervention need not be a paradigmatic case of enhancement in order for it to have an impact on one’s authentic self—drinking a coffee may not be in accordance with one’s values, for example, because it makes one feel anxious or because is not ethically sourced—and so speaking in terms of ‘intervention’ allows us to avoid implying that it is only things deemed *enhancements* that can render an individual either more or less authentic.

3.9.2.2 Final Remarks

In the previous sections, I have flagged several issues that become particularly salient when we talk specifically about cognitive enhancement. But what can be said more generally about how cognitive enhancements impact the authenticity of their users?

Although authenticity of achievement is completely distinct from the type of authenticity that concerns me in this dissertation, there is a robust connection between the two. This is because authenticity of achievement is very likely to bear on the authenticity that I have been focusing on when it comes to making assessments about the authenticity of cognitive enhancement. Authentic achievement (and the related concept of fairness) are closely related to the values of honesty and respect of rules, and many people possess these

values. Because so many people have these as values, whether or not cognitive enhancement is authentic for many individuals will depend on whether or not the use of cognitive enhancement is consistent with them. If it turns out that cognitive enhancements are *not* consistent with fairness, then use of them will not be authentic for these people because their use will not be in accordance with the user's values. Furthermore, the achievements one accomplishes on these drugs will not be worth celebrating because fairness is a prerequisite for achievements worth celebrating. And we can know these things before even exploring the nitty-gritty of how in particular these drugs affect particular users.

But note that even for people who possess the value of honesty, fair play, or respect for rules, cognitive enhancements will likely only violate those values *in certain circumstances*. Many of these circumstances (e.g. formal sports) will be arenas where cognitive enhancements are already banned precisely because they are believed by the rule-setters to violate fairness or the terms of fair play. Some other situations will be more ambiguous. For example, are there 'fair play rules' when it comes to college exams? Sometimes the performances of classmates impact an individual's grade (like in cases of grading done on a curve) and sometimes it does not (like in cases where the percentage you get is the grade you get, regardless of how other people performed). There are likely to be situations in which use of cognitive enhancements would be inauthentic for most people because of the

widespread endorsement of values like honesty and fairness. But there will be situations in which it will be unclear whether use of cognitive enhancements violates these values.

Irina Singh's research on the perceptions of children taking stimulant medication for the treatment of ADHD helps to make clear that concerns about authenticity and medicine are not just limited to the category of enhancement. There are, of course, plenty of reasons why stimulant medication might be a prudent choice for a child with ADHD, and even if a child feels inauthentic on the medication, it may still be important, all things considered, for him to remain on it. But I do want to suggest that children's reports of feeling inauthentic on stimulant medication *should* be taken at least as seriously as complaints about any other (more 'physical) side effect. As I hope to have made clear through this dissertation project, authenticity is not the ethical end-all-be-all when making decisions about what is permissible or impermissible, good or bad. But this does not mean that concerns about feeling inauthentic should be outright dismissed, either. I fear that the measurable 'values' of these medications that help an individual be competitive in this world (e.g. increased ability to sit still, higher grades) will be disproportionately weighted against some of the negative side effects that, while not as directly related to 'making it' in society, are nonetheless significant, both morally and psychologically.

Finally, I can say a bit more about the discrepancies in classification between substances like coffee and substances like Modafinil. I do think that this discrepancy puts pressure on those who are worried about the authenticity of cognitive enhancement to

explain why coffee is innocuous and Modafinil vis a vis authenticity. There are, of course, plenty of reasons *not* related to authenticity for deeming use of Modafinil as an enhancement much more worrisome than use of coffee (e.g. safety, legality). But it seems difficult to justify any principled distinction between coffee and Modafinil along the lines of their effects on authenticity. And I think the burden of proof rests on those who claim that there is a difference in the authenticity-altering effects of coffee and Modafinil to articulate what that difference is.

3.9.3 Moral Enhancement

There is one final consideration I would like to address, and this will be aided by the discussion of a third type of enhancement: moral enhancement.⁷⁰

Moral enhancement has been extensively discussed in the literature, despite its currently hypothetical status as a viable type of enhancement.⁷¹ While there are a number of philosophers who argue that we *should* enhance our moral capacities if given the chance, there is not currently any biomedical intervention being used for this purpose.

Nevertheless, it is an option that may be on the horizon, and so anticipatory discussion of

⁷⁰ In this section, I am talking specifically about the *biomedical* moral enhancements that have been theorized and discussed. There may of course, be categories of moral enhancement that aren't biomedical in nature, but they do not concern me here.

⁷¹ See, e.g., John Harris, "Moral Enhancement and Freedom," *Bioethics* 25, no. 2 (2011); Christoph Bublitz, "Moral Enhancement and Mental Freedom," *Journal of Applied Philosophy* 33, no. 1 (2016); Ingmar Persson et al., "Should Moral Enhancement Be Compulsory? Reply to Vojin Rakic," *Journal of Medical Ethics* 40, no. 4 (2014); Thomas Douglas, "Moral Enhancement," *Journal of Applied Philosophy* 25, no. 3 (2008); Julian Savulescu and Ingmar Persson, "Moral Enhancement, Freedom, and the God Machine," *The Monist* 95, no. 3 (2012).

its advantages and disadvantages is appropriate. I discuss moral enhancement here because it could have an interesting and unique impact on authenticity as I understand it. It is the one broad category of enhancement, of those currently in the literature, about which general appraisals regarding authenticity can be made.

When proponents like Savulescu and Persson speak in favor of moral enhancement, they do so because they believe that moral enhancement will enable us to rewire our moral psychology and alter our moral motivation so as to keep pace with the technological advances we have wrought that have dramatically altered our moral landscape.⁷² There are two ways that moral enhancements might conceivably work, and both potential mechanisms would allow us to draw general conclusions about the authenticity of the enhanced agent.

The first of these mechanisms would be what I term Heighted Motivation. A moral enhancement functioning in this way would preserve the values of the user and not act directly on those values; it would instead act by heightening the motivational pull of those values or by reducing barriers (e.g. laziness, fatigue, fear) that prevent an individual from being motivated to do the things that align with their values. It would seem that a moral enhancement functioning in this way would *always* promote authenticity, since the individual's values are untouched while the propensity to live in accordance with them is

⁷² Ingmar Persson and Julian Savulescu, *Unfit for the Future : The Need for Moral Enhancement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

increased.

But moral enhancements might reasonably operate in an entirely different way. Another way moral enhancement might bring about its anticipated results is through alteration of our selves or our value systems. Indeed, I think that moral enhancements are uniquely positioned to bring about their intended effects through an alteration of the values that the user possesses. Operating under what we might call the mechanism of Values Alteration, these moral enhancements would work by taking an individual's bad or non-optimal values and optimizing them or replacing them with other values that in turn promote the agent's chances of doing the right thing. In this scenario, the new values would be calibrated to whatever the 'right' values are determined to be by those in control of the drug's development.

How might this type of mechanism relate to my conception of authenticity? In my discussions thus far, I have been assuming that mood, personality, and cognitive enhancements alter things other than the user's values.⁷³ But what happens to authenticity when an enhancement alters the precise features of the individual that are the basis for making assessments about authenticity?

This scenario is the most complicated for my account to handle, for while moral enhancement's alteration of one's values might at first seem to bode poorly for

⁷³ Values may, of course, be altered in these cases, but it's not as likely of an outcome compared to moral bioenhancements.

authenticity, it seems plausible that an individual might value having values other than the ones she currently possesses. Recall that in Chapter One I defined the autonomous individual as someone who is authentic (acts in accordance with her values) and also endorses those values. So the case under consideration—a person who uses a moral enhancement in order to obtain values that she values more than her current ones—appears to be a case of someone who is seeking to promote her autonomy. If we assume that, in addition to the moral enhancement helping her gain values that she prefers to her current ones, it helps an individual actually abide by those values, then the moral enhancement would appear to promote both autonomy and authenticity for the future self (but not for the present self).

In the case of someone who does *not* value the alteration of her values, but whose values (and self) are nonetheless altered when she uses a moral enhancement, it would seem that her authenticity is diminished. For if the alteration of her pre-enhancement values is not in accordance with her values, then the new values—even if, upon having them, she does not disavow or dislike them—would not be in accordance with the values she possessed at the time of the alteration. But there is room for reasonable disagreement on this, and the previous scenario, since the outcomes of the assessments will depend on which self (initial or subsequent) you employ in your analysis.

There is a further wrinkle to this discussion: if a Values Altering moral enhancement does a good enough job of altering enough of an individual's values, we may

begin to question whether the enhanced individual is still the same individual as the one before. This is a reasonable question. Because I have defined authenticity as living in accordance with one's values, it is reasonable to question whether an individual whose values have been drastically changed by an exogenous force is really the same individual. There is a trivial sense in which her new values are her values, but they don't really seem to be *her* values; she has not cultivated them in herself or even asked for them to be bestowed to her. This would suggest that not only has the individual's self been transformed into something new, but that her autonomy has also been compromised. Thought about in this way, it would seem that Values Altering moral enhancements will always diminish authenticity. And this is the conclusion I endorse: that moral enhancements that work by altering their user's values will always diminish the user's authenticity. For even if the individual wishes her values were different, and the moral enhancement provides her with those different values, it is hard to feel that a self thus altered is contiguous with the self of the pre-enhanced person.

Thus, the special circumstances of moral enhancement provide us with a category of enhancement about which we *can* make broad generalizations vis a vis authenticity. Depending on the mechanism of action, moral enhancements seem to be singularly authenticity-promoting (in the case of Heightened Motivation) or authenticity-diminishing (in the case of Values Alteration).

3.10 Conclusion

While my discussion has hopefully elucidated some of the issues that we must consider when assessing the impact that biomedical interventions do or don't have on authenticity, I make no claims to have settled the issue definitively. Given the way that I have conceptualized authenticity, this would not be possible. Practical ethics requires that we incorporate empirical data and observation into our assessments, and my account reflects this fact.

My account also brings together some of the true, but partial, insights that are put forth by the enhancement conservatives and enhancement liberals. The enhancement conservatives tend to focus on the *means* of enhancement and base their position on the flaws they find with those means. The enhancement liberals, on the other hand, tend to focus on the positive *outcomes* that biomedical interventions can have on individuals and societies as the basis for their endorsement. As I hope to have illustrated in my discussion, it is important that we consider both means and outcomes when assessing these technologies. Here, I have focused on explaining how both means and outcome matter when assessing the effects these interventions have on authenticity. But analyzing both means and outcome will be important when assessing interventions along other dimensions as well, e.g. safety or impact on societal inequality.

It is also important to point out that these other dimensions, like an intervention's safety or its impact on pre-existing societal inequality, may wind up being more important

considerations than the considerations about authenticity that I have discussed here.

Authenticity is but one consideration (albeit an important one) in the complicated ethical calculus.

Conclusion

How, then, ought we understand authenticity in light of the previous chapters' discussions? As I hope to have made clear, much of the emphasis on authenticity, in both popular culture as well as within philosophy, has been overblown, at least from the ethical perspective. While an authentic individual is minimally morally praiseworthy for being authentic, the primary basis for moral assessment will come not from the authenticity itself but from the values (and their moral valence) that undergird the agent's authenticity.

I also hope my discussion has made clear that prior treatments of authenticity have focused on one component of the concept while failing to paint a complete picture. By understanding authenticity as bi-dimensional, we can better define the concept and better assess agents and their actions.

One consequence of adopting the account that I endorse is that analysis will be even more fine-grained than it is on the other accounts I discussed. In using my account, it will be even more difficult to make any general assessments about whether a particular action, trait, or intervention will be authentic; assessing authenticity will depend on the particulars of an individual (chiefly, what that individual's values are), and so what is authentic for one person may be entirely inauthentic for another. While this consequence of my account may be philosophically inconvenient, it should not be surprising; authenticity is, after all, a deeply personal attribute, and I thus think we should be unsurprised by the fact that it will be hard to make general claims about whether a

particular thing promotes or diminishes authenticity. This applies to discussions about whether or not biomedical enhancement technologies are consistent with authenticity. My position is that we cannot make any general claims about the role these interventions have on authenticity. To settle the question of whether biomedical enhancement technologies have an effect on authenticity, we will have to look at the interventions' effects on individuals in a case-by-case manner.

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Biography

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