

## CARING, TEMPORALITY AND AGENCY: AN ANALYTIC AND A CONTINENTAL VIEW

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There is a striking similarity between the philosophy of Martin Heidegger and Harry G. Frankfurt: they both argue that the temporal nature of human existence and agency is due to the fact that humans care about things. Even though Heidegger's concept of care and Frankfurt's concept of caring are very different, they are worth comparing because they play a similar role and have similar significance in their thinking. This comparison also offers an opportunity for a desired dialog between philosophers working in those two different traditions. I argue that the two views can complement each other: Though Frankfurt provides a detailed psychological description of caring, his concept of caring is too mentalistic and leads to solipsism. Thus, his theory can be enriched with the help of Heidegger's view based on the concept of Being-in-the-world.

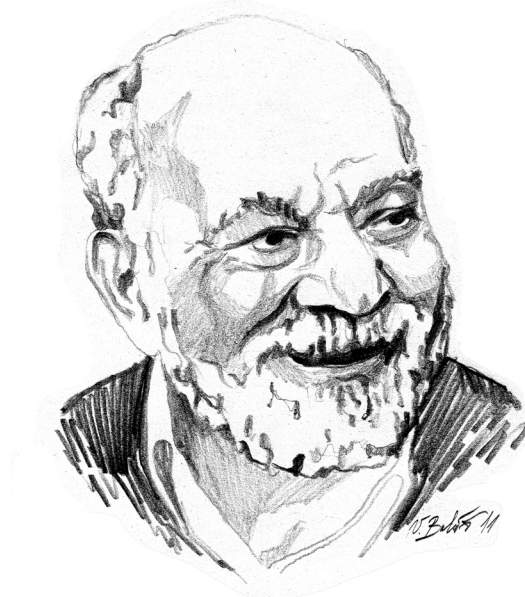
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In light of the traditional opposition between continental and analytic philosophy, it might be surprising to try to connect ideas of thinkers as different as Martin Heidegger and Harry G. Frankfurt.\* It seems that the two completely different methods of philosophy departed long ago and it makes little sense to try to find common points. However, Heidegger and Frankfurt share a key idea: they both believe that caring is essential to our temporal existence and to our agency as well. Since I am largely trained in analytic philosophy I will mostly focus on Frankfurt's views and I will try to come up with some suggestions as to how Heidegger's views on the subject might be similar. In the end, I will show that though the two views are strikingly similar at first sight they have a very different understanding of the key concepts and thus there are significant differences as well. The main reason for this is that while Frankfurt's concept of caring is psychological and tries to describe caring in mentalistic terms, Heidegger emphasizes that we cannot isolate the mind from the environment. Nevertheless the two different understandings do

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not necessarily exclude each other. On the one hand, Frankfurt's psychological understanding of the concept of caring can be made richer with the help of Heidegger's concept of being-in-the-world. On the other hand, Heidegger's concept of care might be made richer as well using Frankfurt's more precise and detailed psychological description. Thus a more general conclusion will follow: the opposition between analytic and continental philosophy can at times be reconciled and the two different traditions can learn from each other, making their understandings of philosophical concepts richer.



*Harry G. Frankfurt*

### **1. Caring, Temporality and Agency in Frankfurt.**

Frankfurt has two basic ideas. First, the most important tenet of his hierarchical theory of desires is that we are agents as well as persons because we have *second-order desires*. When one has such a desire, one wants to have or not to have a certain desire.<sup>1</sup> With the help of second-order desires, we are able to step back and reflect on our motivation. To use Frankfurt's term, they make *reflective self-evaluation* possible. A creature without second-order desires is a *wanton*, someone we cannot regard as a *person*. We evaluate our own selves through second-order desires which make active participation in the process of decision-making possible. Second, his recent views suggest that we are agents because we are able to *care* about things.<sup>2</sup> Human beings are spe-

cial because they care about things: they find some things in their life important; some persons and things matter to them in a special way. For Frankfurt, the two abilities – reflective self-evaluation and caring – are tied closely together. He thinks that the ability to care presupposes reflectivity. Technically, caring about things works through a special type of second-order desire: a desire to sustain a desire. Caring gives our desires a *tempo-*

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<sup>1</sup> Frankfurt, Harry G., "Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person", in Frankfurt, Harry G., *The Importance of What We Care About*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 11-26, reprinted from *Journal of Philosophy* 98, no. 23 (January 1971), 5-20. Frankfurt uses the term "to desire" in a broad sense, interchangeably with "to want."

<sup>2</sup> For the most recent discussion of Frankfurt's concept of caring, see his book, *The Reasons of Love* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004).

*ral dimension* through this sustaining activity.

Let us look at Frankfurtian reflectivity and caring, and their role in agency in more detail. Frankfurt's view on reflectivity as a process that works through second-order desires might sound a bit unusual for those who are not familiar with the latter concept. One might simply say that there is no such thing as "to want to want to do something" or "not to want to want to do something." Sure, it might be artificial to put it this way. But everybody is familiar with situations in which we become aware of our desires and our attitude towards them. In such cases we might think: "I wish I wanted this more" or "I wish I did not want to do this so much." For example, when faced with the fact that he has not made enough progress with his work, a student might wish that he wanted to focus on his work more and that he did not want to waste his time on the things that distract him, say lazing around in bed or going to the movies. Or to take a typical case in which second-order desires might appear, an addict who has a strong desire to take the drug might say to himself: "I wish I did not want to take the drug so badly." These are typical instances of having the type of reflective concern about our own motivation that Frankfurt talks about. No doubt, one can describe these scenarios with a vocabulary different from that of the hierarchical theory of desires. For example, one might say with Gary Watson that the student *judges* that it would be better to work more instead of wasting his time and that the addict *judges* that it would be better not to take the drug and stop his self-destructive way of life.<sup>3</sup>

Obviously, Frankfurt works under an assumption, Humean in nature: human beings are not rational, at least in the sense that they are not moved by pure reason. As it is well-known, Hume believed that "reason alone can never be a motive to any action of the will."<sup>4</sup> He also declared that "[R]eason is, and ought only to be the slave of the passions, and can never pretend to any other office than to serve and obey them."<sup>5</sup> But there is an important difference between Hume and Frankfurt at this point: the latter does not talk about the rule of the passions. Rather, he stresses that some of our desires are reflexive and thus superior; that is, they belong to the second-order and they are the basis of decision-making. And since decision making works through second-order desires and volitions it is not a purely rational process.

Besides second-order desires, Frankfurt introduced a nuanced repertoire of second-order attitudes including *second-order volitions*, *endorsement*, *identification*, and other features of hierarchical structures of desires such as *satisfaction* and *wholeheartedness*. I will not discuss these in detail here, except for the concept of second-order volitions which is crucially important for Frankfurt's concept of freedom. Second-order volitions are a type of second-order desires. When we form a second-order volition, we want one of our desires to be our *will*, or in other words, we want one of our desires to move us all the

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<sup>3</sup> See Watson, Gary, "Free Agency," in his *Agency and Answerability* (Oxford University Press, 2004) 13-32, reprinted from *Journal of Philosophy* 72 (1975), 205-20.

<sup>4</sup> Hume, David, *A Treatise of Human Nature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2000), 265.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 266.

way to action. This concept is very important for Frankfurt's solution to the problem of free will. He claims that if one acts in accordance with his second-order volition he has free will and if one acts on a desire contrary to his second-order volition he does not.<sup>6</sup>

Famously, Gary Watson objected to Frankfurt's view by arguing that second-order desires do not have a special status at all and they are of secondary importance. He thinks that the really important thing is the values that we have. Now, our values can only have a special status if they are more than mere desires. Our values should be expressed by *value judgments* which cannot be reduced to desires. Evaluations understood in this sense are *prior* to second-order volitions: first we make a first-order evaluational judgment about what to do and this is what generates second-order volitions.<sup>7</sup>

Frankfurt's concept of *caring* is significant partly because we can defend his view against Watson's criticism with the help of it. For Frankfurt our values are constituted by what we care about, so caring can be understood as a (non-rational) way of valuing things. Watson would obviously not accept this view, given his rationalistic claim that our values should be the result of evaluative judgments. However, if we work under a Humean assumption the objection loses its force. Our second-order desires are not baseless and they do have a special status due to the fact that they express what we really care about, or in other words, what our values are.

Thus, in itself, a hierarchical structure of desires does not make us capable of caring. Frankfurt argues that in order to be able to care about things, we need to introduce a special kind of second-order desire: a desire to sustain a certain desire. This is what makes us able to care about things and at the same time, this is what makes caring a temporally extended phenomenon. It is important to stress that when an agent cares about something the continuation of his desires is not simply due to "its own inherent momentum" but is the result of the agent's own activity.<sup>8</sup>

But how does one actively sustain a desire? Let us look at Frankfurt's definition of the concept of caring in detail. How exactly do we sustain our desires when we care about something? He explains what caring about something is by contrasting it with both desiring something and finding it valuable.<sup>9</sup> We might desire something but that does not imply that we care about it. I might desire ice-cream, but it surely does not entail that I care about eating ice-cream because it might be that this kind of activity is of no importance to my life whatsoever. It is also possible that though I recognize that something is intrinsically valuable, I do not find that thing attractive at all; it might even be totally indifferent to me. For example, I might judge that a healthy life is intrinsically valuable, but

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<sup>6</sup> Cf. Frankfurt, "Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person."

<sup>7</sup> Watson, "Free Action and Free Will," in his *Agency and Answerability*, 161-197, reprinted from *Mind* 96 (April 1987), 145-72.

<sup>8</sup> Frankfurt, "On Caring," in his *Necessity, Volition and Love* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 160. Ferrero also argues that "[O]ur status as temporally integrated agents is not to be taken for granted; we are not born to it and, once acquired, it must be sustained." Ferrero, Luca, "What Good is a Diachronic Will?" (*Philosophical Studies* 144, vol. 3, 2009), 430.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Frankfurt, Harry G., "On Caring."

nevertheless go on smoking, eating unhealthy food and drinking all the same. In this case, though I judge that a healthy life is intrinsically valuable, I am not moved by it at all, because I personally do not care about a healthy life, or in other words, I do not find it important to me at all. Thus, Frankfurt treats caring about something as equivalent to *finding it important* to us,<sup>10</sup> and claims that it is ultimately different from both desiring something and judging it valuable.

As we have seen, one of the most significant aspects of caring is that it has a *temporal dimension*.<sup>11</sup> Now we see how exactly we sustain our desires when we care about something. When we care about something we find it important and value it in a special way and the mental activity of sustaining our desires is the heart of this kind of valuing. As Frankfurt puts it, “[T]he outlook of a person who cares about something is inherently prospective: that is, he necessarily considers himself as having a future.”<sup>12</sup> This is also something that differentiates caring from desiring and believing; the latter two do not, at least not necessarily, entail the continuation of the given desire and belief. In contrast, it is part of the inherent nature of caring that it persists for a given period of time.

Besides being different from desires and value judgments, caring is also different from *acts of will*, the significance of which are exaggerated according to Frankfurt’s recent views.<sup>13</sup> These include decisions, choices and the like, which one performs consciously and voluntarily. While these are performed consciously and voluntarily, caring is not necessarily performed in such a manner. Paradoxically, even though Frankfurt stresses that the temporality of a desire has to be the result of the active contribution of the agent, what we care about is not in our control. One cannot just decide to care about something or to stop caring about something. What we care about is not under our direct, voluntary control.<sup>14</sup> What is more, Frankfurt introduces the notion of *volitional necessity*. In a case of volitional necessity one cannot help wanting something and one cannot bring oneself to want something. The most obvious example is the volitional necessity involved in love: when one truly loves someone, one cannot want but what is good for the beloved. Thus, “[V]olitional necessity constrains the person himself, by limiting the choices that he can make.”<sup>15</sup>

It is a very important aspect of Frankfurt’s thinking that what we care about is central

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 155.

<sup>11</sup> Several other authors have emphasized the importance of temporality for agency recently. See, for example, Bratman, Michael, *Structures of Agency* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007) or Ferrero’s paper.

<sup>12</sup> Frankfurt, “The Importance of What We Care About,” in his *The Importance of What We Care About*, 80 – 94, reprinted from *Synthese* 53, No. 2 (1982), 257 – 72 83.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 84.

<sup>14</sup> For an important recent discussion of this aspect of caring see Cuypers, Stefan E., “Autonomy beyond Voluntarism: In Defense of Hierarchy” (*Canadian Journal of Philosophy*, 30, No. 2, June 2000), 225 – 256.

<sup>15</sup> Frankfurt, “On the Necessity of Ideals,” in his *Necessity, Volition and Love*, 138.

to our *will*, or as he puts it, what one cares about expresses “what his will truly *is*.”<sup>16</sup> As a consequence, even though a volitional necessity constrains our nature, this does not impair our abilities because a volitional necessity “is grounded in the person’s own nature.”<sup>17</sup> Now, since caring is grounded in the person’s nature, it is a basis of *autonomy* in Frankfurtian thinking. External forces can defeat our will and deprive us of our freedom and autonomy, but what is internal to the will, what belongs to its essence cannot take away our freedom. When we act out of volitional necessity, we act freely and autonomously.

To conclude, caring plays an essentially important role in temporality and agency for Frankfurt. It is important for temporality in the sense that it gives a temporal dimension to our desires. Also, what we care about defines who we are and consequently it is the basis of our practical and personal identity. As a result, it makes autonomous agency possible, since when one acts out of wholehearted caring, his actions flow from his inner nature.

**2. Caring, Temporality and Agency in Heidegger.** Let me turn to Heidegger’s concept of care and its significance for temporality and agency. One of the most basic concepts he used in *Being and Time* is being-in-the-world. With this concept he provided an alternative to the traditional distinction between the object and the subject.<sup>18</sup> The distinction, of course, goes back to Descartes: there is on the one hand *res extensa*, the extended physical world and, on the other *res cogitans*, the thinking subject. Even if we do not believe in metaphysical dualism we can keep the distinction in an epistemological sense and say that the world around us and our consciousness are two separate things. Heidegger’s term, being-in-the-world was devised to oppose this distinction. This concept is not meant to imply that there is a subject that exists in the world as for example water exists in a glass; this would entail that the distinction between the subject and the object is valid. Heidegger stresses that his concept stands for a “unitary phenomenon”: it cannot be broken up into contents which may be pieced together.<sup>19</sup> The claim according to which being-in-the-world is a unitary phenomenon implies that we cannot separate the subject and the object in the way the traditional distinction between the subject and the object suggests. Human existence, *Dasein*, cannot be separated from the world; we exist *as* being-in-the-world. *Dasein* is a unitary phenomenon in the sense that neither the world nor the subject can exist as a self-contained entity; each needs the other to be what it is.

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<sup>16</sup> Frankfurt, “The Importance of What We Care About,” 84 (italics in the original).

<sup>17</sup> Frankfurt, Harry G., “Concerning the Freedom and the Limits of the Will,” in his *Necessity, Volition and Love*, 81.

<sup>18</sup> For a detailed discussion of Heidegger’s criticism of this distinction see Delancey, Craig: “Action, the Scientific Worldview, and Being-in-the-World,” in *A Companion to Phenomenology and Existentialism*, ed. by Dreyfus, Hubert L. and Wrathall, Mark A. (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2006 ), 356-66 and Taylor, Charles, “Engaged Agency and Background,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger*, ed. by Guignon, Charles (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 317-36.

<sup>19</sup> Heidegger, Martin, *Sein und Zeit*, 8<sup>th</sup> edition (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1957), 53 / *Being and Time*, trans. by John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson, Oxford: Blackwell, 1962, 78.

Dasein has another very important feature: it is not just one existing thing among others. It is distinguished from other entities by virtue of the fact that “that Being is an *issue* for it.”<sup>20</sup> It is part of Dasein that it has a relationship to its own existence. Human existence is unique inasmuch as human beings always have a relationship to their own existence, whether or not they are aware of it. So far it seems to be obvious that for Heidegger, human existence has two very important features. First, it is not the case that humans are detached from the world around them. Second, it is also an essential part of human life that we have a relationship to our own existence in our very existence. Thus, we can see what the essence of human life is so far: human beings are essentially related both to their own existence and the world around them.

But what kind of relationship exactly are we talking about? For Heidegger, the way we are related to the world and to our own existence is not a theoretical one. It is basically a *practical* relationship. With this we get to one of the most important concepts of *Being and Time*: care. Human beings are related to the world through care. Care is centrally important to Dasein itself: “Dasein’s Being reveals itself as *care*.”<sup>21</sup> Our natural attitude to the world is not a theoretical one, rather, we are interested in the things around us; we have a practical attitude towards them.

The significance of this practical attitude that humans have and the importance of the fact that they are engaged with the world around them is similar to the importance of caring for Frankfurt. Just as for Frankfurt, caring, temporality and agency are connected in Heidegger’s thinking.

Let us look at first how care and temporality are related. Being concerned about things requires that we are aware of time, especially of the future. Now, how exactly is temporality involved in care for Heidegger? He tries to grasp the totality of Dasein’s temporality in the following way: “the Being of Dasein means ahead-of-itself-Being-already-in-(the-world) as Being-alongside (entities encountered within-the-world).”<sup>22</sup> Being-ahead-of-itself involves an openness to the future, being-alongside involves an openness to the present moment and being-already-in involves a connection to the past. Thus, when human beings care about something, their care involves this tripartite unity of temporality.

One of these aspects of temporal openness is especially important. To use Mulhall’s words, for Heidegger “the primary meaning of existentiality is the future”.<sup>23</sup> Care involves not only a connection to the past and to the present. More importantly, care involves that we have to do something, and this involves an orientation towards the future. Now, why is the future the most important for our temporal existence? This significance lies in the fact that Dasein has its own possibilities and it is also capable of resoluteness, to use Heidegger’s

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<sup>20</sup> Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 12 / *Being and Time*, 32 (italics in the original).

<sup>21</sup> Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 182 / *Being and Time*, 227 (italics in the original).

<sup>22</sup> Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 192 / *Being and Time*, 237.

<sup>23</sup> Mulhall, Stephen, *Routledge Philosophical Guidebook to Heidegger and Being and Time* (London: Routledge, 1996), 145.

ger's term, to project its possibilities into the future.<sup>24</sup> This way, Dasein can realize its possibilities and exist authentically.

But what is exactly authentic existence for Heidegger? It is very difficult to grasp Heidegger's concept of authenticity. Perhaps it is better to look first at the most typical type of inauthentic existence he talks about. According to him, everyday human existence is largely inauthentic. He declares that "[N]o one is himself in everydayness."<sup>25</sup> In everyday life our thoughts and actions are simply the thoughts and actions of *das Man*: "What someone is, and how he is, is nobody [...] This nobody by whom we ourselves are lived in everydayness is the 'One'."<sup>26</sup> In everyday life, in a certain situation we think what one thinks, we say what one says<sup>27</sup> and we do what one does. When we are authentic, we exist just in the opposite way. To be authentic means that we are being ourselves and that we realize our "ownmost" possibilities. As Heidegger puts it, "The *authenticity of Dasein* is what constitutes its *most extreme possibility of its Being*."<sup>28</sup>

To conclude this section, just as for Frankfurt, care is a unifying concept for Heidegger. Dasein or human life is ultimately care, the most important feature of which is the tripartite unity of temporality, that is, a temporal openness to the past, present and most importantly, to the future. Also, it is obvious how care and agency are related: our practical activities are the expression of the way we care about things and our own existence. We are capable of realizing our own possibilities, that is, we are capable of authentic existence.

### 3. Similarities and Differences in Frankfurt and Heidegger.

**I. Criticism of Rationalism.** The most important similarity of the two thinkers is that they are both opposed to rationalism. Frankfurt often expresses his opinion according to which the importance of reason is exaggerated in modern culture.<sup>29</sup> Instead, as we have seen in section one, he tried to develop a Humean theory of human nature, according to which we are not moved by pure reason. Rather, it is our desires that move us in the end.

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<sup>24</sup> Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 323-331 / *Being and Time*, 370 – 380.

<sup>25</sup> Heidegger, Martin, *The Concept of Time*, trans. by William McNeill (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), 8.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 8-9 (italics in the original). *Das Man* is also translated as "They."

<sup>27</sup> Here we can find another interesting similarity between the two philosophers. Heidegger discusses *idle talk*, a type of everyday communication, the most important feature of which is groundlessness: while engaging in idle talk, we are interested in the claim itself, and not its object (See Mulhall, 106). Idle talk "is constituted by [...] gossiping and passing the word along – a process by which its initial lack of ground to stand on becomes aggravated to complete groundlessness" (Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 168 / *Being and Time*, 212). In this sense, Heidegger's concept of idle talk is very similar to Frankfurt's concept of *bullshit*. When we bullshit, we do not have any concern for the truth: we talk in order to serve our interests and to impress others and we are "neither on the side of the true nor on the side of the false" (Frankfurt, Harry G., *On Bullshit*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005, 56, reprinted from *Raritan Quarterly Review* 6, no. 2, Fall 1986).

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 10 (italics in the original).

<sup>29</sup> See for example, Frankfurt, *The Reasons of Love*, especially 23 – 28.



Our most important desires are second-order desires, and especially caring which is constituted by special second-order desires. Caring is central to who we are and to what actions we should perform. It is the basis of our personal and practical identity.

Heidegger has a similar critical view on rationalism. Charles Taylor credits him as “the leading figure among a small list of twentieth-century philosophers who helped us emerge, painfully and with difficulty, from the grip of modern rationalism.”<sup>30</sup> In modern times, reason was often regarded as the most important aspect of human existence and thus human beings were defined as thinking agents. This involves ontologizing the rational procedure which was “read into the very concept of the mind and made part of its very structure.”<sup>31</sup> We have seen that Heidegger refused the traditional distinction between subject and object, and instead he defined human existence as a unitary phenomenon, being-in-the-world. Dasein is not a thinking, rational, “worldless” consciousness disengaged from its environment but an agent which is constantly involved in and engaged with the world he lives in.

**II. Human Nature.** Besides their opposition to rationalism, they also have a broadly similar view on human nature. Frankfurt claims that human beings have two centrally important abilities: they can reflect on their desires and they are capable of caring about things. In other words, they can *relate to* their own selves and to the world around them. Heidegger’s idea according to which for Dasein its own existence is an issue and that it is always concerned with the world is similar: Dasein can *relate to* its own self and to the world around it. What is more, it seems that for both of them, it is through care that humans develop this relatedness.

However, I think that Frankfurt would keep the distinction between the object and the subject and he focuses mostly on the psychology of the agent. Frankfurt has a mentalistic concept of caring and it seems that even a solipsistic agent could be able to care about things provided that the relevant hierarchical structure of desires is present in his mind. Heidegger’s concept of care is radically different since a solipsistic agent cannot exist for him and consequently we cannot define care in purely mentalistic terms.

**III. Caring and Temporality.** As we have seen, the basis of the temporality of the will for Frankfurt is caring; this is what gives a temporal dimension to our desires and volitions. He also emphasizes the importance of caring for the future: “[T]he outlook of a person who cares about something is inherently prospective: that is, he necessarily considers himself as having a future”.<sup>32</sup>

Heidegger’s view is similar inasmuch as he stresses the connection between care and temporality. Care involves a tripartite unity of temporality: an openness to the present, past and the future. Frankfurt’s and Heidegger’s view are also similar inasmuch as they

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<sup>30</sup> Taylor, 317.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 317-318.

<sup>32</sup> Frankfurt, “The Importance of What We Care About,” 83.

both emphasize the importance of openness to the future.

**IV. Contingency.** Both Frankfurt's and Heidegger's views involve contingency. Frankfurt claims that in the end, what we care about most is determined by our biological nature and our personal history. In other words, we do not have any control over these aspects of our lives and consequently we cannot have absolute freedom either. Heidegger's concept of thrownness seems to be similar. Dasein is thrown: we did not choose the particular existence we have, rather, we are thrown into it.<sup>33</sup> Dasein is always situated in the world in a certain way and consequently the possibilities which it can choose are always limited.<sup>34</sup> Both of these concepts seem to imply that we are limited by a certain type of contingency and as a consequence we do not have a total control over our lives and we do not have an absolute freedom of choice.

**V. Wantonness and Inauthenticity.** Both Frankfurt and Heidegger contrast their vision on the good human life with its opposite: for Frankfurt it is *wantonness*, for Heidegger it is *inauthenticity*. A wanton is a creature without any reflectivity: he does not consider what desires move him to act; he simply acts on whichever desire occurs in him. For Heidegger inauthenticity means thinking and acting as dictated by everyday existence and 'One', and a failure to realize one's possibilities. Though both of them have a concept of unreflective creatures, there is a very important difference. Frankfurt's wanton is a creature we cannot regard as a person or an average human being. For him, humans are reflective "by default"; or in other words they are capable of forming-second-order desires. In contrast, everyday human life is largely inauthentic in Heidegger's view and as a result inauthenticity is much more common than wantonness.

**VI. Essence.** Regardless of these similarities listed above, there is an important difference between Frankfurt and Heidegger which is connected to the essence of human beings. Frankfurt seems to favour a non-Lockean theory of personal identity according to which the basis of our personal and practical identity lies in our will and not in cognitive links between our mental states. Now, as we have seen, the will is defined by volitional necessities, that is, things that we cannot help wanting and things that we cannot bring ourselves to want. Frankfurt argues that his view is a theory of freedom and autonomy (in the sense of acting out of internal necessity as opposed to being determined by something external), but Velleman has pointed out that it might be better to characterize it as a theory of authenticity.<sup>35</sup> More specifically, it could be argued that it is a *real-self view* of authenticity, according to which we are authentic, when our actions flow from our real self. We become inauthentic when we fail to act in accordance with our real self; or even

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<sup>33</sup> Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 135 / *Being and Time*, 174.

<sup>34</sup> Mulhall, 84.

<sup>35</sup> Velleman, David, "Identification and Identity", in *Contours of Agency*, ed. by Buss, Sarah and Overton, Lee (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2002), 97.

worse, when our actions are determined by a false self. For Frankfurt, our real self is defined by our volitional essence, that is, what we care about and love most.

At first, Heidegger's concept of authenticity might seem to be similar. Just as Frankfurt, he suggests that we should act according to who we are. However, this is a crucial point where Heidegger differs from Frankfurt. Though Heidegger refused to be called an *existentialist*, his thinking can be characterized as existentialism in an important sense. Namely, he shared the existentialist tenet according to which we do not have an essence separate from our existence. He states that "The essence of Dasein lies in its existence."<sup>36</sup> The essence of Dasein is existence, and not a set of desires or volitions as in case of the concept of self embedded in Frankfurt's thinking. This feature makes Heidegger's view more attractive. Frankfurt's claim about volitional essence and the lack of direct control over what we care about leads to a strong scepticism about *self-control* and *self-management*. The openness about ourselves that Heidegger's view involves on the other hand involves a greater degree of personal freedom and opens up possibilities for us, and if we can fulfil them we can become authentic.

To conclude, Heidegger's view seems to make Frankfurt's concept of caring richer. In my view, Frankfurt emphasizes mental aspects of caring too much and as a result, something is missing from his concept. As I mentioned before, Frankfurt's views cannot exclude solipsism. A solipsistic agent can satisfy all the conditions of Frankfurtian caring if the relevant hierarchical structure of desires is present. But there seems to be something wrong with this result. The idea that someone can care about something without it existing is unacceptable. Thus, we have to define caring in a way that excludes the possibility of solipsism. And this is the point where Heidegger's view seems to be more satisfying since it better expresses the fact that when we care about something there is an intimate connection that the traditional distinction between subject and object cannot fully express.

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<sup>36</sup> Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 42 / *Being and Time*, 67.

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