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AUSTER'S LEVIATHAN: WHEN THE "VOICE OF CONSCIENCE" CALLS OUT

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Abstract

The "voice of conscience", in Heidegger's philosophy, refers to the moment of self-realization when the existentially authentic individual as Dasein recognizes the range of possibilities in any given situation for which he/she is responsible. It is only the authentic individual who hears the call of conscience by having chosen to hear it. The call, if heard, reveals to Dasein the possibilities it has before it to take proper action based on the situation to lead a better life, not only for itself but also for others. Benjamin Sachs in *Leviathan*, in representing the Heideggerian Dasein, chooses to hear his conscience and cries out against the political corruption which his fellow American citizens ignore to hear. As an authentic individual, in the tradition of Heidegger's Dasein, Ben rebels against communal ignorance under political tyranny following the rise of his political conscience, an uprising which is existential in principle and radical in practice, giving Auster's novel an Existential-Marxist tone.

Key words

Auster; conscience; Dasein; existentialism; Heidegger; *Leviathan*

1. Introduction

What is a social truth – or what is *the* social truth – within a specific society in a certain period? What constitutes the touchstone upon which a citizen may act to lead an authentic life in which one's individuality and self-consistency would not be lost in the hell of other people, as Sartre famously put it? What must happen so that one's everyday life passes as authentically as possible to make life existentially authentic? These are the questions Paul Auster puts to the test in *Leviathan*, his "most overtly political work" (Martin 2008: 177). By calling attention to the essence of individual responsibility before a corrupted government, Auster's protagonist existentially practices his possibilities of action and chooses a diverse course of life against communal ignorance toward authenticity, a process highlighting the underlying Heideggerian concept of Dasein's conscience facing politics in Auster's political piece.

Leviathan (1992) initially attracts attention through its title. "Leviathan" is an allusion to "the anti-mundane figure of violence and chaos in Genesis" (Auster and Siegumfeldt 2017: 173), "a direct reference to Hobbes' notion of the state" in *Leviathan* and its concerns with "state absolutism" (Auster and Siegumfeldt 2017: 169), Moby-Dick's enmity against Ahab (Saltzman 1995: 169), and George Oppen's poem "Leviathan" whose opening lines are taken from "The Declara-

tion of Independence” (Ford 1999: 216). The novel is the story of Benjamin Sachs (henceforth Ben), a novelist turned bomber whose change of character is recounted by Peter Aaron, the narrator, within an intricate network of relationships. Ben’s life has become the subject of Peter’s present novel, *Leviathan*, the title Ben wanted to call his own never-published second novel. Peter’s story opens with the news of Ben’s death – a man blew himself up by the side of a road in northern Wisconsin. The FBI finds out that the bomber has something to do with Peter who later decides to write down Ben’s life before the FBI discovers Ben’s identity. It is then through Peter’s account, amid the other minor story lines of the novel, that we discover Ben was a literary genius and a popular writer, influenced by the Transcendentalists, with leftist attitudes. His wife was Fanny Goodman whom he lost to a short affair with Maria. During Reagan’s presidency, his leftism lost color publicly, which led him to political turmoil. Meanwhile, he experienced a fall from the fourth floor of a building once in a party with Maria. After his recovery, he developed a new vision which attracted him to radicalism, especially after murdering an anarchist called Reed Dimaggio in self-defense in the woods and coming to possess his writings, playing his doppelganger afterwards. Ben then began a series of bombings against the replicas of the Statue of Liberty in the 1980s to express his anger at capitalism, with messages broadcast to awaken people after each attempt. However, he lost his life due to the sudden explosion of a bomb in one of his missions. Peter finishes his story, called *Leviathan*, and hands it to the FBI on their second visit to investigate him.

Set in “the political and cultural climate of America between 1950 and 1990” (Auster and Siegfumfeldt 2017: 167), *Leviathan* is considered by Auster as “a book about a collapsing society” (as cited in Hutchisson 2013: 165). This collapsing society is the leviathan-figure of the USA with its capitalistic propagandas challenged by Auster. Through American capitalism, “an unquestioning acceptance of apathy, corruption and materialism” has replaced such concepts of “liberty and democracy” (Martin 2008: 177). By focusing on the controversy between “complacency and militancy,” as Martin continues, Auster suggests that while contemporary Americans fight for some meaningful “daily existence,” their understanding of their compatriots’ lives have failed at “a communal, social and political level” (177). It is therefore through Ben, following his “disillusionment with modern America” (Auster and Siegfumfeldt 2017: 167), that Auster points to “the lack of spirituality” in contemporary America and urges “the need for institutional change” (Martin 2008: 177). In other words, Ben wakes up to hear his (political) conscience reacting against the very foundations of everyday American existence, an existentially meaningful experience which can be explained through Heideggerian terminology.

Whether Heideggerian existentialism can be applied to Auster’s novel is a question of how Ben’s existential crisis, his Leftism, his radicalism, and his death make sense in the light of Heidegger’s philosophy considering *Dasein*’s position in the world, its anxiety, and its conscience in contributing to political change. In this light, in *Being and Time* (henceforth *BT*), Heidegger introduces *Dasein* as the nature of human reality in its routine activities in the world, assigning it a set of features that make its totality of being in relation to itself, the Others, and the

world. Dasein is either *authentic* or *inauthentic* in its aforementioned relations, that is, it has either recognized its potentiality of being to consciously choose among different possibilities in life to guarantee its freedom and subjectivity or it is constantly lost in everydayness and conformity in all modes of life, respectively. Dasein's authenticity is a manner of handling its existence by recognizing its power over different possibilities in each (historical) situation in order to win its destiny in the most effective way. This understanding unfolds during the state of *angst* or anxiety when one's possibilities of action are disclosed to Dasein as matters of choice, and it is up to Dasein to embrace its opportunities by pursuing the *silent call of conscience*, the authenticity reminder, that calls it to action. And since life is generally death-oriented, death the last point in the range of human possibilities in life is the only agent to imprison one's subjectivity and freedom, all the other entities being surpassable in so far as Dasein maintains its authenticity. When authentic action is against inauthenticity on political grounds, despite his notorious support to the Nazis, Heidegger's political worldviews are tinged with Marxist attitudes, especially the late Heidegger, for further concretization away from what certain critics interpret as Heideggerian transcendentalism.

Thus argued, regarding politics being the basic problem in *Leviathan*, what follows is an investigation into Ben's radicalism through Heidegger's portrayal of human reality in itself and within a certain situation to illumine how Ben's call for political change in America and his revolt can reflect the authentic Dasein's "call of conscience" and its existential potential in practice toward non-conformism and political health of the community.

2. Discussion

2.1. When the "Voice of Conscience" Calls Dasein Back to Itself

Moving away from the traditional "ontic inquiry" about human nature to "the ontological mode of being" that investigates "the structures which make it possible to *be* human" (Dreyfus and Wrathall 2005: 3), Heidegger in *BT* elaborates on "fundamental ontology" as a concept with which to understand "Being" and the world with regard to Dasein. Heidegger defines human reality as "Dasein," avoiding terms like 'human,' 'soul' or 'living,' disregarding their use by Plato and Aristotle, the Greek way of understanding human being in everyday existence (Zuckert 1996: 44), since such terms are typically understood "on the model of a worldless subject over and against an object" (Lumsden 2014: 112). Heidegger's Dasein is defined according to its "existing in a world" and its being is "inextricably bound up with the world" around (Dreyfus and Wrathall 2005: 4). Dasein has a kind of being through which it is revealed or "disclosed" to itself to clarify its "thrownness" or present situation in the world among others (Heidegger 2001: 225).

Due to its "thrown" state or its "Being-in-the-world," Dasein is mostly "inauthentic," entangled in the "they-self." Dasein's "they-self" or "inauthentic" self is in fact its "Being-in-the-world," "Being alongside" the world, and "Being-with Others" (Heidegger 2001: 225). Such "absorption" in "the They" and the world – Dasein

is born as such – reveals “a fleeing of Dasein in the face of itself” and prevents it from projecting itself as “an authentic potentiality-for-Being-its-Self” (229), in so far as it basically confronts the world as “publicly interpreted” by “the They” (235).

Overcoming “falling everydayness” is possible through “authenticity” or practicing “*authentic existence*” (Heidegger 2001: 224), which happens through “anxiety” by which Dasein loses its “involvement” with the world (231), feeling the “uncanny” (233). As “thrown” into the world, Dasein sees the “uncanny” but escapes from it by taking refuge in Others, while “uncanniness” is always pursuing Dasein and threatens its “everyday lostness” in “the They” (234). In Lumsden’s words, authenticity is the recognition of the methods through which “norms” control individuals, framing and limiting their possibilities of existence (2014: 118). So authenticity “individualizes” Dasein for its “ownmost Being-in-the-world,” allowing it to recognize that it is “*Being-possible*” and “*Being-free*” (Heidegger 2001: 232). As Harries says, Heidegger ties authenticity to “authorship” and humans are to bear “responsibility for who they are and will become” (2009: 18). On this basis, Dasein comes to know its “existential responsibility” (Mulhall 2013: 140), so as to answer “who it is” and what decisions it should make in a certain situation (Schalow and Denker 2010: 254).

Since anxiety reveals the “insignificance” of the world, it points to “the nullity” of Dasein’s “concern” (Heidegger 2001: 393), meanwhile summoning Dasein to face itself and listen to its “conscience” (277). Dasein needs to listen to the voice which calls for authenticity, but “the They” deprives it of the act of “*choosing*” to hear it. Dasein can overcome this passivity only if it *calls* itself back to itself from lostness, hence the “*voice of conscience.*” Heideggerian conscience, excluding the matter of moral guilt, “*discloses*” to Dasein its situation in the world (314), calling Dasein back “to its ownmost potentiality-for-Being-its-Self,” accusing it of “Being-guilty,” existentially guilty, of lostness in “the They” (314). Moreover, just as one’s moral conscience is voiceless, it is characteristic of the “call of conscience” to be silent, that is, Dasein’s “uncanniness” is soundless against other’s “idle talk” (343). The message is conveyed from the act of Dasein exploring itself without uttering a word. The “call” is, however, evasive and reaches the one “who wants to be brought back” to him/herself (316), who wants to make a choice, take action, and accept the responsibilities. Authentically understanding “the call” gives us our “most positive” aspect, that is, knowledge of our “potentiality-for-being” (341). And since for Heidegger all kinds of understanding happen in a mood, understanding “the call” befalls Dasein in the state of anxiety, “the *anxiety of conscience*” being the confirmation of Dasein encountering the possibility of becoming authentic (342).

Being responsive to conscience is called “resoluteness” through which “the call” calls Dasein back to itself (Heidegger 2001: 314). “Resoluteness” is namely the “authentic disclosedness” of Dasein to itself by its voiceless conscience; it is the “*reticent self-projection up on one’s ownmost Being-guilty, in which one is ready for anxiety*” (343). Moreover, “resoluteness” reveals to Dasein its openness to the plethora of possibilities in each situation. It is Dasein before the mirror of the self with a wider field of vision, able to see around while being detached from everything at the position of the observer. “Resoluteness” furthermore makes Dasein

confront its “Being-alongside” and “Being with Others” in the world. If everyone becomes “resolute,” all people can “authentically be with one another.” It is to say that, respecting “Being-with others,” Dasein is resolute only when it lets others be resolute in order to cohabit in a mutually authentic relationship. Nonetheless, once Dasein is “resolute,” whether Others have become “resolute” or not, it can also become Others’ conscience to wisely choose for them (344), summoning itself to “existential consistency” to recognize itself and its possibilities and accept the responsibility for its choices (McMullin 2013: 215). Meanwhile, it is Dasein’s duty to “mirror” the Others who “exists as separate and self-determining” in themselves (Mulhall 2003: 278), avoiding any attempt to objectify them. An ideal authentic living for all Daseins thus requires a mutual understanding between them.

Regarding this fillip of conscience, when recognized in Auster’s fiction, the change happens with a fall. As Auster says in an interview, “Everything in *Leviathan* revolves around a man falling off a fire escape” (as cited in Hutchisson 2013: 95). Ben’s similar fall changes his life forever – he avoids speaking for a while and then puts his newly discovered worldview into practice by becoming a rebel against governmental inefficacy. According to Peter the narrator, Ben’s fall, silence, and rebellion played significant roles in his change of attitude toward human conscience before political corruption. In this light, Ben’s life before the fall includes a sequence of events that significantly lead to the fall, which acts in turn as the main cause of his conscience-stricken mind and a thorough metamorphosis afterwards. It can then be argued that Ben’s life, being consciously subject to an existential crisis, can be divided into “Pre-Fall Anxiety” and “Post-Fall Conscience” in light of Heidegger’s existentialism, the former standing for his lostness in “the They” and the latter for his “resoluteness.”

2.2. Benjamin Sachs’ Pre-Fall Anxiety

Ben has always wanted to become a writer, following Thoreau in “Civil Disobedience” and *Walden*. His imprisonment for not attending the Vietnam War reiterates Thoreau’s one-night imprisonment in 1846 as a nonconformist protesting against “the proslavery agenda of the war against Mexico” and refusing to pay his poll tax. This experience inspired Thoreau in 1849 to write “Civil Disobedience” to openly discuss “the relationship of the individual to the state” (Baym 2007: 1855). It is thus interesting that Ben writes *The New Colossus* in prison, a novel filled with historical allusions, crying that “America has lost its way” (Auster 1992: 38). He also wants to name his second novel *Leviathan* – recalling Hobbes’ *Leviathan* concerning the relationship between a legitimate government and its citizens. Furthermore, Ben looks like “Ichabod Crane” and “John Brown” in appearance (Auster 1992: 12), a 19th-century American colonel and an abolitionist American captain, respectively, especially the latter with his full bearded face when he was executed. It was Captain Brown whose “revolutionary anti-slavery aims” Thoreau defended in “A Plea for Captain John Brown” (Baym 2007: 1855). According to this plea, delivered several weeks before Brown’s execution, Brown had decided never to participate in any war “unless it were a war for liberty” (Thoreau 2007: 2057). Ben, as a Thoreau-Brown-figure, is somehow a fictional

embodiment of Thoreau in theory and Brown in practice facing an “intellectual problem” (Auster 1992: 15), namely the political agony to fight the American political corruption. “The times were bad just then,” Peter says (54), and Ben was the only pure manifestation of the Thoreauvian spirit to challenge this situation in the form of “civil disobedience”: “The question is not about the weapon,” Thoreau says, “but the spirit in which you use it” (2007: 2057).

Ben gradually develops a political agony calling him to action: “The stupidities of the world appalled him, and underneath his jauntiness and good humor, you sometimes felt [...] intolerance and scorn” (Auster 1992: 18). Born on August 6, 1945, Ben always refers to himself as “America’s first Hiroshima baby” (25), delivered just as the “Fat Man” was released (27). Considering himself from the beginning with an unleashed potency for revolt, Ben “was more interested in politics and history,” despite his family’s religious background, and his politics had somehow “a religious quality” and was “a means to personal salvation,” “a matter of conscience” (25). “I felt I had a responsibility,” Ben tells Peter about not attending the Vietnam War, “to stand up and tell them [the military officers] what I thought” (19–20). And he does not regret his imprisonment; he knew that “he wouldn’t be able to live with himself” if he would not go to jail. Peter sums up Ben’s “whole approach to life” or “attitude of remorseless inner vigilance” as that of “the Transcendentalists,” especially Thoreau in “Civil Disobedience”. Once when *Walden* is the center of their conversation, Ben confesses to Peter that his own long beard is “because Henry David had worn one” (26).

Reagan’s presidency depopularizes Ben’s leftism and leads him into mental turmoil. “By the time I wrote *Leviathan* in 1990 and 1991,” Auster reflects on history, “we’d had eight years of Reagan and were already two years into Bush one. Ten years of right-wing leadership [...] the dismantling of everything we had fought for in the sixties” (Auster and Siegumfeldt 2017: 167–168). Consequently, fewer magazines and fans publish and read Ben’s “harsh and moralistic” opinions in the “climate of selfishness and intolerance, of moronic, chest-pounding Americanism,” and the adaptation of his novel for the screen is failed. What disturbs Ben most is “the collapse of any effective opposition” to the rightists, and “gradually losing faith in himself” he develops “immense changes” inside (Auster 1992: 104–105).

Ben’s personal problems make his politically obsessed mind more agonized. The breakdown of his marriage with Fanny finally leads to a relationship with Maria, reaching its climax during Ben and Maria’s drunkenness when he throws himself from a fire escape. With his moral conscience calling him moments before the fall, Ben jumps to punish himself for tempting Maria into touching him. However, he later reveals that unfaithfulness to Fanny was unimportant before the “question of self-knowledge”:

I found it appalling to discover that I was capable of tricking myself like that. If I’d put a stop to it [flirting with Maria] right then and there, it wouldn’t have been so bad, but even after I understood what I was up to, I went on flirting with her anyway. (Auster 1992: 114)

Ben's political impotency against the Right is simultaneously tinged with a sterile affair. And when the opportunity of purgation is possible and the punishing tool available, he throws himself down. Thus his fall resembles an initial acceptance of failure following his barren being on political and marital grounds. Siegmundfeldt holds that Ben's "feeling of inadequacy" to fulfill both his political and familial roles leads to his fall (Auster and Siegmundfeldt 2017: 171): "I had to change my life," Ben tells Peter (Auster 1992: 122), and his fortunate survival helps him with it. His suicidal attempt was not meant to fail after all; it was a real manifestation of a possibility in the state of agony when he *chose* among his possibilities: "I had put myself in a position to fall" (121). In Heidegger's words, death is "the possibility of the *im*-possibility of existence." This fact is revealed to Dasein as an "authentic Being-towards-death" by authentically recognizing its death-bound movement in life (2001: 354). This recognition happens via "anxiety" as the "conscious recognition" of the contingency of death (Zuckert 1996: 46). Through this recognition, Dasein chooses to make life authentic by consciously leading it before the immanence of death. Death for Heidegger is absolutely each Dasein's "own-most" possibility which no one else can ever confiscate – each individual dies his/her own death. Understanding death as such makes Dasein fundamentally free to choose between life and death. By understanding the nature of death, Ben has mastered his life as the Heideggerian "being-towards-the-end". Ben believes that "you'd have to be a fool not to know that your life could end just as abruptly and pointlessly as any one of those poor bastards" (Auster 1992: 120), the "poor bastards" being "the They" ignorantly living their lives and for whom death is something that just happens and does not affect the quality of life.

Ben's consciousness of his life choices on the fire escape highlights his early meditations over the anxiety of human freedom. Once, when at the top of the Statue of Liberty, he came to believe that "freedom can be dangerous. If you don't watch out, it can kill you" (Auster 1992: 35), which means it *is* possible that you throw yourself down and die. Ben's "anguish of his doubts and self-recriminations" (123), his "self-deprecation" (31), finally leads to that moment of crisis when his vertigo makes him anxious of his existence. Anxiety makes Dasein feel "uncanny" since it is "a state-of-mind" constituting "how one is" and how one could be (Heidegger 2001: 232–233). Already living in its "thrownness," Dasein typically escapes to the familiar mood of "the They" and/or escapes the unfamiliar or the "uncanny" mood which constitutes its anxiety or existential fear. Anxiety calls Dasein back to its "authentic potentiality-for-Being-in-the-world" (232), and summons Dasein to face itself, to hear its "conscience" (277). Heidegger defines "the *anxiety of conscience*" as understanding "the call" by which Dasein encounters its own alienation in the world (342). Metaphorically enough, on the edge of the fire escape, Ben's anxiety opens a window to his conscience that initially strikes him with a sense of guilt to punish himself for his sin simultaneously as it is a sign of his prolonged state of agony over death. The point is that if he died after the fall, the fall would lose its significance in the novel. Auster thus lets Ben live and later tells us what happened during the fall. As Peter reveals, Ben's life "flew apart in midair," in a way that "from that moment until his death [...]" he never put it back together again" (Auster 1992: 107). The fall actually acts as

Ben's purgation to begin anew as a "prisoner of conscience" (Martin 2008: 177) – when he tells Peter about the fall, it is revealed that his suicidal attempt was not out of self-punishment for sinning but a deeper existential agony awakened through his conscience.

2.3. Ben's Post-Fall Conscience

Thus Thoreau (1849) said in "Civil Disobedience" of one's conscience before the State:

Can there not be a government in which majorities do not virtually decide right and wrong, but conscience? [...] Must the citizen ever for a moment [...] resign his conscience to the legislator? [...] I think that we should be men first, and subjects afterward. [...] The only obligation which I have a right to assume is to do at any time what I think right. [...] a corporation has no conscience; but a corporation of conscientious men is a corporation *with* a conscience. (1858)

Thoreau's *man* is "one HONEST man" after truth (1864), whom Emerson finds in Thoreau himself: "For not a particle of respect had he to the opinions of any [...] but homage solely to the truth itself" (1862: 1239). To be *men* and not *subjects*, for Thoreau, means avoiding conformity to maintain one's conscience against the legislator. He held that "most legislators" in serving the state mostly "serve the devil, without *intending* it," and only "a very few, as heroes, patriots, martyrs, reformers in the great sense, and *men*, serve the state with their consciences" (1849: 1859). Elaborating on "conscience" and "resistance" Thoreau holds that

Unjust laws exist; shall we be content to obey them, or shall we endeavor to amend them, [...] or shall we transgress them at once? Men generally, under such a government [...] think that they ought to wait until they have persuaded the majority to alter them. [...] Why is it not more apt to [...] provide for reform? Why does it not cherish its wise minority? (1862)

In this light, "All men recognize the right of revolution [...] to resist, the government, when its tyranny or its inefficiency are great and unendurable" (1860). It then happens that moral conscience, tinged with politics, aspires to choose what is more politically humane to serve the civil rights of all/most humans, hence *political* conscience. While a soldier or reformist might suffer from physical injuries, for Thoreau, "Is there not a sort of blood shed when the conscience is wounded?" (1865). Thoreau's "HONEST man," ideologically, boasts that "I do not lend myself to the wrong which I condemn" (1863), suggesting that his conscience will be injured the other way round. Letting the majority or the minority of legislators prescribe your destiny, in case that such destiny does not guarantee your freedom and civil right, is a blemish to conscience.

Leviathan presents us with a conscience-stricken man as Thoreau's "HONEST man" and Heidegger's Dasein. Ben's gradual change of character in fact

manifests the projection of his potentiality of being not only to freely choose his destiny but also to help others master theirs. Considering the agonized state of his revolutionary change, Ben stops speaking for ten days after gaining his consciousness. While doctors consider his silence as an aftershock effect, Ben later unveils it as a refusal to speak while regretting his sin. However, as he later informs Peter, “I don’t think sex had much to do with what happened that night” (Auster 1992: 119). Ben seems agonized of something more important before the fall and, therefore, “To be silent was to enclose himself in contemplation” (119). Deciding to speak again, Ben decides to recreate himself positively: “I want to end the life I’ve been living up to now. I want everything to change. [...] My whole life has been a waste” (122). As Auster explains Ben’s remarks, “It’s a depressed man who is talking here. He feels that he hasn’t justified himself to himself, that he hasn’t produced the work he wanted to do or become the man he wanted to be” (Auster and Siegumfeldt 2017: 171). In Peter’s words, during Ben’s fall “Something extraordinary had taken place, and before it lost its force within him, he needed to devote his unstinting attention to it. Hence his silence” (Auster 1992: 119). Ben’s “entire life flew apart in midair,” Peter says, “and from that moment until his death [...] he never put it back together again” (107). Ben pursued “perfection” but he came to recognize his “flawed humanity” when his ideals failed (132). The scar on his head, a gift from the fall, thus symbolically reminds him of his failure. Siegumfeldt elaborates that Ben “suffers a dramatic fall at the very height of the celebrations [July 4th] of a national icon [the Statue of Liberty]” (Auster and Siegumfeldt 2017: 173). The fall brands Ben with a scar, like Cain’s, on his head, implying that Ben is “driven to do penance, to take on his guilt as the guilt of the world and to bear its marks in his own flesh” (Auster 1992: 132). The failure of his ideals during Reagan’s presidency finally brands him with the scar of existential guilt, uncovering the path of authenticity for him so that he can attack the very idol of worship the Americans have made out of the Statue.

There are two factors symbolically related to Ben’s fall and silence: the symbolism of the leviathan and the nature of silence. The “leviathan” of the Old Testament (Isa. 27.1) is “serpentine” and connected with Babylon or Egypt where the Israelites lived in captivity as if inside the beast – “in the belly of the whale” connoting “inside the land of oppression” (Ferber 1999: 232–233). Although Auster does not emphasize Ben’s Judaism, his captivity in the leviathan-figure of a nation where political corruption has banned ultimate human liberation is clear enough. Moreover, Auster presents “the State as a monster which devours people,” recalling Hobbes’ *Leviathan* (Wajsbrot 1993: 82; as cited in Varvogli 2001: 144). The body of the leviathan-State of America, like the first frontispiece of Hobbes’ *Leviathan* by Abraham Bosse showing a huge king with a body made of people, “is made up of all the bodies of the citizens” whom it must protect. Auster’s *Leviathan* wants to remark that this contract has been broken and the Statue of Liberty is now devoid of its original significance. As such, “an aesthetic form of terrorism” based on Thoreau’s “Civil Disobedience” is somehow allowed to happen (Hardy 1999: 105). Auster’s leviathan-figure thus stands for America as a monstrous being, and the Statue symbolizes, particularly for Ben, the collapse of the American ideals of freedom and democracy and/or “the inherent hypocrisy

evident within the American system of values” (Martin 2008: 200). That is why Ben decides to explode the replicas of the Statue “to pour scorn upon the concept of liberty” (208), to satisfy his voiceless call of conscience which strikes him in his silent days.

The other biblical reference, the leviathan in Jonah’s tale, is related to Ben’s silence. The beast imprisoned the prophet in its belly for three days and three nights until God forgave him. Van der Vlies (1996) holds that Jonah’s suffering, “an opportunity for rebirth once he has accepted the demands of God,” is that of “enclosure, darkness and figurative death” and informs a similar experience for Ben (59). Jonah’s return to the land, when disgorged by the beast, and obeying God to deliver His message to Nineveh find their modern political version in *Leviathan*. God’s message is here Ben’s conscience, and the “great fish” of the Book of Jonah (1:17) is Auster’s USA where Ben is limited under the rights. Moreover, leviathan simultaneously refers to “the monster of consciousness” manifested in Ben who “devours himself in the process of fulfilling his mission” (Wajsbrot 1993: 82; as cited in Varvogli 2001: 144). He thus acts as a “monster slowly rising to the surface” from the depths of the ocean (Haarr 2017: 76), practising his freedom out of the depth of the domineering ocean-state. His freedom from conformity, as he becomes conscious of the possibility to free himself and inform others of political corruption, “involves so many possibilities” of equal value (Schreiner 2005: 610). As a writer, Ben is “his own Leviathan, or governing power” in giving himself “the measure of freedom and the limits necessary to keep writing.” And once done with writing, he becomes a “subject to another Leviathan, a maelstrom of choices” (614). He initially chooses to throw himself down the fire escape, just as Jonah volunteered to cast himself overboard to help the sailors survive the storm. Ben’s fall is a self-punishment for not having listened to his conscience just as Jonah knows that the storm is because of disobeying God. And just like Jonah’s silence during his repentance in the beast’s belly, Ben’s long silence is a meditation on his sins and probable compensation as he is imprisoned in the belly of the leviathan-America. Jonah is taken back to land and begins to deliver God’s message, and Ben starts his bombings with “Jonah-like messages” left after each bombing (Osteen 1994: par. 7). “Like Jonah,” Varvogli declares, Ben “experiences death in his self-imposed linguistic prison” and begins to take action when he “recovers from this spell of intense introspection” (2001: 151). Ben’s redemption follows his fall; in fact, his fall and silence give him insight into his future deeds. Auster’s own remark about “Life inside the whale. A gloss on Jonah, and what it means to refuse to speak” (Auster 2005: 64), reflected in “The Book of Memory,” is relevant here:

In the depth of that solitude, [...] of silence, [...] in the refusal to speak [...] Jonah encounters the darkness of death [...] And when the fish vomits [...], Jonah is given back to life, [...] passed through death [...] [he] can at last speak. For death has frightened him into opening his mouth [...] and at the moment it begins to speak, there is an answer. (2005: 105–106)

Likewise, Ben's silence follows his entanglement in the chasm of his conscience, with the recognition that he *is* in the belly of the leviathan-America. Moreover, his silence is the silence inhabiting his sense of guilt and his soundless conscience, in Heideggerian terms. The political conscience of Thoreau's "HONEST man" is highlighted more philosophically when we consider Dasein's conscience in Heidegger's philosophy and its political potency. Dasein is "essentially guilty" since it finds itself already in the world with others away from authenticity, and "wanting-to-have-a-conscience" follows this recognition (Heidegger 2001: 353). Listening to conscience is not overcoming or transcending one's existential guilt but taking responsibility for one's state of "thrownness." Such understanding bestows Dasein with "resoluteness" about its particular situation in the world, including its relations with others and their situations, so as to discover what the possibilities of action in those situations are. Regarding Ben, he develops a sense of moral guilt which in essence covers a deeper agony, a "terrible secret" (Auster 1992: 9), the guilt of passiveness against political corruption, the guilt of conformity and submission to a wrong government. To quote Thoreau, "Is it not possible that an individual may be right and a government wrong?" (2007: 2059). The novel's epigraph is taken from one of Emerson's articles entitled "Politics" – "every actual state is corrupt" – which is followed by "good men must not obey the laws too well" (Emerson 1983: 122), reflecting Thoreau and his "HONEST man", further highlighting Auster's drawing from "the Thoreauvian tradition of civil disobedience" (Ford 1999: 215), and how it affects Ben's revolt.

Ben's fall happens on July 4, 1986, "the one hundredth anniversary" of the Statue (Auster 1992: 107), an event also echoing Thoreau's settlement in Walden Pond. Ben's excursion into Vermont also resembles Thoreau's life in Walden as he built a cabin and took up residence there on July 4, 1845 – "a symbolic moment of personal liberation aligned with the celebration of national freedom" (Baym 2007: 1854). And just as Thoreau's isolation there coincided with contemporary political antagonism, Ben's fall overlaps with contemporary political corruption, symbolizing the collapse of the American democracy. In Siegumfeld's view, "The fall unleashes Sachs's self-disgust, which matches his revulsion against America's failure to live up to its own moral and political ideals" (Auster and Siegumfeldt 2017: 172). Not surprisingly, by abandoning "the trappings of his previous existence" (Martin 2008: 28), Ben starts "living like a hermit in the woods" (Auster 1992: 141), where he is supposed to finish his second novel but runs into Dimaggio. Vermont thus becomes Ben's purgatory, just as Thoreau began his "experiment" around Walden Pond in mid-1845 and started writing *Walden* (Baym 2007: 1854). Ben likewise rewrites his life in Vermont once he kills Dimaggio in self-defense.

On accessing Dimaggio's writings, Ben recognizes that Dimaggio was indeed against the Vietnam War. He also finds "three or four volumes of Marx, a biography of Bakunin, a pamphlet by Trotsky on race relations in America," and Dimaggio's thesis on Alexander Berkman (Auster 1992: 223), figures well-known for their anti-capitalism – their influence on Dimaggio was extreme enough to turn him into an anarchist. Dimaggio's dissertation on Berkman – the Jewish "radical" and "anarchist" who shot the symbol of "capitalist oppression," Henry

Clay Frick, in 1892 (Auster 1992: 223) – followed “his own ideas about political change.” Dimaggio supported Berkman, believing that “there was a moral justification for certain forms of political violence,” that terrorism “used correctly” could be effective “for enlightening the public about the nature of institutional power” (224). During the “Homestead Strike” of 1892, Berkman, agitated by Frick’s tyranny against labor unions, attacked his office but failed to assassinate him. Adamic considers Berkman as “a prisoner of conscience” whose motivation arose from social responsibility than radicalism: it was a “social revenge, a blind attempt on the part of a social idealist to help the desperate workers” (1958: 107). Berkman becomes a role model for Dimaggio, both influencing Ben. Like Berkman, Dimaggio and Ben advocate “a belief in social responsibility” (Martin 2008: 184), after their political conscience. Ben even rents an apartment “under the name of Alexander Berkman” in Chicago to lose track during his bombings (Auster 1992: 234). His radicalism is ignited when he rather becomes Dimaggio’s doppelganger; up until then he was a Thoreauvian civil disobedient, and henceforward he becomes a radical leftist, with anarchistic tendencies in so far as his harsh method of explosion is concerned. Ben speculates that when he lost his way, Dimaggio “put his ideas to the test” (224–225). However, regarding the safety of the ignorant people he wants to wake up, Ben has a stronger sense of social responsibility than Dimaggio who does not care where his bullets go.

Dimaggio and Ben’s case also allude to that of the “Unabomber”. Born Theodore Kaczynski in 1942, the Unabomber led several bombings (1978-1995) against industrial advances. Being a genius in math and a professor at the University of California, Kaczynski left everything and moved to the woods around Lincoln in the late 1960s to establish his bombing campaign, meanwhile writing a manifesto titled “Industrial Society and Its Future” (Martin 2008: 185–186). Dimaggio likewise teaches at UC which he leaves to pursue his political radicalism, meanwhile hanging out with “a bunch of idiot radicals” (Auster 1992: 165). The social responsibilities that Dimaggio and Ben pursue have also affinities with Kaczynski’s concerns in his manifesto, although Auster rejects this allusion: “my man was driven by completely different motives” (Auster and Siegumfeldt 2017: 170). However, an article published after Dimaggio’s death reported that he was a member of “a left-wing ecology group” (Auster 1992: 170), making an eco-terrorist of him.

Through his “new American consciousness” Ben believes that “actions speak louder than words” (Martin 2008: 177). He thus starts his political radicalism by exploding the replicas of the Statue one after the other. Auster’s fictional explosions trace back to a contemporary event on June 3, 1980, when a bomb exploded in the museum at the base of the Statue causing damages to many things, the first publication of Emma Lazarus’ “The New Colossus” included. The Croatian Freedom Fighters took responsibility for the bomb, raising attention to Croats suffering under Yugoslavia in 1971 (Kushner 2003: 346). Emma Lazarus had written the sonnet to raise funds for the construction of the pedestal of the Statue. The poem was first recited at the dedication of the Statue and the closing lines were engraved on a bronze plaque on its pedestal, words recognized worldwide as the “‘American’ badge of honor” (Martin 2008: 206). Lazarus also appears as a character in Ben’s *The New Colossus*, “a historical novel” about America between

1876 and 1890 (Auster 1992: 37), “filled with references to the Statue” (35), and full of Ben’s “blatant ‘Anti-Americanism’” (48). Lazarus’ sonnet “reinvented the statue’s purpose, turning Liberty into a welcoming mother, a symbol of hope to the outcasts” (Auster 2005: 508). However, Ben’s novel suggests that “America has lost its way,” that “Thoreau was the one man who could read the compass,” that Americans have no hope to find themselves again (Auster 1992: 38–39), that the Statue is nothing more than petrified liberty. The Statue and the leviathan “prove to be one and the same” here (Fleck 2004: 211): Jonah and Ben are captives in the beast’s belly. However, while Jonah is thrown up, Ben blows the replicas of the Statue up. Peter discusses in detail how the initial positive symbolism of the Statute gradually diminishes for Ben:

Unlike the flag, [...] the statue [...] has transcended politics and ideology, [...] It represents [...] democracy, freedom, equality under the law. [...] however pained one might be by America’s failure to live up to those ideals[.] (Auster 1992: 205–216)

Disillusioned with “the American concept of liberty” (Martin 2008: 207), Ben happens to hear the silent voice of his conscience which calls him to action. It wakes him up from his inauthentic existence to take probable action for the sake of true liberation. As discussed above, it can be argued that Ben’s political conscience in this regard is tinted with Thoreauvianism and Marxism – he becomes a Thoreauvian in his youth following his investigation into Thoreau’s thoughts and develops a Marxist attitude after finding about Dimaggio and his radicalism. Just like Thoreau, eulogized by Emerson as “a speaker and actor of the truth” (1862: 1234), he goes to jail than attend the war and does not allow his conscience to be wounded against what he condemns. Having become familiar with Dimaggio and his role models, he finds the outlet to express himself against the State. Ben’s character change here follows his understanding that he must leave pure theory for action, or better say, civil disobedience to radicalism. In other words, it can be said that Ben’s change of behavior after hearing his conscience is modeled after a combination of what Wolin and Abromeit call “philosophical Marxism and [Heidegger’s] fundamental ontology” in their introduction to Marcuse’s book (Marcuse 2005: xi), when existentialism and Marxism are connected. It is to argue that Ben’s political conscience wakes up to face the world in harsher ways against which conformity cannot hold.

The question now is whether Ben’s authentic radicalism, as we might call it, has any social effect away from the ontological aspects of self-discovery and Dasein’s authenticity and conscience. It is clear that Ben wants to change the world, at least in his own land. As Heidegger holds in an interview,

the demand for a world change leads back to a famous sentence by Karl Marx in the “Thesis on Feuerbach” [...]: “The philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways; the point is to change it.” If we cite this sentence [...] we disregard that a change of the world presupposes a change of the conception of the world. (cited in Puspitosari 2015)

Heidegger believes in a radical change of our worldview to change the world, and this radical change appears in his portrayal of Dasein. To what extent is Dasein imbued with a certain political perspective to change the world can be discussed through Herbert Marcuse's critique of Heidegger's existentialism and its political aftereffect. According to Wolin and Abromeit, the publication of *BT* in 1927 lured Marcuse away from "neo-Kantianism, neo-Hegelianism, and positivism." For his generation, traditional philosophy had lost its power before the horrors of WWI and it was Heidegger who "seemed to offer something the conventional academic 'school philosophies' lacked: a 'philosophy of the *concrete*'" (Marcuse 2005: xii). Heidegger's approach had the "capacity to revivify antiquated philosophical texts in light of present historical needs and concerns." For Marcuse, the two notions of "temporality" and "historicity" in *BT* addressed the way humans could situate themselves in time and history. The "inauthentic Dasein" thus manifested "conformist willingness to adapt passively to circumstances" (xiii). Marcuse was primarily interested in Heidegger's *Existenzphilosophie* due to the "crisis of Marxism" that needed a revolutionary recreation of the contemporary political order, "one which seemed responsible for so much pointless social suffering and injustice," especially after the collapse of the Council Republics (*Räterepublik*) in Bavaria and Hungary before WWI. There also existed an "epistemological crisis," not unrelated to the Marxist one, in Marcuse's view. The Second International initiated "a resolutely anti-philosophical, mechanistic interpretation of Marxism" under the teachings of Engels and Kautsky, displaying "a willful indifference to the 'subjective' factor of working-class consciousness." Marcuse thus believed that *BT* was "an ontologically veiled *critique of reification*: an indictment of the way in which oppressive social circumstances militate against the possibility of human self-realization." Moreover, the critique of "everydayness" in *BT*, Division 1, in which Heidegger powerfully indicts the *inauthentic* "Being-in-the-world," represents an "ontological complement" to the discussions of reification in *Capital and History and Class Consciousness*. From Dasein's standpoint, Heidegger's *Existenzphilosophie* placed "human reality" rather than "objectivity" at the center of its phenomenological worldview (xv), being able to rejuvenate orthodox Marxism (xvii).

Although Marxism attempted to diagnose the "objective" economic causes of the collapse of capitalism, as Wolin and Abromeit observe, it had rather ignored the working-class consciousness and subjectivity. On the contrary, Heidegger's philosophy excelled at delineating the phenomenological structure of "Being-in-the-world" but was poor at addressing the socio-historical aspects of the era for the sake of "*timeless* and *ontological*" issues (Marcuse 2005: xvii). In the "Theses on Feuerbach" Marx famously observed that "The question whether objective truth can be attributed to human thinking is not a question of theory but is a *practical* question" (144). Dasein in *BT* is likewise "immersed in a series of practical involvements: everydayness, tools, concern, moods, being-with-others and, lastly, historicity." For early Marcuse, both of these approaches practically "sought to transcend the ethereal claims of German idealism" and could complete each other (Marcuse 2005: xvii). In "On Concrete Philosophy," Marcuse clarifies the relevance of *Existenzphilosophie* to contemporary human crisis:

If the meaning of philosophizing is the making visible of truth, and if this truth has a fundamentally existential character, then not only is philosophizing a mode of human existing, but philosophy itself is, according to its very meaning, existential. [...] Authentic philosophizing refuses to remain at the stage of knowledge; rather, in driving this knowledge on to truth it strives for the concrete appropriation of that truth through human Dasein. (2005: 36)

It was “the concrete appropriation of that truth through human Dasein” that lead Marcuse to elaborate on the concept of “historicity” in Heidegger’s existentialism: “It is precisely knowledge of historicity that leads to the most momentous decision: the decision either to struggle for the recognized necessity, even against Dasein’s own inherited existence” (2005: 23). For Marcuse, Dasein in *BT*, Division 2, adopts “the perspective of a *historical collectivity*,” concepts such as “destiny,” “community,” “generation,” and “the historical life of a people” bring Dasein face to face with the fate of his community. In Marcuse’s view, “historicity” seemingly represented the key link between “existentialism and historical materialism” (2005: xix).

Marcuse reemphasizes that “Authenticity would then mean the return to oneself, to one’s innermost freedom, and, [...] to determine [...] one’s existence” (2005: 172). Ben, in this light, recognizes his socio-political freedom to swim against the stream and attack the power structure subjugating his fellowmen. His people’s fate is tied to his; as an authentic Dasein he willingly bears the responsibility after hearing the “call” to establish the fate of “the They” until death. However, does his death justify his cause or is his authenticity blemished by his death which is the result of a personal mistake? In yet other words, to what extent does Ben’s cause have practical aspects, in the Marxist sense, and evades the transcendental and ontological farfetchedness of the Thoreauvian and Heideggerian concepts, respectively? In this respect, we must see whether Dasein remains only in its ontological sphere or has the potential for historical change.

Marcuse pondered whether Heidegger’s “ontological standpoint” could merge with the “historical concerns of critical Marxism” (2005: xx). “We therefore demand,” he said, “that the phenomenology of human Dasein initiated by Heidegger forge onward, coming to completion in a phenomenology of concrete Dasein and [...] action demanded by history” (20), “with an eye toward which possibilities for the appropriation of truths are available” (44). Regarding the problem of capitalism Marcuse concludes that Heidegger’s approach “was incapable of making the transition from the ‘ontological’ to the ‘ontic’” (xxi). In an interview in 1974 Marcuse announced that “I first, like all the others, believed there could be some combination between existentialism and Marxism,” due to their “insistence on concrete analysis of actual human existence, human beings, and their world.” However, he soon blamed Heidegger’s philosophy, especially after Heidegger’s rectorship at Freiburg University under Nazism, to be “abstract” and “removed from reality” since Heidegger seemed “to use his existential analysis to get away from the social reality rather than into it” (167). It was Heidegger’s “metaphysical orientation” instead of attention to the “problems of lived experience” that

made his philosophy for Marcuse “unworldly” (xxi). On the contrary, Marcuse found Marxism centrally concerned with “practically” solving the “problems of human self-realization” (xxiv). Marcuse ultimately considers Heidegger’s Dasein as “purged” of the problems of “class [...] work [...] recreation,” of “the daily [...] striving for liberation” (169).

Marcuse could still agree on the philosophical grounds of Dasein’s authenticity and how it could lead to action, despite the gap between ontological fundamentalism and practical Marxism: “Authenticity would then mean the return to [...] one’s innermost freedom, [...] to determine every phase, every situation” (2005: 172). Dasein always has a range of possibilities and it is up to its resoluteness to authentically make the best choice away from what “the They” blindly follows. Understanding Heidegger’s outline of Dasein *does* need *a change of the conception of the world*. According to Heidegger, only the one who *wants* to hear the call hears it. Next follows action, where Marxism plays the role. This understanding requires the individual to understand what Marcuse calls “the fundamental situation of a human being” in society, a situation in which the individual “has a clear view of, and can determine, his or her unique relation to the environment and the task that emerges from this relation” (2005: 2). Such “discovery of historicity as the fundamental determination of human Dasein” makes “radically transformative action” possible (2). The “Marxist fundamental situation” is thus concerned with “the historical possibility of the radical act” whose “standard-bearer” is the “self-consciously historical human being” (3–4). A “Marxian vision” for Marcuse penetrates the nature of a capitalist society, counteracting it by “calling for human existence in its reality” and “demanding the radical act” (4). An act of this kind follows an existential intention since “it emerges from human Dasein as essential conduct”. With the discovery of history as “the fundamental category of human existence,” Marcuse claims, Marx calls the “authentic,” “meaningful,” and “true” existence of humankind its “historical existence” (5). In Marx’s words in “Saint Max,” “As a *determinate* person, as an actual person, you have a *determination*, a task, whether you are conscious of it or not” (as cited in Marcuse 2005: 5). An “unhistorical” existence includes “the isolated individual and the unconscious masses alike” who “misunderstand” the historical situation or “rebel against it” (6). Heidegger looks for this kind of historical existence in Dasein’s past, the history that has shaped Dasein’s present and will clarify its future. In other words, Dasein, in essentially being with others since birth, is governed by “the destiny of the community” and needs to make a decision in order not to “sacrifice future challenges to the shelter provided by the past” (Harries 2009: 27). It is only a Heideggerian question of *authenticity* and *inauthenticity* whether to recognize one’s “authentic Self” or move along with one’s “they-self” (Heidegger 2001: 167). There is, in other words, the possibility of the emergence of an authentic community in so far as Dasein’s “historizing” is a “co-historizing” and determines its destiny in the community (436). As argued earlier, by being “resolute” Dasein can become Others’ conscience and “by authentically Being-their-Selves in resoluteness can people authentically be with one another” (344). Hence the salvation of the community.

Bridging the gap between Marx, Heidegger, and Marcuse regarding Dasein’s practical potential, Ben’s reaction to political corruption follows recognizing his

historical situation to take necessary action. That is why his confrontation with Dimaggio's radical beliefs and the discovery of his Marxist reservoir ignite his own rebellion. Moreover, his rebellion/radicalism is in the form of nonviolent resistance as he is careful "to save his own skin" and that of others (Auster 1992: 233), tracing back to Thoreauvian norms. The technical and circumstantial preparations to ensure zero human casualties in each bombing serve the function of the bomb for Ben's "right of resistance" that Marcuse believes to be the right of each individual within a fake democracy:

there is a "natural right" of resistance for oppressed and overpowered minorities to use extralegal means if the legal ones have proved to be inadequate [...] If they use violence, they do not start a new chain of violence but try to break an established one. (1965: 116–117)

The truth-value of Ben's action is not for "public recognition" but to arouse "the national consciousness" (Martin 2008: 210), acting out public conscience. After one of the explosions, he broadcasts a message "in Thoreauvian fashion" (Ford 1999: 216):

'Wake up America,' the caller said. 'It's time to start practicing what you preach. If you don't want any more statues blown up, prove to me that you are a hypocrite. Do something for your people besides building them bombs. Otherwise, my bombs will keep going off. Signed: the Phantom of Liberty.' (Auster 1992: 216)

"The caller," as Peter addresses the Phantom of Liberty, is Ben acting as the caller of people's *voice of conscience*, rising up "for democracy" and the "oppressed" (33). His political conscience thus calls him to blow up the replicas of the Statue "to awaken the dormant political unconscious" of the Americans (Schreiner 2005: 609), as if each bombing is a fillip of conscience to remind the public of socio-political corruption. Auster considers Ben's radicalism as "a symbolic act verging on [...] political performance art" (Auster and Siegumfeldt 2017: 170). Explosion by explosion, aspects of Ben's art are revealed through his messages: "Each person is alone;" "we have nowhere to turn but to each other;" "Democracy is not given. It must be fought for every day, or else we run the risk of losing it;" "Neglect the children, and we destroy ourselves. We exist in the present only to the degree that we put our fate in the future." Peter believes that these announcements "did not ask for the impossible;" Ben "simply wanted America to look after itself and mend its ways." The "almost Biblical" tone in Ben's messages make him sound "less like a political revolutionary than some anguished, soft-spoken prophet" (Auster 1992: 217). He turns out to be the conscience-caller, calling Americans to take action against corruption, meanwhile playing the scapegoat himself. It is the dual nature of his rebellion that imbues it with both metaphysical and practical undertones, himself being the sole volunteer to practice his belief.

Although the wholeness Ben pursues is paradoxically disintegrated by the sudden explosion of one of his bombs and his death, his authenticity is not under

question. "Willing to put his ideas on the line" (Auster and Siegmundfeldt 2017: 167), Ben has discovered "the principle of self-determination" (Auster 1992: 33). When he decided to undertake Dimaggio's work, as he confesses to Peter, "All of a sudden, my life seemed to make sense to me. [...] I had found the unifying principle [...] [to] bring all the broken pieces of myself together" (228). Echoing Thoreau in an 1851 *Journal* entry, "I am under an awful necessity to be what I am" (Thoreau 1993: 313), Ben's commitment to his goal is finalized in his last words to Peter: "You get just so many chances, and then life takes hold of you, and then you're off on your own forever. I've become who I am now, and there's no going back" (Auster 1992: 230). Although Ben is pursuing his "core humanity," he recognizes that it is unachievable; that he is "a fragmented version of the man he wants to be" (Haarr 2017: 73). Ben's fragmented state, manifested through his exploded corpse, reflects Dasein's essence contributing to its death. Dasein is an essentially fragmented being constantly but hopelessly after perfection so that "wholeness" is "the utter loss of Being-in-the-world" (Heidegger 2001: 280), and "Being-there" for Dasein is a process-oriented way of being in the world. Consciousness of death in this light is what Heidegger means by "authentic Being-towards-death" or "*anticipation*" (349); when Dasein understands the voice of conscience through anxiety, "lostness" in "the They" is unveiled and "resoluteness" makes Dasein aware of its possibilities, death being the last one (354). Recognizing the contingency of death leads Dasein to continue to live "only by willing to do so" (Zuckert 1996: 46). Ben, after recovery, chooses to live in the face of death, his death being always before him by means of his bombs and contingent explosion. It is arguably the situation, in existential terms, that is against Ben; otherwise, if the bomb had not exploded, he could have initiated certain socio-political reforms. Ben's decision to live and follow his cause is a commitment to a goal, a commitment following his conscience to be authentic and acknowledge the possibilities of freedom: "to express my own convictions," to be "free again, utterly liberated by my decision," as he tells Peter (Auster 1992: 228). His attempts at practicing the "voice of conscience" reflect what Auster says in "Time Capsule":

The social revolution must be accompanied by a metaphysical revolution. Men's minds must be liberated along with their physical existences – if not, any freedom obtained will be false & fleeting. Weapons for achieving & maintaining freedom must be created. This means a courageous stare into the unknown – the transformation of life. (2013: 250)

3. Conclusion

Trying to unify his thought and deed within a society where such unification is an illusion, Benjamin Sachs dies, losing to fulfill his dreams and turn his rebellion into revolution. We might say that he faces failure because others make no attempt to face their true freedom, remaining unhistorical and satisfied with the *petrified* concept of liberty manifested in the Statue of Liberty, ignoring Ben's "Wake up" motto. This is to say that Ben is alone in his rebellion and might

remain alone even if he lives. However, the argument here is on the individual level, saving one away from the wrong current, just as Dasein is already on the survival path of authenticity by recognizing the voice within away from Others' idle talk. Ben's response to his conscience as Dasein to make amends for his lost individuality in "the They," to open himself to the possibilities of being other than an object, leads him to *choose* to hear "the call." The inherent point is that, for Heidegger, the hearer of "the call" or Dasein becomes so emancipated from selfishness and ignorance that he/she recognizes the prophetic mission of helping others hear "the call." Ben likewise acts as Others' conscience as far as they have not chosen to hear "the call." If Others had chosen to hear "the call" after Ben's rebellion, he could have fulfilled his mission and a communally authentic life would have followed. Heidegger's ideal of a community of authentic people who are consciously following their conscience is lacking where only one person as Dasein chooses to hear "the call." Ben experiences an authentic way of life after the fall, and criticizing his ideals is a willful ignorance of "the call." The state of communal "being with others" is a constant situation whether anyone is authentic or not, while "being for others" is a state of being revealed to Dasein after "the call." This state is the one sole state which not only guarantees the subject with an authentic life but also lets him/her encourage others to hear "the call." This is what makes the network between individuals when communal authenticity is concerned. Thus everyone in the novel, as Peter Aaron also says, is responsible for Ben's death; the conscience-stricken mind has no rest if not accompanied by soulmates. That is why the novel is such a huge network of human relationships between humans and how they affect each other's life. However, while Others are busy with conformity, it is Ben who stands as the political conscience of the community to serve its *authentic being*. Ben's state of being is in fact the responsibility he feels upon his shoulders to make his existence and that of Others an authentic one, a cause he dies for.

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