Assumption: Within each individual is a “true self” and a “real me”. This is in distinction from what is NOT me.

Assumption: The real self is a constellation of feelings, needs, desires, capacities, aptitudes, dispositions, and creative abilities that make a person UNIQUE.
1) Get in touch with our inner self through introspection, self-reflection, or mediation. Self-knowledge is needed for authentic existence.

2) Express that unique self in the external world – to be what we are. Expression of self is necessary for self-realization.
AUTHENTICITY AND HUMAN NATURE

WHICH LIFE PHILOSOPHY DO YOU GRAVITATE MORE TOWARD?

**Question:** What is the most meaningful and worthwhile life possible for humans?

Two broad approaches:

1) **Self-possession** – to realize one’s own potential, be all you can be, become what you are. Individualism is the cure.

2) **Releasement** – give yourself over to something greater than yourself. Individualism and the cult of authenticity is the problem.
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For your summary, begin it with the following phrase:

“According to Guignon. . . . . .”
Idea #1: Human beings are self-encapsulated individuals with their own inner, personal being, and with no defining or ineliminable relations to anything outside themselves.

Idea #2: Human beings are parts of a wider cosmic totality, placeholders in a cosmic web of relations in which what anything is, is determined by its function within a wider whole.
SOCRATES AND THE GREAT CHAIN OF BEING

The all-encompassing cosmic context embodies a set of ordering principles - an order of “ideas” - that determine the reality of things and their value relative to the whole.

- mathematical concepts: triangles
- moral ideals: justice
- aesthetic ideals: beauty

Ultimately, the “good” or “goodness” is the highest of principles
Mortal nature desires to be immortal and live forever.

To be mortal means to be:

• in a constant state of physical change, amidst the constancy of our “souls.”

• in a constant state of forgetting, and thus we keep our knowledge constant through studying.

• forgotten by others, thus people pursue honor and glory so they may be remembered.

Love is thus connected to our desire for immortality.
Love is a “reproduction in beauty”.

- some people are “pregnant in body” and thus their love leads them to desire sex and produce children
- some people are “pregnant in soul” and thus their love leads them to desire wisdom and produce knowledge
- both seek out the beauty that will beget them offspring

Love and contact with the beautiful is the origin of our wisdom.
The Nature of Love: Ladder of Being

Love is a desire for beauty, that proceeds by ascending from lower to higher realities.

- the love of a single body
- the love of all beautiful bodies
- the love of beautiful souls
- the love of their activities and custom
- the love of laws
- the love of knowledge
- the love of Beauty itself
THE NATURE OF LOVE: BEAUTY ITSELF

Knowing Beauty itself is the ultimate goal of Love. What is the nature of Beauty itself?

- it neither passes away, nor comes to be
- it is consistently and purely beautiful
- it is absolutely and unqualifiedly beautiful
- it is not bound to any one thing or kind of thing

“Do you think it would be a poor life for a human being to look there and to behold Beauty itself? Remember that in life alone, when he looks at Beauty in the only what that Beauty can be seen—only then will it become possible for him to give birth not to images of virtue but to true virtue”
Humans are part of a wider cosmic totality, placeholders in the web of relations in which anything is.

The wider whole determine the individual’s place and function.

The cosmos is a set of ordering principles – ideas – that determine the whole and the value of anything in it.

To know yourself is to know your place in an ordered cosmos. Knowing your personal self is only meaningful because it allows you to better fit into your place and to match up with the ideal that determines your function.
Great are You, O Lord, and greatly to be praised; great is Your power, and of Your wisdom there is no end. And man, being a part of Your creation, desires to praise You, man, who bears about with him his mortality, the witness of his sin, even the witness that You resist the proud, — yet man, this part of Your creation, desires to praise You. You move us to delight in praising You; for You have formed us for Yourself, and our hearts are restless till they find rest in You.

Augustine, *Confessions*, Book 1
How is Augustine’s Confessions like Plato’s Symposium, and how is it like our contemporary individualistic conception?

First clue: Beings toward God. Augustine’s spiritual autobiography begins with statements about God. And the statement “You have made us toward you.” Or “Our hearts are restless until they rest in you.”

Second clue: Our worldly desires take us away from God, to the extent that they replace God as the object of our longing. We are out of touch with our true being, but that true being is not found in us alone, but in us as created, fallen from, and longing for God.
Third clue: Augustine commands us to “turn inward”, “to return to yourself”, and to find truth and God within. The task is not to get in touch with one’s inner self as it is to find God or truth and clear away all the noise that is in one’s inner psyche.

Fourth clue: The source of our actions is not our-selves, but God. God “was working in Augustine.” The question of free will and Augustine’s own agency is a very real question for Augustine.

Fifth clue: The emphasis on ascent. The journey is inward and upward, through the great chain of being to the source of all being. The worldview is theocentric.
THE EXTENDED SELF

Explain the Concept

How might this view of the self matter for how one thinks about:

• The way you think about politics and its purposes?
• The way you think about the natural world?
• The way you think about the religious life?
• The way you think about marriage or family?
RISKS, QUESTIONS, CRITIQUES
TRUE TO YOURSELF?

Is being “True to yourself” and “end in itself”?

What is an end it itself? What is the telos of a human life?
THE PROTESTANT REFORMATION

What truly matters in your relationship to God?

“It is not by works but by faith alone that man is saved.” - Martin Luther

Salvation depends not on external acts in the world, but on the inner condition of the soul. The slow beginnings of religious individualism.

People are increasingly concerned with what is going on inside of themselves. For some, this mean an increased contempt for the world.
What is the difference between a universe and a cosmos?

**Universe**: a vast, homogeneous aggregate of material objects in contingent causal interactions.

**Science**: The study of such a universe requires that we become disengaged, methodical and objective observers that formulate abstract theories.

Mathematics becomes “the grand book of the universe”

As mastery of nature replaces reverence for nature, **Anthropocentrism** begins to replace a Cosmocentrism.
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The Replacement of Nature with Culture

Is society a product of human decision and design, or something natural and preordained?

**Anthropocentrism**: Society and its order is invented by human beings, and thus can be changed by human beings.

**Social Identities**: Our social identities and roles also are not preordained.

**Private vs. Public**: We are truly ourselves in private life, not in the *personas* we show in public life.

As mastery of nature replaces reverence for nature, **Anthropocentrism** begins to replace a **Cosmocentrism**.
The belief that objective reasoning on empirical observation using scientific methods will reveal everything there is to know about reality.

The belief that nature is value-free, and thus there for observation, manipulation, tinkering, extraction.

There is no whole to the cosmos, only an aggregate of disparate material things in causal interactions.
WHAT HAS BEEN LOST?

• Our primal unity and wholeness in life

• Our connection to nature and the wider universe

• A unity within ourselves between reason and feeling
WHAT SHOULD WE RECOVER?

• Restore a sense of oneness and wholeness to the world and human experience.

• Remember that truth is discovered through immersion in one’s deepest and innermost feelings, not objective truth about what is out there.

• The self in its spiritual core, is the highest, most encompassing of all that is found in reality.
Society is the cause of all our ills, whereas the first impulse of nature is always right.

When we look at nature we discover two things

- Self love and self preservation are always good.
- We have a natural repugnance to the suffering of others.
WHO AM I? (OR WHO DO OTHERS SAY I AM?)

• 5 minutes: Write an objective account of what society (or some sector of society) believes about who you are according to its expectations, stereotypes, frameworks, etc.

• 5 minutes: Write a subjective account of who you are from the standpoint of your own innermost feeling of your self.
• 5 minutes: Write an account of who you are from the standpoint of the cosmos, or God, or the universe.

• Does your description follow the logic of Rousseau or is it different. (p. 66)
THE LARGER TREND

• Pre-Modern: From Nature to Humanity to God

• Modern: From Nature to Humanity

• Romanticism: Humanity (immersed in Nature)
**DEBATE!**

- Children are more in touch with reality, beauty, and truth than adults, who have been too controlled by culture and society.

- A life immersed and guided by nature is a much better guide to our happiness, joy, and a meaningful life a life immersed and guided by society. The goal should always be to tune out society’s expectations and attune oneself to nature and its rhythms.

- The creative and expressive artist who speaks from their feelings has better access to what it means to be human than the most astute scientist that has access to objective data.
THE GOAL OF SPIRITUAL AUTONOMY

- The self must pass through a stage of thinking that it is one with nature and that this is the highest truth, but this is only a transitional stage, a stage that itself will be surpassed as the mind reaches a yet higher truth.

- The ultimate destination is the recognition of the absolute priority of the human imagination over both the natural self and nature.

- Romanticism aims not at humanity’s oneness with nature, but at the ultimate humanization of nature in the apotheosis of human creativity.
THE NEED FOR RECOGNITION

• It is not enough to be transparent to oneself, one must also be recognized by others for what one is.

• Expressivism: The inner experience is driven to externalize itself in a concrete form in the world. Experience ex-presses itself.

• Is the self found or made?
The authentic self is the individual who can stand alone, shedding all status relations and social entanglements, in order to immerse him- or herself in “sheer life.”

Life is something we carry within us and it is up to each of us to cultivate it and express it in our own personal ways.

What rises up within you is more fundamental, more real, than the objective realities and intersubjective involvements that make up everyday life.

**Question**: Does being authentic mean being fundamentally and unavoidably out of the mainstream? Is being authentic to be asocial? But does this same asocial existence also uncover something ghastly?
ONTOLOGY

• What is the structure (being) of the self.

MORALITY

• What kind of life ought we to live, and should live to find happiness?
QUIZ

• What is ontology the study of?

• Give four examples of polarizing binaries that shape how our culture understands the world.

• What do Alice Miller’s ideas contribute to Guignon’s project of understanding the sources of our view of authenticity.
### Polarizing Binaries

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WHAT LIES WITHIN?

- Explain what is meant by the following claim.
  Childhood as a separate sphere becomes an ‘infrastructure’ of the personality.

- What are the basic insights of Alice Miller “Drama of the Gifted Child?”

- What does it mean for an adult to achieve “a new empathy with her own fate, born out of mourning.”

- What are the assumptions behind Miller’s view of the self?

- Discuss the key paragraph on page 92. What is Guignol saying? How do you understand this in your own words?
THE BEAST WITHIN: FREUD’S VIEW OF THE SELF

• Id
• Death Instinct
• Superego
• The Heart of Darkness
GUIGNON'S CONCLUSION

• p. 104. Recognizing our capacity for evil can undermine our assurance that we will necessarily live a good life if we get in touch with and express our innermost, primal selves. Society, far from being the enemy of goodness, turns out to be its only hope.

• p. 105. To be authentic is to openly express all the rage, raw sexuality and cruelty within you, even when, or especially when, doing so flies in the face of cultivated morality and manners.
ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT TUESDAY

• Read (or review) Chapter 6

• Bring to class two songs which reference two of the following four thinker’s ideas:
  
  • **Thoreau** or the idea of Spiritual Autonomy (p. 61)
  
  • **Rilke** or the idea of the solitary creative artist (p. 74)
  
  • **Miller** or the idea of mourning the tragic fate of childhood (p. 89-90)
  
  • **Freud** or the idea of beast within (p. 100-101)
  
  • **One** of the post-modern ideas in Chapter 6.