

Authenticity: The Cultural History of a Political Concept

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Introduction

Abstract We argue that authenticity needs to be understood as a political concept in its own right, which in turn shapes the meaning of adjacent key concepts such as freedom and justice. Authenticity is deeply implicated in the language of politics, but to explain its significance, we have to look at discourses beyond politics itself, to theology, aesthetics, philosophy, business, and consumer behaviour. Definitions of authenticity are constantly borrowed and adapted, across historical epochs, between opposing political ideologies, and between high culture and popular usage. For every claim to authenticity there emerges a parallel argument debunking it as a myth or mask for illegitimate power. We suggest that such arguments substitute their own authenticity claims, rather than dispensing with the idea completely.

Keywords Authenticity • Ideologies • Political concepts • Sincerity • Decontestation

The language of authenticity is everywhere. Authenticity derives from two component parts, both originating in classical Greek: *auto*—self, and *hentes*—doer. To be authentic is to identify with, or claim ownership of, a narrative of origins, or a sense of original and unadulterated selfhood. To assert or reclaim authenticity is to reject any force or process that separates

or alienates the individual from their true identity, character, or sense of purpose. Objects, too, can be authentic: not only in the sense that they are not 'fake', but also because they, like material culture in general, can enable and facilitate access to authentic experience, in particular moments or in shared social imaginaries across long periods of time. As a political concept, authenticity derives its power from its association with the immediacy of experience and the positive connotations of being 'true to oneself'. In this book, we shall argue that it is, has been, and will continue to be critically important to the political life of the Western world.¹

We see versions of authenticity across history, and this history recurs as the concept is constantly recycled, redefined, and re-appropriated in new ways, to serve a wide variety of ideological purposes. These show little sign of abating: across a variety of discourses, recent years have seen authenticity emerge as one of the most frequent and powerful concepts of our times. At the same time, authenticity is always contested: there will always be voices that claim that what some celebrate as 'authentic' is in fact fake, bogus, and frequently pernicious, by helping to entrench or naturalise illegitimate forms of power or privilege.

Authenticity is rarely studied as a political concept.² Let us take three influential recent surveys of political concepts as examples.³ All three dedicate chapters to concepts that are widely acknowledged as critically important to all political discourse: 'liberty' (or 'freedom'), 'justice', 'rights', and 'democracy'. Some of these authors or editors make the case for the inclusion of other political concepts, too: 'civil society' and 'victimhood' are two examples. Yet not a single one of the 47 substantive chapters across these three books is on authenticity. Why, then, do we insist on the vital importance of this political concept in the face of such widespread, if implicit, opposition? The answer is not only that authenticity matters. It is also, we suggest, that without authenticity, we cannot appreciate the meaning or operation of any of these other political concepts. No political concept operates in isolation. As Freeden has argued, in the real world, political concepts operate in clusters—or what he calls, somewhat controversially, 'ideologies'—which we need to decode morphologically. In other words, the meaning of each political concept depends on its relationship to other, neighbouring or competing, concepts.⁴ So, let us take a closer look at the example of liberty, a concept the political import of which is undisputed. Liberty is widely invoked across a range of ideologies, but the answer to the question 'What is liberty?' would differ between supporters of John Stuart Mill, Karl Marx, or National Socialism, to name but a few.

Each answer would depend, in part, on the kind of life such ideologies would consider appropriate or desirable for human beings to lead. The question about what kind of human existence is to be 'liberated' by the politics of 'liberty' is not incidental to a conceptual history of liberty itself: it is fundamental. In other words: interpretations of liberty are critically dependent upon prior notions of authentic life.

One of our three introductions to political concepts does include a chapter on 'Human Nature', 5 which may point to a similar connection. Human nature is not, however, coterminous with authenticity. As we shall argue in this book, in some instances at least, calls for authenticity may demand that people disassociate from, or transcend, their natural selves or instinctual drives. Such versions of authenticity call for people to embrace new technologies or modes of life that are highly disruptive of established understandings of what it means to live in accord with 'human nature', if by that is meant some pre-modern conception of human life. The demand for authenticity is a demand that one live in accordance with one's 'true' or 'inner' self, but discovering the best version of this self may require the creation of a 'new' man or woman. A demand for authenticity may also be a demand for the particular social, political, and economic conditions necessary to realise a singular conception of authentic life. Or it may involve a demand for the conditions under which each person can find their own pathway to authenticity. There are many ideological varieties of the concept of authenticity, and it is an empirical rather than purely analytical task to discover what forms they take.

Authenticity may be missing from standard anthologies of political concepts, yet it is not an unexplored idea: we merely have to look for such thinking beyond traditional political theory. This is why we have called this study a 'cultural history' of a political concept. We find authenticity discussed most extensively in domains that have important but tangential relationships with politics, conventionally understood. This book, therefore, explores authenticity in such domains as theology, aesthetics, philosophy, business studies, economic production and consumption—but always with one eye on the political. We show that each of these spheres interpenetrates with others, as ways of thinking about authenticity are 'borrowed' across different historical epochs, and travel between different discourses and practices. Authenticity is constantly rearticulated and recoded as it is employed for new ideological purposes—or indeed to be criticised as a dangerous yet persistent 'myth'. Yet, despite repeated exposures as a socially constructed, normatively loaded, and mythic concept,

authenticity retains its ideological power. We contend that it is more important to understand why this is, and how it feeds back into the political realm, than to engage in yet another 'unmasking' of authenticity claims. The continuing pull of authenticity has been noted by Gerson, who writes that: "there are many ways to succeed in American politics, but most of them involve authenticity." He suggests that in modern democracies, voters will often make choices based not on ideological orientation or personal self-interest, but rather on whether those they are being asked to support are seen as *authentic* in terms of their personality, background, and character traits. The early twenty-first century has seen an intensifying valorisation of authenticity in many spheres of life; the rise of the 'authenticity politician', on all sides of the political spectrum is, we shall argue in this book, only one manifestation of this broader trend.

The first half of this book involves a detailed discussion of authenticity in earlier historical periods. Such a long-term perspective is at odds with existing works that treat authenticity as a product of a distinctly modern consciousness, or, indeed, a specific reaction against modernism. Trilling's Sincerity and Authenticity makes this temporal claim explicit.⁷ In his view, both 'sincerity' and 'authenticity' are versions of the maxim 'to thine own self be true', 8 but they are historically distinct. Sincerity is taken to be the older form, marked by an incliminable social dimension. The normative demand of sincerity is that we should 'fit' our self with the social structure that surrounds us, and act out our place in life 'sincerely', i.e., in a way that is predictable to others, and which they in turn can rely upon. The notion of authenticity, in contrast, is seen as a modern invention, foregrounding the connection between outward behaviour and one's inner, authentic self. Truth to this authentic self is imagined in opposition to alienated social conventions. For the modern individual, the Nietzschean assertion of authentic will may require a "ruthless" act to assert autonomy in the face of a society "schooled" in duty and obedience.9

We take issue with such periodisations, on two counts. First, Trilling's demarcation between the (social) act of pre-modern sincerity and the (a-social) act of modern authenticity fails to take into account that modern invocations of authenticity often have a strong collective dimension, too. In many varieties of modern nationalism, for example, the adherence to a collective imaginary of lived authenticity, which is often exclusionary of those outside of the collective boundary, has been a powerful force.¹⁰ Second, authenticity always references history, sometimes in the shape of specific period precedents, sometimes as a broader claim about a lost

original state of existence. This tendency to look to the past to inspire a vision of authenticity against which the present order falls short, is itself as old as the history of human civilisation. This is a conceptual characteristic of authenticity, not just a contingent reaction against modern life.

Authenticity's relationship to a lost past has also been studied by those interested in the European imagination of 'primitive' societies and pre-modern peoples, who, allegedly uncorrupted by the trappings of civilisation, live in harmony with a nature unmolested by human interference. This primitivist quest for authenticity is often portrayed as a form of intellectual colonialism. In Penny's example, Native Americans become the canvas for the projection of European dreams of an authentic life, but only until the point when they articulate their own demands in their own voice, an event which shatters the externally imposed vision of their 'authentic being'. 11 As soon as those who are stylised into bearers of authentic being speak for themselves, the conceit disintegrates. This may explain why symbols of authenticity lifted from the natural world have proved somewhat more resilient, as nature's 'voice' always requires an external interpretation, and its imagined purity is thus less likely to become disempowered by contradictory evidence from the object of authenticity itself (although 'nature' is still open, of course, to contrasting interpretations). Such claims imply that authenticity is always manufactured for instrumental ends, and therefore ripe for deconstructing or unmasking. Some scholars have seen it as their role to inform their readers that landscapes perceived as authentically wild are in fact the products of human intervention, or that handcrafted products venerated for their authenticity are in fact kitsch invocations of a past that never really existed. 12 What is less often acknowledged is that the objective to unmask and thus politically disarm the language of authenticity often relies, in turn, on an alternative conception of authenticity.

Adorno's Jargon of Authenticity provides a classic example of this dilemma. This influential essay by the German post-war critical theorist has been widely read as exposing affinities between the concept of authenticity and fascism (or proto- or post-fascism). Adorno attacked a particular version of authenticity: the valorisation of Eigentlichkeit (the quality of being in and of itself) and Echtheit (the quality of being genuine), which he traces back to the philosophy of Heidegger and his followers. The alleged hollow, universalising pathos of this language, for Adorno, was implicated in the failure of post-war German political culture to tackle the challenges of the Nazi past. Adorno sought to unmask this language as a

deceptive jargon, but he did so by insisting on a distinction between Eigentlichkeit and Authentizität, where the latter is not only exempted from the critique, but actually forms a cornerstone of his own, alternative conception. In his writings on musical aesthetics, the difference is clear. Here, Adorno distinguished between deceptive "gestures of authenticity", as employed by composer Stravinsky (which, in Adorno's view, merely imitate the outward appearance of authenticity, and thus remain ultimately inauthentic), and Schönberg's music that, in addressing the "requirements of the matter at hand [with] its eyes shut, gains true authenticity [Authentizität]". Authenticity as something that has to be intuitive and intrinsic, not self-conscious and instrumental, also underpins Adorno's definition of authentic works of art as "historical chronicles of their epoch without consciousness of that role". 14 Adorno's polemic is thus a typical example of contrasting one's own understanding of authenticity with the 'disingenuous' use of authenticity by philosophical or political opponents, who employ it instrumentally and for rhetorical effect. But it also shows the limitations of such critiques, which rely on an implied 'real' version of authenticity in order to unmask 'false' invocations.

These claims are also articulated in a variety of vocabularies, and it is worth insisting here on the concept/word distinction. 15 We are interested in articulations of the concept of authenticity, and not merely in uses of the word itself. While the use of the word authenticity will almost certainly indicate the presence of the concept, the inverse is not true. There are many languages of authenticity, and we are interested in any discourse that suggests that there is a genuine, uncorrupted, real, unspoilt form of human life, or form of existence, whether or not the word authenticity happens to be deployed. This is important, as the language that is used to express ideas about forms of existence that are somehow 'true' to an essence does vary across time and place, even when, on our interpretation, these different registers are referring to the same concept. 16 By employing a wide conception of the language of authenticity, we hope to achieve two ends. First, we want to demonstrate that authenticity is integral to arguments from across different historical periods and within a wide range of different political milieus. Second, we want to explain this ubiquity, not just uncover it. We suggest that authenticity plays a particular conceptual role in a range of different ideologies and belief systems, notably to ground politics in the experiential dimension of life. In doing so, authenticity is both subject to, and a mechanism for, what Freeden calls 'decontestation'. 17 To invoke authenticity is to assert that inauthentic

actors or preferences can have no legitimate social space or political representation. It allows people to perceive a particular politics as stable and natural, even if the perception itself is both fleeting and unstable. This strategy is at once exclusive—authenticity is deemed intelligible only to those who share the experience that is its basis—and inclusive, in that authenticity relies on an intuitive appeal: its truths are deemed to be intelligible without recourse to complex theorising or other concepts; they 'speak for themselves', they are common-sense, they express intuitions and gut feelings. Authenticity is certainly a political concept, i.e., a concept that is deeply implicated in authority and power relationships. But to understand it, we need to explore how ideas about authenticity have been constructed and deployed in a variety of cultural settings and practices. Ours is not, therefore, a history of authenticity as promoted by political parties, political institutions, or leading political figures, although some of the examples we explore in this book come from such contexts. We also seek to understand how authenticity is defined in and through the everyday life of citizens, and what the political implications of this might be. Thus, we move beyond authenticity's manifestations in philosophy, political theory, and theology, to include its role in social practices such as consumption activity or the role of leadership in business.

In exploring the role of authenticity in relation to nature, in configuring the relationship between the individual and society, in championing new visions of leadership in business and politics, and in generating and legitimating new consumer practices and experiences, each chapter of this book can be read as a free-standing essay by readers interested in any particular one of these domains. If read in conjunction, we hope the chapters will offer some sense of how different articulations of authenticity have informed one another, across time and space, and how history always plays a part in the production of new definitions. Our chapters therefore take a broadly chronological frame.

In Chap. 2, we begin our account with the narrative of the Fall, and responses to it from within Reform Protestantism, at a time when natural science, with all that it promised in terms of our knowledge of the natural world, was very much on the rise. A vision of prelapsarian life was taken as the epitome of uncorrupted existence, yet the Bible tells us little about life in the Garden of Eden. This in turn allowed early Protestant thinkers a wide latitude in speculating upon the nature of authentic human existence and how we might seek to reclaim, or at least approximate, that condition on this side of the fall from grace. Their answers were diverse and often

conflictual, and they in turn had important implications for the cultural politics of the emerging modern age, including European attitudes to other cultures and civilisations, and, indeed, to parts of their own 'pagan' heritage. This leads on to discussions of nature itself as a repository of authenticity, and as the domain in which human beings can rediscover their own authentic selves: we explore how nature was configured, philosophically, aesthetically, and in material culture, to enable and enhance authentic encounters, and trace this idea of a turn to natural roots into contemporary radical ecology. This idea of achieving authenticity through immersion in nature, we argue, has a long and varied history, and is still very much with us today.

In Chap. 3, we turn to the relationship between the individual and society, and in particular how an individual might render themselves authentic in an inauthentic world. The analysis follows two key strands. The first relates to the influence and reception of Rousseau. Readings of Rousseau to illuminate the social conditions of inauthenticity are common amongst twentieth-century theorists such as Trilling and Berman. What is less common is an analysis of the reception and repurposing of Rousseau's ideas within European society from the late eighteenth century onwards, as those who were inspired by the vision of *Émile*, in particular, sought to create spaces in which they could live out their own understanding of the Rousseauian vision of the authentic life. The second focus of our chapter relates to authenticity as articulated by Existentialists. Their contribution to articulations of authenticity has been particularly profound: both in philosophy, 18 but also, as we explore in Chaps. 4 and $\hat{5}$, in contemporary writing that, on the face of it, has little to do with existential philosophy, such as in management studies and work on consumer behaviour. One example we pay particular attention to is how the philosopher Heidegger and the poet Celan borrowed from one another to develop a particular language of authenticity, and how each of them was motivated in doing so by very different political ambitions, and radically different views of the role and legacy of National Socialism.

Chap. 4 explores the notion 'authentic leadership'. Recent electoral campaigns in the UK and the USA in particular have traded on the appeal of supposedly authentic leaders. We ask what conception of authenticity is at play here, and how the concept of authentic leadership is conveyed to electors and party members. If achieving authenticity requires convergence with the identities as well as the values of follower groups, how does the 'outsider' fare in the authentic leadership stakes? In tracing the

contours of this discourse, we argue that it is deeply entangled with a parallel development in the business world, where the quest for authentic leadership has been invigorated by high-profile scandals and management failures in cases such as Enron, WorldCom, and the Royal Bank of Scotland. While authenticity in leadership is promoted here as a possible antidote to corporate malfeasance, exactly what this means is subject to intense disagreement: does it require being true to one's core values and beliefs, in Rousseauian fashion; is it a process of interactive learning that brings coordination between leader and follower values; a process of 'narrative emplotment'; or is it an application of Sartrean existentialism?

Chap. 5 examines the concept of authenticity in the spheres of mass production and consumption: a field that has frequently been taken to embody alienation and inauthenticity. The commodification of goods, the transformation of 'use value' into 'exchange value' or 'sign value', mass production with global supply chains, corporate advertising: these have all been taken as evidence of the deeply alienated nature of capitalist consumption. Yet recent work on 'subcultures' or 'communities' of consumption have focused on the ability of consumers to not only consume but also produce meaning, in ways that allow them to affirm a product or an experience as authentic. We explore mechanisms of 'self-authentication', i.e., subjective moments of achieving, or aspiring to, authenticity. Subcultures of authentic consumption, we suggest, can generate complex hierarchies, rituals of initiation, and insider/outsider distinctions that discriminate between 'being' (referring to those who embody and 'live the life' of the subculture) and 'doing' (referring to those on the periphery— 'part-timers' and those who just adopt the looks but not the lifestyle). We come back to the distinction between a 'politics of being' and a 'politics of doing' in the conclusion of this book.

Authenticity offers a conceptual language that renders other political concepts intelligible, and connects political ideas with lived experience. Ideas about authenticity form part of the preconditions for the ideological contestation of other political concepts in political argument. A conception of liberty, justice, or obligation will only make sense if we already have an idea of what a human life is and how it should be lived. At the same time, an insistence on the significance of authenticity often serves to inform a critique of other political concepts, and in particular, the ways in which such concepts have become entangled in political systems, which many people have come to see as the domains of self-interested elites, with whom they feel less and less of a connection. In this book, we do not seek

to prove or disprove any particular articulation of authenticity to be 'true' or 'false'. Instead, we want to draw attention to the many politics of authenticity—and to some of the reasons why authenticity remains a foundational concept in the culture we inhabit, which is unlikely to lose any of its ideological purchase, as long as people ask fundamental questions about the kind of life politics is meant to deliver and enable.

Notes

- 1. We do not argue that there is a singular 'Western' understanding of authenticity: there are significant cultural differences, as well as connections, in the understanding and operation of authenticity within this sphere. Where possible, we have also reflected on how such understandings were informed by, or imagined, non-Western Others. Yet a full-scale global history, which would give equal weight to authenticity in non-Western contexts, such as China or the Indian subcontinent, is beyond the scope of this book: we therefore confine our study to broadly Judeo-Christian cultural contexts, from the early modern period to the present.
- 2. With some exceptions, of course: see M. Berman (2009) The Politics of Authenticity: Radical Individualism and the Emergence of Modern Society, New Edition (London: Verso) [1970]; D. Rossinow (1999) The Politics of Authenticity: Liberalism, Christianity, and the New Left in America (New York: Columbia University Press).
- 3. R. Bellamy and A. Mason (eds) (2010) *Political Concepts* (Manchester: Manchester University Press); I. MacKenzie (ed.) (2005) *Political Concepts: A Reader and Guide* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press); J. Hoffman and P. Graham (2006) *Introduction to Political Concepts* (Harlow: Pearson Education).
- 4. M. Freeden (1996) *Ideologies and Political Theory: A Conceptual Approach* (Oxford: Oxford University Press). See also: C. Geertz, 'Ideology as a Cultural System', in D. E. Apter (ed.) (1964) *Ideology and Discontent* (New York: Free Press). We concur with Freeden's view that ideologies are best understood as structured arrangements of political concepts, although we do not analyse ideologies *per se* here.
- C. J. Berry (2005) 'Human Nature' in I. MacKenzie, Political Concepts, 404–32.
- 6. M. Gerson (2014) 'The Power of Authenticity', *Washington Post*, 26/6/14 https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/michael-gerson-the-power-of-authenticity-in-politics/2014/06/26/12d4e9f8-fd5d-11e3-b1f4-8e77c632c07b_story.html?utm_term=.675559030d21 (accessed 25/07/2017).

- 7. L. Trilling (1971) Sincerity and Authenticity (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press).
- 8. The words uttered by Polonius to his son Laertes in William Shakespeare's Hamlet.
- 9. Trilling, Sincerity and Authenticity, 131.
- 10. See R. Handler (1986) 'Authenticity', Anthropology Today, 2(1): 2-4, which draws on Trilling when discussing authentic nationalism, but does not comment on the fact that Trilling's sincerity/authenticity dichotomy effectively dissolves in the face of modern, collective forms of authentic being.
- 11. G. H. Penny (2006) 'Elusive Authenticity: the Quest for the Authentic Indian in German Public Culture', Comparative Studies in Society and History, 48(4), 798-819.
- 12. See, for example, W. Cronon (1995) 'The Trouble with Wilderness: Getting Back to the Wrong Nature' in W. Cronon (ed.), Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature (New York: W. W. Norton & Co.), 69-90.
- 13. T. W. Adorno (1964) Jargon der Eigentlichkeit. Zur deutschen Ideologie (Frankfurt/M: Surkamp), English translation by K. Tarnowski and F. Will (1973) The Jargon of Authencitiv (Evanston: Northwestern University Press).
- 14. T. W. Adorno (1949) Philosophie der neuen Musik, quoted from S. Knaller and H. Müller (2010) 'Authentisch/Authentizität', in K. Barck et al. (eds), Ästhetische Grundbegriffe, vol. 7, Supplemente, 40–65 (Stuttgart: J. B. Metzler), 56.
- 15. For some reflections on this, see G. Sartori (1970) 'Concept Misformation in Comparative Politics', American Political Science Review, LXIV (4), 1033-53.
- 16. Berman, too, uses "the word 'authenticity' to designate a whole family of aspirations and ideals which are central to the cultural life of our age. But my choice of the word was rather arbitrary; so many others might have done as well. 'Identity', 'autonomy', 'individuality', 'self-development', 'self-realization', 'your own thing': our vocabulary overflows with expressions which express a persistent and intense concern with being oneself." M. Berman, The Politics of Authenticity, xxiii. Berman's own language of and synonyms for authenticity are as rooted in time and place as any other, in this case the New York of the late 1960s and the rise of the counterculture and the New Left.
- 17. Freeden, Ideologies.
- 18. See for example: F. Nietzsche (2003) Beyond Good and Evil (London: Penguin) [1886]; M. Heidegger (1962) Being and Time (Oxford and Malden, MA: Blackwell) [1927]; J.-P. Sartre (1956) Being and Nothingness

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(New York: Pocket Books) [1943]; S. de Beauvoir (2010) *The Second Sex* (London: Vintage) [1949]. For a discussion of Nietzsche and authenticity, see J. Golomb (1990) 'Nietzsche on Authenticity', *Philosophy Today*, 34(3), 24–58. For de Beauvoir, C. B. Radford (1965) 'The Authenticity of Simone de Beauvoir', *Nottingham French Studies*, 4(2), 91–104.

The Nature of Authenticity, and the Authenticity of Nature

Abstract The idea that an authentic life is one lived in, or according to, 'nature' is a common and recurring theme in Western traditions of thought. We begin here with the account of the Fall in early modern Protestantism, and look at how both natural science and the creation of botanical or landscape gardens were conceived as a route to at least partial redemption. Landscape gardens in turn reproduced landscape painting, as 'nature' was rendered in idealised form in order to provide a truly authentic and immersive experience. We then examine pre- and non-Christian sources for framing authentic life in nature—'noble savages' and pagan rites, as well as the idea of 'wilderness' and its importance for the contemporary radical ecology movement.

Keywords The Fall • Garden of Eden • Botanical garden • Landscape • Wilderness • Noble savage • Radical ecology

My great passion is outdoor pursuits, which I undertake mainly on my own, hill walking, kayaking and deep sea ocean sailing. Once I leave land on an ocean passage outside of any territorial waters I'm nearly completely free of any outside human influences [...]. Why? Because I feel totally free psychologically, I know it's only me and the ocean, and my small sailing boat. Force of nature is the only interaction I have. And if forces of nature are against me, and block my desired course, then I have a choice to change course and use that force of nature to my advantage.

This is one of many thousands of comments which online learners from all over the world contributed to the 2015 iteration of a 'massive open online course', or MOOC, on Propaganda and Ideology in Everyday Life.1 The course was co-produced by the authors of this book and curators from the British Library, and is hosted annually on a free digital platform. Structured around five key themes-freedom, justice, community, place, and consumption—for five weeks every year, learners discuss twenty-five individual learning steps, and upload their own images to illustrate what these political ideas mean to them. A detailed analysis of these comments has revealed, above all, that to many of these learners, who collectively number over 20,000 to date, political ideals appear real or authentic when they can be imagined intuitively, and are experienced in correlation with, or as an extension of, personal experiences of 'freedom' in nature. ² The uploaded images on the MOOC confirm the same pattern. Learners selected images, sometimes personal photographs or drawings, sometimes images sourced from the internet or newspapers, which embodied their imagination of a political idea: but a striking number of these images featured nature. They showed individuals enjoying nature: standing on mountains, flying in hang gliders, watching the sunset over the ocean; or landscapes devoid of any human presence, birds soaring in the sky; one image featured a captive eagle being released back into the wild. The experience of nature, and the ability to discover, or recover, a sense of authentic selfhood in doing so, it seems is fundamental to our imagination of an authentic existence—and a benchmark against which people assess what, in politics, counts as authentic, and what does not.

The question of what it means to live authentically is not a new one. In this chapter, we shall suggest that this question is not just a 'reaction against modernity'; nor is it a reaction against any one specific historical 'crisis'. It has no single historical cause or starting point. Instead, it runs through discourses and practices that cut across historical periods, ideological families, and social milieus. And each time the question is posed, it draws on pre-existing articulations of the same question, and pre-existing answers that have been given: these are re-coded, re-cycled, made to fit new agendas. In this chapter, we shall explore some instances of this, not in order to offer a comprehensive account of the relationship between authenticity and nature: that would be impossible. Instead, we hope to illuminate some of the mechanisms whereby the concept of authenticity has been associated with nature, and how this association moved across

discourses and material practices that are normally considered in isolation from one another. To understand these connections, two questions need to be understood as closely interrelated: the question about what it is to be an authentic human being, who behaves 'naturally', and the question of how to recapture a sense of living in an authentic, 'natural' environment, in a world when most of our social and 'natural' environments have been heavily shaped by human interventions. What connects these questions is a strong sense that, for a variety of reasons, humanity has, fully or partially, lost access to this authentic natural state, and that people in the present, individually or collectively, strive to regain access to this condition.

The vision of the prelapsarian life of Adam and Eve runs across the Abrahamic traditions, and finds its fullest expression in Western Christianity, and, within that, in Reform Protestantism in particular. This is not the first or only account of lost innocence and the subsequent corruption of authentic states of being. But it is one that has been worked and re-worked persistently within Western culture. However, it is not, and never has been, a self-contained tradition. Even within predominantly Christian cultures, attempts to reflect on, and indeed recover, a vision of lost authenticity often draw on pre- and non-Christian ideas and traditions. For example, ideas about authenticity rooted in Christian theology often intermingled with the idea of 'Arcadia' as first defined by classical authors and iconographies.³ Moreover, the sources for this imagination were not confined to theological and philosophical discourse. European overseas exploration and the evolution of colonial imaginaries and practices throughout the early modern and modern periods produced a plethora of textual and pictorial representations of 'exotic' locations as unspoilt paradises, inhabited by 'primitive savages' whose lives were imagined as more authentic than those in the metropole.⁴ Although in the twenty-first century, and in the wake of seminal texts such as Edward Said's Orientalism,⁵ we have become, rightly, more wary of the cultural imperialism inherent in such valorisations of 'the primitive', the idea that cultural traditions and lifestyles found outside 'the West' offer us glimpses into authentic states of being from which we have been alienated continues to exercise a powerful influence onto the imagination of authenticity today. In what follows, we shall explore some of these interconnecting threads, to account for the centrality of nature in the imagination of the authentic life over a longue durée.

THE FALL AND THE RECOVERY OF EDEN: BRINGING HUMANITY BACK TO NATURE

For many centuries, Christian thinkers argued that the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden alienated man from divine Creation, and thus, ultimately, from his (or her) authentic self. The problem was how humanity, on this side of original sin, could recover the harmony with the natural order that we knew in the Garden of Eden. Can fallen humanity find some form of redemption in this world, in addition to that which may be waiting in the next? If so, what are the mechanisms of redemption? This question was complicated by the fact that theological sources rarely spell out what exactly constitutes an authentic life in an authentic nature. The Book of Genesis 1–3 tells us very little about the life of Adam and Eve before the Fall, and there appear to be inconsistencies within it (for example in accounting for when and how woman was created). We are told that the tasks of the first man and woman were to "be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it", and earth has always been taken to have been a land of plenty, where "every plant yielding seed which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food". Adam and Eve are, then, stewards of the Garden, but that stewardship initially takes place in a condition of innocence and lack of selfknowledge, up to the point at which the serpent tempts them to eat from the tree of knowledge. It might be argued that the lack of specificity about life in the Garden of Eden makes the ideological pull it exerts all the more powerful, as it becomes something of an 'empty signifier', 6 whose content can be filled through the preferred imaginaries of those who see it as a valid representation of humanity's original condition.

One example of giving substantive content to prelapsarian life is a view that developed particularly strongly in seventeenth-century English Protestantism: that Adam's knowledge of the natural world prior to the fall was 'encyclopaedic'. This may seem an odd claim: given that the Fall from grace was due to the eating of the fruit of the tree of knowledge, surely prior to that, Adam and Eve were both innocent of knowledge of the natural world? Here a strong contrast is drawn between, on the one hand, moral knowledge and self-awareness of the kind revealed by the fruit of the tree, and on the other, a comprehensive understanding of God's Creation, which can be held in a condition of moral innocence. The tree of knowledge reveals good and evil, shame and guilt, and Adam and

Eve cover up because they are now aware of their own nakedness and the lust they have for each other. Knowledge of the natural order of things may, however, be held while still in a state of moral innocence, and that was the assumption being made by many of these seventeenth-century thinkers. Bacon, for example, wondered whether science might return the human mind to its 'perfect and original condition'.⁷ South preached on 'those intellectual perfections that attended our nature in its time of innocence'. For Calvin, prior to the Fall Adam "was endued with right judgement, had affections in harmony with reason, had all his senses sound and well-regulated".⁸ This view of Adam's perfect knowledge of the natural world is based in large part on his 'naming of the beasts' in Genesis:

And out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought *them* unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that *was* the name thereof.

Bacon again: "whensoever he shall be able to call the creatures by their true names he shall again command them". Thinking about the nature of prelapsarian life in the Garden of Eden, and this idealised existence compared with the lot of fallen humanity, was commonplace in seventeenth-century Protestantism. In this context, a good deal more of the 'fleshing out' of this imaginary came with Milton's epic poem *Paradise Lost* (1667), where the account of the Fall of 'Man' in the Garden of Eden is transformed from the brief discussion in Genesis 1–3 into more than ten thousand lines of verse. Milton's description of Eden comes in book IV, where, as Stoll reminds us, in a "passage frequently quoted at length, Milton set the scene" 10:

And country, Whereof here needs no account. But rather to tell how, if art could tell, How from that sapphire fount the crispèd brooks. Rolling on orient pearl and sands of gold. With mazy error under pendant shades. Ran nectar, visiting each plant, and fed. Flow'rs worthy of Paradise which not nice art. In Beds and curious knots, but nature boon. Poured forth profuse on hill and dale and plain, Both where the morning sun first warmly smote. The open field, and where th' unpiercèd shade.

Embrowned the noontide bowers. Thus was this place. A happy rural seat of various view,
Groves whose rich trees wept odorous gums and balm,
Others whose fruit burnished with golden rind.
Hung amiable: Hesperian fables true,
If true, here only, and of delicious taste.
Betwixt them lawns, or level downs, and flocks.
Grazing the tender herb were interposed,
Or palmy hillock or the flow'ry lap.
Of some irriguous valley spread her store —.
Flow'rs of all hue, and without Thorn the Rose....¹¹

This, then, was the bucolic, pastoral setting in which humanity had lived in its first incarnation, and within which humanity had all too briefly enjoyed its authentic relationship with both God and nature.

One answer the question of how a fallen humanity, mired in original sin, could find its way back to something approaching our prelapsarian life came through the notion that the Garden of Eden, the cradle of all creation, could itself be reassembled, or at least approximated, on this side of the Fall, and that this environment would allow humanity, for all the stain of original sin, to reflect upon the nature of existence and glimpse something of the innocence and virtue that came before the Fall. This is where natural science first emerged not just as a theoretical, but as an applied method for reconstituting the experience of authentic being. In the Renaissance, it was a common belief that the combined effects of the Fall and then the Great Flood had led to a scattering of the unity of Creation across the globe. Botany could be employed to re-assemble the scattered flora (and sometimes also fauna) in a perfect order that would provide physical access to the experience of the original wholeness of authentic nature. The botanical garden was the three-dimensional realisation of that idea, which would restore the wholeness of Creation itself, and thus become a gateway back into a spiritually authentic existence. The creation in the early modern period of elaborate botanical gardens drew on the 'four quarters' design represented the four corners of the earth, later systematised as the four continents of Europe, Asia, Africa, and America. As Prest has argued, the purpose of such gardens was not just scientific: ultimately, they offered a glimpse of Redemption, and thus the end of inauthenticity. 12

This practice was re-invigorated by the opportunities to study nature on a global scale that were thrown up by European imperial exploration. One important product of this process was the scientific botanical garden

at Kew, created in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, which both benefitted from and provided a rationale for British scientific exploration and colonial expansion.¹³ Scientific botany was here configured not as an antithesis to an authentic experience of nature, but rather, as a way of re-capturing the authenticity that real landscapes had already lost due to human manipulation. Like the Renaissance botanical garden, Kew (re-) assembled the flora of different continents in a perfectly ordered space, but this sense of order was now rooted in the authority of modern natural science. Botanical gardens such as this one were, however, not just a representation of this idea: they were also devices to render this experience accessible, to translate an idea into a lived experience. Hence, Kew's accessibility to the public was a crucial step in naturalising such beliefs as common-sensical. To experience the totality of Creation, one no longer had to traverse the globe: a stroll through a single, organised space would offer the same experience, consciously or unconsciously intertwined with the promise of Redemption. Other eighteenth-century gardens, such as Wörlitz in Germany, mapped similarly global or cosmopolitan re-creations of the world in different ways, for example by linking progress through the garden to journeys of world exploration.¹⁴ Making such global imaginaries of authentic nature restored was not just an intellectual exercise. The significance of gardens in making such processes visible is that it also made the materially accessible. This 'access' to nature in its supposedly original form in a single space is a key component of the ideological imaginary that is authenticity of nature. Nature's mere existence does not suffice: to become ideologically useful, this nature has to be experienced, by an individual (even if that individual is part of a group), and within a relatively short time-span that can be construed as a single experience.

Here, as in many other instances, aesthetics played a key role in translating such philosophical conceptions of authenticity into liveable experience. In the quest for a re-constituted authenticity in and through nature, visual and material culture were not just illustrations of preconceived ideas: they were constitutive and integral parts of these imaginaries. At Kew, Wörlitz, and in the many other gardens that were created across Europe in the 'English style' throughout the long eighteenth century, meaning was constituted in the experience of moving through these ideal-typical land-scapes. English landscape garden design rejected both the artifice of baroque architectural gardens and the messiness of the agricultural countryside in favour of interventions that would restore supposedly universal natural forms, such as Hogarth's 'line of beauty', to visibility, and thus

allow them to exercise a powerful effect on the human mind.¹⁵ Yet the significance of such practices cannot be subsumed in the intention of any one creator or designer. As Bending put it: "The significance of the garden lies not only in its major innovators and master practitioners, but in the depths to which it penetrated eighteenth-century culture, the importance it was given as a national art, and the emotional significance with which individuals invested it."¹⁶ Emotion and experience were not just part of the reception history of gardens created in the new, 'natural' style: emotion and experience were deeply implicated in constituting the garden as a site of authenticity in the first place. Bending again:

What makes pleasure gardens such exciting places in this period is that they assume an interplay between reason, imagination and sense [...]. In both garden design and in the responses of individuals to those gardens, the pleasures of the senses could all too often outweigh the more lofty claims of reason. Thus, while theorists and philosophers might insist on the importance of rational pleasure and might champion gardens for their intellectual merit, what marks out the garden's peculiar status [...] is its own insistent physicality, a physicality that cannot be abstracted into pure intellect, a physicality that demands a somatic confrontation with the corporeality of the senses. That clash between body and mind, between the physical and the intellectual was characteristic of pleasure gardens throughout the eighteenth century; but it also represented a challenge for the individual as they considered the use of their time, the nature of leisure, the sense of a moment set apart from their everyday experience of life.¹⁷

Emotions provided routes to access an authentic inner self, and were vital in supplementing logical deduction as a path to (self-)knowledge. In the context of eighteenth-century culture, immersion in different emotional states was conceived as a way of accessing dimensions of the self from which day-to-day life separates or alienates people. As we shall see in the next chapter of this book, the popular cult of Rousseau in particular gave a new impetus to the search for authentic experiences in gardens, and inspired not just a language for its philosophical expression, but also a set of embodied movements and a habitus through which such spaces were transformed into sites for the making of the authentic self. In all these, the connection of authenticity and nature was key: the ideal-typical nature of the landscape garden provided physical access to a lost world of authentic Creation; in doing so, however, it also offered access to an authentic self,

conceived as separate from the self in what Bending calls the "everyday experience of life" in an alienated world.

That is not to say that the eighteenth century invented an entirely new aesthetic framework for configuring the connection of nature, authenticity, and human experience. As with many other material articulations of the idea of authenticity, the aesthetics of eighteenth-century landscape gardens re-cycled and re-appropriated existing symbolic languages and iconographies. In spite of the apparent emphasis on soft natural forms, which contrasted sharply with the straight pathways, clipped hedges, and geometrical patterns in baroque gardens, what landscape gardens staged was an ideal-typical essence of nature, which was self-consciously constructed. To achieve this idealising effect, the aesthetics of such gardens drew on existing traditions of landscape painting, which they translated into three-dimensional designs, conducive to an immersive experience that would involve all senses.

Landscape painting has long acted as a lens through which we perceive nature's ideological form. Like botanical gardens, images of ideal landscapes had long antecedents. In the Christian tradition, flora and fauna, harmoniously arranged, depicted the Garden of Eden or the 'hortus conclusus', which features in the Vulgate Bible's Song of Solomon as the embodiment of a morally pure space, in which the Immaculate Conception took place. From the late medieval period, gardens also began to feature as backdrops for stories, biblical and otherwise, interpreting and enhancing the actions and emotions of the figures in the foreground. Seventeenthcentury European academies, who saw it as their task to classify and regulate cultural production, developed hierarchies of painterly genres, in which history paintings, portraits, and genre paintings featured more highly than pure landscapes: this reflected the fact that landscape stood, in some ways, outside canonical narratives of high culture, civilisation, and progress. Yet it was that very quality that enabled representations of landscapes to assume a special role in representing culture's 'Other', by connecting it with the realm of nature. In the oeuvre of seventeenth-century painters such as Claude Lorrain, the landscape, whilst illustrating historical or biblical narratives, began to take centre stage. 18 The small figures in the foreground provided interpretative clues, as well as a sense of official legitimacy for these images, but the emotional and moral content of the image was conveyed, primarily, by nature itself.

The narratives that take place in such Claudian landscapes intermingled Christian and pagan models: some referenced biblical subjects, other images depicted settings and stories from antiquity—in our example, a scene from Virgil's *Aeneid* (Fig. 2.1). This new genre of *historical landscape* received official recognition in the *Académie française* in 1817. And yet, the term *historical landscape* is somewhat misleading. For these were neither realistic landscapes, nor realistic historical scenes. Instead, Claude and those who followed him depicted archetypal stories that were set in ideal landscapes, which in turn owed much to the sacro-idyllic landscapes of classical Greek and Roman frescoes. The landscape setting did not just frame the action: it elevated it to an ideal type, and dramatised both spiritual anguish and the prospect of redemption.

Such paintings exercised a powerful influence on how people encountered natural settings. Famously, in the eighteenth century, European tourists often carried a 'Claude glass', through which one could frame a picturesque vista in the classical 'landscape format', and also change its colour scheme, to better resemble Claude's paintings. But landscape gardens themselves re-cycled Claudian aesthetics, in their quest to create a nature that was more 'authentic' than what could simply be glimpsed in



Fig. 2.1 Claude Lorrain (1672) Landscape with Aeneas at Delos, National Gallery, London. Public domain

the countryside. Ideal landscape paintings such as Claude's provided the visual template for the creation of new landscapes which supposedly rendered human intervention invisible, and represented an 'authentically natural' nature to the human eye. The example in our image (Fig. 2.2), the famous English garden at Stourhead, contains numerous vistas that were directly modelled on Claude's paintings, in this case, the *Landscape with Aeneas at Delos.*¹⁹

In doing so, landscape gardens, seemingly designed to facilitate encounters with an authentic nature freed from the artifice of formal gardening, imported powerful theological and philosophical undercurrents into this project. Painterly, or picturesque, aesthetics that framed the appearance of nature would enhance its authentic properties, and mobilise them for the benefits of individual experience and spiritual development. During the eighteenth century, philosophers and educators wrote extensively about the beneficial effects of human encounters with nature, in these ideal-typical forms, which would not only be a source of pleasure, but had the capacity to render those who experienced these pleasures into more authentic beings. The Earl of Shaftesbury, one of the leading moral philosophers of the early English Enlightenment, suggested that gazing upon



Fig. 2.2 The Landscape Garden at Stourhead, Wiltshire (Photo by Maiken Umbach)

the harmonious balance of natural forms would serve to redress imbalances in the mind of modern, civilised man, and thereby exercise a healing influence upon the soul. But this unadulterated nature, to Shaftesbury's mind, was best observed in its idealised form of the landscape garden.²⁰ But, of course, such strategies were never entirely controlled by their creators' intentions, nor by the commentary of Enlightenment educators and moral philosophers. By placing individual experience at the heart of what it meant to re-constitute an authentic encounter with nature in a world corrupted by the consequences of the Fall, the landscape garden opened the door to a plethora of competing experiences and ideas of pleasure: a move that rendered the political meaning of such practices infinitely more complex and less predictable, but in doing so, also decisively contributed to translating an elevated theological and moral quest into a popular practice.²¹

Noble Savages and the Pagan Other

The ideas and images we have explored so far provided a rich repository, from which a range of competing modern constructions of nature as a realm of authenticity have liberally re-cycled and re-appropriated discursive and pictorial tropes. A number of so-called 'reform movements' swept Europe and American in the decades around 1900. They drew their supporters from across the political spectrum, but shared an ambition to find a more authentic life through a renewed engagement with the natural environment. Attempts to re-gain an authentic way of being by returning to nature could be focused on the making or consumption of different food, different dress, or the adaptation of a different habitus (most conspicuously, in nudism or naturalism); some endorsed a physical re-location of entire communities into supposedly untouched natural environments, and founded artists' colonies, utopian settlements, and other natureseeking intentional communities in landscapes that were seen or imagined as ideal-typical representations of nature's essence or animating principles. Most of them produced leaders or theorists who not only published extensively on the practical benefits of such 'reforms', but also elaborated complex alternative ideologies.

Modern scholarship has often dismissed such movements as escapist, a product of fin-de-siècle cultural pessimism, grounded in a failure to cope with life in the modern world.²² While historians such as Buchholz et al.²³ acknowledge the diversity of ideological currents with this turn to nature,

they also point out that most of these experiments floundered within short time-spans because of contradictory or unrealistic aims, which were fundamentally at odds with the realities of modern civilisation. This is certainly true for some of the more radically utopian experiments. But focusing on these detracts from the fact that the impulse to seek authenticity by reconnecting with idealised conceptions of nature extended well beyond small groups of dedicated enthusiasts, and transformed mainstream discourse, and political practice. Recent cultural history writing has revealed that those who led the quest for a 'reform' of modern life through recourse to a natural realm imagined as a carrier of authenticity were not overwhelmingly anti-modern radicals bent on the destruction of complex forms of urban civilisation.²⁴ More typically, they were ordinary, city-dwelling, middle-class Europeans who looked to nature as a resource for improving and enhancing individual and communal experience, and for negotiating the challenges of modernisation rather than escaping from them. What is significant, then, is not, or not primarily, that some individuals sought authentic ways of communing with nature outside the parameters of modern life, but how many people engaged with imaginaries of the authentic life through opportunities to enact different lifestyles, as hobbyists and fans, in order to translate ways of communing with authentic nature into the fabric of their life inside civilisation and modernity. Looking to nature as a vehicle for restoring a lost sense of authenticity was not, or at least not predominantly, about a narrative of rejecting the present to return to pure origins: more typically, it was seen as a partial corrective to the present, to be experienced and cherished in that present, which held the promise of restoring a dimension to human life and experience that life in modern cities could not cater for.25

A similar debate surrounds notions of authenticity that were expressed in the popular veneration for foreign civilisations that were believed to have preserved the authentic bond with nature better than Western civilisation. These were grounded in an eighteenth-century imagination of 'noble savages', inspired by real or imaginary encounters with colonised peoples or those who became objects of anthropological interest due to European colonial exploration.²⁶ But in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, they entered popular culture on an unprecedented scale. Huge fan communities emerged around the veneration of 'natural peoples' such as the American Indians glorified in Karl May's popular stories about the 'Wild West', the South Sea Islanders painted by Gauguin, or the New Zealand Maoris glorified as the Vikings of the South. Such views provided

ideological ammunition for a variety of projects, from commercial exploitation to Nazi racial theory. Yet it is important not to mistake such any one appropriation for the ideological trope itself. As Penny has demonstrated for the German venerations of American Indians, the idolisation of authentically 'natural peoples' persisted across radical political breaks, and ranged widely across different ideological milieus, attracting supporters amongst conservatives, progressives, communists, Nazis, and democrats alike.²⁷

Beyond the Christian striving to overcome the consequences of original sin, these reform movements drew inspiration from the classical imagination of 'Arcadia', which has formed a powerful undercurrent in Western thinking about the relationship between nature and the authentic life. Arcadia, a province in ancient Greece, was imagined as a domain where life was lived naturally, uncorrupted by civilisation. In one of the first systematic analyses of the trope in iconic literary and philosophical texts in the medieval and modern periods, Curtius described it as a locus amoenus, literally, a pleasant place, or a place of pleasure.²⁸ Yet the beautiful landscape inhabited by Arcadian shepherds, nymphs, and satyrs was no harmless idyll. It was also a precarious sphere. Tempting and threatening at once, Arcadia was characterised less by order than disorder, less by control than excess, less by regularity than trance, intoxication, sensuality and indeed sexuality. Arcadia was both a real place, albeit one located in a distant past, and a mythological realm, ruled by Priapus, god of sexuality, fertility and the garden. The Enlightenment saw the beginnings of anthropological research into what were thought to be practices of pagan Priapus worship surviving from ancient Roman times. In the 1770s, Hamilton and Payne Knight travelled to remote parts of the Southern Italian countryside to investigate these rites, in a typical conflation of ancient culture with the real lives of 'noble savages'. 29 In 1786, Knight published An Account of the Remains of the Worship of Priapus. 30 The frontispiece featured an engraving showing Hamilton's collection of wax model phalli, which were worshipped in these ceremonies. This research provided the background for Enlightenment notions of Arcadia. But its advocates did not believe that pagan deities really existed. Priapus was a metaphor for denoting an imaginary Arcadian landscape as a sphere of sensual experience, recalling a Dionysian world of instinct and intuition which preceded and, for some, subverted the Apollonian world of reason and regularità. In 1634, Claude's contemporary Poussin's painted a Bacchanal before a Term of Pan (today in the National Gallery, London). The painting, like many of Poussin's works, is characterised by a rigidly academic neo-classical style, and even today, Poussin is widely revered in France as a paragon of the French virtues of *clarté* and harmony in cultural production. These were deemed to afford consolation and orientation, especially in times of national 'crisis'. In August 1944, Picasso painted a gouache variation of Poussin's Bacchanal. In stark, expressive shapes and wild swirls, it captured the orgiastic and trance-like atmosphere of the theme of the painting, which, for all intents and purposes, showed a mythological orgy. Picasso's gouache was regarded as an outrage when it was shown. It was denounced as "immoral, unnatural, lusty insanity", because it cast a shadow on Poussin's dignity—a question of political significance at a time when the French were trying to redefine their national self at the end of the Vichy régime.³¹ Yet Picasso's gouache picked up an important theme of the classical tradition of which Poussin himself was very conscious. According to Blunt, the orgiastic ceremony in Poussin's painting is conducted to honour a herm of Priapus.³² The herm motivates the ritual, yet it forms no centre: not only are the activities depicted 'disorderly'; they are, by definition, de-centred. There could be no heroic individual taking centre stage. The concept of heroic individuality, the ideal of the reasoning subject, was being dismantled, iconographically and visually. The actors are shown in a state of trance and delirium, they return to their primitive selves, to a state of nature. The tension with reason and civilisation was evident. When Poussin painted Arcadian shepherds discovering a sarcophagus with the inscription Et in Arcadia Ego, "I [Death], too, am in Arcadia", he reminded his viewers that pre-individualist and pre-rational notions of culture were at once full of pleasure, but also out of control, subversive to the order of civilisation and its centrepiece: the heroic, rational individual.33

In the twentieth century, this sense of threat and subversion lent itself to political movements that looked to nature as a route to accessing a notion of wild, natural selves that would challenge, and potentially reverse, the destructive consequence of modern civilisation. Various forms of radical ecological thinking take the form of an anti-civilisation narrative: the 'new Luddism' of authors such as Zerzan and Sale,³⁴ arguments such as Westra's for re-wilding the world,³⁵ or for taking direct action to save and restore the natural environment, as articulated by movements such as 'Earth First!.' or the 'Earth Liberation Front'. These different agendas interpenetrate each other and draw on a very similar equation of 'wild' nature with authenticity.³⁶ In most versions, the development of forms of

human knowledge, and associated changes to human modes of life, have removed us from prior, authentic modes of life and also denatured our surrounding environment. Key moments in this version of the narrative of decline include the agricultural revolution, which takes us away from nomadic, hunter-gatherer lifestyles, and which also makes the possession and defence of territory indispensable, and the division of labour, which results from the agricultural revolution: societies now need a 'warrior class' to defend territory. With division of labour a priestly class also develops, living on the surplus produced by others, and, later, industrialisation, which radically deepens the breach with our natural environment.³⁷ As in the biblical account of the Fall, in these narratives, too, new forms of knowledge corrupt humanity, both socially and individually, and it becomes necessary for us to find our way back to a prior mode of existence. We have, in effect, to 're-authenticate' human experience. And yet the nature that we are called upon to recapture here owes less to the Christian imagination of a harmonious Garden of Eden, and more to the parallel evolution of a pagan world of Dionysian wildness: in the eyes of radical ecologists, it is the unpredictable, uncontrollable, even threatening side of nature that confronts us with existential truths, and, thus, a more authentic version of the self. In Wall's reader on Green History, pagan sources feature prominently, with contributions tackling the cult of Gaia, the pre-classical Greek deity of the earth who was displaced at Delphi by Apollo, and witchcraft as a 'goddess religion'. 38 As with the earlier discussion of American Indians and Karl May's novels, pagan cults and 'primitive' people are here taken as role models for an authentic life, at one with the 'soaring hawk' or the 'stone silently sprouting lichens':

But in genuinely oral, tribal cultures, the sensuous world itself remains the dwelling place of the gods, the numinous powers that can either sustain or extinguish human life. It is not by sending his awareness out beyond the natural world that the shaman makes contact with the purveyors of life and health, nor by journeying into his personal psyche; rather it is by propelling his awareness laterally, outward into the depths of a landscape at once sensuous and psychological, this living dream that we share with the soaring hawk, the spider, and the stone silently sprouting lichens on its coarse surface. ³⁹

Heinberg lists Lao Tze, Rousseau, Thoreau, as well as most of the pre-Socratics, medieval Jewish and Christian theologians, and nineteenth- and twentieth-century anarchist social theorists as the direct precursors to the current philosophy of primitivism.⁴⁰ The parallels with the view of humankind's prelapsarian existence come through very clearly is some articulations of contemporary primitivism, for example in Zerzan's account of the 'reversal in anthropological orthodoxy' in *Future Primitive*: "Now we can see that life before domestication/agriculture was in fact largely one of leisure, intimacy with nature, sensual wisdom, sexual equality, and health." By contrast, the development of agriculture "greatly increased division of labour, established the material foundations of social hierarchy, and initiates environmental destruction". This is a secularised version of the narrative of the Fall, as domestication "with accompanying forms of domination, seems to anchor and promote the facets of decline from an earlier state of grace".⁴¹

But if primitivism and the anti-civilisation ecology movement take preagricultural forms of life as an inspiration for how we should live today, the question arises as to how contemporary denizens of industrial society, with the 'wrong' intuitions and sensibilities, can reconnect with the enchanted sense of the world that was taken to exist in earlier times. As one anonymous contributor to *Green Anarchist*⁴² puts it: "And how do we be alone with ourselves? Are there any places left inside us which aren't mined and desecrated already? As we're put through the school mill, the family mill, the work mill... how do we preserve our primitive shape, hold onto our original wildness?" One answer to this question is that, in order to rediscover our essential, uncorrupted selves, we must retreat from civilisation into wild places. To take one example of this theme from the radical ecology movement Earth First!:

In the wild, we are free from the man-made abuses that we enact upon one another. In the wilderness, revelling in the will of the land, we remember our own wills, free from abuse, free from oppression. We recall, nourish, and strengthen our authentic, wild free selves. This is our struggle—for access, preservation, and protection of the wild so that we can heal the wounds of abuses inflicted upon us and the Earth.⁴⁴

It is worth noting that two elements connect here. The first is a conception of nature as 'wilderness', as a realm of what Naess and other deep ecologists call 'free nature', 45 which has a 'will' of its own, but stands abused by the forces of civilisation. The second element is an 'authentic' mode of human being, which is nourished and strengthened by contact with free nature. There is, then, an authentic form of human life, but this

form of life can only be realised through a direct association with wilderness. It is only by escaping the trappings of civilisation and engaging directly with wilderness that we can overcome the falsity of our everyday lives. This theme is a common, if not a constant in claims to authenticity: the idea of direct, unmediated experience. If we are taken to lead inauthentic lives now this is generally because some agent or institution intervenes between our lived self and our 'authentic' self, and this can be overcome if a way can be found to bypass the intervening obstacle. This message is often portrayed visually, with or without some brief accompanying text. One example of an image that operates in this fashion is that of a Canadian lynx used by Earth First! for a fundraising letter in 2011. Alongside a line drawing of the head of a lynx, is the legend "Visualise vast Wilderness. Actualize industrial collapse". Aside from the tell-tale ear tufts that demarcate the lynx, the drawing is ambiguous between a wild and a domestic animal. 46 This image acts like a myth in Sorel's definition, 47 by communicating complex ideas in a single form, and through appeal to intuition. The lynx through whom we are invited to 'visualise vast wilderness' stands as a metonym for the wild as a whole. While that wilderness is presented as radically Other to civilisation, as the untainted field of authenticity, the image used to represent it has a certain quotidian quality: are we looking at a Canadian lynx here or a domestic cat? This ambiguity permits the viewer to make an empathetic connection with familiar creatures. It is the quality of that connection that enables affective experience of an authentic moment. To represent the wild with an image that is too unfamiliar, strange, or distant from the viewer would undermine that connection even though, prima facie, we might think that some distancing from the domestic is exactly what would be required. The lynx reference brings with it connotations of the relationships that human beings tend to have with domesticated pets. Note also the assumption of a certain power or efficaciousness in the visual element of ideological communication in terms of realising ideological ambitions. It is visualising the wild that will clarify the negative, corrupting dimension of industrial society.

Claims to an authentic nature, or authentic forms of human existence in nature, are often dismantled by historically informed critiques, for example by Cronon, discussing the idea of the privileged status of 'wilderness': "It is not a pristine sanctuary where the last remnant of an untouched, endangered, but still transcendent nature can for a little while longer be encountered without the contaminating taint of civilization. Instead it is a product of that civilization, and could hardly be contaminated by the very

stuff of which it is made."48 Cronon's assessment may constitute a more accurate account of supposed wilderness than the romanticised notions put forward by radical ecologists. Yet precisely because of the mythic qualities of claims to authenticity in nature in this discourse, Cronon's deconstruction does little to offset the affective qualities of the claims of Earth First!. Claims to authenticity are always selective, and open to contestation. Nonetheless, the claims of radical ecologists are not completely divorced from evidence. Numbers of many wild species are declining, human development encroaches on areas that fit a shared understanding of what 'wilderness' is, for all that this conception may be a social construction. This highlights one of the problems in academic approaches to authenticity, which make it their mission to unmask popular 'misconceptions': "Wilderness hides its unnaturalness behind a mask that is all the more beguiling because it seems so natural."49 It is not clear that this tells us very much about the political effectiveness or persistence of claims such as these. And as in the earlier discussion of Adorno, we might see strategies of unmasking as attempts to replace one story of authenticity with another.

If the problem for radical ecologists is the alienation of humanity from nature that comes about as a result of the dissemination of knowledge and its accompanying practices, what is the solution? There is no simple answer to this question, and we see deep ecologists and others drawing on a wide range of spiritual and philosophical sources in their desire to heal the wounds of Western civilisation, by giving people unmediated access to a genuinely natural world. If our problem is alienation and inauthenticity, one route back to authentic existence is via authentic experience. The epistemology here is intuitionist. Fundamental knowledge comes to us through intuition, but in an environment that is divorced from the natural world, our intuitions are themselves denatured. We cannot trust our fundamental intuitive assumptions when these have been developed in an urban, industrial environment, nor even in a rural but agricultural setting. To recover 'true' intuitions, people need to be exposed to true wilderness.⁵⁰ This is what sets one set of intuitions on a higher epistemological plane—that they have been formed under the 'right' environmental circumstances.

Other answers to the question involve looking for spiritual and philosophical traditions that offer an alternative to those associated with human alienation from nature. In this regard, radical ecologists often see Judaeo-Christian religious beliefs as culpable. Judaeo-Christianity turns people's minds away from earthly concerns toward heavenly reward.⁵¹

Indeed, this mortal, transient world of matter is as nothing compared with the eternal afterlife—rather it is impermanent, theologically peripheral, and, ultimately, expendable. Alternative traditions of pagan thought are alighted upon that treat the earth itself as sacred, and these may come from indigenous peoples, Eastern mysticism, pantheism, or certain interpretations of contemporary science (ecology, in particular). The counternarrative of deep ecology and radical environmentalism is constructed from a diverse bric-à-brac of alternative belief systems, that are not themselves systematised into anything approaching a doctrine, but which stand instead as an 'invitation' to an alternative way of thinking about, and acting in, the natural world, which will reconnect us to our authentic mode of existence.⁵²

While this conception of the wilderness represents a radical departure from the biblical narrative, here, too, nature is taken as a realm offers an authentic, direct route to spiritual experience, unmediated by organised religion or other human institutions. The wild as the repository of God's (or the gods') creative power is a recurring theme. This, in turn, is informed by images of the kind we encountered earlier in this chapter, and their popularisation in the course of the nineteenth century. Blomfield, a later imitator of Romantic artists such as Friedrich, painted the forests of New Zealand as forming natural 'gothic cathedrals' (Fig. 2.3), with a light that appears to be un- or super-natural, conjuring up a spiritual presence that reveals itself through natural phenomena. We see similar motifs in the work of American Transcendental Art movement of the 1830s to 1860s, associated in particular with the Hudson River School.⁵³ Some common notions in environmentalism, such as Lee's idea of nature both having a 'will' of its own, and existing as a spiritual, not merely material, realm, appear to draw on this heritage. This reconnection with the natural world implies a mode of life and experience that is itself taken to embody a form of authenticity. It is not enough merely to contemplate nature from afar: there is an insistence on direct, unmediated lived experience in nature. Nature has, again, to be allowed to speak directly to human intuition.

This discourse suggests that what is being opposed is the degradation of the natural environment at the hands of thoroughly modern forces, in a sense that classical theorists such as Weber would have easily recognised as 'modernisation'. The assumption is that the modern condition has reduced human thought to an instrumental rationality, which, predicated as it is on secularisation, has disenchanted life, and robbed people of their ability to appreciate the spiritual value of the world they inhabit. Structural



Fig. 2.3 Blomfield, C. (1921) The Vaulted Aisles of Nature's Cathedral. Auckland War Memorial Museum—Tāmaki Paenga Hira. PD-1944-1 (Reproduced by kind permission of the Auckland War Memorial Museum)

processes such as industrialisation, urbanisation, and technological advances have created both powerful incentives and the technical means for destroying this de-valued nature in the name of profit and convenience at a phenomenal pace. This provided the inspiration of those who look to nature in an attempt to reverse the impact of modernisation. The antimodern thrust of this narrative of loss and destruction is certainly to be taken seriously—but it is not to be mistaken for an explanation of the objective phenomenon. For the ideological trope of nature as the locus of

true authenticity derives its power not from any grounding in Weberian (or any other) political theory, but from a very different source: its ability to evoke *longue durée* memories, to cite and re-cycle precedents that are so old, and so familiar, that they have come to be seen as self-evident, common-sensical, or part of some universal human appreciation of 'the truth'. The casting of nature as the true locus of authenticity is not just a reaction against modernity, but it is as old as human civilisation itself. We could spend much time trying to uncover its earliest articulations—Stoic belief in following the laws of nature, the Cynics' desire to live free of material possessions, or Pliny's discourses on the sub-urban space as a mental retreat from which the corruption of the *polis* can be analysed and, ultimately, overcome—each of these might each feature high on the list of suspects. But the question of origins is not, ultimately, decisive. It is not just that history produces ideology, but also that ideology produces history. We do not attempt to try and trace an objective evolution of the idea of nature as a realm of authenticity, but draw attention to the fact that much of the present effectiveness of this ideological trope stems from its ability to suggest the existence of such a history. Indeed, we might say that the haziness of this history contributes all the more to its ideological effectiveness. The point is that the history of this idea follows no linear plot, nor clearly demarcated phases of evolution; rather, history here features as a rhythmic recurrence of something that is experienced as historical memory, but that resides, ultimately, outside history, because it is universally human: nature has been sought out by those in search of authenticity in all historical periods because, this ideology suggests, it is part of the human condition. To take this imagined historicity seriously is not to say that the signifiers of natural authenticity were in fact unchanging. It is through a careful and highly selective appropriation of an extremely varied mix of tropes and representations that political arguments about authenticity are historicised or naturalised at each particular moment. Each such decontestation is simultaneously unique to each political situation, yet also tapping into a reservoir that is construed as timeless.

Notes

1. The MOOC is hosted by the FutureLearn platform. All learners who sign up for courses agree to the following: 'You consent that we and our Partners Institutions may conduct research studies that include anonymised data of your interactions with the Website, including Learner

- Content'. Futurelean (2016) 'Terms and Conditions', *Futurelearn*, 9 May, https://about.futurelearn.com/terms/ (accessed 07/03/2017).
- 2. For a full analysis of the learner comments, numbering several thousand, see M. Humphrey, M. Umbach, and Z. Clulow, 'The Personal and the Political: An Analysis of Crowd-Sourced Political Ideas from a Massive Open Online Course', *Journal of Political Ideologies*, forthcoming 2019.
- 3. On Arcadia in classical antiquity, see R. Jenkyns (1989) 'Virgil and Arcadia', *Journal of Roman Studies*, 79, 26–39. On its afterlife in modern Western literature and thought, see E. R. Curtius (1953) *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages* (London and New York: Pantheon Books). On Poussin's famous painterly rendition of Arcadia, see R. Verdi (1979) 'On the Critical Fortunes, and Misfortunes, of Poussin's Arcadia', *The Burlington Magazine*, 121/911, 95–107.
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- 5. E. Said (1978) Orientalism (New York: Pantheon Books).
- 6. R. Barthes (1957) Mythologies (Paris: Seuil).
- 7. For this and much of the following section we are indebted to the excellent P. Harrison (2007) *The Fall of Man and the Foundations of Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
- 8. Harrison, *The Fall of Man*, 60. Martin Luther also held the view that Eve 'had these mental gifts in the same degree as Adam', Harrison, *The Fall of Man*, 57.
- 9. Harrison, Fall of Man, 27.
- 10. M. Stoll (2008) 'Milton in Yosemite: Paradise Lost and the National Parks Idea', *Environmental History*, 13(2), 237–274, quote 241.
- 11. J. Milton (2005) *Paradise Lost* G. Teskey (ed.), New York W.W. Norton, 84–5 [1667]. See also W. Poole (2005) *Milton and the Idea of the Fall* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
- 12. J. Prest (1981) *The Garden of Eden: The Botanic Garden and the Recreation of Paradise* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press).
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 M. Umbach (2000) Federalism and Enlightenment in Germany, 1740–1806 (London and Ohio: Hambledon Press).
- 14. On Wörlitz, see Umbach, Federalism and Enlightenment.

- 15. A useful introduction to the eighteenth-century garden as a site of cultural and political meaning-making is J. D. Hunt (1992) *Gardens and the Picturesque: Studies in the History of Landscape Architecture* (Cambridge, MA and London: The MIT Press); and J. D. Hunt (2004) *The Picturesque Garden in Europe* (London: Thames & Hudson).
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- 35. L. Westra (1998) Living in Integrity: a Global Ethic to Restore a Fragmented Earth (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield) claims that "ecosystem integrity is absolutely required for areas covering at least one-third of the global land-scape", 29.
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- 37. So for example: "Division of labor, which has had so much to do with bringing us to the present global crisis, works daily to prevent our understanding the origins of this horrendous present." J. Zerzan (2005) 'Future Primitive (1994)', in J. Zerzan (ed.) *Against Civilization: Readings and Reflections* (Los Angeles: Feral House), p. 220. See also J. Zerzan (2017) 'Division of Labor', *Spunk Library*, https://www.jl2.org/spunk/library/writers/zerzan/sp001189.html (accessed 14/07/2017).
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- 42. The tagline of *Green Anarchist* is, tellingly, 'For the Destruction of Civilization'.
- 43. Anon (2004) 'How Hard It Is to Be Alone in Civilisation', *Green Anarchist*, 71–72, 21.
- 44. R. Lee (2013) 'In the Wild, We Are Free from Abuse', *Earth First Journal*, 27 June, http://earthfirstjournal.org/journal/brigid-2013/in-the-wild-we-are-free-from-abuse/ (accessed 28/07/17).
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- 46. This image is available on the web, but is somewhat fugitive. At the time of writing in August 2017, it can be seen here: https://southwestearthfirst. wordpress.com/, here: https://www.reddit.com/r/PropagandaPosters/comments/1jmpx2/visualize_vast_wilderness_actualize_industrial/, and here: https://sites.google.com/a/wheatoncollege.edu/fysbaker2013/
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Living in an Inauthentic Society?

Abstract How can the individual live authentically in a society steeped in inauthenticity? This question received particularly acute analysis from philosophers Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Martin Heidegger, as well as the Existentialists inspired by the latter. In this chapter, we examine these ideas, but we focus on how they were received and adapted by individuals and groups who drew on them to engage with experiments in authentic living. There is another authenticity discourse that asks how society and its environment can be made true to the promise of modern technology and governance, and how weak, irrational humanity can also be remoulded into a new form that will integrate with the possibilities of the future. This notion of authenticity is not only deployed by totalitarian regimes, but also has its liberal manifestations.

Keywords Rousseauism • Heidegger • Existentialism • Holzwege • Paul Celan • National Socialism • Futurists

Authenticity is often invoked as a critique of civilisation. Secularisation, urbanisation, industrialisation, and, in the context of the disintegration of particular industrial communities, even de-industrialisation, have all been associated with a loss of authenticity. To remedy the perceived 'crisis', many critics have looked to the individual's interior world as a source for

re-capturing authenticity. How this interior world is imagined, as we shall explore in this chapter, maintains a strong connection with the idea of authentic nature. And yet, when the authenticity claim operates ideologically, it rarely implies a demand for literal return to a 'state of nature'. The ideal of a life that is somehow 'true' to an origin, an innate nature, or a self-determined mode of being, has been employed through different historical periods and across quite distinct ideological morphologies—Right and Left, individualistic and collective, conservative and radical. We focus our analysis on two important discourses that have pitted the authentic individual against a world marbled with the inauthentic. One discourse drew on the thought of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, even if in practice, 'Rousseauism' has taken on several different trajectories. The other is grounded, directly or indirectly, in the thought and language of Martin Heidegger, which was developed in new directions by existentialists such as Jean-Paul Sartre. Both strands take the idea of an authentic individual as their starting point. Yet we take issue with a historiography that has concluded from this that conceptions of authenticity are, by definition, centred on the individual, imagined in opposition to society and the political order.1 We will explore examples that show how easily these ideas travelled into collective imaginaries of authenticity, but we shall also argue that such collective mobilisations are not inherently conservative or antimodernist, but can have radically different ideological characteristics.

ROUSSEAUISM AND THE AUTHENTIC INDIVIDUAL

In 1762, Rousseau wrote his famous treatise Émile, ou de l'éducation. The question of authenticity sits at the heart of this discussion of an ideal-typical education, which allows human beings to develop their innate character, rather than press them into a mould dictated by social convention. As Rousseau defined his aim: "To be something, to be himself, and always at one with himself, a man must act as he speaks; he must always be decisive as to what course to take, he must take that course proudly and follow it to the end." Rousseau considered Émile his most important book. Its reception history, however, was initially rather chequered; on publication, the book was banned both in Rousseau's native Geneva and in Paris. During the French Revolution, however, the book was idolised, not so much as a practical guide for educational reform, as a manifesto about the 'new man' the revolutionaries aimed to create. Beyond France, Émile was absorbed into a discourse that intermingled Enlightenment

ideas with the contemporaneous movements of Sentimentality, the Storm and Stress, and eventually, emerging variants of Romanticism across Europe. In such contexts, Émile was read as a call to arms against the artifice of the social conventions of the ancien régime, in favour of the discovery of an authentic self capable of challenging conventions, but also against a conception of the Enlightenment that was considered narrowly 'rationalist'. The intellectual problem that Rousseau struggled with throughout his life was how to restore the amour de soi (self-love) of our pre-social savage ancestors, with their presumed independence and freedom, their lack of vanity and greed, with the existence and advantages of a complex social and political order, whilst avoiding a decline into what he called the amour propre, vanity and inauthenticity, of those living in contemporary society. He proposed two solutions: a radically egalitarian, small-scale social and political system, which he sketched in The Social Contract, and a form of education that would immunise developing human beings, the children in whose hearts the voice of nature still speaks, from the corruption of the society that surrounds them: that was the purpose of Émile. Rousseau believed that inauthenticity in the social order runs deep, and escaping it is no easy task. In *The Confessions*, he defined his task as "an enterprise which has no precedent, and which, once complete, will have no imitator. My purpose is to display to my kind a portrait in every way true to nature, and the man I shall portray will be myself." As Berman puts it, "the process of confessing, for Rousseau, was a process of unmasking, of differentiating, of integrating, of bringing his authentic self into being." The authentic person has to bring themselves into existence through introspection, and when they do, they are guided by the light of nature.

The problem Rousseau diagnosed was not merely that humanity is corrupted and rendered unfree by social norms and conventions, but that we have even grown to love our chains, and to embrace the social world that has destroyed genuine being. Under these conditions, "the majority of men are quite unlike themselves, and often seem to transform themselves into different men". If there is no hope of finding redemption within the existing social order and its conventions, we have, instead, to look within the individual soul. This idea led him to reject the rule of 'experts' and their 'sterile rationalism': two key ideas which, according to Darnton, propelled the *Social Contract* from being a "crushing failure" at the time of its publication to a "popular force" in the shape of "a vulgar Rousseauism" animated and energised by amateur science within the space of a few years. This popular Rousseauism homed in on the theme that the truth of

being is accessible through introspection and *reverie*. In searching our own hearts we can intuitively come to know ourselves, our innermost drives and heartfelt desires. It is here, internally, that we hear the voice of nature speak to us, unadulterated and clear. The removal or exclusion of the artifice of society brings us closer to the condition of the pre-social savages, for whom the voice of nature was strong. In *Émile*, too, 'nature' is the true teacher. The role of the tutor is to allow the child to draw upon the lessons that nature can provide. As Rousseau says of his own childhood "I had no idea of the facts, but I was already familiar with every feeling. I had grasped nothing; I had sensed everything." The authentic life, in this discourse, is one in which we are in accord with our natural mode of being, and one in which we understand our own inner natures. We are part of society, but not seduced by the differentials of wealth and power to put ourselves over and above others, and in so doing enslaving ourselves to *amour propre*.

Rousseau's writing provided a new vocabulary for several generations of educated Europeans, who castigated civilised society as epitomising a form of inauthentic life, in which people "strive to impress one another without ever revealing their true judgements, [whereas] the authentic individual speaks simply from the heart". 11 Rousseauism was understood as an invitation to engage in inward reflection to discern the true nature of the self, but it also produced a widespread veneration of a concept Rousseau himself had never used: the idea of a 'noble savage', innocent of the trappings and baubles of civilisation. 12 As Rousseauism became a literary and cultural fad across later eighteenth-century Europe, the focus was less on the political analysis, than on practices and rituals that would unlock routes to authentic experience. Quoting Rousseau was part of the habitus: but new visual and material ways of relating to, and posing within, nature in a Rousseauistic fashion brought this theory to life. One of the most influential images that defined this new habitus was the 1781 portrait of Sir Brooke Boothby by the British painter Joseph Wright of Derby (Fig. 3.1). Unlike his aristocratic peers in contemporaneous portraits by Joshua Reynolds, Thomas Gainsborough, or Johann Zoffany, who preside over landscapes as territorial possession, Boothby is depicted reclining in a forest, at ease with a seemingly untamed nature. His pose suggests no sense of ownership. Instead, he communes with his environment, and the contours of his body blend organically into those of the river embankment on which he rests. The book in his hand is Rousseau's *Émile*; Boothby had personally financed the English-language translation of the text he is holding.



Fig. 3.1 Joseph Wright of Derby (1781) Sir Brooke Boothby, National Gallery, London, Public domain

The image not only modelled a new way of finding the self in nature, but also inspired a new cult of 'genius': the idea that the individual's authentic self is imagined as a well-spring of intellectual, artistic, and emotional creativity.¹³ Emotions would play a constitutive role in the unleashing of this genius, and were vital in supplementing logical reasoning. Melancholy was particularly prominent amongst these emotions, because, unlike other sentiments, it is closely associated with solitary introspection. An aesthetic experience of nature acts as a trigger for the experience of melancholy. As Cummings has argued, Wright's image in turn mobilised earlier pictorial traditions of picturing melancholy, dating back to the Renaissance. 14 But the Rousseauistic association of melancholy, introspection and authenticity, often referred to as the 'joy of grief', also featured prominently in (often-epistolary) sentimental novels of the time, such as Goethe's The Sorrows of Young Werther, Richardson's Clarissa, or Sterne's Sentimental Journey. In aesthetic theory, we encounter it in Moritz's notion of Produktionsästhetik, which suggested that aesthetic value was not contained in artworks or texts themselves, but generated within the individual

soul in the act of beholding them.¹⁵ Physical landscapes, too, played a part. The landscape gardens we discussed in Chap. 2 of this book were designed provoke a sentimental response in the body and soul of the onlooker. The 'medium of landscape' was more flexible than the written text, in that it maintained neither a clear sense of genre, nor an unequivocal sense of direction: it thus seemed ideally suited as a prompt for introspective self-exploration, without imposing a clear sense of direction from the outside.¹⁶

The centrality of individual interiority in this discourse and practice of authenticity-seeking has given rise to the idea, articulated by Trilling and others, that Rousseauism marked the origins of the cult of a distinctly modern authenticity, which juxtaposes the introspective individual in search of authentic essences with the falsehood of the society that surrounds him or her. But Rousseau's self-appointed followers did not confine their ambitions to the individual quest for authenticity. The concept quickly gained new meanings, each inflected by the particular social and political circumstances in which it was deployed. One such deployment was the association between authenticity and national character. Eighteenthcentury sentimentality was predicated on a rejection of the alleged decadence of the formal courtly culture, widely associated with France. In Germany, this association lent itself to projects that defined 'German character' as an authentic antidote to 'French' decadence and alienation. In 1779, Daniel Nikolaus Chodowiecki, the influential director of the Berlin Kunstakademie, who created over 6000 artworks, published a series of engravings titled "Natural and Affected Acts of Life," with a commentary by the prominent Enlightenment philosopher Georg Christoph Lichtenberg.¹⁷ These engravings juxtapose German ways of living life 'authentically'—in conversation, instruction, and prayer, for example, or by taking promenades—with 'affected' French ways of performing the same actions. 18 Chodowiecki depicts the German manner as quiet introspection, modesty, and sensibility; all outdoor pursuits appear to unfold in harmony with the surrounding natural landscapes. Germans, he implies, are true to themselves, they act authentically. The corresponding French 'affectations' lack this authentic quality: its absence is made visible though pompous rococo costumes, exaggerated gesticulation, and, in the outdoor scenes, with the trimmed, geometrical hedges of a baroque garden.

The association of authenticity and nature proved useful in the context of emerging nationalisms of the decades around 1800. Indeed, for scholars such as Handler, this is the point when authenticity gained real political

momentum. 19 For early theorists of the nation such as Johann Gottfried Herder, author of the famous 1772 Treatise on the Origin of Language, every nation had its "specific, originary character; this is what is lost in the mélange of modernity". ²⁰ Herder's adaption of the notion of authentic life to collective forms of national character marks a significant and profoundly influential shift in the ideological imaginary of authenticity. It is important to stress, however, that such adaptations are not simply a 'consequence' of Rousseau's thinking. Indeed, Herder himself did not look to Rousseau as a model. Herder's notion of the ideal polity was radically different from Rousseau's, ²¹ and he denounced the French philosopher for being "only concerned with the effects produced by the novelty of his ideas", and thus prone to the very desire for social approval that he formally rejects.²² Herder's appeal to the authenticity of the 'national spirit' re-purposed the imaginary of Rousseauism in ways that placed significant ideological distance between him and the original claims.²³ What both had in common, however, was the claim that authenticity had been corrupted through the effects of modern civilisation, on the individual and on the polity as a whole. Herder's purpose was not to exalt an existing German state: it was, instead, a project of cultural critique, with the goal to re-imagine the nation in a way that would resolve a perceived problem of political inauthenticity in the present.

Language was central to this project. It contained within it the seeds of an authentic existence: this belief motivated movements across Europe in the nineteenth century to systematise national languages in lexicons and dictionaries, and to collect vernacular folk tales, such as the Grimm brothers' famous collections, in a bid to overcome the inauthenticity of French as a universal language of elite discourse.²⁴ Like Chodowiecki's false and affected poses, a language that was not 'true' to its roots would alienate communities from their true character more effectively than any political repression: vernacular languages and dialects could serve as alternatives. The diction of national authenticity provided useful ideological ammunition when the cultural rivalry between the French and the Germans turned violent during the era of Napoleon's occupation of the Holy Roman Empire, which fundamentally restructured and 'rationalised' the existing imperial structure, and introduced supposedly universal Enlightened legislation such as the Code Napoléon. Political and cultural elites of the time looked to the association of German character with authenticity to mobilise opposition to these changes, and, subsequently, to create a set of useful political 'memories' of the anti-Napoleonic struggle as a spiritual crusade

for the purity of German character.²⁵ Painters such as Caspar David Friedrich and Georg Friedrich Kersting produced patriotic images that commemorated the anti-Napoleonic 'Wars of Liberation' as an uprising of Germanic energies infused and rendered authentic by their synergies with natural forces. The French appeared as an alien presence on German soil, alienated both from place and from nature itself. In Kersting's *Auf Vorposten* (Outpost Duty) of 1829 (Fig. 3.2), which commemorates a fallen martyr, the uniform identifies the protagonist as a member of the German volunteer units. It shows him not engaged in military action, but at rest, the contours of his body melting into those of his natural surroundings. The similarities with Wright's Brooke Boothby are striking: but Rousseau's manuscript has now been replaced by a gun.

Friedrich's famous 1814 painting of *The Chasseur in the Forest* makes a similar connection, depicting the German military victory by showing a single French soldier being physically and spiritually overpowered not by an army, but by the German forest.²⁶ In such images, nature—or, better said, the presumed German ability to commune with nature, and thus



Fig. 3.2 Georg Friedrich Kersting (1829) Auf Vorposten, Alte Nationalgallerie Berlin, public domain

with an authentic sense of self—bestowed moral legitimacy on one national culture while denying the same to others.

EXISTENTIAL AUTHENTICITY

Dasein [Human Existence] plunges out of itself into itself, into the ground-lessness and nullity of inauthentic everydayness. But this plunge remains hidden from Dasein by the way things have been publicly interpreted, so much so, indeed, that it gets interpreted as a way of 'ascending' and 'living concretely'.

This downward plunge into and within the groundlessness of the inauthentic Being of the "they", has a kind of motion which constantly tears the understanding away from the projecting of authentic possibilities.²⁷

Thus, Martin Heidegger warns of the dangers of conformity to preexisting modes of understanding and acting in the world, which on the one hand offer an apparent and seductive sense of certainty, but which serve, on the other, to close off possibilities for realising authenticity. Despite other, radical differences, Rousseau and Heidegger share a sense in which living by the lights of the social order within which one finds oneself, rather than seeking to forge one's own path through the world, constitutes the epitome of inauthenticity. This, for Heidegger, is the essence of the 'dictatorship of the Others'. And as for Rousseau and his followers, for Heidegger, too, nature was powerfully associated with its antithesis, the achievement of authenticity. Shortly after the end of the Second World War, Heidegger published a collection of philosophical essays that showcased many of the guiding threads of his later philosophy. The collection was enigmatically entitled 'Holzwege', published in English first under the original German title, later as Off the Beaten Track; some critical scholarship refers to the same title as Wrong Paths.²⁸ The confusion over the translation is itself indicative of a key trait of Heidegger's philosophy and its later, extremely variegated reception. Like many of Heidegger's arcane philosophical terms, the German original contains multiple meanings within it. And like many of them, it is not a product of a particular philosophical tradition—whose language itself Heidegger chastised as deeply inauthentic—but, instead, a vernacular term that draws on a range of different religious and folk traditions. On one level, Holzwege are the paths created by loggers in the forest: they are the most primitive, and most embodied, ways in which man creates tracks in nature, through

the very act of moving through it, in contrast with the mechanised and planned construction of modern civilisations. This idea was a cornerstone for Heidegger's thinking, which pivoted on the opposition between an instrumental rationality that he rejected, and an 'openness to being'. Second, Holzwege are also wooden tracks, on which a rambler might be exploring the forest. As a metaphor for thinking philosophically, they conjure up the figure of a lone thinker, whose philosophy is inspired by the German forest: which, as we have seen in the work of Kersting and Friedrich, is itself powerfully associated with a particular German imaginary of authenticity. Heidegger's self-styled philosophical retreat, his famous 'hut' (sometimes translated as chalet, or, more appropriately, cabin) in the Black Forest, gave a material reality to this understanding.²⁹ The hut in the forest featured prominently in Heidegger's public selfstylisation, as a philosopher whose work responded directly to the encounter with elementary nature—for example, in his 1933 radio broadcast entitled 'Creative Landscape: Why do we stay in the provinces?':

On a deep winter's night when a wild, pounding snowstorm rages around the cabin and veils and covers everything, that is the perfect time for philosophy. Then its questions must become simple and essential. Working through each thought can only be tough and rigorous. The struggle to mould something into language is like the resistance of the towering firs against the storm. And this philosophical work does not take its course like the aloof studies of some eccentric. It belongs right in the middle of the peasant's work. [...] At most, a city-dweller gets 'stimulated' by that so-called stay in the country. But my whole world is sustained by the world of these mountains and their people.[...] Solitude has that peculiar and original power not of isolating us but of projecting our whole existence out into the vast nearness of the presence (Wesen) of all things.³⁰

And yet the role of nature in Heidegger's philosophy, concerned as it is with 'returning' it to its most basic and essential questions, is not that of a prompt for individual introspection, as it had been in Rousseauism. As the final sentence in our quote makes clear, for Heidegger, the individual's encounter with elementary, even hostile, nature is about confronting us with a fundamental and universal truth of human existence, or 'being' in the world.

If Heidegger saw his contribution to philosophy as an antithesis to how that discipline had been conventionally conceived, this oppositional stance chimes with another connotation of the term *Holzwege*: in vernacular parlance, and, in particular, in the Lutheran tradition, the term is also a

synonym for Irrwege, errancy, or theologically speaking, heresy, i.e., drifting from the true path of God-hence Lyon's translation of the title as Wrong Paths. Heidegger here signals his own self-understanding as a 'heretic', in the sense of a philosopher who rejected the 'official' philosophical traditions of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and the language in which these were expressed, in search of an entirely new form of thinking. A language that is logical and predictable for Heidegger is already a cause of inauthenticity. Instead, "to mould something into language" has to be a "struggle"—and this struggle resembles the existential struggles that characterise a fundamentally non-harmonious nature, in his words, it is "like the resistance of the towering firs against the storm". Authenticity emerges in and through this struggle—not through a process of individualistic and aesthetic self-discovery. For Heidegger and later Existentialists who were inspired by his philosophy, there is no individual 'true self' to be unearthed. Nature is therefore not an aesthetic trigger for individualistic introspection or reverie; it is, rather, a reminder of the fundamental truth of human existence. Engaging with it requires "a kind of honesty or a kind of courage"31 as well as "constancy (no one could be authentic for just one minute), and a capacity for self-knowledge."32 Authenticity, therefore, is "always an achievement", 33 and it entails grasping and taking responsibility for the whole of a mortal life. Embracing mortality is a key element of this process. 'Being-toward-death' is an attitude towards life, accepting its "thoroughgoing contingency". 34 This is not something that humanity easily embraces. We distract ourselves from our own mortality through a million and one possible displacement activities, designed to avoid the contemplation of our own finitude. When we exist in this condition of "tranquilizing alienation", 35 we are leading inauthentic lives, lost in the world of what Heidegger called 'das Man', an abstract form of personhood rather than a true self. In this state, we do not take responsibility for our own existence, but drift through social roles, undertaking the tasks that are expected of us in those roles (there is an echo here of what Trilling calls 'sincerity'). These roles are not truly ours, they are, as Heidegger puts it 'delegatable'-"'anyone' could fill our places because those places are the Anyone's."36 What calls us back to authenticity, if we allow it to, is the voice of 'conscience', for Dasein to examine its mode and to recognise (feel guilt about) the distance between the actuality manifested in the inauthentic life and the potential for authenticity. Conscience reminds Dasein that it is 'not-at-home'.

Defining the purpose of philosophy in these terms in turn invited new political appropriations. In his 1927 Being and Time, Heidegger had insisted on the need for philosophy to leave behind academic traditions, and re-focus on fundamental ontological questions about 'Being': he defined the human condition not, as René Descartes had done, through thinking, but through being-in-the-world, or Dasein, defined as the idea of 'care', or an engaged and concerned mode of existing. In taking a polemical stance against Rationalism, Heidegger's philosophy became attractive for National Socialism, as it lent credence and authority to the rejection of liberal and 'technocratic' modernity in favour of collective, vitalist idioms that required the guidance of a political and spiritual leader figure. This affinity was underscored by Heidegger's own political choices, when he joined the Nazi Party shortly after Hitler's seizure of power, when he stood for and was elected as rector of Freiburg University in 1933, and when he oversaw the removal of Jewish academics from their posts. Heidegger himself later stated that he had, however briefly, believed that National Socialism was poised to restore Germany to its 'historical essence'. 37 In a lecture of 1935, which was later published as part of the book Introduction to Metaphysics, Heidegger referred to the "inner truth and greatness" of the National Socialist movement.³⁸ Heidegger quickly grew disillusioned with National Socialism, and leading Nazis in turn dismissed many of his writings as "philosophical gibberish". 39 Yet it is undeniable that Heidegger's rejection of the modern world and its ways of thinking chimed with the Nazi project to restore Germanness to its authentic roots, rejecting, in particular, the 'rootless' character of Jewish identity as the antithesis of authenticity. 40 Both Heidegger's thinking and that of the emerging Nazi movement drew on tropes popularised by the Jugendbewegung, or German youth movement, of the decades around 1900, of which we shall hear more in Chap. 4. In this movement, the immediacy of youthful experience was conceived as an antidote to the decadence of modern civilisation, and virtues such as vitality, energy, and intuition as a route toward the spiritual salvation of society.

As in the popular adaption of Rousseau, the relationship between Heidegger's thought and anti-modernist cultural and political movements of the early twentieth century and the Nazi era was focused less on a singular philosophical claim than on the language and symbolic habitus associated with it. Heidegger himself was highly conscious of the symbolic importance of language. In his quest to recall humanity to the requirements of *Dasein*, Heidegger developed his own idiom, which consisted of

unfamiliar grammatical constructions, metaphors derived from vernacular rather than philosophical discourse, such as the aforementioned *Holzwege*, and a large number of composite nouns, such as 'being-toward-death'. While it resonated with popular sentiments around authenticity, this language was also an easy target of polemical mockery from Heidegger's political critics. We have already mentioned, in the introduction to this book, Theodor Adorno's famous essay on the *Jargon of Authenticity*, which attacks Heidegger's idiosyncratic 'jargon' as masking anti-liberal, anti-democratic agendas under a cloak of authenticity-seeking. Yet in a paradoxical political twist, the same 'anti-language' also appealed to those amongst Heidegger's readers who wanted to challenge hidden legacies of National Socialism.

A particularly fascinating example of such an ideological re-purposing of Heidegger's language is the story of the poet Paul Celan. Celan was born as Paul Antschel in 1920 in Cernăuți, or Czernowitz, then part of the Kingdom of Romania. Jewish by origin, he grew up speaking Yiddish, German, and Romanian. Many members of his family were murdered by the Nazi regime; Celan himself barely survived incarceration in a concentration camp. After the war, Celan became one of the most important German-language poets of his era. His is best known for his poem Death Fuge (Todesfuge), written in 1944–45, which became perhaps the bestknown poetic indictment of the Holocaust, and is widely acknowledged as disproving Adorno's dictum that there could be "no poetry after Auschwitz". 42 Adorno's statement, written in 1949, reflected a widespread sense amongst the German Left that the language of 'high culture' had been so thoroughly implicated in the Nazi propaganda effort that it was no longer a trustworthy vehicle for expressing ethical content. This verdict mirrored the earlier observations of the Jewish intellectual Walter Benjamin that "fascism was the aestheticisation of politics." 43 Celan was extremely alert to this problem. In his view, the Nazis had not just murdered his people, the Jews, but also his mother tongue. Conventional linguistic registers were thus unsuitable as a vehicle for his poetry. And yet he insisted on re-claiming the language spoken in his childhood home—but in a radically deconstructed, and reconstituted, form. As Celan put it in 1958:

Reachable, near and not lost, there remained in the midst of the losses this one thing: language. It, the language, remained, not lost, yes in spite of everything. But it had to pass through its own answerlessness, pass through frightful muting, pass through the thousand darknesses of deathbringing

speech. It passed through and gave back no words for that which happened; yet it passed through this happening. Passed through and could come to light again.⁴⁴

In 1952, Celan published his first volume of poetry, Poppy and Memory, which included the Death Fugue. Two years earlier, Celan had read Heidegger's Holzwege, which "marked Celan's shift from a reluctant or sceptical learner to an enthusiastic reader". 45 Celan would later refer to Heidegger as his principal "vis-à-vis". 46 Celan made more annotations in Holzwege than in any other work he read; its peculiar terminology and his ungrammatical phrases enabled Celan to make the German language useable again after its abuses by National Socialism. 47 What particularly fascinated the poet were Heidegger's composite nouns—being-in-the-world, being-toward-death, not-at-home—all of which seemed to capture ways of being in the world undisturbed by the inauthenticities of instrumental thinking and technocratic politics. Another attraction was that Heidegger's ambiguous metaphors resisted any sense of a singular, definitive purpose. Celan's poetry was all about double meanings, in terms such as *Holzwege*, or the verb übersetzen, which he took from Heidegger to mean both 'translating' and 'ferrying-across'; this term plays a central role in Heidegger's On the Way to Language, which Celan read and annotated in 1954. The same metaphor occurs in Celan's poem From Darkness to Darkness, written only weeks later:

You opened your eyes – I see my darkness live. I see to its foundation: There too it's mine and lives. Does that ferry across? And awakens while doing so? Whose light follows at my heels For a ferryman to appear?⁴⁸

This re-appropriation remained mired in ideological conflict. Celan continued to look to Heidegger's language as an inspiration for his own quest to cleanse language of the stifling legacies of "deathbringing speech", but he expressed deep misgivings that Heidegger never rejected Nazi ideology unequivocally: a poem that Celan wrote about a visit to Heidegger's hut in 1967 expresses his palpable disappointment. For Lyon, "Celan played the role of the accuser, and Heidegger the accused. Where, for Celan, the destruction of conventional grammar expressed the impossibility of addressing the enormity of the crimes of the Nazi regime in that regime's own language, for Heidegger, the search for a different language

remained a general, existential, and almost mystical task. And yet, Heidegger's ability to translate disruptive silence into a new language became Celan's vehicle of choice for writing poetry after, and about, the Holocaust. This relationship is, perhaps, one of the most remarkable examples for a process by which languages of authenticity could be deployed for radically different purposes—purposes which served almost diametrically opposed political ends, and yet remained deeply entangled in one another.

While Heidegger's reception in post-war Germany continued to be tainted by the philosopher's involvement with the Nazi regime, ⁵¹ left-wing intellectuals in other countries were less reluctant to build on this legacy. They included self-consciously left-wing Existentialist philosophers such as Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir. For them, being authentic meant to take responsibility for the meanings and values that we choose to live by, even though nothing can validate any such choice. As Sartre put it: "my freedom is the unique foundation of values and... nothing, absolutely nothing, justifies me in adopting this or that particular value, this or that particular scale of values. As a being by whom values exist, I am unjustifiable. My freedom is anguished at being the foundation of values itself without foundation". 52 The inauthentic life for Sartre is one in which we deny that these meanings and values come about as a result of fundamental choices that we make, when we rely instead on a form of deterministic psychology— 'that's just the way I am', or 'I can't help being this way'. Such excuses cannot succeed in a world in which there is no God, and in which we choose not only for ourselves, but inevitably for others too, through the creation of an image that others can see and relate to. As Sartre puts it "everything is indeed permitted if God does not exist, and man is in consequence forlorn, for he cannot find anything to depend upon either within or outside himself. He discovers forthwith, that he is without excuse."53

For the French Existentialists, to borrow Guignon's phrase, the authenticity injunction was to 'Be Human!', rather than "Get in touch with what you really, truly are, as an individual".⁵⁴ We must live in a condition in which we *care* about our Being, which is something that only humans have the capacity to do. There is, however, no sharp demarcation between authentic human beings and those leading inauthentic lives. We can each of us strive for authenticity, we are all tempted away from it, as we mediate between the 'thrownness' of our lives, and the personal projects that we have. Existential authenticity in this sense is not, then, an entirely anti-

social mode of being, although the extent to which authenticity can constitute a social or political virtue is disputed. Grene sees the legacy of Heidegger's valorisation of life in the remoteness of the Black Forest as essentially solipsistic.⁵⁵ Guignon, on the other hand, is much more optimistic about the possibilities for authenticity to serve, if not as a public moral virtue in and of itself, as an enabling virtue for freedom and politically democratic life. Despite her reservations, Grene also allows for this possibility—that authenticity entails "not only the winning of freedom, but the respect for freedom, not only the achievement of dignity in the individual but the acceptance of the Kantian maxim of the dignity of all individuals."56 For Guignon, those ethical traits that are necessary for authenticity—honesty, courage, constancy, self-knowledge—require a social condition of freedom for their realisation, and if the potential desire to lead an authentic life is mutually recognised across individuals, then all should recognise the requirement for the social and political condition of equal freedom for all. Similarly, to be authentic is to be:

Clear about one's own most basic feelings, desires, and convictions, and to openly express one's stance in the public arena. But that capacity is precisely the character trait that is needed in order to be an effective member of a democratic society. And if this is the case, then it would seem that a democratic society should be committed to promoting and cultivating authentic individuals.⁵⁷

Contemporary opinion on the political 'usability' of Existentialist authenticity remains divided. For commentators such as Bloom and Lasch, the turn towards individualistic notions of authenticity, the idea that morality is somehow to be found from within, or at least developed in contradistinction to existing social norms, has fostered a culture of narcissism in which people adopt a self-righteous and intellectually lazy relativism, and can assume that the proof of the correctness of their position is simply a matter of self-examination. Why engage in open democratic debate, why take seriously the views of others, why trouble oneself with even the possibility of objective moral truths, when society is either a place of debased bourgeois values (Rousseau) or encrusted tradition and the 'dictatorship of the Other' (Heidegger)? Bloom alluded to this problem when he entitled his analysis of authenticity in American political culture *The Closing of the American Mind*, ⁵⁸ noting that "today virtually every Nietzschean, as well as Heideggerian, is a Leftist". ⁵⁹ We might see current

controversies over free speech on campuses, and the 'right' of students to 'no-platform' speakers as part of the ongoing struggle that Bloom elucidates. And yet, as we shall see in Chap. 4 in this book, Existentialist notions of authenticity not only continue to exercise a powerful pull on the popular imagination: they have also experienced a significant renaissance in recent debates about 'authentic leadership', both in formal politics and in the corporate sector.

AUTHENTIC SOCIETIES?

In the previous two sections, we have explored different iterations of the view that authentic life is under threat by social conventions. Yet there is another discourse on authenticity, which reverses this assumption, and envisages society not as exerting pernicious strains of inauthenticity upon its individual constituents, but as embodying and enabling an authentic life. In this view, attempts to retrieve individual forms of authentic existence amount to little more than a Luddite desire to retain forms of human life long superseded. Far from providing us with an authentic form of existence, they trade in kitschy echoes of the past. In this view, both society and the individual have to be reconfigured to capture the full economic, cultural, and political possibilities of the modern world.

This discourse exists in many variegated forms, and here we can only sketch some examples. The reason it is rarely associated with the conceptual history of authenticity is that the word authenticity is less frequently used in it than in the writings of Rousseau, Heidegger, and those who re-appropriated their language directly. And yet authenticity informs and energises such political visions, even if it frequently does not speak its name. One place we can look for such a view is in the work of Karl Marx, who, for all of his rejection of bourgeois capitalism and the oppression that he believed it engendered, nonetheless praised it for its revolutionary transformation of feudal society. Indeed, the opening sections of the 1848 Communist Manifesto read as something of a paean to the globally transformative power of mid-nineteenth-century capitalism, rescuing humankind as it has from the 'idiocy of rural life'. 60 Marx, of course, had his own view of what authentic human life might look like, one purged of the alienated labour that divorced humanity from its 'species being'. Living in accord with our species being, we would bring the problem of production under self-conscious, social control, choose our occupations freely, and produce in order to meet the needs of others rather than for exchange-value

and profit. His vision of unalienated labour was set out, in an almost romantic fashion, in the early 'Notes on James Mill'.

Let us suppose that we had carried out production as human beings. Each of us would have in two ways affirmed himself and the other person. 1) In my production I would have objectified my individuality, its specific character, and therefore enjoyed not only an individual manifestation of my life during the activity, but also when looking at the object I would have the individual pleasure of knowing my personality to be objective, visible to the senses and hence a power beyond all doubt. 2) In your enjoyment or use of my product I would have the direct enjoyment both of being conscious of having satisfied a human need by my work, that is, of having objectified man's essential nature, and of having thus created an object corresponding to the need of another man's essential nature. 3) I would have been for you the mediator between you and the species, and therefore would become recognised and felt by you yourself as a completion of your own essential nature and as a necessary part of yourself, and consequently would know myself to be confirmed both in your thought and your love. 4) In the individual expression of my life I would have directly created your expression of your life, and therefore in my individual activity I would have directly confirmed and realised my true nature, my human nature, my communal nature.61

In many ways, this text is an account of an authentic life in the sphere of production. It is replete with notions of what constitutes the essential nature of man. But it also has an inherently social dimension: in affirming my own essential nature in both the object and the process of production, I also affirm the essential characteristics of those for whom the objects are being produced. To produce authentically, I must understand not only myself, but all of humankind, which shares the same fundamental species being as myself. The problem for the Marxist becomes one of the possibility of organising society and economy in such a way as to make unalientated production possible for all.

We should note that the possibility of an authentic mode of production opens up the possibility that the goods so produced can also be seen as authentic. These goods represent the 'objectification' of humanity's species being. We find this view in Marx, but not only in Marx and not only on the political Left. As long as no alienating process injects itself in between the authentic self of the producer and the coming-into-being of the object that is being produced, the authenticity of the former confers itself upon the latter. The artist making a picture or a sculpture is an

ideal-typical form of such authentic production. The same idea underpins the ideological elevation of artisanship and handicrafts to bearers of moral virtue in many cultural contexts. Ayn Rand's 1943 novel The Fountainhead, supposedly a manifesto of American libertarianism and capitalism, actually says very little about either, but says a lot about the architect as the idealtypical, god-like creator of a new world cleansed of alienation and simulation.⁶² In celebrations of capitalist modernity such as Rand's, the attempt to cling on to past, and now outmoded, forms of architecture (in that particular case), but also modes of production, art, literature, domestic goods and so on, comes to be seen as the embodiment of inauthenticity. Howard Roark's nemesis in *The Fountainhead*, Peter Keating, represents this inauthentic mode—in contrast to Roark's insistence that he does things his way or not at all (to the point where he is willing to blow up a building for which his designs have been adulterated), Keating is always willing to add jarring Rococo or Neoclassical flourishes to his designs, if that is what his clients want or if he believes it will win him approval. His buildings stand as inauthentic as he himself is.

It is an element of the ideological malleability of the concept of authenticity that it can be applied to objects, the process of manufacturing those objects, or indeed the process of consuming those objects, as much as it can to the virtues or otherwise of a human life. A prominent example of this association can be seen in the arguments put forward by the Italian Futurists of the early twentieth century, as in the 1910 Manifesto "Against Past-Loving Venice", co-authored by F. T. Marinetti, Umberto Boccioni, Carlo Carrà, and Luigi Russolo. It is a call to arms against a material nostalgia embodied by the historical city of Venice, long a favourite tourist destination for European elites, and the embodiment of a cultured world unadulterated by the influence of modernity. To the Futurists, this city was but the outward manifestation of a spirit of inauthenticity, which can be eradicated only by a programme of radical physical destruction:

Away with you, venerable old Venice [...] We loved one another well enough while the nostalgic dream lasted, but now it's time to give you the boot. [...] Damn that [...] Grand Privy of traditionalism. Let us cleanse and cauterise this putrescent city, this festering bubo of the past. [...] Fill in all the stinking little canals with the rubble of those crumbling, leprous palaces. Burn all the gondolas, those rocking chairs for cretins. Raise up to high heaven a glorious symmetry of iron bridges, topped by a great canopy of smoke from the factories. What a backlash that would be at the sagging

curves of the miserable old buildings! And yes, may it come! The reign of Divine Electric Light, that will liberate Venice once and for all from the venal moonshine.⁶³

This text could simply be read as the Futurists' extolling the virtues of the modern. And yet the language used in this manifesto is steeped in the diction of authenticity: the violent destruction of past objects wished for here is not simply about facilitating an adaptation of the modern age: it is about enacting a fantasy of destruction of the inauthentic—captured by the metaphor of diseased bodies—to clear the path for something that is true, pure, and absolute. It is not the past that is rejected, but an inauthentic representation of a fictitious past, or a past past, in objects that have become function-less. Although they may have been authentic buildings in their historical day, they are now utterly outmoded, and just as kitsch as a Keating building.

This connection between modernity and authenticity was not just an elite phenomenon. The decades around 1900 witnessed the arrival of a host of new manufacturing technologies. Germany, which experienced a particularly rapid process of socio-economic modernisation from about 1890, emerged as one of the world's leading manufacturing powers, whose goods came to dominate world markets for decades to come. At the Philadelphia World's Fair of 1876, German products were dismissed as "cheap and nasty".64 Less than two decades later, German goods were highly praised internationally as 'quality products', technically reliable and morally authentic. Germans and their foreign rivals alike attributed the superiority of these objects to their capacity for embodying the identities of those who made them—while products that mimicked mere fashion lacked authenticity.⁶⁵ This claim, powerfully articulated by the *Deutscher* Werkbund, an early twentieth-century association of German industrialists, designers and political theorists, borrowed much of its vocabulary from the English Arts and Crafts movement and its association of authenticity with traditional artisanship. 66 Unlike the Arts and Crafts movement, however, the Werkbund embraced a vision of modernity that derived its political poignancy from its opposition to a pastiche version of tradition similar, in that respect, to the Manifesto against Venice. This ideological constellation was powerful, and enduring-and it was soon recognised globally. The idea of a German authenticity was symbolically 'magnified' by industrial mass production in ways that eluded the Arts and Crafts, but for the Werkbund's founding father, Hermann Muthesius, it also became the bearer of a mission of 'Germanising' the world through the proliferation of authentic objects which proved no less powerful than the 'civilising mission' of classical imperial ideologies:

The German form will be more than just a term used in patriotic speeches: it will become the world form. Today the ascendancy of German peoples on this earth is a certainty [...] It is not a question of ruling the world, financing the world, educating it, or providing it with goods and products. It is a question of shaping its appearance. Only when a nation accomplishes this act can it truly be said to stand at the top of the world: Germany must be that nation.⁶⁷

German industrial 'authenticity' featured prominently in the different ideological agendas of liberal imperialists of the Wilhelmine Empire, democratic modernists of the Weimar Republic, the propagandists of Nazi Germany, and the ideologues of Westernisation and the German 'economic miracle' of the 1950s. ⁶⁸ Some of these themes will be explored in more detail in Chap. 5 in this book, where we shall examine the notion of authenticity in the mass consumption of 'functional' industrial products.

It is easy to imagine such attempts at producing a collective, statesponsored authenticity, which re-moulds people in the image of an authentic polity, as inherently totalitarian, and to draw a trajectory from such projects to the plans to create a 'New Soviet Man' and a 'New Fascist Man' in the ideological upheavals of the early-to-mid twentieth century.⁶⁹ The Futurist agenda, in particular, seemed to feed directly into the "anthropological experiment" that was "often presented as the means and end of the Fascist revolution."⁷⁰ Yet historians have been rightly sceptical of work that focuses almost exclusively on the self-proclaimed aims of these regimes and their associated propaganda efforts, and suggested that the actual mechanisms at play in inscribing such ideologies in everyday life were rather more variegated.⁷¹ What is more important for the purposes of our discussion, however, is that the idea of a particular social or political order rendering individuals 'authentic' was by no means confined to so-called totalitarian regimes. Liberal societies, too, engaged in the moulding of model citizens, and, in doing so, enlisted their own imaginaries of authenticity. These manoeuvres may be somewhat less explicit than they are in Fascism or communism, but this does not necessarily make them any less powerful ideologically, and perhaps more so. In recent years, scholarship on material culture has explored how political concepts such as liberalism have been

'naturalised', both discursively and by being inscribed into physical infrastructures of governance and a habitus of 'governmentality'. Most scholarship in this vein has treated this decontested or 'invisible' quality as a particular characteristic of liberalism—Joyce's title, *The Rule of Freedom*, sums up this paradoxical quality.

Across political systems, then, we find elements of an attempt to liberate humankind from outmoded and subservient forms of collective life in favour of modes of living that were deemed to me more authentic: in Chap. 4, we shall explore how political leaders of different ideological persuasions have traded on such aspirations to authenticity. Opportunities for authenticity are offered, but only to those willing, and qualified, to grasp them in the right way; and in every case humanity had to be, to varying degrees, refashioned in order to have the capacity to take advantage of what was on offer. And in Chap. 5, we will examine the notion of 'authentic consumption', and explore how consumers took up and re-purposed the opportunities for realising authenticity offered by products such as those promoted by the German Werkbund. Modern notions of leadership and of consumption constitute fields in which the importance of the concept of authenticity is unambiguous—but its meaning is not. Both, we shall argue, were deeply mired in the ideas, practices, and representations of authenticity that we have explored in the first two chapters of this book.

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Authentic Leadership

Abstract This chapter traces the interconnected discourses of authentic leadership in modern politics and in corporate management. Authenticity, we argue, has become a popular panacea for dealing with corporate misconduct and corruption; it is also invoked, on the political Left and Right, as an antidote to political disillusionment. Yet a non-moralised version of authenticity is ill-suited to addressing these problems. It can also disadvantage social outsiders, including women, who do not mirror the cultural characteristics of political supporters or 'followers'.

Keywords Leadership • Youth • Trump • Corbyn • Hitler • Corporate misconduct

Introduction

Most of us, most of the time, follow leaders, whether we like it or not. We are citizens of a nation-state with a government that wields the ultimately non-negotiable power of state authority. Many of us will also be employed in private or public organisations with management hierarchies, and we may be members of sports clubs or other forms of social organisation with leadership committees. Even supposedly 'horizontal', leaderless forms of political organisation tend to develop informal leadership structures, as

people look to those who are more experienced or better resourced for guidance.¹ We may be, simultaneously, followers in some aspect of our lives and leaders in another, such as those in middle-management positions in corporations, universities, schools, etc., or business leaders who are also citizens.

What qualities do followers look for in their leaders? Anyone sufficiently interested in this question to run an internet search will find a plethora of lists such as '10 Traits of Great Leaders', '10 Traits All Great Leaders Possess' or 'The Top 10 Leadership Qualities'. As one might expect, there are leadership virtues common to pretty much all such lists. We want our leaders to have 'courage' (or 'assertiveness'), but also 'humility', 'vision', 'humour', 'dedication', 'accountability', 'patience', 'magnanimity', and so on through the litany of desirable characteristics. One other virtue that is cited repeatedly is that of 'integrity'—defined on one such list site as "the integration of outward actions and inner values. A person of integrity is the same on the outside and on the inside. Such an individual can be trusted because he or she never veers from inner values, even when it might be expeditious to do so. A leader must have the trust of followers and therefore must display integrity." As we will see in the rest of this chapter, this idea of the importance of a concordance or alignment between the inner values of the individual and their outward behaviour and leadership strategies is at the centre of a burgeoning interest in the notion of 'authentic leadership'.

If 'authentic leadership' is the answer, what is the problem? For many, it is political and corporate failure, caused by fake politicians and snake-oil businessmen. In the stereotypical political story, Western politicians learnt to say what the public wanted to hear, and not what they themselves believed, to the point where every political statement has been through multiple focus groups, and as a result everyone is saying pretty much the same thing—politics then becomes a matter of technocratic management rather than democratic competition, and the only question is one of who can manage state and economy most effectively. For all that this discourse is indeed a stereotype, what matters politically is not whether it is objectively true, but that it is believed by a significant segment of the population, for whom it generates a sense of alienation and dissatisfaction. This, in turn, opens the door for politicians who are willing to make a stand on their integrity or authenticity, and publicly articulate what they 'truly' believe (or, rather, make a public performance to that effect), supposedly without focus groups or spin, and

preferably at the risk of upsetting large numbers of their political opponents. This marks the rise of the 'authentic politician' who will emphasise qualities such as integrity, courage, and honesty—generally at the expense of other qualities such as humility, the capacity to build consensus, and openness.

In business, the clamour of authentic leadership comes on the back of a wave of corporate scandals, of which the Enron debacle of 2001 and the financial crisis of 2008 mark the peaks. Corporate failures are, of course, nothing new, but the poor ethical practice evident in many of these cases has led to widespread reflection amongst practitioners and business analysts on the causes of ethical failures in business management, and lack of authenticity has been singled out as a prime problem. This leads to a series of further questions: what does authentic leadership look like? How can followers identify the necessary markers of authenticity? Does the ideal of authentic leadership unfairly discriminate against groups around whom leadership roles have not been defined?

Authentic leadership is also articulated through the capacity to act in such a way as to innovate appropriately and stamp one's authority on the organisation that one is leading. Ayn Rand was an author with a sharp eye for inauthenticity, who still enjoys a cult following amongst defenders of radical libertarian and neo-conservative positions in business and politics, and who was a foundational figure in the evolution of so-called 'Objectivism'.³ The following passage from her 1943 novel *The Fountainhead* provides a good example. It portrays a meeting between the heroic protagonist of the novel, Howard Roark, and the Dean of an institute of architecture, from which a young Roark is about to be evicted:

"There is a treasure mine in every style of the past. We can only choose from the great masters. Who are we to improve upon them? We can only attempt, respectfully, to repeat."

"Why?" asked Howard Roark.

... "But it's self-evident" said the Dean,

"Look," said Roark evenly, and pointed at the window. "Can you see the campus and the town? Do you see how many men are walking and living down there? Well, I don't give a damn what any or all of them think about architecture – or about anything else for that matter. Why should I consider what their grandfathers thought of it?"

"That is our sacred tradition".

"Why?""4

Roark's repeated 'why?' and the Dean's inability to answer that question without invoking platitudes about self-evidence shows the Dean to be a follower rather than a leader. Completely embedded in notions of architectural tradition, the Dean cannot understand the inauthenticity of the architectural styles that he is defending. We see this when Roark offers to tell him what is 'rotten' about the Parthenon.

"It's the Parthenon!" said the Dean.

"Yes, God damn it, the Parthenon!"

The ruler struck the glass over the picture.

"Look," said Roark. "The famous flutings on the famous columns—what are they there for? To hide the joints in wood when columns were made of wood, only these aren't, they're marble. The triglyphs, what are they? *Wood*. Wooden beams, the way they had to be laid when people began to build wooden shacks. Your Greeks took marble and they made copies of their wooden structures out of it, because others had done it that way. Then your masters of the Renaissance came along and made copies in plaster of copies in marble of copies in wood. Now here we are, making copies in steel and concrete of copies in plaster of copies in marble of copies in wood. Why?"⁵

Ultimately, the Dean has no answer, other than that this is how things have always been done. His failure of leadership is not only that he cannot break free from the prison of tradition, but also that this commitment to tradition blinds him to Roark's extraordinary, revolutionary talent. Roark is the archetypal authentic man in Rand's gallery of characters. His attitude to even his most implacable enemies throughout the novel is more indifference than anger, and his steadfast integrity outrages others as it serves to highlight their own varying levels of hypocrisy.

Not being hidebound to tradition is a corollary of being true to one's inner values. Your guide in life, then, become the values you adopt and take responsibility for, not those that are externally imposed. It is not, *per se*, that the Dean *prefers* traditional architectural styles that is the problem, so much as that he has no *reason* for promoting those styles other than that this is 'the sacred tradition.' He is a slave to convention, a determinate sign of an inauthentic leader.

AUTHENTICITY IN POLITICAL LEADERSHIP

"The biggest attribute you can now have in politics is authenticity."6

Recent years have witnessed the rise of what is often described as a 'new breed' of politician: they define themselves less through a traditional political programme, but through personal attributes—attributes that, in turn, are 'signifiers of their supporters' disgust and frustration' with the political establishment.⁷ Over the last two years, three names that have emerged particularly frequently in this regard are Donald Trump and Bernie Sanders in the USA, and Jeremy Corbyn in the UK. Although they stand for very different political goals, their popular appeal is grounded in their perceived 'authenticity'. The following three descriptions in the media referred to these three politicians, but could be applied interchangeably to each of them:

"His words have not been scripted or prepared for the press; he speaks from the heart."

"It's now clear to every voter that [he] is nothing but himself."

"No Bullshit. Unvarnished opinion and beliefs."8

Since antiquity, politics has come to be seen as a sphere of action in human life marked by compromise, negotiation, and the trading of interests; compared to this understanding, each of these three political actors plays on their 'outsider' status with regard to that domain. Trende adds two other dimensions that may have assisted the rise of political authenticity in recent years. First, the 'wreckage of the Great Recession', starting with the banking crisis in 2008, that has widened the gap between the elite and 'everyday experience', in turn making those identified as elite actors both more resented and less trusted than before. Second, people's ability to use the internet has increased their ability to "ferret out inauthenticity amongst candidates".9

According to Trende, the strongest indicator of support for Donald Trump in 2016 was not education, income, or anti-immigrant sentiment, but the perception that 'people like me don't have any say'. ¹⁰ The authentic candidate, in other words, gives voice to those who cannot otherwise be heard in an inauthentic world. Thus, when people see Trump or Sanders, they see a version of themselves; in this scenario, what are traditionally perceived as political flaws can actually reinforce the authenticity of the leader in question. When these candidates were mocked for their hair or manners or speech, the mockery "channels every cultural slight these voters have faced in the past decade". ¹¹ Personal attacks can thereby strengthen the bond between the 'authentic' candidate and his supporters, particularly if candidates can use these insults to build a 'them versus us' narrative.

This brings us to another quality of our trio of 'authentic' politicians collectively they had (at least before Trump assumed the Presidency of the USA) very little in terms of a record of political responsibility to attack. This is a corollary of their status as outsiders. So, while Corbyn can attack his opponent's record in office, it is, as UK commentator Charles Moore notes, "true that one cannot blame him for any decision made by any government in his lifetime, since he has opposed, as an MP, pretty much everything enacted by either ruling party for a third of a century". 12 They are all, up to the point of election to leadership positions, 'clean hands' politicians, their authenticity thus uncorrupted by the previous exercise of power. This quality has proved attractive, particularly to young, first-time voters. Of course, voting decisions always have more than one cause. Statistically, younger voters tend to lean more towards the political Left than older ones, so we might expect Sanders and Corbyn to do better than Trump in this regard. However, although young voters went for Clinton over Trump in the Presidential election of 2016, in the Democratic primaries they overwhelmingly supported Sanders over Clinton by a large margin—Sanders won over 70 per cent of the under-30 vote. 13 Similarly, in the UK, young voters supported a Corbyn-led Labour Party over the Conservative Party by a huge margin—to the point where the polling organisation YouGov (one of the few polling organisations to call the UK general election result correctly on the basis of a large-scale constituency analysis) stated that 'age is the new class' in relation to voting intentions. 14 Labour were 46 per cent ahead amongst 18-19-year-olds, while the Conservatives led by fifty points amongst the over-70s. 15 As Paul Starr observes, the desire for authenticity is a recurrent aspect of youth politics.¹⁶

Yet this argument could also be reversed. While the authentic politician seems to exercise a particular attraction for young supporters, 'youth' itself is also a key ideological trope in discourses around authenticity. The *Huffington Post* recently diagnosed an increasing obsession with the under-30s as high achievers in US culture. In regularly published lists celebrating the successes of the young (variously defined as people under 25, under 30, or sometimes under 40), as CEOs, authors, inventors, or simply generic high earners, 'youth' itself becomes an aspirational good: the same success achieved by an older person is perceived as tainted, because it is part of a system, not an authentic individual achievement.

The ideological fetishisation of youth as a marker of authenticity is, however, not as new a historical phenomenon as recent media coverage suggests. The decades around 1900 saw a proliferation of 'youth

movements' that laid claim to a spiritual and ideological authority based on the rejection of traditional or 'Mandarin' politics as conducted by older elites. ¹⁸ As Wohl put it:

Around the end of the nineteenth century the idea of generational rebellion began to crystallize into a cluster of attitudes than can be called the ideology of youth. The ideology was a by-product of the century-long pursuit of social liberation. [...] The *Jugendbewegung* in Germany and Austria, the nationalist revival in France, the revolt of young Socialists against the party leadership in Italy, the mobilization of young intellectuals in Spain against the existing parties were all manifestations of the desire of young people to broaden their personal feelings of generational uniqueness into social movements. [... Their] goal was both to save youth from the corruption by adult values and to transform the society at large by infusing it with youthful ardour and enthusiasm for noble, noncommerical tasks. It operated on the premise that youth was a superior and privileged state of life, beyond which lay degeneration. [...] It went on to claim that youth was a higher form of human existence. Some of its more extreme leaders went so far as to declare a war of youth against the adult world.¹⁹

If the 'adult world' represented an alienated form of politics and public life, youth was here imagined as the antidote, the quality that infused a sense of authenticity and spiritual energy into a new form of politics. The interwar period saw these new forms of anti-politics take more concrete shape, on both the Right and the Left, with a new generation of political leaders posing as the embodiments of the energy, freshness, and aspirations of the young. Radical leaders not only looked to youth as a generation of people they could shape in their own image, creating, for example, the fascist or Soviet 'new man'. They also fetishised youth as an ideological quality that was the hallmark of their political vision, promising radical solutions to the problem of alienation, and conjuring up the prospect of a political system that authentically represented the interests or desires of ordinary people better than a negotiated, multi-party system. Within National Socialism in particular, the desire to speak for and on behalf of youth was repeatedly invoked to define what was different about a politics that rejected the precedents of the Weimar Republic wholesale.

The rise of the 'authentic political leaders' was thus one that was intimately intertwined with the idea of youth—but youth here functions, in large part, as a metaphor for an authentic, unalienated state of selfhood. Thus, throughout the twentieth century, political leaders, especially those

in radical, totalitarian regimes, claimed to embody the spirit of youth, even if, like Corbyn and Sanders, they were anything but young themselves. The totalitarian regimes that emerged in Europe in the 1920s and 30s certainly paid great attention to the mobilisation of youth, in part by absorbing and reconfiguring existing youth movements, and by making youth the target of radical campaigns of re-education and indoctrination.²⁰ At the same time, however, these political movements did not confine their appeal to youth. Youth, to them, was, instead, a hallmark of their ability to act authentically—a trope that occurred prominently in the propaganda of these regimes, and in the ego-documents produced by leaders such as Goebbels and Hitler. A particularly interesting example of this kind is Joseph Goebbels's semi-autobiographical novel Michael of 1929.21 In it, the later Nazi Propaganda Minister tells the story of an ideal-typical German youth, Michael, whose tragic personal fate, which ends in his semi-voluntary self-sacrifice in a mining disaster, is emblematic of the alienation of life in Weimar Germany for young veterans from the First World War. Michael's clash with mainstream society, its expectations and institutions, is not about any explicitly political stance: it is, rather, about his desire to lead an authentic life 'before the time is right', i.e., before National Socialism has created conditions in which it is possible to realise an authentic self. Caught up in these contradictions, Michael tries his hands at various crafts, at being an artist, and, finally, a manual worker, but as he cannot find authenticity in a profoundly inauthentic social world, his fate is, inevitably, death. His death, we learn in a pseudo-Nietzschean foreword, is however not an end point, but the foundation for a spiritual 'resurrection' of an authentic German people. In it, Goebbels writes: "Decay and dissolution do not signify downfall, but rise and arrival. [...] Youth today is livelier than ever before. It believes. In what? That's what the struggle is about. From its midst the shoots of a new way of being carefully find their way towards the light. Youth, confronted with old age, is always in the right."²² In spite of its extravagant Expressionist rhetoric, Goebbels' assertions here mirrored a widespread preoccupation, both of the Left and the Right of the German political spectrum of the 1920s, with a sense of cultural crisis and alienation, which only a radical rebellion of youth can heal.23

Thus, the idea of an authentic leader both channelling the energies of youth and spearheading a political revolution that does away with 'politics as usual' is as old as the rise of mass politics itself—even if, in the European context, this language gained particular political virulence as a result of the

combined effects of rapid shockwaves of modernisation, and the impact of the First World War. What is interesting not note here is that the fetishisation of 'youth' in this discourse mirrors the association of authenticity with prelapsarian nature that we explored in Chapter 2 of this book. Not only did the various youth movements of the decades around 1900, as described by Wohl, all share a desire to spend time in the outdoors, which they imagined as an authentic space from which they could draw inspiration in their spiritual struggle against the established order of adult life. Youth itself is also a particular stage in the life cycle, which is here imagined as a guarantee of innocence and authenticity, in much the same way as the prelapsarian myth imagines the youthful state of Creation as a stage of authentic being, to which we can try to return through a series of strategies that reverse the corrupting effects of alienation that occurred with mankind's maturity, and recover its earlier condition.

What is new in more recent politics, then, is not so much political leaders claiming to embody authentic alternatives to a corrupt political system, but the ways in which such claims are now made, and acted upon, within the confines of parliamentary democracy, rather than just in radical opposition to it. The move of such oppositional youth politics into parliamentary democracies was facilitated in the post-war world by the student protest movements of the 1960s. As a student, Bernie Sanders was involved with the Civil Rights Movement, was an active protest organiser for the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, arranging sit-ins and freedom rides against racial discrimination in the American South; he also organised protests against segregation of housing in major American cities. Corbyn's political career began at a similar moment, when he joined the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, and his political career since has been very much that of a campaigner for radical, anti-establishment causes: for the Guildford Four, the Birmingham Six, against military intervention in Afghanistan and Iraq, for Mordechai Vanunu, who was imprisoned in Israel for giving away its nuclear secrets, for Palestine, at the World Social Forum 2004 in Mumbai, at the legality of war conference of the European Left, for 'Stop the War', which he chairs, for the Antarctica Act of 1996, and so forth. In 2016-17, these politics, in style as well as substance, seem very remote: but they have made a remarkable comeback in part because they served as a vehicle to transport the political language, style, and symbolism of a youth protest movement—the slogan of the 1968'er student protesters was famously: "don't trust anyone over 30"24—into the fabric of mainstream opposition politics.

Given the historical trajectories of youth protest movements, first when they tried to attack the established order directly, later when they tried to change this order by subverting it from within, it is unsurprising that many commentators today view figures such as Sanders, and especially Corbyn, with suspicion. If to be authentic is to be true to oneself, by revealing and acting upon one's innermost core convictions, then in a politician, it is a quality that seems antithetical to the practical skills of negotiation and compromise conventionally expected of democratic political leaders. Commentators such as Starr thus admonish modern electorates that politics "is not today and never has been a sphere for the display of the authentic self". 25 In this view, their political success rests not only on conjuring up 'unrealistic' expectations, but also in denigrating the normal political process and thus producing, rather than just responding to, a sense of inauthenticity in contemporary politics: it relies "on the very campaign tactics responsible for making the political class seem so dishonest and inauthentic" in the first place. 26 And yet, just as public mockery increases the popularity of Trump amongst his constituency by channelling their own feelings of being slighted by society, so worthy interventions by commentators such as Starr criticising political rebels such as Sanders and Corbyn for sticking to 'outdated' radical principles and lacking pragmatism and negotiating experience is most likely to increase their popularity, because it underscores their essential difference from inauthentic form of normal 'adult politics'.

And yet the resurgence of 'authenticity candidates' in the second decade of the twenty-first century is not one that we can account for fully by reference to particular political traditions and pedigrees. In politics, as in every other sphere of life that we have examined in previous chapters, 'authenticity' is never a self-contained concept. It is, rather, shaped and energised by authenticity discourses in seemingly unconnected fields, which exercise a powerful hold on the public imagination. The 'ideal type' of the authentic political leader is co-produced by a broader discourse on authenticity and leadership, which plays out in many arenas of social life beyond formal politics. One field that has proven particularly influential in the recent past is the idea of the authentic business leader. The cross-over is, of course, very apparent in the self-stylisation of Donald Trump. It was not Trump's political experience or programme that first propelled him to political prominence: it was, instead, his role as host, in 14 separate seasons, of the hugely popular television show *The Apprentice*.²⁷ At its peak, the show was watched by over 28 million viewers, and thus one of the most-watched programmes on NBC, with a core demographic of viewers aged between 18 and 49.²⁸ In the show, Trump modelled the figure of the billionaire corporate leader, who was, or was presented as, an authentic self-made man, whose character attributes ordinary members of the public could emulate and prove by completing a set of intuitively accessible tasks in front of a television audience, and thus assume the coveted role of Trump's business apprentice. Rose and Wood have described this type of show as an example of "consumer practices of authenticity-seeking in a postmodern cultural context", and argue that they "blend fantastic elements of programming with indexical elements connected to [the audience's] lived experiences to create a form of self-referential hyperauthenticity". 29 In this way, such constructions of authentic leadership transcend the specific politics of Trump. The ideal type of the authentic leader that is performed and popularised in this way appeals not only to voters on the political Right; it draws, as well, on a discourse which presents authentic leadership in business environments as the solution to many problems that have been castigated by various political groups, including leftist and environmental movements, as well as many ordinary concerned citizens. It is to this discourse that we shall now turn to better understand the notion of authentic leadership in the context of the twenty-first century.

AUTHENTICITY AND CORPORATE LEADERSHIP

Discussions about how to be an effective leader in the workplace date back at least to the nineteenth century. We find them not just in specialist 'howto' guides, but also in the portrayals of successful business people in novels, films, and, more recently, even computer games. Yet such discussions have been propelled to particular prominence recently by a public crisis of confidence in corporate leadership in the wake of a series of scandals—the banking crisis of 2008, corporate misconduct at Enron, the Bernie Madoff Ponzi scheme, and spectacular failures to adhere to safety standards that caused major environmental disasters in the last decade, to name but a few. The various combinations of malfeasance and negligence involved in these cases have led several of those who either work on, or work in, corporate management to embrace 'authentic leadership' as offering a path out of the mire of corporate malpractice, and so writing on authentic leadership has developed a very strong normative dimension. It is based on the assumption of a serious moral problem in corporate leadership (which is in part produced by financial incentives and temptations toward dishonest

practice that have always been part of market transactions), for which authentic leadership can help us find a solution.

What conception of authenticity is deployed in this discourse? There is, as one might expect, more than one on offer. This is, not least, because there are at least three families of literature on authentic corporate leadership, each of which is included in this discussion. Firstly, there is an academic literature that makes explicit connections between business ethics and work in the philosophy of authenticity. We shall here explore the example of Kevin Jackson's work on Sartre and business ethics, and Sparrowe's discussion of Paul Ricoeur and a narrative understanding of human agency. A second literature on corporate leadership and authenticity is interested in the discriminatory validity and empirical applicability of the concept: in this section, we shall discuss examples written by Avolio and Gardner, Eagly, and Michie and Gooty. While this literature is less likely to draw explicit connections with the philosophy of authenticity, there are often implicit traces of such work. The third body of literature is both by and for practitioners. Generally written by those involved in leadership training in corporate environments, such works have practical objectives. They ask readers to reflect upon their current practices, on their core values and beliefs, and on how they can bring their 'core self' into their management practice. Yet even here, we find considerable reflection on the nature of authenticity. Examples we will focus on include the books by Thacker, Inam, and Bunker and Wakefield.

For all of these authors, the basic injunctions of 'know thyself', and then (once oneself is revealed), 'to thine own self be true', remain the ground for any authenticity claim. Like many other contemporary commentators, Gardner traces the authenticity he advocates back to the ancient Greeks and the aphorism 'know thyself'.30 Some form of selfknowledge is taken to be central to most conceptions of authenticity, and leading authentically entails "acting in accordance with one's true self". 31 For Inam, from a practitioner perspective, authentic leadership is about "leading from the core of who we are". 32 Also from a practitioner background, Thacker asserts that the essence of authenticity is 'being yourself', and Michie and Gooty cite Harter to the effect that authenticity implies that one "acts in accordance with the true self". 33 For Kernis, it is the "unobstructed operation of one's true, or core, self in one's daily enterprise".34 Many other examples could be given from the literature on corporate leadership, as this idea of being true to a core self is absolutely central to many (although as we shall see not all) conceptions of authenticity. That assertion leads to a very obvious question: if I must be true to myself, then who am I? For Gardner, authentic leaders continually ask this question of themselves.³⁵ It is when we come to the kind of answer that might be generated by leaders asking 'who am I?', that we see that theories of authentic leadership begin to diverge.

One view is that this is, above all, a project of *self-knowledge*, of undertaking an introspective journey that reveals what our core values and convictions are. These values and convictions then provide the raw material upon which the authentic leader bases his or her actions and interactions with others. Authentic leaders must be "honest and genuine" and aim to achieve "concordance between their core values and their behaviour." They "lead from a conviction", having "a value-based cause or a mission that they want to promote." The values and convictions of the authentic leader should be communicated 'transparently' to followers, thereby building a relationship of trust within the workplace, community, or broader society.

Such an understanding can imply a static or fixed sense of selfhood. We have our core values and convictions, which are brought to the surface by reflecting on personal experiences and 'trigger events'. Authentic leadership then becomes a question of communicating and acting upon these with honesty and integrity. In some ways, this brings us back to political actors such as Bernie Sanders and Jeremy Corbyn—part of their appeal lies in the idea that they have been at the margins of their parties because of their beliefs, but that this has never caused them to waver in their deeply held principles. Corbyn, on this view, is authentic in both knowing what his values are, and in communicating these values clearly and unwaveringly to his followers.

Achieving authenticity of this sort requires work. As Thacker puts it, being authentic is like keeping in shape physically: "it is a daily decision and there is no substitute for doing the work". Inam makes a very similar point: "authenticity comes from practice. Practicing authenticity is like working out our muscles." But is this mental work-out an exercise in discovering who we are, or an exercise in self-creation? For Thacker, the 'daily work' involves making progress in four different areas, as authenticity is a 'multiple component variable'. Part of that does involve gaining 'selves'-awareness (stressing the need for successful leaders to engage in 'self-monitoring' and adapt their projected self differently in different situations), but also the need to work toward unbiased processing, an appropriate level of transparency about core values, and bringing concordance

between values and behaviour.⁴⁰ All of this would be compatible with the view that there is a core self that is relatively stable over time in terms of values and beliefs.

Other writers on authentic leadership in business look to take a more dynamic, storied or narrative approach to authenticity, seeing it as a process of *self-making* rather than just self-discovery. Sparrowe complains that, while existing perspectives on authenticity are indeed developmental—characterised by a growing awareness of one's true self—that self is not sufficiently dynamic, which in turn limits the ability of a leader to inspire others: "followers are transformed not because leaders retreat to their inner selves, but because their leaders offer them alternative ways of being". Selves are not given, waiting to be discovered, they are created, and in order to capture this process, Sparrowe draws on Ricoeur's theory of the self as a narrative project.

This 'self as a narrative project' approach accommodates a dialectic between constancy and change. We may experience life, and learn, as a single self; at the same time, if someone tells us 'I was a different person back then', that claim is intelligible to us. A narrative approach captures how the values and purposes of a person change through time and under the influence of events, but still relate to same individual. Such an approach rejects both the belief that there is a unchanging 'self', and the idea of the self as a substantialist illusion, imposing a false coherence on fragmented experience. Sparrowe and other authors who take this view when commenting on corporate leadership offer a 'third', narrative path that provides a 'bridge between what is lived and what is told'. As Ricoeur put it, "as for the narrative unity of a life, it must be seen as an unstable mixture of fabulation and actual experience".⁴²

This might be read as a recipe for the realisation of inauthentic leadership, as leaders selectively disclose what it is they think their followers want to hear, and 'fabulate' about their own life experiences. We might see the leader with a narrative conception of the self as a myth-maker. For Sparrowe, this is not the case, because character is attested through the narrative process. ⁴³ Values and purposes are disclosed in relation to the changing events of a narrative life, and the narrative self is formed through repeated interactions with others over time. Everyone will be biased in the telling of their own story, and each narrative is by definition selective, in ways that suit the purpose and interests of the narrator. Yet such self-revelation does not take place in a vacuum. The development of a narrative plot (the 'emplotment', in Ricoeur's terminology) brings together

"agents, goals, means, interactions, circumstances, and unexpected results" the self is both created and revealed in emplotment. The dramatisation of the life narrative renders the leader accessible to followers, and therefore open to their judgement; in this way, narrative makes them authentic.

'Emplotment' can, however, be used to legitimate inherently authoritarian rather than pluralistic notions of leadership. It is useful here to draw on a comparison from the world of politics. In the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, a tradition of confessional writing emerged, most clearly in Pietist or evangelical 'conversion narrative', that used emplotment to ascertain absolute truths. 45 This, in turn, shaped conventions of writing more secular life narratives in diaries, long letters, and autobiographies that are primarily about the 'discovery' of the true self. 46 In the twentieth century, this genre was used by real or aspiring political leaders to establish their credentials. A particularly influential example was Hitler's infamous Mein Kampf. Written during Hitler's imprisonment in 1923 after an abortive putsch attempt, the book was published, in two volumes, in 1925 and 1926; up to 1945, 12.5 million copies were sold or distributed in Germany, in over one thousand editions, with millions more published in a host of translations. Historians have pointed out that this was not a 'proper' political text: not a traditional party manifesto, not a blueprint for political action, not even propaganda as conventionally understood. 47 And yet Mein Kampf played a defining role for National Socialism, because it used the device of 'emplotment' to allow the reader to experience the 'discovery' of the animating principles of the movement through an intensely personal account. Hitler drew extensively on other texts, which he often copied almost verbatim; Hitler's sources included many mainstream conservative, occasionally liberal, and at times even socialist works, as well as iconic texts of Western thought, from Homer and the Bible to Francis Bacon and Ernst Jünger. 48 But Hitler incorporated such references into his personal story, and this use of 'emplotment' was what made the text so influential. Hitler's begins the book with a personal account of discovery: of his own passion for the outdoors, for play fighting with his friends, for a life beyond the civil service career that his family envisaged for him, and the traumatic arguments with his father that ensued. The narrative guides the reader, through sentiment, intuition, and identification, towards the supposed 'truths' of the leader's personal political philosophy—and it establishes the credibility of the leader as the 'natural choice' for implementing the aims of the movement, and addressing the grievances of his followers.

Hitler stylised himself as a solitary being in opposition to social forces. But the narrative approach to authenticity can also accommodate the view that a self is constituted in dialogue with others. The process relies upon our ability to see ourselves as a character in a life story. As some of the more recent literature on business leadership argues, we have to construe the self as an object of reflection.⁴⁹ The development process here is not one of coming to understand the nature of one's essential self, but about deciding between different options and priorities. In the process of making decisions, we select, not merely reveal, those values which have the highest degree of importance for us. This, in turn, does not come about through narcissistic self-absorption, but in considering others. "What matters in relation to positive principles and values are the regard leaders demonstrate for their followers and the esteem they hold for themselves. The two are inextricably related."50 Such narratives of authenticity are cocreated and mutually interpreted. The outcome this narrativisation is what Freeman and Auster call a 'poetic self', as opposed to the 'discovered' essential self.⁵¹ Similarly, Boas and Eilem stress that authenticity cannot be merely subjective. The relationship with followers brings an intersubjective dimension to the concept, and a leader's own self-concept of authenticity should depend to a considerable extent on the authentication of their leadership by followers.⁵² The life story that a leader communicates conveys his or her qualities, their strengths and weaknesses, and provides an account of their values. All of this is judged by followers in their evaluation of the leader—followers look for 'authenticity markers'. Authentic followership involves the "continuous process" of evaluating the authenticity of a leader.⁵³

This search for 'authenticity markers' on the part of followers raises a set of normative concerns for some theorists of authentic leadership. What if the leader does not share many markers with the group, and is not 'prototypical' of them? These markers are about identity, not just shared values. What if, in other words, the leader is an outsider? Eagly explores the implications of this in regard to gender and leadership. The potential problems for leaders who do not share the right 'markers' for authenticity are at least twofold. They may not share the same values as the follower group; or followers may simply assume such a clash, because of divergent identity markers. Gender provides one example of this. Expectations about values and identity have been constructed along gendered lines. In roles where 'masculine' traits of competitiveness and assertiveness are highly valued, women displaying 'feminine' qualities (focusing on co-operative working, say) do

not have the right identity markers to win over potential followers.⁵⁴ But if they adopt the required masculine virtues (Eagly cites the example of Ann Hopkins at Price Waterhouse), their behaviour attracts criticism because the instantiation and advocacy for those values is not deemed authentic for women. So, women lose out either way, they have either inappropriate values or the 'right' values with the 'wrong' identity, and the path of authentic leadership is not open for them via either route. As Eagly notes, the same problem applies to any identity that constitutes an 'outsider' status in a particular workplace: class, speech, sexuality, race, accent, etc. Inam, too, argues that authenticity challenges in business are different for male and female leaders because of gender expectations.⁵⁵ A similar point is made in Hogg's 'social identity' theory of leadership. All of us segment the social world into in-groups and out-groups that are schematically stored in memory as prototypes, and these prototypes then become a heuristic short-cut for making judgements about people we come to afresh.⁵⁶ Outsiders may suffer from a 'legitimacy deficit' in their dealings with potential followers, which is rooted in the specific culture of an organisation, but which also reflects society as a whole.⁵⁷

Such observations suggest limits to 'self-creation' in the pursuit of relational authenticity. It is a useful reminder that the agency of leadership takes place within a context that may be very 'sticky' and slow to change. If an authentic relationship between leaders and followers is fundamentally grounded in trust, ⁵⁸ then it may be inaccessible to those leaders who lack appropriate markers of cultural identity, and from whom, therefore, the followers' trust will be withheld. This would be true however much they 'owned' their personal experiences and communicated their values and convictions sincerely and transparently. The same problem occurs with political leaders: politics in the UK and USA has, historically, been highly masculine in its operations, and it is perhaps no coincidence that two party leaders in recent years who have been repeatedly criticised for their apparent *inauthenticity* have been Hillary Clinton and Theresa May.⁵⁹

For all these caveats, most of the texts we have analysed here promote the aspiration to bring authenticity into corporate management; authentic leadership has also become key to many management training programmes. But there are also sceptics. For Jackson, training in authenticity is an oxymoron: it clashes with notions of self-responsibility and free choice. He considers it 'odd' for Business Schools to offer training in authenticity: "any such regimen would no sooner be specified than it would become an insidious form of indoctrination". There are also

questions about the moral status of authenticity in leadership. For Sparrowe, the problem is that authentic leadership is "resolute in its indifference to moral postures".⁶¹ In this regard, authenticity may be somewhat like courage or perseverance. A virtue, perhaps, but one that can be put in the service of ends that others might regard as morally sound, morally neutral, or morally repugnant. Just as one can imagine the 'courageous Nazi' prepared to run into a hail of bullets for what he believes in, so we might imagine the authentic racist, transparently communicating her core values for the world to see. If that is an accurate representation of the core values of the agent, it would be hard to deny the authenticity of how he or she has chosen to be. This is why Sparrowe places such emphasis on the relationship between leaders and followers, and the open, public dimension of emplotment.

In response to such concerns, some writers have suggested that ethical standards are inherent to the authentic leadership concept. Michie and Gooty cite a number of authors who have "argued that authentic leaders strive to do what is right and fair for all stakeholders and may willingly sacrifice self-interests for the collective good of their work unit, organization, community, or entire society. Such leaders are said to engage in selftranscending behaviours because they are intrinsically motivated to be consistent with high-end, other regarding values."62 They posit an intrinsic link between achieving clarity about one's core values and communicating them clearly, on the one hand, and cleaving to a particular kind of value structure on the other, which is altruistic, and in which notions of the right and the fair take centre stage. This can be asserted as part of the process of contesting the meaning of conceptual language, but the logic is a little baffling. In almost all renditions of authenticity, at its heart lies the idea of being true to one's own values, not a particular social hierarchy of values. If authenticity becomes tied to a specific set of values, then it no longer appears to be anything distinctive from holding a particular moral position per se, other than the proviso that one holds that position reflexively and transparently. But what if these values are not my values? Is it inherently inauthentic to hold different values to a form of, say, Kantian ethics?

What authentic leadership is, and whether we need it, remain contested questions. It may be a journey of self-discovery or self-creation, of affirming an essentialist self or transcending that self, it may be about creating a narrative or rejecting the whole idea of life as narrative, and it maybe an aspiration that is inherently biased against any 'outsiders' to the cultural

norm of an organisation or society. These conceptions travel back and forth between seemingly separate discourses on leadership in the corporate sector and in modern politics. It is both ironic and significant that Hitler's Mein Kampf not only echoes some features of the discourse on business leadership, but that in countries such as India, Mein Kampf is still widely used by students on leadership in business and management studies courses. As The Telegraph reported in 2009, Indian booksellers explain that "the surge in sales [of Mein Kampf] was due to demand from students who see it as a self-improvement and management strategy guide for aspiring business leaders, and who were happy to cite it as an inspiration".63 This may not be quite as surprising as it first seems, when such autobiographical approaches are endorsed by contemporary writers on authentic leadership. "[I]n constructing their life-stories leaders explain and justify their present self, which includes their leadership motivations 'for, more than many forms of speech, autobiographical discourse expresses more directly than other discourses one's sense of self, identity, and motivation for acting in the world."64 This does not mean, of course, that such readers embrace a distinctive Nazi ideology. Our examination of the authenticity appeals of Corbyn, Sanders, and Trump demonstrated that appropriations of authentic leadership cross radical political divides. The intentions of such re-appropriations are not always callous, nor are they necessarily separate from legitimate moral concerns. As we have seen, the boom in demands for, and definitions of, authentic leadership in recent years has been fuelled, at least in part, by a desire to respond to ethical failings of leadership in the recent past.

But if the discourse of authenticity is taken to provide an answer, it is worth asking ourselves again what exactly the question is that it addresses. Cooper et al. touch on this—the 'creators' of the construct of authentic leadership contend that a lack of ethical leadership, coupled with an increase in societal challenges, such as economic instability or geopolitical threats, drive the quest for authentic leadership. ⁶⁵ The examples offered in such arguments are telling: companies such as WorldCom and Enron were the victims of fundamental dishonesty at the corporate leadership level. While it may be true that the likes of Jeffrey Skilling and Ken Lay at Enron behaved inauthentically, that they acted fraudulently and dishonestly would seem to be the larger problem. ⁶⁶ If the desire to do what is 'right and fair' is deemed integral to authenticity, it may provide a partial answer. But from the point of view of the more plausible non-moralised concepts of authenticity, the appropriateness of this response is questionable. If the

core values of corporate leaders are profit maximisation and increasing shareholder value, what does it mean to pursue these goals authentically? Do the moral constraints against acting illegally in pursuit of these objectives come from authenticity itself, or from elsewhere? If a leader can maximise shareholder returns through an illegal trading action, in ways that are unlikely to be discovered, authenticity offers few inherent incentives to choose a different course of action. On our reading of the literature of leadership and authenticity, it is far from obvious what such a constraint might be, without importing a moral code of conduct that fits rather awkwardly with the idea of self-realisation or self-creation through authenticity.

Beyond the world of corporate governance, the idea that authenticity in political leaders will help address societal challenges raises even more fundamental questions. This is not just because political problems are inherently complex, and defy straightforward solutions through authentic leadership. These challenges themselves often draw on authenticity as a way of mobilising opposition to the established political order. The end of the Cold War briefly gave rise to a sense that we were witnessing the end of traditional ideological conflict, and the rise of a new politics that would only be concerned with pragmatic problems of implementation of liberal, technocratic principles. Political questions in this imaged future would evolve around how best to achieve a set of common-sensical political objectives, not about the fundamental questions of how we should live or be in the world, which had underpinned more radically ideological conflicts of the past.⁶⁷ If we take this view of post-Cold War politics as read, then the transfer of models of 'authentic leadership' from the corporate domain to the political world is unsurprising. And yet contemporary politics has assumed a very different shape from that predicted by Fukuyama in 1989. This is not only because the economics of globalisation produced powerful opposition movements from those who felt they 'lost out' from this process, and looked to national leaders to reassert and defend 'the national interest'—as evident in the recent rise of leaders such as Trump and Le Pen, and the Brexit referendum in the UK. The political rhetoric of such movements is infused with the notion of defending authentic national cultures against the threat of 'globalism' and its manifestations, from multinational corporations to flows of migrants and refugees. But even beyond such topical debates, the recent political landscape has been profoundly transformed by the rise of a phenomenon often referred to 'identity politics'. Identity politics certainly predated 1989, but since then it is has

moved from the margins to the centre of political discourse. Identity politics originated as a rebellion of marginalised social groups against the political consensus. According to Heyes,

the laden phrase 'identity politics' has come to signify a wide range of political activity and theorizing founded in the shared experiences of injustice of members of certain social groups. Rather than organizing solely around belief systems, programmatic manifestos, or party affiliation, identity political formations typically aim to secure the political freedom of a specific constituency marginalized within its larger context. Members of that constituency assert or reclaim ways of understanding their distinctiveness that challenge dominant oppressive characterizations, with the goal of greater self-determination.⁶⁸

Although Heyes is sceptical of polemical critiques of identity politics that argue, dismissively, that all identity politics are grounded in imagined 'authentic' group identities that have far less empirical coherence than these imaginaries suggest, she acknowledges a set of common features in all identity politics, which are antithetical to a universal political consensus of the kind identified by Fukuyama. From the perspective of identity politics, such a consensus is little more than the rationalisation of the economic, political, and moral interests of one dominant social group at the expense of others. These 'others' are defined not, or at least not primarily, by ideological divergence from the mainstream, but by immutable characteristics of their shared group 'identity', which can relate to gender, ethnicity, religion, or a more complex amalgam of various of these features. This ties identity politics directly to the question of authenticity. As Taylor suggests, modern identity politics is characterised by an "emphasis on its inner voice and capacity for authenticity—that is, the ability to find a way of being that is somehow true to oneself".69 Similarly, Kruks argues that

what makes identity politics a significant departure from earlier, preidentarian forms of the politics of recognition is its demand for recognition on the basis of the very grounds on which recognition has previously been denied: it is *qua* women, *qua* blacks, *qua* lesbians that groups demand recognition. The demand is not for inclusion within the fold of 'universal humankind' on the basis of shared human attributes; nor is it for respect 'in spite of' one's differences. Rather, what is demanded is respect for oneself *as* different.⁷⁰

If political mobilisation in identity politics relies on the real or imagined authenticity of the identities in question, then this calls for 'authentic' political leadership from someone who models the alleged characteristics of the group. It is unsurprising that, in a dialectical twist, the 'response' from established politicians, as from established corporate power, has been to develop a strong discourse around authentic leadership of their own. This dialectical relationship is thrown into particularly sharp relief when identity politics clashes with the official political system, as in the case of Islamist extremism in the West, and the resulting calls for strong, authentic leadership in the face of a terrorist threat. As Japp has argued, "the style of this prevention [of terror attacks] is typically displaying authenticity. The politics of prevention is following the 'credibility imperative'. The heroic expression of this style is the term 'war on terror'." But can authenticity shape a meaningful response to Islamist terror, if this terror could itself plausibly be viewed as an example of authenticity in action? Perpetrators of religiously motivated terror attacks tend to be clear about their core beliefs, and act on them transparently. They gain authentic followers through their leadership actions, who then go on to act on the principles that they have adopted, whether alone or as part of organised networks. This observation is not intended to trivialise either Islamist terrorism, nor the discourse on authentic political leadership, but to raise the prospect that a non-moralised account of authenticity can serve a variety of, often directly clashing, ideological purposes. In this, authenticity is, of course, behaving as an entirely 'normal' political concept: freedom and justice, too, are often invoked to legitimise diametrically opposed political objectives. Likewise, all these concepts also lend themselves to anti-establishment 'direct action', as we have seen in our discussion of authenticity and radical environmentalism in Chap. 2. Authentic leadership may be part of a response to direct action that threatens the established order—but it may also be part of the problem that generates this threat in the first place.

Claims to authenticity matter in politics, if they can be plausibly maintained they can both mobilise followers and be turned against opponents, who are then denigrated as 'fake'. The concept of authentic leadership used in business has clear relevance for understanding the ways in which authenticity is projected in the political realm. Authentic political leaders are aware of their core values and relate this closely to their actions, they do not need their every utterance to be aligned with focus groups and surveys ('unvarnished opinion and beliefs'). They communicate these values to their followers, and they have a 'back story' or narrative that

reinforces their status as outsiders to mainstream politics. They also appear to negotiate some of the 'authenticity marker' gaps quite successfully—a billionaire mobilising poor working-class supporters, and politicians of pensionable age cultivating a youthful following. These politicians 'produce' authenticity, and many members of the public are more than willing to 'consume' it. This raises questions about how authenticity is understood by those who are on the 'receiving end' of authenticity claims, which is something we turn to in the next chapter.

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Authenticity and Consumption

Abstract This chapter explores discourses about authenticity in relation to mass-produced objects and their consumption. We analyse authenticity as a positional good, used to demarcate difference from other consumer practices, and explore instances where consumers use manufactured objects as props for experiences and performances for the purpose of 'self-authentication'. Some of these are located in distinctive milieus or subcultures of consumption, while others can be found at the heart of 'mainstream' consumer culture. We analyse the mutually constitutive relationship between 'functionalism' and authentic consumption, from the beginnings of industrial mass production to the present, under totalitarian as well as democratic regimes, and trace the roots of functionalism to the Greek notion of 'appropriateness' as a moral good.

Keywords Artisanal • Handicrafts • Consumerism • Globalisation • Communities of consumption • Hyperauthenticity • Self-authentication • Functionalism • Beetle

"We've entered an age when words like 'hand-crafted', 'artisanal' and 'passionate' are turning consumer heads the way 'low price' once did. In response, ubiquitous beer brands are producing small-batch IPAs, and major recording artists are releasing new albums on vinyl." Those con-

sumers who consciously seek 'authentic' pathways through the process of consumption are often defined as those who "put education, individuality and authenticity at the heart of their ambitions for themselves."² They define their choices in opposition to a supposedly alienated form of mass consumerism, for example: "It's a political act to eat raw foods, because major corporations are poisoning people with over-processed, denatured food."3 The quest for authentic consumption, however, is no longer a niche activity: it has become a major driver in the modern marketplace. The global market in 'food authenticity' is calculated to be worth \$7.5 billion by 2022.4 Advice literature telling companies how to promote products in terms of their authenticity is proliferating.⁵ "Far from needing to be rescued from mass culture... authenticity was found in mainstream events and brands, including fast food, mass fashion and entertainment, and bathroom products".6 In another area conventionally understood as contrived and insincere, we are told that the "consumption of reality programming represents a sophisticated quest for authenticity".7 In other words, in exactly those areas where, on the conventional view, we would least expect it—mass-produced products and global brands—the quest for authenticity is currently at its most intense.

Understanding how the discourse of authenticity has come to intermingle with mass consumption and entertainment brings us back to the constant struggle to lay claim to, and establish the meaning of, language and the concepts within it. As Kim and Jamal note in relation to tourism, earlier accounts of alienation in consumption, such as that by MacCannell, relied upon an objective conception of authenticity.8 For tourism studies, allegations of inauthenticity generally relate to staged events and touristic experience that fail the objective authenticity test. This critique can certainly be broadened out to theories of consumption more generally. But how persuasive is this view? Objective authenticity assumes that there is an "undistorted standard to determine what is or is not genuine". 9 This view is grounded in traditional theories of alienation as the antithesis of authenticity. These are rooted, directly or indirectly, in Marx's analysis of capitalist economies, focused on the sphere of production, and, in particular, the extraction of 'surplus value' from human labour by capitalists. The capitalist mode of production, on this theory, separates the human worker from their 'species being', or authentic mode of existence, and traps them in routine, mindless, soul-crushing jobs in factories and workshops. The modern proletarian can certainly not be, as Marx famously desired, someone free to "hunt in the morning, fish in the afternoon, rear cattle in the

evening, criticise after dinner, just as I have a mind, without ever becoming hunter, fisherman, herdsman or critic". Instead extensive division of labour means they are trapped in monotonous occupations for long hours, set by their employer, and are condemned to live in decrepit accommodation. The 'market exchange' between employee and employer, coming to an agreement over the sale of the worker's labour power, is no fair exchange at all.

In the course of the twentieth century, this critique of capitalism has moved more extensively to the field of consumption as a sphere of equally alienated activity. In The Consumer Society, Jean Baudrillard, at a time when his debt to Marx was still quite obviously apparent, assesses consumption as the core activity of capitalism, in which use-values have been replaced with 'sign-values': indicators of a manufactured self-identity or social status. The market pushes particular images of a supposedly desirable identity that lead to life-denying narcissism rooted in a cult of permanent youth and beauty.¹¹ Consumer products sold and bought in mass market conditions, in this analysis, represent the antithesis of authenticity. 12 We may think that what we buy in the market meets our needs and desires, but these products alienate us further from our authentic selves, as we focus on the capacity of goods to indicate social status in relation to others. Clothes are no longer about providing warmth and protection, cars no longer about providing transport; instead, both become signifiers of an ostentatious display of wealth and status. 13 Goods are reduced to commodities, and these become the focus of human engagement. As Baudrillard puts it: "the humans of the age of affluence are surrounded not so much by other human beings, as they were in all previous ages, but by objects". 14 Thus, we arrive in the supposedly post-authentic age.

This alleged post-authenticity spills over from the marketplace into politics. Blühdorn points to a politics of 'simulation', where political discourse is marked by a stark mismatch between word and deed—not through intentional, individual acts of deception, but as a consequence of social and political structures that maintain society in a condition of inauthenticity. We live, according to Blühdorn, in a society steeped in the rhetoric of sustainable development—recycling, carbon footprints, food miles, fair trade, organic produce and hybrid cars—and yet the sphere of our unsustainable material consumption remains king, as we consumers will not tolerate any policy changes that would seriously undermine our powers of consumption. Politicians in Western democracies know this, and play the same double game, telling people what they want to hear but

giving them what they actually want—all with a display of utmost sincerity. In this view, politics looks little different from other forms of consumer activity. The *demos* creates 'demands' and politicians and governments produce policy responses, which are no more authentic than commodities themselves. In the service of the commodities themselves. In the service of the commodities themselves. In the service of the commodities themselves. In this view, politics looks little different from other forms of consumer activity.

But is it still credible to analyse consumer behaviour as an expression of false consciousness? If we accept that authenticity is never objective, but always constructed, then we should take seriously accounts whereby consumers themselves perceive their experience as authentic. Empirical studies have explored consumers' own voices, and uncovered processes whereby consumers experience acts of consumption as helping them achieve moments, or subjective states, of authenticity.¹⁷ They see themselves not as duped victims of false consciousness, but as active agents capable of framing and pursuing life-goals with a degree of autonomy. We suggest that we ought to take such voices seriously, and treat consumers, like all other actors in this study, as active agents in the production and performance of authenticity. This is not to say that there are no 'ideologies of consumption', or that mass marketing, viral marketing and other selling techniques have no purchase on the consciousness of consumers. It is to say, rather, that a quest for self-determined authenticity is something that develops through negotiations with the commercial, political, and structural dimensions of life. In other words, we take as the starting point for our analysis the assumption that people are capable of creating some critical distance from external forces, to reflect on the world that surrounds them and choose their own path through it, which will often involve creatively adapting and personalising what the market has to offer in order to create authentic experiences. The consumer thus also becomes a producer, or a 'prosumer'—a concept not unlike Karl Philipp Moritz's Produktionsästhetik, which we explored in Chap. 3 of this book: in engaging, materially, aesthetically, or intellectually, with an object of consumption, we produce its meaning and import in our own minds. 18 And it is this act that gives us the option to define, and perform, our own vision of authenticity qua the object.

In *The Practice of Everyday Life*, de Certeau suggested a similar possibility, when he explored how consumer 'tactics' can undermine and repurpose the 'strategies' of producers through the co-optation of commodities into the practices of everyday life. De Certeau's most famous example is the way in which citizens negotiate their own, ad hoc routes and pathways through urban sites, thus subverting the orderly intentions

of the planners of modern, capitalist cities. 19 In what follows, we allow for the same possibility, but without assuming that such acts of performative re-coding are, by definition, oppositional or subversive. Instead, we suggest, they draw, partially and creatively, on meanings associated with objects through processes of production and advertising, which consumers in turn mobilise to pull them into their own narratives of authentic experience. This point is related to the theme we explored in Chap. 4 of this book, which suggests that, for many, the 'narrative self' is a route to achieving authenticity. Humans are meaning-producing beings, looking to identify, or impose, some pattern or order to their lives.²⁰ As people look to connect the disparate experiences and objects that make up a life into a story that has meaning for them, their story does not merely express practices, but makes them.²¹ Stories do not just impose a meaning on the past: they also shape what people will do in the future, as they seek to act 'in character'. In this way, consumers are 'producers of meaning'.²² Achieving authenticity "involves neither suspension of disbelief nor negotiation of paradox, but...deliberate goal-driven intent" towards the development of personal identity.²³

This quest for personal identity does not, of course, take place in social isolation: the search for a sense of self takes place both against and with others. Who we see ourselves as in opposition to is an important indicator of our sense of self; by the same token, shared markers of identity serve to define our membership in particular groups. How we manage to signal affiliations and group membership is important not only to leaders, as we explored in Chap. 4, but to everyone who has any desire for social belonging. This social dimension, however, does not necessarily detract from the experience of authenticity: on the contrary, much evidence suggests that for many people, their membership in particular 'subcultures of consumption' or 'communities of consumption' is vital to realising their sense of an authentic identity.²⁴ Such memberships can be more important to people than the abstract classifications of social groups traditionally used in academic analysises, which focus on producer groups—shopkeepers, industrial labourers, agricultural workers—or identities defined by shared religion, ethnicity, or nationhood. For bikers, surfers, snowboarders, festival tourists, to name but a few consumer groups, authentic belonging to such a group is evidenced and performed through shared rituals of consumption. It is worth exploring one particular subculture in more detail to elucidate how exactly authenticity is imagined and performed, individually and collectively.

MOTORCYCLES AND AUTHENTICITY

The Harley-Davidson motorcycle is an iconic consumer product that both signifies and enables an experience of authenticity for many of its users.²⁵ These motorcycles have given rise to a distinctive community of consumers who feel themselves to be particularly close to their authentic selves when they ride, discuss, and otherwise experience their Harley-Davidsons. This community is marked by "an identifiable, hierarchical social structure; a unique ethos, or set of shared beliefs and values; and unique jargons, rituals, and modes of symbolic expression". 26 Hierarchies here relate not to income or other 'objective' markers of social status, but, rather, to an individual's capacity to perform the consumer experience more 'authentically' than others. At the top of this hierarchy are the 'old' outlaw biker groups, often originally established by returning US servicemen at the end of the Second World War. The outlaw lifestyle, in which the 'biker ethos' is completely at the centre of members' lives, provides the template against which other biker groups have their authenticity measured. Those who consider themselves at the 'hard core' have various derogatory terms for those lower down the hierarchy, such as 'Rubies' (Rich Urban Bikers), 'RIOTS' (Retired Idiots on Tour), and 'SEWERS' (Suburban Weekend Riders).²⁷ Relatedly, judgements on authenticity within groups are based on the individual's perceived commitment to the group's ideology of consumption.²⁸ These judgements often revolve around a distinction between 'being' and 'doing'. For those who take themselves to be near the heart of the biking culture, it offers, above all, a way to be. Those who are located at the periphery of the community are merely engaged with 'doing'. Beverland, Farrelly, and Quester track this distinction across a variety of communities of consumption.²⁹ So those who, for example, lead 'regular' citizen lives Monday to Friday, and then use part of the weekend to surf, snowboard, or ride a motorcycle, are likely to be seen as those merely 'doing' or 'playing at' the activity in question. Wearing the 'right' gear and knowing the right symbolic language is not sufficient for authentic insider status; indeed, some brands lose affiliation from those who see themselves as core group members if they cater too overtly toward 'doers'. A 'hardcore' surfer reports that "You probably see a kid in a Quiksilver t-shirt who's never been to the beach before. It's just one of those brands, they just buy the brand."30 Those who come to an activity for the first time, then, suffer a 'liability of newness', 31 as they have yet to establish their credentials with those subgroup members who have developed the

in-group authority to make judgements on their cases. This is redolent of the 'legitimacy deficit' discussed in the previous chapter with respect to the discourse of authentic leadership. In both cases, it is the absence of shared in-group markers that single people out for lacking necessary characteristics. In the case of both the 'liability of newness' and the 'legitimacy deficit', the key question is the extent to which newcomers are capable of, and have the time and other resources necessary, to gain in-group acceptance. This struggle for acceptance is a relatively common feature of the experience of those whom come into contact for the first time with a community of consumption, as reported by novelist McGuane during his brief spell on a Matchless 500:

A fascinating aspect of the pursuit, not in the least bucolic, was the bike shop where one went for mechanical service, and which was a meeting place for the bike people, whose machines were poised out front in carefully conceived rest positions. At first, of course, no one would talk to me, but my motorcycle ideas were theirs; I was not riding one of the silly mechanisms that purred down the highway on a parody of the equipment these people lived for. One day an admired racing mechanic—'a good wrench'—came out and gave my admittedly well-cared-for Matchless the once over. He announced that it was 'very sanitary'. I was relieved... Ultimately, I was taken in, treated kindly, and given the opportunity to ride some of the machinery that so excited me.³²

McGuane persevered with attending the shop, and as he had the 'right' kind of bike, and it was well looked after, he was eventually admitted to group membership and allowed to ride some of the rather more exotic bikes owned by members of the group.

Barriers to entry can be a particular problem when in-group markers have traditionally included gender or class-based or racial markers. For those who believe that we are truly in, and perhaps should celebrate that we are in, a postmodern condition in which chosen forms of identity trump ascribed characteristics, such barriers to entry are no longer, or at least far less of, a problem that they once were, as individual, goal-orientated behaviour works to break down standard socio-demographic categories. In this regard "people have the latitude in Western culture to redefine their own categories. They simply will not stay in the boxes drawn up for them by sociologists, marketers, or demographers." The problem still remains, for newcomers, of how best to establish their authenticity credentials within the subgroup. In this regard, analysts make a distinction

between 'self-authentication' through 'flow' activities, and the development of belonging through 'authoritative acts'. 'Flow' activities provide a sense of 'being in the moment', of engaging in the relevant activity in a way that provides the personalised benefits of it. From their interviews with practitioners, Beverland et al. identify three necessary antecedents to the self-authenticating act: freedom, excellence, and connection. The performance of the act—biking, snowboarding, skiing, etc.—provides a strong personal sense of 'in the moment' freedom. They also allow the development of heightened skills (excellence) in that particular activity. Finally, they offer a feeling of connectivity with something larger than the self: this might be with other members of the subgroup, but it might also be a feeling of connection with nature or with some ideal of right living.

Tellingly, many of the authenticity rituals associated with subcultures of consumption draw on other strands that we have identified in this study as central to the historical evolution of authenticity. Nature, and the ability, through immersion in natural environments, to discover or re-capture a sense of natural selfhood, is crucial here, as in so many other articulations of authenticity. In *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*, author and cult figure Robert Pirsig reflects on the strong connection to the environment he experiences when riding a motorcycle. In common with much writing in the genre, the comparison is with driving a car as a less authentic form of experience:

You see things vacationing on a motorcycle in a way that is completely different from any other. In a car you're always in a compartment, and because you're used to it you don't realize that through that car window everything you see is just more TV. You're a passive observer and it is all moving by you boringly in a frame. On a cycle the frame is gone. You're completely in contact with it all. You're *in* the scene, not just watching it anymore, and the sense of presence of overwhelming. That concrete whizzing by five inches below your foot is the real thing.³⁴

This sense of connectedness with the environment is also stressed by McGuane:

Nothing in the air was lost on me as I passed through zones of smell and temperature as palpable transitions, running through sudden warm spots on the road where a single redwood 100 feet away had fallen and let in a shaft of sunlight. The road seemed tremendously spacious.³⁵

Similarly prominent is the association of motorcycling with 'freedom'—in contrast to the lack of freedom we experienced in 'normal' interactions in an overly controlled and regulated social and political environment. Thus, journalist Robert Hughes writes:

Buying a bike, particularly a big motorcycle, is buying an experience that no other form of transport can give: a unique high that like pot has spun its own culture around itself. The name of the game is freedom. A biker, being more mobile, is on a different footing from a driver. The nightmares of traffic afflict him less. Instead of being trapped in a cumbersome padded box, frozen into the glacier of unmoving steel and winking red taillights on the ribboned parking lots that expressways have become, he can slide through the spaces, take off, go... And the kick is prodigious.³⁶

Writers on motorcycling tend to emphases the 'flow' that comes through the intense concentration required to handle a motorcycle at speed on challenging roads, and the danger that comes with this experience is an integral part of the ensuing euphoria:

The faster you ride, the more closed the circuit becomes, deleting everything but this second and the next, which are hurriedly merging. Having no past to regret and no future to await, the rider feels free. [...] The curves play games with the rider, and the rider is lost in the concentration it takes to match wits with an impressive opponent. How fast to enter this turn? The fact that you can be so sadly mistaken is what gives the right choice its sweet taste.³⁷

I was riding to the limit of my ability, one tiny error of judgement could have brought catastrophe and the ensuing sickening crunching noise followed by the silence and the stillness before the pain would start to rise and rise. But these thoughts only made me want to ride faster, hooked on the sensation of being on the edge, a delicious glimpse of utter freedom, total peace.³⁸

Let's face it, there's definitely an element of death-wish built into the motorbike. You have to enjoy the pain and the heartache. Better to go out with a bang than a phut.³⁹

Newcomers, who may well lack the skills in the activity in question, which can only come with practice, are likely to seek to confirm their identity and belonging with 'authoritative acts', adopting the "iconic imagery widely associated with the community". This means, at this stage, merely

'doing' rather than 'being' and accepting a lowly status in the hierarchy. Schouten and McAlexander stress similar characteristics to the 'new biker' community. The 'core values' of this community are personal freedom, patriotism and a connection with American heritage (through the Harley-Davidson brand), and 'machismo', which implies a strongly gendered dimension in this particular subculture. Although there are an increasing number of female biker clubs, it is worth noting that this still implies a form of gender segregation. Again, newcomers will tend to begin by asserting identity characteristics before gaining sufficient experience in 'flow' activities to embrace the subculture as a way of 'being'.

Here, as in the other instances we analysed, the authenticity claim relies crucially on the Othering of different consumer practices as inauthentic. Thus, subcultures of consumption often embrace a self-marginalising discourse vis-à-vis 'mainstream' society. Bikers reserve the term 'citizen' for non-bikers, and there the coherence of the subculture is reinforced by its minority and marginal status with regard to the rest of society. Pierson gives one account of this in the US context:

Take the numbers: seven million who ride stacked against 225 million who don't. (To get an idea of the minority status this number confirms, consider the fact that some twenty million Americans call themselves dedicated birdwatchers). Those who ride are both alone and held tight in the fold of the elect. They draw together for protective warmth and take strange relish in needing to do so at all. The glue between these relative few can be tenacious.⁴²

This marginalisation works on both sides of the divide, with these self-marginalised groups demonised by mainstream commentators. Hughes highlights the outlaw status and perceived anti-social dimension in the cultural imagination of motorcycling:

Has any means of transport ever suffered a worse drubbing than the motor-cycle? In the 17 years since Stanley Kramer put Marlon Brando astride a Triumph in *The Wild One*, big bikes and those who ride them have been made into apocalyptic images of aggression and revolt—Greasy Rider on an iron horse with 74-cu. in. lungs and ape hanger bars, booming down the freeway to rape John Doe's daughter behind the white clapboard bank: swastikas, burnt rubber, crab lice and filthy denim. The chorus from press and TV... 'Four wheels good, two wheels bad'.⁴³

BEYOND THE SUBCULTURE: FUNCTIONALISM AS AUTHENTICITY

So what of forms of consumption that are not embedded in clearly defined communities of consumption, but which take place in rather more anonymous, disconnected modes? Is this where we find the alienated, inauthentic consumer? Not necessarily. In their study of consumers of reality television, Rose and Wood find that the "consumption of reality programming represents a sophisticated quest for authenticity". 44 Consumers are seen here as producers of meaning, capable of engaging with reality programming in a 'playful' or 'ironic' manner, who 'negotiate' to find an interpretation of the product that leads to "a judgement of sufficient and satisfying authenticity". An authentic experience may arise from personally identifying with one of the programme participants, or taking pleasure form an exotic location. This 'contrived' form of authenticity or 'hyperauthenticity' denotes viewers' reflexive consumption of an individualised blend of fantasy with the real. 45

In this view of consumption, the consumer's own needs and expectations become the measure of authenticity. One interviewee on the global fast-food brand McDonald's suggested that "it's clear they're delivering the same product the same way and in the same environment every time. So they're trying to deliver what I would say was an authentic product."46 The very fact that the experience of buying food in a McDonald's should meet a common standard in terms of both the food and the environment is constituted as assign of the authenticity of what is on offer. It provides control (wherever you are, you can immerse yourself in a familiar environment) and virtue (a striving for a common standard across different contexts). This standard would not necessarily satisfy someone who believes that 'authentic' food should be ecologically responsible and stringently healthy, but for some consumers, at least, even fast food, which is purely 'functional', can be a locus of authentic consumption. To appreciate this claim, it is important to explore the historical roots of the connection between 'function' and 'authenticity', and their role in the evolution of modern objects of consumption.

As Koshar and Confino have noted, the consumer object became a centrepiece of identity politics throughout Europe and America before the twentieth century. An including the spectacular World Fairs, promoted the notion that a nation's value could and should be measured not only in terms of its

military prowess but, also and decisively, by the quality and 'character' of its industrial products. 48 Competition in the global marketplace turned the manufactured object into a carrier of national achievement: producers and consumers were imagined as collaborating in achieving a culturally distinctive, morally purposeful culture of mass consumption. This historical connection between market dominance and cultural identity is sometimes lost in claims that the difference between this first phase of globalisation, and globalisation as we know it today, is that the former was 'merely economic', while the latter is also 'cultural'. 49 Mass production and mass consumption were, from their very inception, both cultural and ideological. The German story makes this particularly evident. When Germany first emerged as an industrial superpower in the late nineteenth century, it competed against the well-established market dominance of English, and, increasingly, American products. Germans, acutely conscious of this 'late start', produced a flurry of writings on the connection between identity and the modern industrial product, in which authenticity loomed large. As we have seen, the 1876 Philadelphia World Fair was a defining moment in this story.⁵⁰ In 1887, the British Merchandise Act forced German manufacturers to label all products destined for export to Britain or any of her colonies 'Made in Germany'. 51 Yet between 1870 and 1913, Germany's share of world industrial production rose from 13 to 16 per cent, while Britain's share dropped from 32 to 14 per cent. 52 German production now concentrated on sophisticated manufacturing processes informed by the latest scientific and technological inventions.⁵³ By the 1890s, 'Made in Germany' had been transformed from a pejorative term into one of the most effective marketing tools of modern history. English manufacturers even began to forge it, printing 'Made in Germany' on their English-made products.54

This reversal was not just about economic statistics: it was also a competition about authenticity. In 1896, English author E. E. Williams published his influential *Made in Germany*. Modelling his account on popular invasion scare literature, Williams's book sought to understand the triumph of German objects, which penetrated even into the privacy of ordinary English homes, as a problem of identity. The protagonist of Williams's account is horrified to discover the creeping 'Germanisation' of his world. In a key scene, he despairs over the extent to which German consumer goods have come to dominate his domestic sphere, and, falling asleep, is haunted by a nightmare, during which he discovers that even the gates of Heaven are now guarded by a German St Peter, and can be

unlocked only with keys 'made in Germany'. ⁵⁶ Williams offered a moral rather than an economic explanation for this story. Mirroring the structure of Gibbons' *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, he portrayed Germany's success as a symptom of the inner decadence of the British nation. Williams blamed the English lack of energy, thrift, and entrepreneurial spirit. English captains of industry were old-fashioned, lazy, arrogant, greedy, and more keenly interested in personal luxury and consumption than in the health or vigour of their firms; English workers were inflexible, poorly trained, and inclined towards destructive industrial action. By contrast, the success of German industry, to Williams, was indicative of that nation's cultural ascendancy. Unsurprisingly, the message was greeted triumphantly in Germany. Wuttke wrote a preface to the German edition, in which he pointed out that the dynamism of the German economy was a function of its youth—British competitors had become complacent and decadent. ⁵⁷

The label 'Made in Germany' proved an apposite metaphor for such claims. 'Made' alluded to the German verb 'machen': the making of the object, which was imagined, even fetishised, as an extension of old German handicrafts, was now connected with modern industrial methods. Through this grounding in historical solidity, machen was to serve as the antidote to alienation, which was frequently invoked by actors on all sides of the political spectrum to problematise bourgeois capitalism. Goods made in Germany were infused with *longue durée* memories of making. The semantic link was backed up materially. The individual morality of the traditional maker had to be transformed into the collective ethics of the consumers. The vehicle for this was to be found in the material and aesthetic characteristics of the objects concerned. Authenticity, formerly associated with traditional methods used by craftsmen, was now associated with 'functionalism'. These claims were championed by the German Werkbund, some of whose spokesmen we encountered in Chap. 3 of this book, advancing arguments about the need for authentic consumer products to be rooted in the spirit of their own times. The Werkbund, founded in 1907, was an association that united politically ambitious designers and industrial producers, including AEG, Siemens, Bosch, BASF, and Mercedes Benz, in a quest create and promote authentic, functional objects for mass consumption. Muthesius, founding father of the Werkbund, argued these products needed to be were 'simple', 'rational', 'comfortable', 'practical', and 'functional'.58

In this discourse, 'functionalism' denoted much more than being of practical use-value: function was based on the idea of appropriateness, in

the sense of the Greek prepon, which signified a harmonious or authentic relationship between an idea or object and the purpose to which a consumer would put it.⁵⁹ Such claims drew on long ideological traditions. Since the Enlightenment, aesthetic and moral theorists had invoked the term 'appropriateness': the Earl of Shaftesbury in England, or, in Germany, Wieland, who labelled the same quality 'Angemessenheit', deemed objects 'appropriate' if they embodied a harmonious relationship between outer form and inner purpose. 60 In architecture, too, mathematical proportions and balance were to reflect the principle of appropriateness. 61 The new industrial products of the early twentieth century tapped into the same imaginary: functionalism was not just about technical quality, but also about the sense of purpose, and, thus, the act of authentic consumption. The antithesis of functionalism was everything that seduced consumers into inauthentic behaviours: decorative façade designed to impress, to represent, and generally detract from the essential function on which their authenticity rested. They could be, as in the examples we explored in Chap. 3, objects that conjured up a nostalgic image of the past: under this heading, modern manufacturers rejected the legacies of academic 'historicism', or Beaux Arts, a quest defined by Muthesius as a "struggle against inauthentic pomp and superfluous pathos". 62 Advocates of modern functionalism as diverse as Lichtwark, Rigl, and Loos attacked the historicist architecture and design culture of the nineteenth century as morally degenerate for the same reasons. 63 Loos famously dubbed ornament a "crime", and exclaimed "Behold, the time is near, deliverance awaits us! Soon the streets of our cities will be gleaming like white walls."64

But the quest for authentic objects and the experiences they would enable was also defined in contradistinction to other, competing trends that were deemed inauthentic. Any self-conscious attempt to achieve an aesthetic effect could become suspect, in this view. Thus, the designers of *art nouveau*, or *Jugendstil*, were derided as "helpers of yesterday's men and a hindrance to the men of tomorrow". ⁶⁵ A fashionable obsession with novelty for its own sake was likened to the supposed inauthenticity of nostalgia. As Muthesius wrote in 1905:

During the past 30 years, industry has exploited the quick succession of historicist styles to churn out one novelty after another. The quickened pace with which one style followed another, had to lead the whole business *ad absurdum*. At this moment, the Arts and Crafts movement seemed to offer a way out of the dilemma. Yet the result was even more embarrassing than

the abuse of style. By sticking to matters of outward appearance alone, by hiring designers who copied the superficial qualities of that which German artists had invented, industry reached the shallow waters of *Jugendstil*. It was clear to every serious observer that this fashion could not last, and was certainly divorced from the aims of German artists. [...] It is blatantly obvious that the policy of maximising industrial turn-over by stimulating the customers' greed for novelty will lead to artistic bankruptcy. This is the same slippery slope as discount pricing.⁶⁶

The authentic antithesis were products that carried their functionality on their sleeve—products that excelled in terms of simply yet elegant functionality, such as the Leitz camera, or the Zeiss microscope. Cars, too, became model objects of the new functionalism, and one car in particular: a car that did away with narrative references to traditional modes of transport such as the horse-drawn carriage, and adopted a purely functional, streamlined shape: the original 'Strength Through Joy' car first designed and promoted in Nazi Germany, and re-born after 1945 as the famous VW 'Beetle'.⁶⁷

The Beetle presents a particularly interesting case study for the link between functional objects and the quest for authenticity in consumption, because we have a wealth of sources that allows us to assess not only how the car was marketed, but also how consumers in turn enlisted it in their own quest to live out moments of authenticity. The Beetle still functions as a symbol of authenticity today: as one of Beverland and Farrelly's interviewees states, the Beetle is, to them, the most 'authentic' car because it "was developed for the common person and because it was affordable". 68 But its status in this role dates back many decades. As Rieger points out, the VW Beetle "enjoyed an exceptionally long production run, attracting drivers between the end of Second World War and the turn of the millennium. The Beetle became the first automotive classic to inspire a retro vehicle." It commanded strong affective identification: "Its 'Beetle' nickname holds an important clue for the love this vehicle has commanded over the decades", and "numerous VWs were revered as deeply personal treasures, which owners lovingly washed and waxed, polished and painted". 69 What made the car so popular was in large part the apparent honesty and functionalism of its design: the simple, aerodynamic shape, the fact that, unlike older car designs, it did not seek to emulate the box-shape and hierarchical structure of the traditional, horse-drawn carriage, in which the affluent passengers would inhabit a space in the back removed from the mundane space of the

chauffeur, or carriage-driver, near the front. The curvy shape of the Beetle, which allotted pride of place to the driver, was a perfect embodiment of a product that rejected nostalgia in favour of a 'making' that was situated in the moment.

The design, however, was only to come into its own if the Beetle was used in 'appropriate' ways by consumers. Countless adverts both from the Nazi period and from the 1950s promoted the Beetle as a weekend car for taking urbanites out of the city.⁷⁰ Advertising brochures, posters, films, and other material objects, guided the consumer in the 'appropriate' use of this authentic object. In the Beetle, consumers not only found an object that they could turn into a prop for the performance of authentic moments: it was an object that was marketed precisely by conjuring up the longing for such a realisation of authenticity in the first place. This quality is best illustrated through the public savings scheme created around what was then called the *KdF Wagen*, or 'Strength Through Joy' car.

'Strength through Joy' was an organisation created by the Nazi regime to link new industrial products and leisure experiences to the ideological goals of the regime, promoting, as the name indicates, an association between an immediate, affective experience of happiness, or joy, which was created through consumption, with a political commitment to the regime that sponsored them.⁷¹ The Strength Through Joy organisation enjoyed huge popularity, but one of its most enduring legacies was, paradoxically, the promotion of an object it never managed to mass produce: the Beetle. In the 1930s, millions of aspiring German drivers collected stamps that would eventually entitle them to the delivery of a 'Strength Through Joy' car. Not only the anticipated product, but also the act of saving for it was ideologically charged. Saving for a future goal symbolically empowered the consumer, in contradistinction to the supposedly enslaving effects of buying goods for immediate gratification on credit. This attitude was encouraged not just by official propaganda, but also by physical objects such as the savings tins, in which consumers collected a groschen each day, before the dial indicated that it was time to take the coins to the local bank in exchange for one more stamp for the KdF savings book. The savings tins were reminiscent of piggy banks. Their bright colours and simple designs, which depicted the future car as the centrepiece of a new, more self-determined life, framed the consumers as excited children yet to achieve full self-realisation, and an authentic life, in the future, when the promise of the savings scheme would come into its own. The images on these tins (Fig. 5.1) and in associated advertising, as on the



Fig. 5.1 One of the most common designs for the 'KdF-Wagen' savings tin, circa 1938

cover of the monthly magazine *Motorschau* from 1938 (Fig. 5.2), depict the car as a means for (re-)turning to nature: the cars are always featured as taking a driver, or sometimes couples or families, out of the city, along winding country roads or motorways that meander harmoniously through fields, hills, and mountains, into beautiful German homelands, or *Heimat*, as a space for leisure, relaxation, and self-cultivation.⁷²

Of course, the promise of authenticity conjured up through the consumption, or anticipated consumption, of driving a KdF car, for the Nazi regime was a means of stabilising ideological allegiances. Much recent research on the idea of a Nazi *Volksgemeinschaft*, or people's community,



Fig. 5.2 Cover of the July 1938 issue of the periodical *Motorschau*, a highly popular publication dedicated to the propagation of Nazi-sponsored mass motorisation

has emphasised the importance of this connection between consumption and politics.⁷³ The regime tried to capitalise on the real or perceived successes of mass consumption. Seemingly mundane practices—from driving cars to drinking Coca-Cola, from seaside holidays to gymnastics—took on a significance far beyond the purely private, functioning as arenas in which political identities and ideological preferences were formed, performed, and contested. The striving for authenticity needs to be understood as an

integral part of the political attraction for those within this imagined community. People enjoyed the 'freedom' suggested by the new consumer goods, or their anticipation, but re-purposed them for their own ends. Simply pointing out that the myth was 'false', unattainable, and indeed, violent, cannot account for its ideological effectiveness. Consumerism, new leisure practices and industries, as well as new media spectacles certainly helped redraw the boundaries between the public and private spheres. But some in the Nazi leadership quickly realised that such developments could become 'transmission belts' for dangerous notions of individualism, gender equality, and 'decadent' sexualities that were at odds with healthy 'Aryan' lifestyles within the united *Volksgemeinschaft*.⁷⁴

Ego-documents from the time offer insight into the ways in which people embraced such practices to fashion new identities and new modes of participation in authentic experiences.⁷⁵ Alongside the writing of diaries and letters, the new mass practice of hobbyist photography not only documented such activities, but was itself a new form of mass consumption: people bought cameras, films, albums and picture frames, instruction books, then new and better cameras. And photography proved to be an incentive for embarking upon new forms of consumer behaviours as well.⁷⁶ Photos turned fleeting moments into memorabilia, to be enjoyed long after the experience, and shared with others. In the hobbyist photography from this period, consumer practices such as car driving feature particularly prominently. In such photos, new consumer pleasures were valorised. Consumers recycled images and poses that abounded in official publications, especially in media celebrating the new motorways of National Socialism.⁷⁷ In private photography, too, roads—including, but not only, the new motorways—were depicted as spaces of a peculiar charismatic power, as trajectories, literally and metaphorically, for transporting smiling travellers into a brave new world of intense and immediate experience and joy. Vehicles used for getting around, cars, motorcycles, bicycles, and, occasionally, cruise ships, were favoured motifs. Yet the consumers' private photographs did not just repeat official pictorial conventions: they endowed the experiences photographed with a strong sense of personal identity and aspiration. Captions in private photo albums often anthropomorphised vehicles, giving cars endearing nicknames such as Opelchen (the term literally translates as "Little Opel", but plays on the similarity with Onkelchen, a common term of endearment for an uncle or other close family member).⁷⁸ At the same time, these photos are marked by an air of relaxation, leisure, and pleasure. Consumers photographed themselves,

their families and friends sunbathing, sleeping, and picnicking: 'taking a break', as many captions indicated, was key to transforming the outer experience of travel into an exploration of inner selfhood.

As a result of such appropriations, the celebration of consumer experiences such as driving the *KdF* car as accessing a sense of authentic self-hood, survived relatively unscathed into the post-war world, attempts at de-Nazification notwithstanding. In 1948, a group of former *KdF* saving schemes members took out the largest class-action law suit the Federal Republic had seen to that date, arguing that they deserved to be compensated for the honest and honourable activity of saving for a *Strength Through Joy* car that was never delivered. In 1961, they reached an amicable settlement, giving them compensation in cash or as a (larger) discount on the purchase of a new Beetle, for which most of them opted.⁷⁹

Volkswagen were quick to capitalise on the Beetle's special place in this enduring consumer aspiration, now re-coded as an integral part in the experience of an emphatically 'Western' modernity: in the 1950s, VW marketed their product as a symbol of "peacetime normality". 80 By 1955, and to much fanfare, the one millionth Beetle was produced. Meanwhile, German consumers continued to anthropomorphise Beetles, describing them as beloved family members, and likening them to faithful dogs.⁸¹ And soon, the Beetle became a worldwide hit, with sales soaring, especially in the United States. And yet, even as the promise of being an 'ordinary people's car' was made a reality by global mass consumption, owning a Beetle lost none of its powerful association with individual selfauthentication. In the course of the 1960s, in spite of its difficult political history, the Beetle became the vehicle of choice of a 'hippie' counterculture: adorned with flowery graffiti and slogans such as 'Make love, not war', sometimes dubbed the 'love bug', for the hippie generation, the Beetle featured prominently in a renewed quest to leave behind the shackles of an alienated civilisation and reclaim more authentic versions of the self in communion with like-minded others, and in natural settings.⁸²

What this story tells us, then, is that across a variety of radically different political and economic settings, consumer objects served as important vehicles for people to realise moments of authenticity: through self-exploration, connecting with nature, and the formation of distinctive consumer subcultures. Such subcultures did not need to be self-consciously 'oppositional' to help consumers realise moments of authenticity. Nor did they need to be immune from political co-optation. Here, as in the other

arenas we have analysed, authenticity proves a highly malleable political concept. Like other foundational concepts, such as the idea of freedom, or justice, authenticity could be claimed for many different political purposes and agendas, and it could be grafted onto, and intermingle with, a host of other political values and aspirations. But the only way in which the striving for authenticity itself can be dismissed as meaningless, or as a product of false consciousness, is to measure it against an 'objective' standard of authenticity, which, as we have argued, would be akin to exempting one particular ideological variant of the idea from the process of democratic negotiation and competition, and make it an absolute measure of all others.

Notes

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- 29. Beverland, Farrelly and Quester, 'Authentic Subcultural Membership'.
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Conclusion

Abstract Conceptions of authenticity—what it means to be 'true' to a self or an essence—are deeply intertwined with ideological presuppositions. Authenticity is a ubiquitous idea, as particular conceptions of it are adapted and re-cycled between different historical epochs and domains of activity. It can be seen as a highly exclusive quality, available only to a self-selecting cultural elite who own positional goods, or, as 'everyday authenticity,' a demotic attribute available to all through a process of 'self-authentication', as anyone can extract meaning for themselves from both goods and experiences. Ultimately, as long as we ask ourselves how we should 'be' as well as what we should 'do', there will always be a demand for a politics of authenticity.

Keywords Hoax • False consciousness • Positional goods • Conspicuous authenticity • Everyday authenticity • Politics of being

Is authenticity a dangerous hoax, which is traded against "political freedoms, material wealth, and greater intellectual and creative opportunities"? It seems that for every claim to authenticity, there is a parallel claim seeking to expose it as a fake. As we have seen, for Adorno, the 'jargon of authenticity' was a pernicious vehicle that obscured the power of objective social conditions over man's existence, and, under the guise of a seemingly

unpolitical metaphysical pathos, transported Nazi ideology in the postwar era.² More recent critics, responding to proliferating of authenticity claims in the world of consumption, suggest that authenticity serves to cement social inequality.³ Amidst Boyle's praise for the 'New Realist' consumers of authenticity, he notes that there has "always been a market in authenticity for the wealthy", while poor people cannot afford Aga stoves or vintage sports cars.⁴ The problem becomes one of how to make authenticity available to all. And yet, the quest for authenticity continues unabated: in politics, in advertising, and in everyday life. Some believe that 'authenticity for all' is a contradiction in terms. For Potter, authenticity is always about exclusivity and contrasts in status, and what we have seen recently is a turn towards the desire for 'conspicuous authenticity'. The inauthentic has always to remain as a foil to authentic forms of life.

On this view, authenticity is always a positional good: claiming to live one's life authentically implies a value judgement about those who make different choices, and it can thus become an indicator of status in an imagined, yet powerful political, economic, or spiritual hierarchy. Once authenticity stands in danger of being democratised, there are powerful social incentives to close it down again and restrict access to the relevant authenticity markers. So, for example, organic food, initially marked out as authentic territory by those who championed the virtues of 'real food' against the base mass consumption of industrially farmed products, was transformed by large food wholesalers and retailers into a mass market item, to the point where Walmart offered to sell organic produce at no more than a 10 per cent premium over conventionally produced food. However, at this point, where authenticity could become 'mainstream', new counter-claims sprang up that re-positioned the concept in opposition to this. In this example, the New York Times opined that scale and transportation are as important to organic farming as how the food is grown. This relocated 'authentic' food as a positional good: grown locally and on a small scale and thus, inevitably, expensive. It was, once again, categorically different from the mechanised organic food that the masses might get their hands on in Walmart.⁵

Yet, as our analysis shows, each authenticity claim is also open to new appropriations. These re-appropriations often subvert original ideological intentions. As we have shown, past political leaders or regimes that relied on promises of a more authentic life were rarely able to control the aspirations they conjured up: aspirations which, as in the case of the *Strength Through Joy* car we explored, would soon be lived out under the banner of

a very different politics from those they were intended to naturalise. In the realm of consumption, re-appropriations of authenticity have also tended to cross the very social divides that critics claim they created or bolstered in the first place. In all these cases, authenticity is not, in any objective sense, owned by any particular social or political group, or associated with any one particular discourse or practice. As Potter notes:

[T]he distinction between what is 'real' and what is 'fake', or what is authentic and inauthentic, tells you a lot more about the person making the judgement that it does about what is being judged. As architect Witold Rybczynski puts it, the claim that the suburbs are not 'real' makes sense only if one assumes that a real city has cathedrals and plazas instead of parking garages and fast-food franchises, sidewalk cafés not shopping malls, live theatres instead of cineplexes.⁶

Accounts of what is authentic are always connected to ideological presuppositions. Those who see themselves as leading authentic lives will tend to regard those who make different choices as hapless victims of manipulation or false consciousness. And yet, denouncing the longing for authenticity as a form of false consciousness creates a mirror image of the very problem for which authenticity is so often blamed: it is to set up a standard of objective truth, with which authenticity claims can then be debunked as 'fake'. To be sure, no invocation of authenticity is ideologically neutral; and many are designed to further specific interests. Yet the same applies to many other values we are accustomed to regarding as foundational: liberty, justice, community, to name but the most obvious. Exposing each political mobilisation of such concepts as partial or self-interested does not explain these concepts' continued importance in political life, broadly conceived, nor does it offer an adequate explanation for their enduring appeal.

In this book, we have argued that we need to take seriously the powerful purchase that authenticity has on our collective imagination. This is due, in part, to its longevity. Appeals to authenticity are made either to some kind of history or to an imagined future: if the former, they imagine a return to a state of nature, or innocence, or at least an attempt to restore to human endeavour an 'original' quality, which has been lost or compromised by the alienating effects of social conventions, institutionalised politics, or 'mere fashion'. If the latter, then they conjure images of a better world in which the fully realised conditions of modernity finally allow the

true potential of humanity to emerge. For this reason, we have argued that Berman's and Trilling's influential claim that authenticity is a specifically modern phenomenon is not only empirically flawed: it also overlooks the constitutive part that the past, historical and imaginary, plays in the affective power of the concept of authenticity.⁷

At the same time, the concept of authenticity has proved extremely malleable, not only across time, but also within contemporaneous, and often closely intertwined, articulations. Individuals, distinctive milieus or subcultures, and even 'mainstream' society at large, continually re-define and re-purpose promises of authenticity offered by political or commercial actors. Thus, a case study of how authenticity operates in just one walk of life, or one historical moment, would fail to cast light on one of key animating qualities behind authenticity's success story: the huge scope it offers for new actors to invoke authenticity for themselves, and deploy it for new purposes of their own making. To elucidate this particular quality, we have traced some of the manifold manifestations of authenticity, historical and contemporary, across a range of different political articulations, social practices, and material cultures. In doing so, we have been particularly interested in the process whereby one particular articulation of authenticity is 'translated' into another: between different genres, such as theological writings and physical gardens; between different political projects, such as Heidegger's and Celan's use of the same language of authenticity in dealing with National Socialism; or between different arenas of the exercise of power, such as the corporate sector and modern political leadership. With the rise of the concept of 'self-authentication' on the part of consumers of popular culture, authenticity does stand democratised. It is not now the preserve of cultural elites to determine what, or whom, is authentic according to some objective standard, nor is it merely the preserve of those who undertake the work of radically separating themselves from the currents of mainstream society. This is, instead, a realm of what we might call 'everyday authenticity', in which anyone can create moments of authenticity for themselves through whatever means seem appropriate to them, be that motorcycling, reality television, or even a trip to McDonald's. For the 'critical' theorists of capitalist alienation, this will be the point at which authenticity eats itself. If McDonald's can provide an 'authentic' experience, what could not? For the advocates of everyday authenticity, however, the self-chosen identities that it enables or empowers offer a way to overcome the problems of 'outsider' status that we discussed in Chap. 4. If the core of one's sense of identity revolves

around being a biker, a surfer, or a costumed tourist, then, even while the distinction between (authentic) 'insider' and (inauthentic) 'outsider' is maintained, the more ascriptive forms of identity no longer matter, or matter a good deal less than they once did.8

We have subtitled our account "the cultural history of a political concept". This is based on the contention that we cannot understand authenticity if we see it as either merely political, or merely cultural. Authenticity, however conceived, is never just a matter of cultural taste: even when the quest for authenticity focuses on the individual, as it did, in different ways, for the followers of Rousseau and the Existentialists, the imagined 'Other' against which authenticity is defined is always based on a political narrative of alienation, corruption, or decadence. And yet, we cannot fully grasp the appeal of authenticity if we reduce it to this political dimension. Authenticity is always articulated through a set of cultural metaphors, and derives much of its persuasive power from their emotive and aesthetic appeal. In Germanlanguage historiography, authenticity has therefore been treated primarily as an aesthetic category: the Ästhetische Grundbegriffe, a comprehensive semantic lexicon of aesthetic concepts across time, contains a detailed discussion of authenticity in relation to creativity and cultural critiques. 9 Yet the same term is absent from the Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe, a similarly conceived eight-volume lexicon of foundational political concepts. 10 Our analysis suggests that such divisions are misleading. It is precisely at the intersection of politics, aesthetics, and lived experience that meanings of authenticity have been, and still are, configured, contested, and re-defined. Thus, we have traced authenticity across the seemingly diverse realms of theology, aesthetics, philosophy, marketing, and consumption, as well as more overtly political claims. And we have placed visual and material sources on an equal footing with written texts to analyse its operations.

What has emerged are the multifaceted, deeply entangled, yet ideologically highly distinct uses of a concept that has lost none of its attraction over time. What all of them have in common is that they relate to the original Greek term, authentikos, and its two component parts: autoself, and hentes—doer. Authenticity is something that we do, or achieve, ourselves. Authenticity can never be prescribed, nor passively consumed. That is not to say we can achieve authenticity in splendid isolation: authenticity may require particular political conditions, a particular theological or ideological framework, or particular material environments or consumer goods to enable its realisation (or at least its approximation as a regulative ideal). But to be authentic is to make use of such opportunities in a self-directed and self-determined way. This reliance on self-doing adds to authenticity's ideological appeal. Authenticity is an invitation to all of us to discover and realise a mode of existence which we recognise ourselves, and our purpose in life. Few other political ideals, even the seemingly omnipresent notion of 'freedom', are effective without a powerful link to the idea of authenticity. Authenticity, in empowering the self, is what activates other political appellations, and makes them credible. For the same reason, the politics of authenticity are unlikely ever to become redundant. As a consequence, visions of political futures that do away with authenticity and the 'politics of being' are not just contingently wrong, but structurally flawed. Fukuyama's prediction from 1989 that a common-sensical, neo-liberal consensus was to replace the ideological conflicts that had animated history thus far is only the most extreme example within a wider discourse that defines politics as post-ideological, pragmatic problem-solving.¹¹ There is, no doubt, a lot of room, and need, for a politics beyond authenticity. But as long as people look to politics to address questions not just of what is to be done, but how we, as human beings, should be, the concept of authenticity is unlikely to lose any of its ideological purchase.

Notes

- 1. A. Potter (2011) The Authenticity Hoax: Why the 'Real' Things We Seek Don't Make Us Happy (London: Harper), 231.
- 2. T. W. Adorno (1964) Jargon der Eigentlichkeit. Zur deutschen Ideologie (Frankfurt/M.: Surkamp), English translation by K. Tarnowski and F. Will (1973) as The Jargon of Authencitiv (Evanston: Northwestern University Press).
- 3. The idea of taste as a form of 'cultural capital' that cements social hierarchies was first developed by P. Bourdieu (1984) Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste, translated by R. Nice (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press). On taste and authenticity also see P. York (2014) Authenticity Is a Con (London: Biteback).
- 4. Boyle Authenticity, 58.
- 5. We owe this example to Potter, *The Authenticity Hoax*, 128–31. It offers a good example of the process of decontestation and recontestation in struggles over the meaning of language.
- 6. Potter, The Authenticity Hoax, 224.
- 7. Berman, The Politics of Authenticity; Trilling, Sincerity and Authenticity.

- 8. On costumed tourists see H. Kim and T. Jamal (2007) 'Touristic Quest for Existential Authenticity', *Annals of Tourism Research*, 34(1), 181–201. Questions of identity are never, of course, a simple binary choice between voluntary and involuntary aspects, and further research on the interplay between chosen and ascribed forms of identity in the field of self-authentication is highly necessary.
- 9. Susanne Knaller and Harro Müller (2010) 'Authentisch/Authentizität', in Karlheinz Barck et al., (eds) *Ästhetische Grundbegriffe*, vol. 7, Supplemente (Stuttgart: J. B. Metzler), 40–65.
- 10. This works remains the most comprehensive longitudinal survey of political semantics, but has no entry for authenticity, and only three adjectival uses of the related term *echt* (original, genuine); Otto Brunner, Werner Conze, and Reinhart Koselleck (eds), *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe: Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland*, 8 vols (new edn, Stuttgart, 2004). *Echt* features in three forms: as part of a theological move to invest 'authentic' everyday Christian experience with theological authority in the later eighteenth century (iii, 777); to question the distinction between 'authentic' and 'inauthentic' communists in 1848 (iii, 496); and to attack the conflation of anti-Semitism with 'authentic' nationalist sentiment in 1880 (i, 145).
- 11. F. Fukuyama, (1992) The End of History and the Last Man (New York: Free Press). See also D. Bell (2000) The End of Ideology: on the Exhaustion of Political Ideas in the Fifties: with "The Resumption of History in the New Century" (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press) [1962].

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