“Fall” and Redemption in the Thought of Martin Heidegger and Jacques Lacan

Tyler Akers  
University of Denver

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.du.edu/etd

Part of the Philosophy Commons, and the Religious Thought, Theology and Philosophy of Religion Commons

Recommended Citation

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate Studies at Digital Commons @ DU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Electronic Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ DU. For more information, please contact jennifer.cox@du.edu,dig-commons@du.edu.
"Fall" and Redemption in the Thought of Martin Heidegger and Jacques Lacan

Abstract
This dissertation examines and develops Martin Heidegger's concept of "falling" as a significant historical-philosophical principle. Falling, however, is primarily understood as a concept of the early Heidegger, whereas I argue that Heidegger continues to rely upon it, both explicitly and implicitly, throughout his career. Falling is a description of philosophical and Western history, known as metaphysics, and the description of man's relationship to Being. Thus, falling relates to the most significant streams in Heidegger's later thought, too, including the truth of Being, the death of God, the gods, the overcoming of metaphysics, and meditative thinking.

I then reinterpret the traditional theology of the Fall narrative from Genesis in light of falling as philosophical concept, extending Heidegger's own "destruction" of Western metaphysics in relation to one of its grounding myths. I move on to demonstrate the significance of a falling understanding in a rereading of the death of God and the end of metaphysics by examining Heidegger's engagement with Nietzsche. I conclude by incorporating Jacques Lacan's psychoanalysis as a further extension of Heidegger's discourse on falling, showing that the subject's discourse and relationship to the truth of Being is at the core of his constitution and neurosis.

Document Type
Dissertation

Degree Name
Ph.D.

Department
Religious and Theological Studies

First Advisor
Carl Raschke, Ph.D.

Second Advisor
Scott Howard

Third Advisor
Mark George

Keywords
Fall, Falling, Gods, Heidegger, Verfallen

Subject Categories
Philosophy | Religious Thought, Theology and Philosophy of Religion

Publication Statement
Copyright is held by the author. User is responsible for all copyright compliance.

This dissertation is available at Digital Commons @ DU: https://digitalcommons.du.edu/etd/1006
“Fall” and Redemption in the Thought of Martin Heidegger and Jacques Lacan

A Dissertation

Presented to

the Faculty of the University of Denver and the Iliff School of Theology Joint PhD Program

University of Denver

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

by

Tyler Akers

August 2015

Advisor: Carl Raschke
Abstract

This dissertation examines and develops Martin Heidegger’s concept of “falling” as a significant historical-philosophical principle. Falling, however, is primarily understood as a concept of the early Heidegger, whereas I argue that Heidegger continues to rely upon it, both explicitly and implicitly, throughout his career. Falling is a description of philosophical and Western history, known as metaphysics, and the description of man’s relationship to Being. Thus, falling relates to the most significant streams in Heidegger’s later thought, too, including the truth of Being, the death of God, the gods, the overcoming of metaphysics, and meditative thinking.

I then reinterpret the traditional theology of the Fall narrative from Genesis in light of falling as philosophical concept, extending Heidegger’s own “destruction” of Western metaphysics in relation to one of its grounding myths. I move on to demonstrate the significance of a falling understanding in a rereading of the death of God and the end of metaphysics by examining Heidegger’s engagement with Nietzsche. I conclude by incorporating Jacques Lacan’s psychoanalysis as a further extension of Heidegger’s discourse on falling, showing that the subject’s discourse and relationship to the truth of Being is at the core of his constitution and neurosis.
# Table of Contents

Introduction 1  
My Project in Context 11

Chapter 1: The History of Metaphysics and the History of Being 33  
1.1 Introduction: Being and Metaphysics 33  
1.2 Falling Persists Through Heidegger’s Thinking 36  
1.3 Destruction and Recollection of the question of the meaning of being 41  
1.4 The Meaning of Overcoming Metaphysics 44  
1.5 The Preface to Falling in *Being and Time* 50  
1.6 Heidegger’s Concept of Falling 68  
1.7 Falling and Death 71  
1.8 Additions to a Phenomenology of Falling 73  
1.9 Conclusion 83

Chapter 2: Augustine’s Theology of the Fall 87  
2.1 Introduction 87  
2.2 Heidegger on the Theology of the Fall 91  
2.3 The Classic Augustinian Model of the Fall 93  
2.4 Augustine’s Fall as Entry of Death Into Life 94  
2.5 Death of the Soul, Death of the Body 100  
2.6 The Fall and the Itinerary of the Soul in Two Cities 102  
2.7 Conclusion 108

Chapter 3: Heidegger and the Genesis of Truth 113  
3.1 Introduction 113  
3.2 The Truth of Plato, and Beyond 117  
3.3 Truth from Proposition to the Freedom to Let Beings Be 124  
3.4 The Essence of Truth as Untruth 130  
3.5 The Truth of Being as Thing and World 135  
3.6 Conclusion 155

Chapter 4: Heidegger and the Truth of Genesis 164  
4.1 Introduction 164  
4.2 The Truth of Genesis 179  
4.3 Conclusion 196

Chapter 5: Falling at the End of Metaphysics: the Death of God and the Will to Power 207  
5.1 Introduction 207  
5.2 Nietzsche’s Metaphysics: Death of God and the Will to Power 209  
5.3 Nietzsche’s Entrenchment of Metaphysics 219  
5.4 Nietzsche’s Metaphysics in Relation to Falling 226  
5.5 Heidegger’s First Corrective: Affirmation of Being-History 229
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter 6: The Humiliation of Metaphysics and The Waiting for a God</th>
<th>236</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6.1 Introduction</td>
<td>237</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.2 Nietzsche’s Fall</td>
<td>240</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.3 Heidegger and the Question of God</td>
<td>248</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.4 Falling—“Only a God Can Save Us.”</td>
<td>251</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.5 Conclusion</td>
<td>259</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter 7: The Lacanian Fall: Psychoanalysis as Metaphysical Diagnosis</th>
<th>267</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7.1 Introduction</td>
<td>267</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.2 Freud and the Original Fall in Psychoanalysis</td>
<td>269</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.3 The Broader Heideggerian Context of Lacan’s Theory</td>
<td>272</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.4 Lacan’s Phenomenological Analysis</td>
<td>276</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.5 Lacanian Subjectivity</td>
<td>277</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.6 The Truth of the Subject is the Truth of Metaphysics</td>
<td>283</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.7 The Habitus of the Subject</td>
<td>288</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.8 The Aletheia of the Subject</td>
<td>292</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.9 Conclusion</td>
<td>308</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter 8: Antiphony of Death: The Freedom and the Work of the Metaphysical Subject</th>
<th>314</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8.1 Introduction</td>
<td>315</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.2 Death—Man’s Absolute Master</td>
<td>327</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.3 Death: the Word of Man’s Freedom</td>
<td>333</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Conclusion | 345 |

| Bibliography | 351 |
Introduction

Phenomenology returns thinking to the investigation of phenomena as they appear in their “givenness.”¹ The first, Husserlian phenomenological reduction attempts to take reflection, via a step back, prior to any ideas or presuppositions related to the phenomena that present themselves. As Maurice Merleau-Ponty puts it, phenomenology tries to give a direct description of our experience as it is, without taking account of its psychological origin and the causal explanations which the scientist, the historian or the sociologist may be able to provide.²

Following Husserl’s initial formulations, Martin Heidegger states in Being and Time—his own expansion of the phenomenological project—phenomenology aims to “let that which shows itself be seen from itself in the very way in which it shows itself from itself.”³ Thus phenomenology seeks to lay bare the nature or essence of a phenomenon in its appearing without recourse to prior philosophical or scientific ideation.

¹ Cf. Moran, Dermot. Introduction to Phenomenology (New York: Routledge, 2000), 11: the phenomenological epoché, or suspension of the natural attitude . . . This bracketing meant that all scientific, philosophical, cultural, and everyday assumptions had to be put aside – not so much negated as to be put out of court . . . Indeed, in genuine phenomenological viewing, we are not permitted any scientific or philosophical hypotheses. We should attend only to the phenomena in the manner of their being given to us, in their modes of givenness.”


In his landmark phenomenological work, *Being and Time*, Heidegger argues that it is Being itself which conditions and provides for every phenomenon. Yet Being has never even been raised as a philosophical question except to the extent that it is either subsumed under or confused with some characteristic of beings, or as the ground (reason) for all beings, which leads naturally enough to the metaphysical conceiving of Being as the Highest Being. Phenomenology immediately challenges these conclusions as insufficiently primordial, i.e., already presumptuous, imposing a number of preconceived rational or ideational structures upon the phenomenon of Being itself. Being remains unique and difficult as a matter of thought, for while every phenomenon is given by virtue of Being, Being is not simply *present to* experience and reflection in the same manner beings are, and it cannot be conflated with beings or their qualities. The question is, how does Being show itself or appear, if it cannot be reduced to the qualities of beings or as their ground reason (the latter of which necessitates an imposition of human logic upon “something’ that first makes *logos* possible)? Obviously, Being, in one way or another, appears to *us*, so it must in some as yet non-thematized way present itself to *us*. Thus, Heidegger argues, a phenomenology of our own human factual experience might lead philosophy to the place of posing the question of Being again, just as it was raised at the outset of Western philosophy—but was long since forgotten and abandoned as a question. To do this, Heidegger investigates human existence in terms of its own unique Being, such that, as Da-sein (being-there/here), we as humans take our Being up into our concern and investigation.

---

*As we will see, Being is dismissed as the most general, universal, abstract, self-evident, etc. of concepts.*
Husserl was compelled to leave every phenomenon “bracketed” in order to achieve something akin to an original “seeing” of the thing itself as it presents itself. Phenomenology, the art that evolved under the aegis of Edmund Husserl, with the explicit purpose of returning our philosophical investigations back to phenomena themselves as they appear and show themselves, includes those phenomena which had been precluded from rational discourse since the onset of modernity.

As Heidegger’s own phenomenological investigations expanded, however, he began to discover that a more original sense of the self-manifestation of phenomena could be found as a principle of Greek thinking and experience—in Aristotle in particular—in the form of *aletheia*

as the unconcealment of what-is present, its being revealed, its showing itself. That which phenomenological investigations rediscovered as the supporting attitude of thought proves to be the fundamental trait of Greek thinking, if not indeed of philosophy as such.\(^5\)

This discovery led Heidegger to the conviction that would guide the rest of his life’s work into the *aletheia* of Being. The originary relationship between thinking and Being—such as it is stated in Parmenides’ fragment, “thinking and being are the same”—remains ignored, but the relationship itself nevertheless perdures. Because this relationship is *a priori* established, though not interrogated, this means that the meaning of Being, the truth/unconcealing of Being to some extent remains engaged with the metaphysical tradition, which has forgotten Being itself. Being therefore has a history in human thinking, even if it is as such forgotten. That is, Being was spoken in the history of philosophy, but precisely *as concealed, hidden, unapproached, in oblivion, misconstrued.*

---

The first and remaining step, therefore, is to return to the philosophical heritage in order to disclose its engagement with the meaning or aletheia of Being. As we will see, Heidegger names this process of laying bare the history of Being out of the history of philosophy Destruktion, “destruction.” This history of forgetting itself, however, exemplified as the tradition of philosophical thinking as metaphysics, Heidegger calls falling.

Falling is therefore an essential determination discovered in Dasein’s experience of Being, revealed as Dasein’s relationship to Being, one that continues to show up explicitly throughout Heidegger’s body of work:

Forgetting the truth of being in favor of the pressing throng of beings unthought in their essence is what “falling” [Verfallen] means in Being and Time. This word does not signify the Fall of Man understood in a “moral-philosophical” and at the same time secularized way; rather, it designates an essential relationship of humans to being within being’s relation to the essence of the human being.  

This dissertation examines the phenomenology of this falling throughout Heidegger’s lengthy and profound engagement into the question and truth of Being. With the Heideggerian problematic in place, I will also use it as a point of comparison with an unlikely interlocutor, Jacques Lacan. Situating his own theory within a Heideggerian framework, Lacan articulates the subjectivity of fallenness in terms of its fractured, alienated and misrecognized constitution. Lacan’s subject is constituted by falling in very often synonymous terms as Heidegger. For Heidegger, falling away from Being means, among other things, to also fall into and away from self and world. Lacan’s subject is understood by definition to be self-alienation.

---

From beginning to end, I analyze these moments in which Heidegger elaborates falling in relation to the *aletheia* of Being. However, I take Heidegger's phenomenology of falling further, and in relation to his own method. By re-sounding Lacan's self-avowed relationship to Heidegger, I further elaborate the concept of falling in its subjective dimensions: the subject is the truth of metaphysics, and metaphysics is the truth of the subject.

Thus I argue that falling must be elaborated in terms of its phenomenological structure, and these are exemplified in *standing, humiliation, and getting up again*. My investigation will describe this structure of falling from a number of perspectives, but continuously situated within the Heideggerian problematic. As a pure phenomenon, falling occurs by virtue of an initial standing. Everything and everyone that takes a stand, falls; conversely, every fall occurs out of a stand-taking. Yet human falling takes on altogether different contours because of the nature of human standing. Humans fall in a uniquely human way because they stand in a uniquely human way. Heidegger's own employment of “falling” can be situated in the broader context of this structure of falling at the same time as his thinking provides the elucidation of a concept of falling.

In Heidegger's philosophy, falling is the name for the movement of the history of metaphysical thinking in relation to the *aletheia* of Being. While Heidegger does explicitly formulate the aspect of falling *away* and *into* of metaphysics in relation to the *aletheia* of Being (after its initial formulation as the structure of Dasein's existential modality), he does not explicitly make the connection of what kind of *stand* is taken metaphysically that results in falling and its continuation. Within the Heideggerian terrain, it is the way humans stand in relation to being, to beings, and to themselves,
which determines the nature of their fall. Following the thread of falling, I will investigate the *stance* of metaphysics that conditions its fall. The nature of this stance is one of insolence in the face of *aletheia* as such. Eventually, as we will see, Heidegger comes to identify this metaphysical stance with Nietzsche’s will to power; the will to power is the summary principle of metaphysics. It is metaphysics’ kind of stand that determines its type of fall. That stance is determined as *willfulness*, overweening will power, attested to in the very form of metaphysical thinking.

This falling derives when thinking insists upon the *presence* of being as the condition of being itself.

The other part of falling’s structure—articulated in terms of metaphysics and stance—is *humiliation*. Humiliation is mostly always associated with the peculiarity of human falling, while it cannot be discerned elsewhere, say, when a tree falls; therefore, falling and humiliation are somehow determinate for human being, and should be amenable to phenomenological articulation. The etymology of the word “humiliation” is essential for understanding this relationship. From the Latin root (from *humilis*, “lowly, humble,” but literally “on the ground,” from *humus*, earth⁷) of both humiliation and humility we discover that humiliation literally means to be brought back to the earth. In various ways we will see how this humiliation is evinced in Heidegger’s treatment of metaphysics and the overcoming of metaphysics.

But I am going to go a step further into the analytic of falling. Taking cues from Heidegger’s *Destruktion* (the philosophical process of laying bare, uncovering, disclosing, disassembling the relationship of Dasein to the *aletheia* of Being from its

tradition, past, history, and world), I will uncover the essential aspects of the structure of falling out of the traditional “fall narrative” of Christian theology, the Genesis account of Adam and Eve’s partaking of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Under a “destructive” reading, we can observe the same structure of falling in the Genesis account that Heidegger discerns within the course of Western thinking. This is no accident, as it is this narrative of the Fall of man, read theologically, that co-conditions this very history, to the extent that it funds and corresponds to a view of a Western, metaphysical anthropology. The Genesis narrative therefore offers unforeseen openings into the philosophical problematic of falling. By rereading the narrative, I will expose how the source-text of the theological Fall offers a rather fateful mytho-poetical reading of the metaphysical process that Heidegger delineates philosophically and in the history of ideas. To what extent can the structure of falling as it is delineated by Heideggerian thinking be discerned within the archetypical narrative of the theological fall? The answer will lead us to a greater establishing of the concept of falling from a philosophical perspective. At the same time, this narrative offers a pivot by which to transition into the stranger aspects of Heidegger’s thinking upon the aletheia of Being, which include a return to the question of the divine, the god and the gods. Heidegger’s thinking, particularly his work on the mythic and poetic, makes this confrontation possible. Entry into this will be provided by Augustine’s analysis of original sin and the Fall.

It is precisely at the juncture when the gods reenter the realm of philosophical thinking that the issue of piety is brought up again as a necessary response to the dominion of metaphysical falling. The humiliation that occurs in the process of
metaphysical falling, exemplified mytho-poetically in the Genesis narrative, brings the hubris of human thinking back to the earth where it belongs and precisely where it can begin anew. It therefore can take a new stance, conditioned by humility.

I continue pressing into the issue of piety, humility and other “old values” as the answer to metaphysical falling by examining Heidegger’s reading of Nietzsche. Heidegger argues that, with Nietzsche, metaphysics is brought to its highest pitch, principle and conclusion in the will to power. In the “death of God” lies the final turning of Western metaphysics into its conclusions: the displacement of all previous values from their “supersensory” guarantee. However, as Heidegger argues, rather than “destroying” that principle that has been the guiding thread of Western metaphysics—which culminates in the technological domination of human beings over the masses of beings which exist only to serve human goals, needs and projects, including the use of human beings themselves in this way—Nietzsche brings the principle of metaphysics to consciousness and thereby releases it as the determining principle of the new history of “overcoming” metaphysics. Thus Nietzsche concludes metaphysics by offering it the conclusion that it already had always made—the will to power. The diagnosis is at the same time the prescription in Nietzsche’s “reversal of Platonism.” Thus Nietzsche does nothing to halt metaphysical falling but rather exacerbates its velocity and conditions, overflowing its boundaries into every possible avenue of human existence and thinking.

In the next chapter, I will compare Nietzsche’s thought, response and philosophy with what Heidegger calls the unthought in Nietzsche and in metaphysics. This unthought thought, I argue, is hidden in Nietzsche’s so-called madness, and inscribed concisely in one of the “epistles of delusion” that he wrote to a friend after his fall or
collapse in the streets of Turin. By examining Nietzsche’s fall, we find an as-yet unthought response to the falling of metaphysics which Heidegger in many respects also discerns—a response further conditioned by the piety of thinking that Heidegger introduces back into philosophy, particularly in terms of the humility of thinking. This humility once again returns the question of the divine to philosophy, for it is from out of falling that one once again faces that which in no way offers itself to human control, willing, or conception. Thus we will finally have laid the proper road for entry into Heidegger’s talk of the god, the gods, “return of the gods,” the “passing of the last god,” etc. Only within this context does Heidegger’s god-talk make proper sense and attain its proper importance.

Nietzsche’s personal madness, which is indeed the madness of metaphysics itself, segues into the question of the subject of metaphysics. In the final chapters, I follow Lacan’s lead to situate him within a Heideggerian context, first on a categorical level (couching his theory of the subject within terminology specifically Heideggerian), and then on a deeper level, as we uncover the implications of Lacan’s employment of essential Heideggerian themes such as aletheia (including the play of presence and absence), death and being. The truth of the subject reveals the subject’s constitutive madness. This madness is the aggressive response to the trauma of Western civilization and to the ontological powerlessness that is revealed to the subject at the same time it is constituted as subject. A subject is, has its being, to the extent that it is always-already falling away from itself. Neurosis is the consequence and symptomology the aggressive response to this situation.
Lacan evinces the phenomenological structure of falling in exact terms: the subject of metaphysics is caught within the self-perpetuating, self-humiliating cycle in its endless and vicious attempts to define and secure itself against the others and the powerlessness that necessarily constitute it. The subject continually brings death to the extent that it refuses its falling. The diagnosis Lacan offers is the same as Heidegger: we are looking at the truth of being as the subject reveals it. The solution to this problem is, strikingly, similar to the one that Heidegger offers and that Heidegger uncovers in Nietzsche’s thought: Lacan articulates it as gift, grace, and submission.

By passing through these movements I seek to heighten and contextualize the importance of Heidegger’s god-talk, which is a direct response to the falling of human Dasein from the truth of Being. With such god-talk, Heidegger opens up the possibility into a pious thinking which insists upon humility as one of its methodological necessities. This dissertation is the groundwork to a further investigation into this possibility.

Falling is the phenomenological description of our form of thinking and the way of being that it codetermines. It is responsible for a long paradigmatic and practical journey that delivers us up now not only to a world of illimitable crises but to the diminishment and challenge of meaning and significant human experiences. By examining the conditions of falling, I will show the radical shifts that occur in our Western world as they derive from the stance thinking takes. This thinking is determined by our comportment toward Being and beings—but so much unfolds from this relationship. Our falling comportment means a revolution in experience with beings of the world, with ourselves, and follows from a decision upon Being itself. But implicit
in these changes are broader usurpations of some of the most primordial and significant human experiences. Piety, the gods, God, well-being, the holy, the divine, the sacred, the invisible, the unapparent and hidden, the unrevealed—whatever falls within such “categories” undergoes a concomitant upheaval and redefinition—if not outright exclusion—in falling’s trajectory. There is therefore nothing more absurd today than to speak of the gods or the holy or God’s will. On the other hand, well-being is only what is useful and serviceable for us, and whatever is hidden or unrevealed is judged as nonexistent, inessential or useless; etc. The convictions have a distinctive genealogy, however. The first task is to understand how such a fall can occur, what it is, and in the process to mark out possible moments of returning from the stance that precipitates this ever-darkening tumble.

My Project in Context

Every dissertation must situate itself within a broader research and theoretical concept, and that is my intent in the remaining part of this introduction. The breadth of Heidegger research is expansive, no doubt, but insisting on Lacan as student and essential conversation partner with Heidegger places my own project squarely within a more circumscribed literature focusing on the site at which ontology and psychoanalysis confront one another. But the intersection of Heideggerian philosophy and psychoanalysis is a strange and contentious space. On the one hand, the decentering and radical fracturing represented in post-Lacanian psychoanalysis appears to go hand in glove with the deconstruction of metaphysical assumptions, such as the stability, coherence and purity of the transcendental ego, the immediacy of intuition and self-
consciousness, and the processes of inscription, or conscription, of the individual (qua subject) into symbolic metanarrative and structures, civilizational, mechanical and cultural.

At this level, then, the question regards the position of the subject, is his/her placement within Being. I find a number of instructive conversation partners and allies in my own studies. Among many others is Žižek, who overcomes every other in his power to consolidate innumerable disparate streams into a semi-coherent theoretics of the subject (psychoanalytic and Marxist/materialist) combined with a philosophically brilliant ontology. Žižek is the monstrosity born of Hegel, Kant, Marx and Lacan.

Žižek’s position is unique in that he is injecting a philosophical ontology into Lacanian psychoanalysis. But the question in relation to my project will always be what is Žižekian subjectivity’s relation to the question of Being? For Žižek, the subject is an abysmal gap, a self-distantiation within the folds of the Real, or One. The transcendental I is nothing but the “noncoincidence of the One with itself.” The materialist science therefore is not to catch an outside-to-inside view of the structure of reality – because there is none – but rather to perform a “reflexive twist” by which I catch a glimpse of my own inclusion into my existence, a “reflexive short circuit” that glimpses the Real from a twisted perspective. This reality is never “whole,” not because it escapes my grasp or sense—not because of its ontic expansiveness or the limitations of my senses—but because of my own anamorphic blind spot that betrays my own inclusion within the Real, as the One not matching up with itself. This is why Žižek

---

9 Ibid., 17.
reads the cultural sphere—psychoanalyzes it, really, to agree with Badiou's assessment—in order to elucidate the Symbolic-Imaginary slipping and sliding that in relief betrays a stance subjectivity is taking in relation to its being and being-with-others.

Such psychoanalytic theory avoids the reification of a transcendental, substantialist or metaphysical subject or self, and situates subjectivity in a materialist context. This subject is nothing in and of itself, with no substantial or ontological status, an “ontological Void,” and therefore its inclusion into the Real will always be a traumatic experience of self-realization. The Symbolic-Imaginary evidences the symptomatology of this traumatic inclusion and constitutional barring. What Žižek calls “tarrying with the negative,” or the experience of Hegel’s “night of the world,” the utter dissemination that the subject is, a violent explosion of reality—pure Imagination—this “night of the world” is the pre-ontological itself. Reason, understanding, these are remainders, repression of this void of negativity at the heart of the subject; and they are structuring formation of an a priori primordial chaos.

The crux of the matter, with Julia Kristeva as much as Žižek, is that subjectivity is the crucial missed lynchpin in Heidegger’s thinking of Being. That is, freedom is predicated upon an abyssal, disruptive subjectivity that irrupts at the site of the Symbolic and Imaginary. The Symbolic is the expression and explication of the ontologic. But as such, the pre-ontological, pre-theorized, effulgent experience of Being, represented in Heidegger’s ideal of Da-sein is as much caught in the prefabricated trap of metaphysics as any Above, Beyond, or transcendent. Furthermore, the abyssal or

---

10 Ibid., 44.
barred subject reflects the relationship between thinking and being (such as contended by thinkers from Parmenides to its most recent revival in Heidegger) only to the extent that being is the material substrate—matter, or nothing—from which any individual human being derives, and from which subjectivity itself arises.

Julia Kristeva represents this distinction as the split in the subject, between its social constraints (symbolic superstructure, familial and societal relations) and its “bio-physiological processes,” which Freud identifies as drives. Kristeva’s “subject-in-process,” in the disruptions of imagination, that subvert the totalitarian social norms and determinations, brings to bear the irruptions of the other side of the subjective split, the material-biological aspect, origin and interminable spring of the subject. The subject continually introduces “operations heterogeneous to meaning and its system,” as Kristeva argues:

By that I mean that these ‘operations’ are pre-meaning and pre-sign (or trans-meaning, trans-sign), and that they bring us back to processes of division in the living matter of an organism subject to biological constraints as well as social norms.11

Thus, for Kristeva, the goal is to study the dialectic between the “heterogeneity of biological operations in respect to signifying operations.”12

The “night of the world” serves the same role as Kristeva’s chora, borrowing from Plato’s concept. The chora is the womb or enclosure, from the Greek, the pregnable Real that prefigures and underlies every distinction, a unitary whole represented for


12 Ibid., 30.
Kristeva in the body, or the “pre-bio-physiological.”

Signification, meaning, is produced by the fracturing or breaking off from this *chora* in positing, *thesis*, which differentiates and vocalizes from a closer intimacy with the material-biological substrate and origin. This differentiation/positing is a disruption of the Real into the symbolic by virtue of the imaginary. Kristeva identifies poetic language, poetic actions (play, music, dancing), but also neurosis, madness and drug experimentation as forms of the revolutionary usurpations of oppressive normativizations, systematization, and dominations. Each of these poetics represents a “reordering of the psychic *drives* which have not been harnessed by the dominant symbolization systems.”

Psychoanalysis is the intervention into the “fundamentally deceptive” aspects of Western knowledge and politics. It is therefore “critical and dissolvent, cuts through political illusions, fantasies and beliefs to the extent that they consist in providing only one meaning, an uncriticizable ultimate Meaning, to human behaviour.”

Kristeva’s phenomenological influence in her semanalysis borrows from Husserl. (She also closely appropriates Lacan here in his own phenomenological methodology, as I will exhibit in later chapters.) For Kristeva’s part, the only way to

---

13 Cf. Kristeva, Julia, “Revolution in Poetic Language,” from *The Kristeva Reader*, 94: “the chora precedes and underlies figuration and specularization, and is analogous only to vocal and kinetic rhythm.”


Its [the Ego’s] *free spontaneity and activity* consists in positing, positing on the strength of this or that, positing as an antecedent or a consequent, and so forth; it does not live within the theses as a passive indweller; the theses radiate from it as from a primary source of generation [Erzeugungen]. Every thesis begins with a *point of insertion* [Einsatzpunkt] with a point at which the *posing has its origin* [Urprungsetzung]; so it is with the first thesis and with each further one in the synthetic nexus. The ‘inserting’ even belongs to the thesis as such, as a remarkable modus of original actuality. It somewhat resembles the *fiat*, the point of insertion of will and action.
avoid metaphysics in semiotics is to grow perceptive to the bio-
logical expressed in
semiotic processes; and, as a materialist science, to catch the sign in its production, its
positing. This science of analysis was innovated by Freud, and Lacan after him. The
phenomena that present themselves as such to psychoanalysis, however, are not
codified, rational or systematic. They evince a symptomotology of our basis in the Real.

It is the fact that we are speaking beings or on the verge of speech that has
“divided, separated us from nature.”17 The split leaves us with “traces” of the pre- or
trans-linguistic.18 Kristeva and her kin are not subject to a vulgar biologism or
scientism in this reduction but are rather expressing a literally unspeakable distinction
at the heart of what it means to be human.19 Kristeva rejects, following Heidegger’s
fears, that the psychoanalyst “biologizes man’s essence.”20 Furthermore, Kristeva is not
espousing a pure rationalism, for it is precisely what is by definition irrational, non-
rational, or even trans- or pre-rational that exhibits itself in the manifestations of the
unconscious and its work. It is matter, the body and all the paradoxical tearing,
reduplicating, merges and metamorphoses that are spoken, find voice, out of the fractures
of the symbolic by the unconscious.

17 Kristeva, Julia, In the Beginning was Love: Psychoanalysis and Faith, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (New

18 Cf. Ibid.: “beyond the representations words and things, we find the ultimate marks of biochemical
processes that take place in a subject interacting with another subject; hence these marks are already pre-
signs, pre-conditions, or substrates of desire and communications.”

19 The primary critique we could offer hardly even fits as theoretical. The question arises, when we are
considering the limits of method, Why would we try to name the unspeakable? This theological or
apophatic question, however, is secondary to our purposes—except to the extent that questions of
humility and piety are involved.

20 Ibid., 9.
The path is more phenomenological, grounded in a Husserlian rather than a positivist discourse. But what reveals itself to Kristeva’s experience is the irruption of the imagination in the subject-in-process. This is why one of the functions of the psychoanalyst is to “reawaken the imagination and to permit illusions to exist.”\footnote{Ibid., 18.} To allow for the “discourse of the imagination” to speak out leads analysis to obtaining “the physical efficacy, the real impact that we desire.”\footnote{Ibid., 19.} Thus the analyst must “restore to illusion its full therapeutic and epistemological value.”\footnote{Ibid., 21.} Following the method of the phenomenological epoché, Kristeva does not adhere brute positivism. Her definition of psychoanalysis runs along phenomenological lines:

Nevertheless, analytic language (that spoken by the analysand as well as that spoken by the analyst insofar as the analyst himself remains an analysand) cannot be reduced to objective terms. The analytic process is first and foremost an unfolding of language prior to and beyond all unification, distansiation, and objectification. Language that resonates between two subjects, posed or de-posed. It opens or closes their bodies to its implicit ideals and offers a possibility (not without risks) of psychic as well as physical life.\footnote{Ibid., 60.}

Kristeva even borrows from Heidegger’s and Nietzsche’s analyses of nihilism to agree with the Heideggerian contention—appropriated into her own discourse—that metaphysics itself is that long symbolic-systemic oppressive accretion pressing upon me and limiting my freedom, self-knowledge, and which forces me into untenable contradictions with myself and with the world. Kristeva is well-placed, therefore, within the context of an existentialist-phenomenological philosophy in the line of Heidegger,
but also of Kierkegaard’s problem of the single individual negotiating his subjective freedom and relation to the Other, God, though Kristeva’s is not a traditionally religious choice.

From its conception, phenomenology, too, bore in its breast the care for human freedom. For Husserl, the ultimate end of his theoretical enterprise was to free philosophy to answer to the great crisis that modern life, technicity, cold industrialization, positivism and physical sciences had opened up but could not in themselves address.Kristeva expresses the goal differently but in essential alignment with Husserl, as both understand the hegemony of modern totalization inherent within the philosophical/metaphysical project. What for Kristeva is totalization is for Husserl the danger of an “all-encompassing universal science”:

the great ideal is soon anticipated of a science which, in this new sense, is rational and all-inclusive, or rather the idea that the infinite totality of what is in general is intrinsically a rational all-encompassing unity that can be mastered without anything left over, by a corresponding universal science.

Against the objectivism, which eventually culminates in an epochal human self-alienation, Husserl, for his part, expounds on the “unheard-of radicalism” of the Cartesian epoché via transcendentalism. Husserl calls Descartes’ reduction a “radical inquiry back into subjectivity.” Nonetheless, Descartes failed in a way that Husserl wishes to correct. By tracking every experience, idea and opinion and memory, however,

---


26 Ibid., 22.

27 Ibid., 76.

28 Ibid., 69.
Descartes himself backs away from the radicalism of his own methodology and attenuates it in two ways. First, “he excludes the living body,” which itself is the experiential ground and wholeness of my *Welthabe*, my natural possession of the world. Second, Descartes begins his method of radical, ideology-undermining doubt nonetheless with a goal held in advance, by which his breakthrough of the *epoché* remains a means to the end. For Husserl, to maintain consistency, the *epoché* is not something to go through to get to the other side, as it were, to the apodictic assurance of the “external world,” which is Descartes’ coveted next layer upon the ground of certainty offered by the ego. Rather, the *epoché* must “seriously be and remain in effect.” To posit a soul, furthermore, is to replace the phenomenological ego with the “residuum of a previous abstraction,” the abstraction of the body.

Husserl’s criticism of Descartes’ twofold failure is a warning to us. The second we must repeat emphatically as the continuing method by which Heidegger works and within which we must persist as well: every goal or end that would preemptively determine the nature or process of phenomenological inquiry will pollute its progress and purity. Philosophy in service to a politics is such a short-circuit of the *epoché* (one that Heidegger was for a time guilty of). For the other philosophers we are treating in this review, the question of political involvement, and the nature of that involvement, is almost always a foregone conclusion arrived at through a subjective decision—the phenomenologists being the exceptions. Add to this a thinking that locates itself within “materialism” or “transcendentalism,” “objectivism” or “relativism.” Each school of

---

29 Ibid., 79.
30 Ibid.
31 Ibid., 80.
philosophy is the result of a prior decision on the question of being, one that can only be substantiated as a sheer fiat or bald prejudice, but that cannot be grounded in the phenomenological *epoché*, and one that cuts short the labor of thinking.

We will revisit this warning at the end of this introduction. For now, we should understand that Heidegger never sees his project as abandoning phenomenology, nor moving beyond it, but rather—if it is to be a successful method in the first place—to allow it to disappear as a self-designation “in favor of the matter of thinking whose manifestness remains a mystery.” The difficulty of Heidegger’s corpus and thought is therefore qualitatively different from the difficulty of, say, Kristeva’s or Derrida’s, and that is because Heidegger’s difficulty is his simplicity, springing from a desire to return prior to all the theoretical complexity performed in the name of philosophy. Anything other than such a step back will force the matter of thinking into predesigned discursive universes.

Husserl’s greatest advance over Descartes, then, is having avoided these two errors. The “pre-given life-world” is the experience of the transcendental ego, which the Cartesian *epoché* reveals, and the body is to be radically included. In Husserl’s famous formulation, “Consciousness is always consciousness of something,” but the reduction of the *epoché* introduces us to the immensity of the world, an always-already entangled experience, a meaning.

Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology extends this Husserlian insight of an embodied world. For him, too, every experience is inscribed into a pre-given world of meaning.

---


Each phenomenal percept is linked to a chain and thereby insinuates another. Thus a horizon, a plenum, a world, is stitched together in my body.³⁴ Like Husserl, Heidegger before him, and Kristeva after him, Merleau-Ponty sees the body as a unity distinct from a scientific object.³⁵ Merleau-Ponty further aligns his phenomenology explicitly in relation to the question of being. Phenomena present us not with “pure” being but with a mediated experience of it. Despite our “inextricable involvement” with the world, there is a “cohesion which cannot be denied since they [i.e., all percepts] are all differences, extreme divergencies of one same something.”³⁶

My work joins this effort at these psychoanalytic and phenomenological intersections. I allow the phenomenon of falling to bring with it the phenomenology of a world, in particular the life-world construction of metaphysics, which includes the concomitant phenomenon of humiliation. Thus a psychical, bodily manifestation, which carries no meaning by itself, opens up the world in which a human is enmeshed. Falling is meaningful, and precisely for us, because it reveals the horizon in which we stand. Following Husserl, then, “Through the ego alone does the being of the world, and, for that matter, any being whatsoever, make sense to me...”³⁷ Falling is an experience of embodiment. But what reveals itself in the phenomenological-existential experience of

Sense experience... invest [ quale ] with a vital value, grasping it first in its meaning for us, for that heavy mass which is our body, that it always involves a reference to our bodies. The problem is to understand these strange relationships which are woven between the parts of the landscape, or between it and me as incarnate subject, and through which an object perceived can concentrate in itself a whole scene or become the imago of a whole segment of life.

³⁵ Ibid., 202.


falling, such as Heidegger begins the explication for us, is the constitutional and
determining nature of a way of thinking called metaphysics, and the irruptive de-
structuring falling has on it.

Along the psychoanalytic lines of Žižek and Kristeva, my analysis of the
phenomenon of falling reveals something of an extreme incommensurability at the heart
of human being. Psychoanalysis is the reading, or the semanalysis, of the symbolic
revelation of an ontological split in the subject. From the mytho-poetical construction of
the Genesis narrative of the Fall, we can perceive the depths of the imagination at work
with the symbolic in expressing the irruptive subject in process. However, my analysis
resituates this discourse first within Heideggerian delineations, back within the question
and the question of the truth (aletheia) of Being. This removes a number of assertions
and simplifies an analysis wrought with presuppositions on the nature of Being—a
matter that is insufficiently raised and concluded by the decisions required in every
revolutionary politics, theory or philosophy. Žižek and Kristeva, along with Badiou38

38 Badiou, of course, sees himself as breaking from contemporary philosophies, including what he calls the
postmodern and the hermeneutic varieties, the latter of which is exemplified in Heidegger’s “poetics of
being.” Heidegger’s and the others are stuck in the ashes of metaphysics, but Badiou insists that we must
reestablish truth, for philosophy itself will not be replaced by natural sciences or anything else. The world
still needs philosophy, Badiou argues, and needs it “to be refounded upon the ruins of metaphysics as
combined and blended with the modern criticism of metaphysics” (Alain Badiou Infinite Thought: Truth
and the Return to Philosophy, trans. Oliver Feltham and Justin Clemens [New York: Continuum, 2008],
42). For Badiou, the truth is constructed in fidelity to an Event. A subject is the individual who has
become subjectivized in their fidelity to that Event. The truth is singular, therefore, never general (It also
always transmits knowledge, following the Medieval distinction [Ibid., 45]). Around the site of that
Event a subject will, hopefully, draw others into a true community of subjects in fidelity to that Event.
Though St. Paul is the purest example of this subjectivity—although Mao was Badiou’s own humiliating
political choice at one time—Badiou does away with all the fairy-tales and transcendence (Cf. Badiou,
2003]). Badiou’s highest ideal of the community gathered around a truth Event is still Communism, as it
is for Zizek. Badiou insists on mathematics as the pure language of the Event, of the paradoxical
combination, in set theory, of universality in singularity.

Despite his adamant dismissal of Heidegger at every turn, I cannot see Badiou’s thinking as so
opposed. Heideggerian elements return for Badiou all the time. On the other hand, its Badiou’s
decisionism that would remove him from quite self-consciously from phenomenological reflection. Adrian
and now Laruelle—do not perform a the phenomenological *epoché* in fidelity to the lines drawn up by Husserl in his critique of Descartes: the second critique Husserl lodges against Descartes, that of starting off with a goal and performing the method for the sake of that end—this charge squarely implicates every revolutionary agenda. Therefore, in these instances, the *epoché* is not initiated in a necessary, questioning humility, but rather initiated with the presuppositions of oppressed and repressed subjectivities, hegemoniacal systems and paradigms, the symbolic and systemic determination of bodies and psyches and *imago*. The advance of Heidegger over those who followed him was that, while he did himself leap for a time into a determining revolutionary presuppositionalism in the form of National Socialism, he nevertheless performed his own recoil, his step back, prior to and apart from every revolutionary decision. This was so for the sake of the most pressing question for Heidegger, the preeminent and still-unasked question of Being. Badiou settles the question of Being as the finite yet unbounded set of all sets, a meta-ontology of mathematics;\(^39\) for Žižek, being is the indivisible remainder of the subject’s inclusion into reality, the fracture of the Real that the subject himself is; Kristeva, being an influence for Žižek—and both being students of Lacan—sounds a similar song: being is nothing without reference to the subject of enunciation, and truth is relative to the subject.\(^40\) My contention is not a

---


matter of relativism versus absolutism; it is rather a matter of the degree to which the relativity of the truth and the subject are submitted first to the prior questioning of being, which is philosophically preeminent, a task of indeterminable duration that does not allow for short-cuts into preexisting analytic discourses or to be coopted by predetermined socio-political “goals.” (It is engaged with an “ethic,” however, one determined by the simple imperative of letting be, which I will discuss more fully later.) My attempt to engage with Lacan specifically on this matter is to reorient psychoanalytic experience toward its own origin and ground as a question of the aletheia of Being. The phenomenological side of psychoanalysis, practiced by Lacan, unconceals for us a whole world of meaning as well, but in terms of a relationship and engagement with Being. But I am not beginning with the a priori convictions nor the revolutionary pretensions of these thinkers; for them, Being is a stop along a way, but the phenomenon of falling outlines a problem in our relationship to the unconcealment/concealment of Being, a stance that would continue to determine the nature of our reflections and actions.

In taking such a step back, out of the compulsion to theorize-for-revolutionary-action, I wish to return the discourse on the subject back to its primordial relation to the question of Being that Heidegger revolutionized in the twentieth century. The subject, as I will show, then, is a stand-taking before Being, amidst and within beings. Lacanian psychoanalysis is a kind of phenomenology of this stance, and thereby a unique perspective on our relationship to the unconcealing and concealing of Being itself. This much I show Lacan to be actively involved in and cognizant of. Lacan ought to be
understood within his Heideggerian dimensions, as I argue. Falling is the name by which I connect and explicate this bodily and metaphysical phenomenon.

Some of the other works related to mine include moral treatises that are caught up with dealing with the effects of the Enlightenment upon human teleology and the remaining demand for a systematic and binding morality or ethic. The argument goes, from MacIntyre to Stephen Mulhall in *Philosophical Myths of the Fall*, that this morality can no longer be found in the religious metanarratives that once assured them. In his analysis, Mulhall chooses three philosophers who wish to “preserve a recognizable descendent of the Christian conception of human nature that is always already averting us from the relation to truth, comprehension, and clarity…”\(^{41}\) Mulhall argues that Nietzsche, Heidegger and Wittgenstein hold a definition of human nature that includes perversity, that they do not take the divine origins of humans seriously, but that we must “learn to live with a conception of ourselves as essentially enigmatic to ourselves.”\(^{42}\) Each one therefore requires a kind of “incomprehensible redemption,” and can “incomprehensibly achieve it through a certain kind of intellectual practice that is also a spiritual practice.”\(^{43}\) Each thinker criticizes or rejects Christian faith or a theological understanding of humanity,\(^{44}\) yet each “reiterates elements of a distinctively

---


\(^{42}\) Ibid., 12.

\(^{43}\) Ibid.

\(^{44}\) I want to point out here that these characterizations of Christian faith and thought are how Mulhall articulates them, not how I do. I know things are not so simple. The question is, *whose belief?*, *whose faith?*, *whose theology?*, *whose Christianity?*, etc.
Christian structure of thought,” and this is so through the concept original sin, evidenced in concepts of fallenness and animality, for Heidegger.

Mulhall follows the dimensions of fallenness with acuity, and discovers what I will come upon in my investigation: that “Dasein’s nature is such that it bars its own way to what belongs most properly to that nature.” Yet Mulhall’s central question to what extent Heidegger’s traditionally Christian terminology, drawing as it does on the strength of Kierkegaard’s writing, can be divorced from Christian theology so easily? Where Kierkegaard comes to the radical inadequacy of the human self that requires it to anchor in an external point, namely God, Heidegger does not merely insist that the ground is internal. Rather, according to Mulhall, Heidegger moves to locating the existential possibility of my own death that draws my life up into a whole that is not finished, i.e., that is possible. But to the extent that Heidegger’s concern is to properly attune Dasein to the finitude of existence, and Kierkegaard’s is to absolutely relate to the Absolute, the two “are in fact different ways of saying exactly the same thing.”

The more one presses the real terms of Heidegger’s implicit dialogue with Kierkegaard at this pivotal point, then, the more questionable

46 Ibid., 56.
47 Ibid., 49. Cf. Ibid., 56:
But if Heidegger’s conception of Dasein’s enigmatic turning away from itself, its self-inflicted blindness to its defining capacity to own its own life, is that it is more than an error and less than a fate, then he is reiterating with remarkable faithfulness the Christian perception of human beings as at once irremediably lost and open to redemption.
48 Ibid., 59. Ibid., 60:
Hence, we must understand death in the way we understand the being whose end death is—we must grasp it existentially. We must, in other words, regard it not as an actuality but as a possibility—a possibility that we relate to, or fail to, not when we actually die but in our life.
49 Ibid., 63.
becomes the assumption that Heidegger’s words transcend, or at least distance themselves from, the orbit of Christian discourse.⁵⁰

Mulhall’s goals become clear here. Between Heidegger’s conception of humanity and animality (the analysis of this latter term is unnecessary to understand Mulhall’s claims) combined bely “a concise recounting of the Christian myth of the Fall.” Mulhall is interested in revealing Heidegger’s reliance upon Christian dogma, but only to argue that he is among three thinkers who relate a philosophical myth of the Fall in order to strip it of a transcendental signified after the demythologization of the Enlightenment, in which man attains the brilliance of his own self-sufficiency and rationality.⁵¹

Before the new rise of ethics studies situated within the anthropocene literature, animal studies, and other nonhuman ontologies,⁵² the attempt to situate the Enlightenment as the now predominant problem for thinking, morality and society – evinced in the Death of God, which is not going anywhere soon – was already classic.⁵³

⁵⁰ Ibid., 64.

⁵¹ For Mulhall, Heidegger, Nietzsche and Wittgenstein replicate the diagnosis of “an originally Christian conception” of our need for redemption, but that they detach “that conception from its companion notion of an essentially divine source of redemption…” (Ibid., 120).

⁵² One of those most consistently situated within a Heideggerian discourse is the quite wonderful, Plant-Thinking: A Philosophy of Vegetal Life, by Michael Marder.

⁵³ After the revolution sparked off by MacIntyre, the question has been how to philosophize on morality or think ethics after the serious ungrounding of the post-modern philosophies. Terry Eagleton most recently took up this banner, in Culture and the Death of God, as he tirelessly faces the barbarian hordes of the New Atheists. Also see Eagleton, Terry, Reason, Faith, and Revolution: Reflection on the God Debate (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010). In that work is where Eagleton coined the now famous summary term of the new atheist elite, Hitchkins.

Of course, Harvey Cox, of Harvard contributed infamously to secularization studies, along with Peter Berger in The Social Construction of Reality and The Sacred Canopy. But no one has gone as far as Charles Taylor’s philosophical brick, A Secular Age. Taylor, with a comprehensiveness and an attention to detail, meets the problem of the secularization and the death of God with an acuity unmatched. He also attacks the materialist presupposition that the “fact” that everything is rooted in matter necessitates that religion is a fairy tale for adult children: “This present materialism as the view of courageous adults, who are ready to resist the comforting illusions of earlier metaphysical and religious beliefs, in order to grasp
Mulhall fits into this tradition, and further adds a not-so-subtle form of Christian apologetic by insisting that these atheist thinkers are not so independent and rather rely upon Christian precepts.

While Mulhall’s analysis is astute and his summation of the falling concept accurate, it is incomplete, as is almost every reading of Heidegger’s concept of falling. Why? As I point out early on in this dissertation, the concept of falling cannot be relegated solely to the “early Heidegger,” nor abandoned solely to the vocabulary of Being and Time, as pretty much every analysis of Heidegger’s falling does.54 As we will see, Heidegger himself continues to reference and reassert the essential character of this existentiale, this fundamental human – both individual and collective, another missed point – relationship to Being. My contribution to this dialogue is to expand the concept beyond the context of Being and Time, and to take Heidegger seriously when he asserts this is the case. The experience of falling remains as, to borrow from Husserl and Merleau-Ponty, it continues to phenomenologically knit together in the body a broader thinking and civilizational context, a pre-given world of meaning in which we are immersed. That world is in part the world of metaphysics, but it is also the life-world of

---

each individual. Falling therefore contributes to the understanding of the interaction between the pre-given life-world, the status and stance of the ego/subject, and its relation to a symbolic world of metaphysics. The fall of metaphysics, therefore, can only be understood once the concept of falling is expanded into what is called “later Heidegger,” Heidegger in the midst and after his *Kehre*. Why is this?

One of the most essential aspects of Heidegger’s turn is his insistence upon and elaboration of the experience of *truth*, that truth as *aletheia* is the truth of Being and the Being of truth. I go further than any analysis thus far to explicate falling in relationship to *aletheia*, thus the revelation that un-truth is of the essence of truth. That is, I reveal falling as a testament, a speaking, primordial experience, a bringing-of-world, and a bringing-to-open the founding, persistent and necessary relationship of humans to Being. Falling is the result of the stance we take in relation to the unconcealedness and concealedness of Being, rather than a mere litmus test of authenticity and inauthenticity, as the common reading of the concept maintains. The concomitant experience of falling is humiliation.

After reading falling as the existential experience of Dasein with Being and with others—which is as far as almost all have gone in their analysis—I move on to examine falling as the phenomenological description of human engagement with the *aletheia* of Being, including the history of Being, as Heidegger connects the two. Falling is the name for the metaphysical relationship to truth; truth is the exposure of our relationship to Being. From there I move on to examine how this engagement with truth is exemplified in the mytho-poetic story of the traditional Fall narrative from Genesis. The Genesis story sheds a reciprocal mythological light upon the phenomenon of falling
and our relation to the truth of being. Read with the light of our work to that point, the Genesis narrative takes on new dimension and relevancy for the continuing philosophical engagement with myth, once myth is recovered as a “saying” that exposes the human relation to being. I take the further step to reinterpret the Death of God and Heidegger’s reading of Nietzsche through the encompassing phenomenology of falling.

Falling continually exposes the stance of human Being, especially with consideration of the consequence of humiliation. In my reading of Lacan, I understand Lacan to be explicating this experience in terms of subjectivity, and in continuity with Heidegger’s project. In the Genesis account, with Nietzsche and Lacan we find the returning of humiliation as the destitution of the subject of metaphysics, even the manic repetition of falling.

All the while I avoid relegating this most profound concept for Heidegger to theological hold-over or Heidegger’s quasi-disavowed earlier vocabulary. Heidegger prescribes merely tarrying with the questioning of Being, that is, thinking, instead of offering up some solution to the multifold problems that falling causes and reveals. The great thinkers we have discussed are guilty of rushing to conclusions, rather than thinking and dwelling in their Heideggerian definitions. Badiou and Žižek and Kristeva and their revolutionary, Marxist, or psychoanalytic counterparts (or even the new speculative realist) are seeking to overturn an production or economic system, or a Symbolic order that oppresses a Subject or suppresses our primordial split being, or allow a Subject to reconcile itself to the absence of a big Other or the abyss of his freedom, or returning thought to the nothing or to Earth or to terror, etc. Hannah
Arendt is looking for a politics. Eagleton, Taylor and Mulhall are looking for a contemporary ethics in a metaphysically groundless world.

Heidegger is radically insistent, however, upon reticence as a principle of thinking-acting, upon his refusal to remove thinking from a meditation upon being, especially after his abject failure of Nazi engagement, an attempt that he could merely ignore or try to justify by saying that any ontic political order will be ontologically errant.  

55 Heidegger's thinking is continually located within a narrative of inception, and refuses to move hastily out of that dwelling.  

My attempt is to continue such an inception and dwelling by pulling together a number of philosophical, mythological and psychoanalytic elements that seem disparate when left within their own discursive contexts. But when these elements are brought into closer relation to the question of being, they provide surprising resources.

To dwell in the inception is not to liberate us from metaphysics; nor is it to answer age-old questions regarding the substance of reality, the first causes, or the existence or non-existence of God. Nor is the purpose to find a way of setting free a subject, a self, liberating us from normative political or symbolic structures. Nor do I wish to ground or deny morality in a postmodern age of groundlessness.

Following the itinerary of falling is a meditation on humiliation in multiple forms, but also on humility. We are humiliated theoretically, psychically, philosophically, even in a civilizational way. The thinking that resists falling, however,

---

55 We find a brilliant treatment of Heidegger’s argument in Zizek’s *The Ticklish Subject*, in which Zizek claims that it is Heidegger’s recoil from a radical subjectivity and the power of the imagination that delivered him over to totalitarianism. (Zizek, Slavoj, *The Ticklish Subject* [New York: Verso Publishing, 2008], 5-57.)

remains planted, humble, in a common landscape—perhaps in the end with the foolish hope that we might find more in common than we have that divides us, by returning to what we have in common, and one of those things is represented in falling. This thinking has learned from humiliation, from the fall from a stand that was unbefitting, a stand toward truth and being and beings. Thinking, dwelling in the inception of an engagement with the question of being, has its own rewards. No goal is to be achieved but to think in fidelity to humility and piety after a long fall. This thinking opens itself up for what might want to be said.
Chapter 1: The History of Metaphysics and The History of Being

Falling reveals an essential ontological structure of Dasein itself. Far from determining its nocturnal side, it constitutes all Dasein’s days in their everydayness.\(^{57}\)

1.1 Introduction: Being and Metaphysics

In the long history of metaphysical thinking, being and beings have shared an uncriticized relation (in the Kantian sense of critique). This relation moreover resembles a confused conflation by which the qualities of beings are attributed to being as such. Heidegger discerns in this a fateful determination. These confluences play out through various historical “epochs” of metaphysics. Broadly defined, these epochs exist as the Greek, the Roman, the medieval, the Renaissance, the modern, and the most recent epoch of En-framing (Gestell). These epochs are conceptualized under various philosophical terminologies in which Being is rendered, according to Heidegger, as φύσις, λόγος, *Ev, ἡδέα, ενέργεια, Substantality, Objectivity, Subjectivity, the Will, the Will to Power, the Will to Will."\(^{58}\) These modalities or definitions of Being, however, are always merely variations of imposing upon Being the qualities and modalities of beings themselves, such that Being is variously the manifestation or existence of all

---


beings as a whole and as such; or it is represented as the Highest Being, ineffable, outside-of yet the *causa* of all and every being.

As the history of these epochs of Being progress, one feature increasingly stands out and unifies all of the other modes. That quality is the quality of *presence*. Being is increasingly conflated with the presence of beings, while beings reciprocally are determined by their presencing and potential for presence. When Being is rendered, for example, in terms of subjectivity, Being is that which enables beings to come before the “I” as objects of intuition and representation. Following Kantian lines, these objects are objects of possible experience within the *a priori* condition of space and time. Beings are then experienced *qua* object as—following the etymology of the word itself—that which stands against and before my sensory intuition, and they are furthermore *subject* to my representation in terms of understanding and willing. I understand the object of intuition in order, furthermore, to *make use of it*. Thus, when Being is rendered as Will or as Will to Power, Being itself is seen as both the possibility for the ground of my experience at the same time as it is *employable* as a means of affecting objects and my environment. I will unpack all of these relations in due course.

Increasingly, only those objects which are, can be or will be present to my intuition, willing or representing *count* as beings at all. Moreover, to the extent that Being is submitted in my conceptualization as what *is* present—if, that is, it is thought or considered at all—the more I set upon beings to fulfill my desires, projects, goals, and correspondingly, the more Being as such slips away into what Heidegger calls oblivion, forgottenness (*Vergessenheit*), or abandonment. Beings are thereby victims of our plans—bringing along an inevitable *reaction* to such activities, however—and
submitted ever more intensely to projects of presencing; their own being is removed or augmented, harnessed or even driven into nothing as it faces the challenge of human willing.

The Being of beings, in this trajectory, is increasingly driven out of what beings are in themselves and into the presencing machination or imprisoning by humanity on a large scale. The peak of these epochs is what Heidegger calls the “essence of technology,” which, he insists, is nothing technological. Within this epoch in which we find ourselves today, beings are reduced in their being to nothing but “standing reserve” (Bestand). Beings—including the human being, as “human resources”—are subjected to an endless process of counting, measuring and ordering into standard placement, presentation, and seriality. Thereby, they are set up into “standing reserve” to be housed indefinitely, stored, to await and to be called upon and challenged forth to provide energy, mobility, use, enjoyment, etc. The river is a body of water to be damned up or fished in, as, for example, in tourism or industry; the sun is a reserve of energy to be captured in solar panels, stored in batteries and released for the products and cities of human beings; the wind must be captured with windmills for the same reason. All of this must be done because it can be done.

In this, all beings present and possibly present are submitted to, for lack of a better word, the faculties and activities of human presencing. To the extent that the history of metaphysics is part and parcel of these developments, culminating in the essence of technology, human behavior, sociality and knowledge are conditioned by an ever-increasing drive or will toward presence, when it comes to being and the being of
beings. For the being of beings *is* such that beings are ultimately and illimitably
presenced to human knowledge and ends.

This entire process, condition and history is subsumed into Heidegger’s concept
of *falling*, *Verfallenheit*, which serves as an indication for the direction of thinking that
has yet to be truly analyzed and elucidated.

### 1.2 Falling Persists Through Heidegger’s Thinking

Is it Being’s fault that Being is so confused, and is it the fault of the word
that it remains so empty, or is it our fault, because in all our bustling and
chasing after beings, we have nevertheless fallen out of Being? What if
the fault is not our own, we of today, nor that of our immediate or most
distant forebears, but rather is based in a happening that runs through
Western history from the inception onward, a happening that the eyes of
all historians will never reach, but which nevertheless happens –
formerly, today, and in the future? What if it were possible that human
beings, that people in their greatest machinations and exploits, have a
relation to beings but have long since *fallen* out of Being, without
knowing it, and what if this were the innermost and most powerful
ground of their *decline*? [Cf. *Being and Time*, §38, especially pp. 179 f.]

The bracketed citation quoted at the end of this passage, included by Heidegger
in this 1953 German reissue of his lecture series entitled, “Introduction to Metaphysics,”
comes twenty-five years after *Being and Time* sent shockwaves from the German
philosophical scene. This 1953 parenthetical addition directs the reader back to the
passage in *Being and Time* in which Heidegger introduces the existential-
phenomenological concepts of *falling* and *thrownness*.

It is well known that in the event of what is called his *Kehre*, or turn, Heidegger
abandoned much of the language and terminology that he forged in his 1927 *Being and

---

Even in the lecture above, presented at Freiburg in 1935, Heidegger explicitly distances his project from that of contemporary philosophy, specifically ontology, by disavowing the term itself which had previously named his work: “Two modes of questioning [ontology and thinking] which, as is only now becoming clearer, are worlds apart, should not bear the same name.”

Furthermore, we know from Heidegger’s continuous assertion that the singular, foundational question of being was the one guiding thread and unifying theme of his oeuvre from *Being and Time* onward. For example, ten years after *Being and Time* hit the philosophical scene and inaugurated the widespread popularity and the new moment in the field of phenomenology, Heidegger confirmed in his private writings that he was still on the same path of thinking that issued therefrom:

The question concerning the ‘meaning’ [of being], i.e., in accordance with the elucidation in *Being and Time*, the question concerning grounding the domain of projecting-open—and, then, the question of the truth of be-ing—is and remains my question, and is my one and only question; for this question concerns what is most sole and unique. In the age of total lack of questioning anything, it is sufficient as a start to inquire into the question of all questions.

According to Heidegger, the sheer compulsion of, repetition of, and inquiry into this one question required him to always renegotiate the very form and means by which the

---

60 Though the most important terms of *Being and Time*, and thereafter (ontic/ontological, existential/existentiell, (non)thetic/(non)thematized, phenomenology, etc., i.e., the words intimately interwoven into the fabric of established and traditional philosophical discourse) were mostly stricken from much of their public use, it is clear that the distinctions persist in the background and within certain academic settings where the vocabulary had already become tradition itself. Regardless, the terms persisted as a certain inner vocabulary, a machinery undergirding Heidegger’s patent thinking that he had recourse to particularly in discussions with those who were more familiar with *Being and Time* than his later, simpler discourse.

61 Ibid., 44.

question itself was asked. His discourse, which in appearance changed drastically after his so-called *Kehre*, was always captured by and rotating around this “most sole and unique” question of Being.  

In light of all this, it must strike us as quite remarkable, even twenty-five years after the “purification” of his language commenced, following the singular necessity of the matter of Being, that we should run across an explicit recollection of a term that by so many rights ought to have been among the first of the many which Heidegger conscientiously disavowed. This word is our own guiding thread: *falling*. That Heidegger would still be invoking this term twenty-five years (and well beyond) after *Being and Time* must strike us as somewhat remarkable.

We get the sense, then, that this falling is no mere trifle for Heidegger, not some minor, incidental term to be discarded, overcome and forgotten. Borrowing from Heidegger’s own terms, there is something *essential* yet unthought and unspoken in this concept, in relation to Heidegger’s project and beyond it. How does falling fit into his problematic, as Heidegger introduces it in *Being and Time*? How is it referenced explicitly as a pertinent theme in the later part of his career? What is falling, and how and why does the concept make its way through the course of Heidegger’s investigation into the preeminent philosophical question of Being? What insight might we gain by following this trail?

---

63 We also note here the curious phrase, “the age of the total lack of questioning anything” as more than a mere accidental remark. In *Contributions (Beiträge)* and elsewhere, it is borne out that questioning is the “piety of thought” (Heidegger, Martin, *The Question Concerning Technology, and Other Essays*, trans. William Lovitt. New York: Harper & Row, 1977), 35), something, then, more like a disposition, an attunement and comportment, rather than a methodology, by which an absolute *humilitas* conditions the process of thinking. Humility and falling are co-belonging terms, as I will show in time.
Though the details will become clearer as my investigation proceeds, nevertheless, being is Heidegger’s endless impetus for thought. His project is to approach the as yet un-thought (his own word) question of the meaning, and then the truth, of being. This truth has a unique nature, as being is not a being and cannot be reduced or added to beings as a predicate. Furthermore, concerning the truth of being, this truth possesses a nature that more originally fits the Greek *aletheia*, which Heidegger translates as *unconcealment*, or *Unverborgenheit*. This *unconcealment* of being was impressed upon some of the earliest Western thinkers, but early on was lost just as much as the question of being itself, *as the* question of being. Rather, the historical metaphysical-philosophical tradition, i.e., the history of the West’s predominant form of thinking, concerned itself first and foremost with *beings*, without ever giving consideration to Being as such unless it was as the being of beings, or the beingness of beings, i.e., the *presence* of beings, rendered in various ways. As a result, the West has forgotten being altogether, and being has slipped into forgottenness or oblivion. Consequently, the Western metaphysical thinking enacts itself in a *way of* being that cannot consider itself fundamentally within its oblivion, and retains a thoughtlessness with which it projects onto beings many preconceived systems, ideas and goals. This thinking has conditioned metaphysical humanity; Western thinking has fallen away from being at the same time it has fallen upon beings in various modes of attack, use, production, ordering, etc. The concept of *falling* is the summary concept of this entire experience.

The history of metaphysics is conditioned by falling. I will continuously lay the details of this experience bare before I turn to applying this concept outside of a
Heideggerian domain, to the Fall of Genesis and, later, to Lacanian psychoanalysis, in order to apply and examine its efficacy.

Heidegger also associates this situation of “falling” parallel to the “oblivion of Being,” and gives the title “metaphysics” to the twenty centuries of Western thinking and being that are implicated in this oblivion. The traditional formulations of Western philosophy, as much as our everyday speech, were and remain inadequate—even unfaithful—to the question and truth of Being. Thus, even from the beginning, a destruction was necessary in order to grow capable of merely asking into the meaning of the question of Being. Let us recount Being and Time’s well-known preface, which begins with a quote from Plato’s Sophist:

‘For manifestly you have long been aware of what you mean when you use the expression “being”. We, however, who used to think we understood it, have now become perplexed.’

Do we in our time have an answer to the question of what we really mean by the word ‘being’? Not at all. So it is fitting that we should raise anew the question of the meaning of Being. But are we nowadays even perplexed at our inability to understand the expression ‘Being’? Not at all. So first of all we must reawaken an understanding for the meaning of the question. Our aim in the following treatise is to work out the question of the meaning of Being and to do so concretely. Our provisional aim is the Interpretation of time as the possible horizon for any understanding whatsoever of Being.66

Before anything else it is not the question of Being itself which must be asked into, but rather we must “reawaken an understanding for the meaning of the question.” According to Heidegger, we are already too removed from the possible meaning of the question itself, let alone any answer that might be given. The first task is therefore to raise a questioning of our lack of questioning of the meaning of Being. In this early stage of his

66 Heidegger, Martin, Being and Time, H1, p. 19.
existential analytic, Heidegger identifies the three related ways that the question itself is dismissed, both tacitly and expressly. Some assume that the question is “superfluous” because “[i]t is said that ‘Being’ is the most universal and the emptiest of concepts.” Thus it is considered 1) “indefinable.” If that were not enough, the definition of the concept is also 2) self-evident, and 3) the most universal, “for everyone uses it constantly and already understands what he means by it.” For Heidegger, however, every dismissal is a confession of our carelessness in the face of the question of the meaning of Being itself, which announces a call to re-attune ourselves into openness to the questioning; the way he pivots around the third “presupposition” is the first introduction to his process of Destruktion that will be elaborated further along.

1.3 Destruction and Recollection of the question of the meaning of being

This Destruktion – de-structuring – undertook to “loosen up” the “hardened tradition” within which the question of Being was hidden and ignored for two millennia, according to Heidegger, to “dissolve” the “concealments” of this tradition, in order to lay bare again this singular and destinal question of Being. Heidegger hopes, then, to discover the “birth certificate” of the “basic ontological concepts.” This destruction, therefore, is more of a recovery effort. As such, this destruction is far from having the negative sense of shaking off the ontological tradition. We must, on the contrary, stake out the positive possibilities of that tradition, and this always means keeping it within its limits…But to bury the past in nullity is not the purpose of this destruction; its aim is positive…The destruction of the history of ontology is essentially bound

---

65 Ibid., H2, p. 22.
66 Ibid.
67 Heidegger, Martin, Being and Time, H22
up with the way the question of Being is formulated...we can carry out this destruction only with regard to stages of that history which are in principle decisive.\footnote{Ibid.}

These early formulations of method preliminarily express Heidegger’s felt necessity that the form of the question, including the terminology, the very language and mode used in the questioning, is an injustice to the matter under discussion.

The “decisive” historical-philosophical points of such formulations of the question will be worked out throughout Heidegger’s work, and will become the signposts and guiding strains that mark and maintain the univocity of the question, even in its very concealment. From an aerial view, Heidegger marks out epochs of this theater of Being and the thinking that engages it or fails to take up the question: the pre-Socratics, the Greeks, the Romans, the Middle Ages, into modernity and into our more recent times, variously described as the “disempowering of the spirit” and the demonic,\footnote{Heidegger, Martin, \textit{Introduction of Metaphysics}, 49.} the era of the total lack of questioning, and the end of metaphysics.\footnote{Cf. Heidegger, Martin, \textit{Contributions}, §4, p. 8.} These decisive moments and their formulations are also signified by several proper names: Parmenides, Heraclitus, Anaximander; Plato and Aristotle; Augustine and Aquinas; Descartes, Kant, Leibniz; Hegel and Nietzsche; Kierkegaard and Hölderlin.

These names and eras, along with the preeminence of the quest for Being (and with it the ubiquity of beings), are the only consistent terms that populate Heidegger’s work from beginning to end. So much of the otherwise ubiquitous modern philosophical language in which Heidegger embedded his earliest discourse underwent its own
destruction so as to be rendered mostly absent in his later work after his so-called turn. Indeed surprisingly, Heidegger himself abandoned many of the terms and much of the language by which his work is characterized and understood even to this day. We have already seen one such example in “ontology.”

This historicality of Dasein’s existence will be a trope that continues to open up an entirely new formulation of history itself for Heidegger. In his seminal, private work (a point that should not be ignored), Contributions to Philosophy (From Ereignis), from the section on the “last god,” Heidegger begins with a note on the being of the last:

The last is that which not only needs the longest fore-runnership but also itself is: not the ceasing, but the deepest beginning, which reaches out the furthest and catches up with itself with the greatest of difficulty. Therefore, the “last” withdraws from all calculation and therefore must be able to bear the burden of the loudest and most frequent misinterpretation.71

And again, five years later, he assert in his lecture course on Parmenides that the beginning is not lost somewhere in the past but “lies in advance of what is to come.”72 From these passages arise one of Heidegger’s many reversals of our common everyday notions that the beginning is long past, even lost. Instead, whether it be in the life of an individual or the inception of Western civilization, the future is always running behind and up to the beginning, is always led by it and drawing it forward.

This explication of Dasein’s historicity and temporality helps develop for us a sense of how the scope of the history of Western metaphysics that Heidegger is ever at pains to elucidate and overcome is interwoven and codeterminative of the kinds of

---

71 Ibid., §253, p. 285.

beings that we ourselves are. It is simultaneously why this history cannot be simply left behind, laid to rest, or forgotten, that is, overcome in any way that resembles how an opinion is overcome. In fact, even the forgottenness of being and the question of being, which predominates and conditions the history of metaphysics, are an *Ereignis* in and of themselves.73 This is why the “overcoming” that Heidegger speaks of during and after his so-called *Kehre*, first announced in the *Destruktion of Being and Time*, is the overcoming that is an “incorporation,”74 or a “perduring thinking.”75

Before turning to this truth of metaphysics, of what is revealed therein, in order to further think what this truth of metaphysics means, and to begin the transition into the opening for which it is significant for us, let us consider the etymological sense of the word Heidegger sometimes uses for “overcoming.”

### 1.4 The Meaning of Overcoming Metaphysics

Rather than the traditional word used for “overcoming,” “*Überwindung*,” Heidegger in his public writings often uses the word “*Verwindung*.”76 By this choice Heidegger means to differentiate the latter term from the metaphysical implications of the former. “*Überwindung*” possess the metaphysical associations of Nietzsche’s thinking

---


75 Cf. Ibid., 91-92: *Destruktion* is a “remembrance [that] experiences the unique Appropriating of the expropriating of beings, in which the need of the truth of Being, and thus the origination of truth, opens up and radiates upon human being in the manner of a parting. Overcoming is the delivering over of metaphysics to its truth.”

76 Apart from being confirmed by Heidegger on numerous occasions, as a matter of principle, the emphasis of this second sense of the English word “overcoming” is confirmed by Joan Stambaugh in her translation of “Overcoming Metaphysics,” in *The End of Philosophy*. See her footnote 1 on page 84.
of the “will to power,” and even more, of a severing and a leaving behind, that is, a spatio-temoral abandonment. Here the German prefix “über” insinuates the elevation over, beyond, or the superiority of what is overcoming to what is being overcome, and is even translated by the Greek as “meta-“. Heidegger’s project, however, is one of recovery, and this is the motivation and context that guides him in separating the coterminous epochs of the history of metaphysics and the history of the “truth of being”: to “bring metaphysics back within its own limits . . . This only: neither a destruction nor even a denial of metaphysics. To intend anything else would be childish presumption and a demeaning of history.” Thus we can never understand the delineation of the previous epoch from the onset of a new beginning as a mere juxtaposing the two against one another, nor accepting and serving the latter at the expense of the former. Rather, the first epoch has played itself out, shown its hand, and asked its last serious question with Nietzsche’s madman (and madness). If we continue to address the meaning of the word Verwindung over against that of Überwindung, we will shed light upon how this overall overcoming is characterized.

77 Cf. Ibid., 95: “With Nietzsche’s metaphysics, philosophy is completed. That means: It has gone through the sphere of prefigured possibilities.”

78 Heidegger, Martin, “A Dialogue on Language,” from On the Way to Language, trans. Peter Hertz (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1982), 20. It remains shocking that some of the most respected scholars today still characterize Heidegger’s overcoming as a replacement of the old metaphysics with the new, an overcoming of an “inferior” thinking with a “superior” form. In doing a good thing in a bad way, Peter Eli Gordon is attempting to establish the historical and ideational precedent of an “overcoming” philosophizing that characterizes many a German thinker, in order to further situate Hans Rosenzweig within the legitimacy of this precedence; however, in the process Gordon characterizes Heidegger in a white-washing way that demonstrates the overall misapprehension and tenor of his project: “The history of German philosophy in particular proffers a rich succession of thinkers who announced both the demise of metaphysics and the beginning of a new, superior philosophy (for example, Kant’s “Copernican Revolution,” Hegel’s knowledge at “dusk,” and Nietzsche’s “death of God”) . . . A revolutionary conception of philosophy is one of the broadest points that Rosenzweig and Heidegger shared in common.” (Gordon, Peter Eli, Rosenzweig and Heidegger: Between Judaism and German Philosophy [Berkley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2005], 137)
Most importantly, *Verwindung* has at least two essential advantages over *Überwindung*. First is the sense that Vattimo points out in his essay, “*Verwindung*” Nihilism and the Postmodern in Philosophy”: “eine Krankheit verwinden” means convalescence, to cure or to heal. Thus the palliative idea that what is ill, what is out-of-balance, can be healed or harmonized. Heidegger makes this intonation explicit:

The unfit belongs to what respectively presences…In the presencing of what presences lies duration as persisting in permanence….Giving what is fit to being, every being mutually acknowledges every other . . . Giving what is fit and granting mutual acknowledgment—that is in itself overcoming [*Verwindung*] the unfit. We do not say subduing [*Überwindung*] because that could mean the unfit would be eliminated. Indeed, the unfit belong to the essence of presencing as non-essence.\(^79\)

Thus the “overcoming” of metaphysics is meant to include a healing of what has been imbalanced and unfit, but more specifically, this overcoming is be-fitting (or, as certain translators translate “*Ereignis*,” as en-owning, giving over to ownership and being of the other): “Giving what is fit and granting mutual acknowledgement—that is in itself overcoming the unfit.” Clearly, what is unfit is us. From his earlier language, we would speak here of *comportment*: it is our *comportment* toward things that itself is unfit and must be made (be)fitting, and we give what is fitting by “granting mutual acknowledgement.” Against Kant’s metaphysical doctrine, in the overcoming that is a becoming fit and be-fitting, we no longer allow ourselves to posit things before our consciousness, to accomplish the awareness and understanding of a subjective representation of a perception to consciousness. Rather, we are to behold, to think-thank, to meditatively think, to dwell. Hence, in “The Origin of the Work of Art,” Heidegger states, “In order to discover the nature of the art that really prevails in the

work, let us go to the actual work and ask the work *what and how it is.*

Earlier on, Heidegger links the question of what and how a being is with the essence of truth and the essence of freedom, of letting beings be qua an “engagement [that] withdraws in the face of beings in order that they might reveal themselves with respect to what and how they are . . .” Later on, when Heidegger begins his approach to “things,” he will say that “Thoughtfully remembering in this way, we allow the worlding essence of the thing to concernfully approach us . . . we protect the essence of the thing in the region from where it essences.”

Already, based upon these observations, we ought to find ourselves baffled at every charge that is launched against Heidegger insisting that he lacks an “ethic,” while at the same time noting his own objection to the term. Yet his objection seeks to guard against the *thoughtless* association of his thinking with metaphysics. Furthermore, we see in this brief note that Heidegger’s “ethic” is as radical as his historic-philosophical project. Still further, as a result of this, it should dawn on us that Levinas is not so un-Heideggerian as he would like to think. If anything, Levinas posits an extremity of the

---


83 Heidegger, Martin, “Letter on ‘Humanism’,” from *Pathmarks*, 271: If the name “ethics,” in keeping with the basic meaning of the word *ethos*, should now say that ethics ponders the abode of the human being, then that thinking which thinks the truth of being as the primordial element of the human being, as one who eksists, is in itself originary ethics.
same ethic, a self-annihilative ethic that lets every being be at the expense and
overwhelming, substitution, or flooding of my own being.\(^\text{84}\)

To take this reflection upon the sense of be-fitting into its more common
connotations, that of health and appropriateness, the overcoming of the convalescent of
his unfitness must always be seen as an incorporation of the illness into his newfound
strength. The illness helps compose the healing to wellness, and like the day and night
of Heraclitus, neither is separate from the other; illness is carried up into wellness, and
vice versa, one gives itself to other in the other’s becoming. We are reminded of the
convalescent Nietzsche who was, perhaps unawares, standing already at the door of
madness when he penned these words: “For a typically healthy person, conversely,
being sick can even become an energetic stimulus for life, for living more.”\(^\text{85}\)

The second advantage of the term \textit{Verwindung} even further emphasizes this
sense. The root of the word, “winden,” means “to wind,” “to bind” or “to twist” together.
The prefix “-ver” adds the emphasis “to do or to become” what the stem refers to.
Therefore, the \textit{Verwindung} of metaphysics means, for Heidegger, to tie up, to bind, thus
to heal the wound of metaphysics into a new health, fullness, and completion. Thus
Heidegger can say that the \textit{Verwindung} of the essence of technology, \textit{Ge-stell}—the

\(^{84}\) Cf. Lévinas, Emmanuel, \textit{Otherwise Than Being: or Beyond Essence}, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh:
Duquesne University Press, 2008), 116. In \textit{Otherwise Than Being}, Levinas, for example, articulates this
“unconditionality of a subject, which does not have the status of a principle”:
The self is a \textit{sub-jectum}; it is under the weight of the universe, responsible for everything . . . . To
be without a choice can seem to be violence only to an abusive or hasty and imprudent reflection
. . . . It is the setting up of a being that is not for itself, but is for all, is both being and
disinterestedness. The for itself signifies self-consciousness; the for all, responsibility for the
others, support of the universe. Responsibility for the other, this way of answering without a
prior commitment, is human fraternity itself, and it is prior to freedom. (116)

\(^{85}\) Nietzsche, Friedrich Wilhelm, “Ecce Homo,” from \textit{Basic Writings of Nietzsche}, trans. Walter Kaufmann
calling-forth, gathering and ordering of beings in order to reveal—is not a leaving behind of the historical development of this epoch, but rather a recovery and appropriation of this essence “from its domination back to servitude.”

These two features of Heidegger’s sense of overcoming—healing and binding—combine in his methodology. In order to overcome the history of metaphysics, to be healed of the metaphysical wound (falling) within the nature of the human and its history, the human itself must be reconciled to this self-same history by letting it come into its “ownmost,” and that means let it occur and come to the fullness of its being in the human. At the same time, the human must be further knit into this history so that its truth may come to reveal itself. Heidegger’s recovery of the thinking of Western metaphysics—the thinking of the truth of beings as such and as a whole—is a drawing into the intimacy of this originary decision that was already woven into the fabric of Western thinking by Plato and Aristotle’s time, and is exemplified in their philosophy. The leap into the other beginning occurs only through a radical appropriation of the thinking of the truth of beings that has been inscribed into the history of philosophy. As cited earlier, this is the overcoming that delivers metaphysics over to its truth, understood as aletheia. This overcoming is simultaneously the transformation of man from the rational animale of metaphysics, from the first beginning, into the other beginning of the truth of being where man takes up his Da-sein, the thereness and hereness of his being, and, to borrow from the heart of Nietzsche “What does your

---


87 This ownmost is revealed in the accomplishment of the “end of metaphysics,” and brought to its highest revelation in the unfolding “essence of technology.”
conscience say?—“You should become the person you are”.\textsuperscript{88} As we have already seen in outline, the destiny of man is conditioned by the history of Western metaphysics, and the culmination of that destiny such as it has been determined so far by man’s decisive \textit{Ereignis} is experienced in the essence of technology, and we will see more of what this means as we move ahead. This destiny is man’s self-determination, his self-understanding, and his existential comportment to his world.

What of this originary decision that reached all the way ahead of the first beginning that it now brings along and delivers to its conclusion? Early on Heidegger characterizes it under the term “ontological difference,” and later just becomes the difference, that is, the difference between being and beings.

Much of Heidegger’s process of recovery then falls upon genealogical philosophical lines, as he is at pains not only to identify a long-forgotten debate situated among the earliest philosophers, thinkers and poets—and yet this must often be pieced together with only “fragments” of their thinking—but also the consequences of this battle’s historical track.

\textbf{1.5 The Preface to Falling in \textit{Being and Time}}

Falling enters Heidegger’s discourse in \textit{Being and Time} not as an isolated or uncritical ideologeme or theologeme, but as the summation concept of a complex of \textit{existentiales} of the state of Dasein’s Being. Falling is the existential-ontological condition of human being, as Dasein, in its everydayness. Before arriving at falling proper,

however, in order to situate it, we must contextualize the phenomenological-existential-ontological apparatus of *Being and Time*.

Like the meditation within all of his subsequent work, we have already seen that *Being and Time* begins with the question of the meaning of Being and its forgottenness. “This question has today been forgotten.”\(^89\) Positively, *Being and Time* is a recovery effort, an existential analysis of the question of the meaning of Being; it investigates the question of Being, phenomenologically speaking, from the only vantage point that we can question it: as the beings themselves that ask into their own Being. Dasein (literally t/here-being, but historically translated inappropriately as “existence”)\(^90\) is the name that Heidegger gives to the being whose Being in each case is my own.\(^91\) That is, Dasein takes its own Being into its care (*Sorge*).\(^92\) Being is our singular question, “the fundamental question.”

But in order to ask the question we must first consider the nature of questioning itself: “Every seeking gets guided beforehand by what is sought. Inquiry is a cognizant seeking for an entity both with regard to the fact that it is and with regard to its Being

---


\(^90\) Heidegger, Martin. “Introduction to ‘What is Metaphysics?’,” from *Pathmarks*, 283:

‘Dasein’ names that which is first of all to be experienced, and subsequently thought accordingly, as a place – namely, as the locality of the truth of Being.” This note is added to the 1949 edition: “Inadequately said: the locality dwelt in by mortals, the mortal region of the locality.

\(^91\) Heidegger, Martin, *Being and Time*, H41-42, p. 67-68:

We are ourselves the entities to be analysed. The Being of any such entity is in each case mine. These entities, in their Being, comport themselves toward their Being. As entities with such Being, they are delivered over to their own Being. *Being* is that which is an issue for every such entity… The *essence* of Dasein lies in its existence… Because Dasein has in each case mineness, one must always use a personal pronoun when one addresses: ‘I am’, ‘you are’.”

\(^92\) Ibid., H57, p. 83-84.
as it is.”\textsuperscript{93} Such investigating has a threefold structure. First, there is “that which is asked about”; secondly, there is always a questioning of something, “that which is interrogated”; thirdly, there is “that which is to be found out by the asking,” the answer or object of questioning.\textsuperscript{94} If the meaning of Being is to be formulated along these lines, then the inquiry is “guided beforehand” by what is sought, that is, guided somehow, by Being itself; therefore, “the meaning of Being must already be available to us in some way.” This “in some way” is precisely the difficulty. That Dasein, the being that has its Being here and there (Da), that is (Sein) here and there, that takes up its Being as an issue for itself, under its care, and investigates therein, gives clear indication that an “\textit{understanding of Being is itself a definite characteristic of Dasein’s Being}. Dasein is ontically distinctive in that it is ontological.”\textsuperscript{95}

At this point, Heidegger is employing a number of complicated distinctions in order appropriately to guide the procedure of an investigation into the difficulties that arise from this situation. If Dasein – Being here/there – possesses an “understanding of Being” in its pre-understanding of care (Sorge) – and it is now apparent that, “in some way,” it does – it remains a question as to how Dasein possesses such an understanding. To what extent is this understanding explicit, “conscious,”\textsuperscript{96} thematized, or known at

\textsuperscript{93} Ibid., H5, p. 24.
\textsuperscript{94} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{95} Ibid., H12, p. 32. Italics in original.
\textsuperscript{96} The reason we place “consciousness” here in quotation marks is to mark the provisional and conjectural nature of such a term, and the theoretical and scientific complex from which it derives – from the ontological standpoint, which cannot begin its investigations from such presuppositional terms. Consciousness already implies the subjectivist split between the ego, the I, of a subject, and the objects which stand opposed to him/her, are presented before him/her, or represented within his consciousness – or unconsciousness for that matter. The existential-analytic seeks to dive into a more primordial sense of the being of the individual that is prior to these theoretical and scientific distinctions.
all? After all, Heidegger begins his masterwork with the question, “Do we in our time have an answer to the question of what we really mean by the word ‘being’? Not at all.”

A pause is necessary here to point out that it is right at this point that Heidegger’s most decisive distinction makes its entry, the implications and vocabulary of which we will be explicating throughout this work. The distinction that Heidegger opens up to view, with painstaking, relentless, ingenious effort, will come to be known as the “ontological difference,” i.e., the (ultimately problematic, existentially and philosophically speaking) difference between Being and beings. Later on, one way of formulating the Difference will be in this way: “When we say ‘beings are,’ we distinguish each time between beings and their being, without noticing this distinction at all . . . we say ‘being’ and really mean beings.”

From the beginning and always, Heidegger’s ontological investigations insist upon a more basic, anterior nature than those pre-constructed and ontologically weighted terminologies that derive from and for the sake of a modern, subjectivist, objective, scientific, etc. understanding of the question of Being. In each of these forms of investigation a number of decisions have already been made as to the question of Being, answers have been constructed that address the Being of man and beings from an a priori conclusion of Being itself. My own investigation, as it proceeds, will be highlighting these presuppositions with regard to Being and the vernaculars that derive from them; in short, we are speaking of the language of metaphysics, the contours of which will continually be elucidated and examined.

Lacan gives us the psychoanalytic description of Heidegger’s falling and dispersal into das Mann. But whereas Heidegger places this within an existential relation of Dasein with other Daseins, Lacan locates this fall within infantile subjectivization, at the ‘mirror stage’. The fall is a scientific, even an ontological, rather than an existentialist discovery. Lacan makes this point very explicitly: The fact is that they encountered that existential negativity whose reality is so vigorously proclaimed by the contemporary philosophy of being and nothingness. / Unfortunately, this philosophy grasps that negativity only within the limits of a self-sufficiency of consciousness, which, being on of its premises, ties the illusion of autonomy in which it puts its faith to the ego’s constitutive misrecognitions.


Ibid., H1, 22.

Heidegger, Martin. Basic Concepts, 22-23. Also see, Heidegger, Martin. “The Onto-Theological Constitution of Metaphysics,” from Identity and Difference, 63:
Balancing upon the hints of this distinction from the very beginning, Heidegger’s initial vocabulary here in *Being and Time* is located and discernable within the traditionally philosophical purview at the same time that it inaugurates the thinking that will come to condition existentialism throughout the twentieth century, along with Heidegger’s “later period” after his *Kehre*. As a result, the ontological difference is variously rendered and explored. Thus, even here Heidegger is enacting a double movement of philosophizing that will characterize his entire oeuvre, a simultaneously convergent and divergent process, a backwards and forwards glancing.

The Difference (a difference that is not an exclusion of sameness, contrary to many prejudiced readings of Heidegger, including Lauruelle’s) is the name given for the problem for the Being of Dasein that *has* Being (at one point called the “lieutenant of being”—the placeholder of being) at the same time that it takes up its Being as an issue for itself, its own and as Being in and of itself (to the extent that such an endeavor is possible, i.e., given to the possibility of Dasein). On one hand, Heidegger works in fidelity to and generously with the Western philosophical tradition (qualified as metaphysics); on the other hand, Heidegger is opening up a ground for the possibility of the leap that will overcome this tradition.

Perhaps the most difficult thing in elaborating this difference is to hold together its *sameness* at the same time, a point that Heidegger is always trying to formulate: in

---

This passage presages what we will discover later when the truth of being is related to *freedom*, not simply the caprice of an individual or her/his self-willing, but freedom understood still differently. It is important to note here that the matter of thinking, the difference, goes unquestioned as a matter of thinking, and is so under the auspices of the freedom of thinking to think upon it or not to. This harkens back to what we have already seen in the freedom of Dasein to take up its Being into its concern, and to choose its possibilities rather than to fall into them.
this instance, to elaborate the Difference at the same time as elucidating its
codetermining reciprocality – a reciprocal en-lightening of this dual question between
being and beings – with the historical discursive situation from which it was put into
language and debate.

This will be the difficulty of our proceedings, too, to see the reciprocal nature of
the metaphysical way of determining Being and beings, and the history that derives
from and reciprocally co-conditions the ideational (thinking) situation. It is along this
Difference that every binary reveals itself within the fissure of metaphysics. For our
purposes later on, this is where presence and absence receive their metaphysical
determination, therefore, as what is “real” and “not real,” along with any number of
other distinctions. By way of the metaphysical distinction between presence and
absence—so goes the gods and the divine, evinced in the “death of god.” Furthermore,
we find the situation into which falling takes its stand as the constitutive ontological
situation of Dasein’s comportment to the problematic of the ontological difference
between being and beings.

The Difference offers the ultimate paradox and problematic for Dasein’s inquiry
into Being—indeed, existentially speaking, it is the paradox and problematic of Dasein’s
existence. Later, Ereignis, event of appropriation, en-owning or just event, will take up
the representation of this Difference. Dasein must take up this problem, and decide upon
it, and thereby be decided; the manner in which it does so determines the possibility of

---

Heidegger, Martin. “Nietzsche’s Word ‘God is Dead’,” from Off the Beaten Track, 188:
It remains hidden in what way the essence of man is determined on the bases of the essence of
being” And again, we see the indication of some kind of determining of beings based upon the
metaphysical comportment toward being: “metaphysics is thought as the truth of beings as such
in their entirety, not as the doctrine of a thinker. In each instance, a thinker has his fundamental
philosophical position within metaphysics…The destiny of being makes its way over beings in
abrupt epochs of truth.
its existence, and perhaps its very Being.\(^{100}\) Let us continue to unpack this issue by reading the thematic distinctions by which Heidegger opens up his terrain—the terrain that \(is\) human existence, its Being, and the language which lays it bare. This terrain is the opening that is and opens up the Being of the human.

Though Being pervades all that \(is\), and nothing is without it, it is not immediately given to thematic or sensual investigation. The arrival at Being as a subject matter of inquiry, of elucidation, requires a peculiar method. This is Heidegger’s first and last contribution, but the peculiarity and singularity of this method will only grow more pronounced and simple from the initial foray of *Being and Time*. In truth, Being is and is not immediately evident; it is rather difficult to ascertain in its very ubiquity and its easily misinterpreted presencing. In other words, though all beings *are* by virtue of Being, Being is not to be located within them, or to be confused for a being.\(^{101}\) The difficulty stems from the fact that the being of beings is defined by a particular approach to beings themselves and being itself (as forgotten, oblivious), and in fact has gone through beings in a certain way to arrive at a definition and determined experience of Being. This is why Heidegger’s method is self-described as a consistent and “erring”

\(^{100}\) Cf. Heidegger, Martin. *Nietzsche: Vols. 3 and 4* (*Vol. 3: The Will to Power as Knowledge and as Metaphysics; Vol. 4: Nihilism*), trans. David Farrell Krell (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1991), 218: *Being bestows itself by betaking itself into its unconcealment—and only in this way is It Being—along with the locale of its advent as the abode of its default.* This “where,” as the “there” of the shelter, belongs to Being itself, “is” Being itself and is therefore called *being-there* [Da-sein]. . . “The *Dasein* in man” is the essence that belongs to Being itself. Man belongs to that essence in such a way that he has to be such Being. *Da-Sein* applies to man. As his essence, is in each case his artifact.

\(^{101}\) Heidegger, Martin. *Introduction to Metaphysics*, 20: Nevertheless, the question about Being as such is misconstrued as coinciding with the question about beings as such; this misconstrual thruts itself upon us above all because the essential provenance of the question about beings as such, and with it the essence of metaphysics, lies in obscurity…According to the usual interpretation, the “question of Being” means asking about beings as such (metaphysics)…Being remains forgotten.
way down a number of byways, including the infamous hohlwege, paths in a wood that lead to a dead end and force the traveler to retrace his steps.

Being is not a being; nevertheless, in *Being and Time* Heidegger begins, “Being is always the Being of an entity,” such as it is given to existential-phenomenological investigation. We as yet have no “thematized” access to Being that is not “attached,” as it were, to some being, as the Being of an entity.\(^{102}\) Since Being itself is nevertheless the Being of entities, though itself is not a being, beings become the subject matter of an inquiry into Being.\(^{103}\)

Dasein, on the other hand, is also not an entity that just occurs.\(^{104}\) That is, we are the beings who take up our Being as a matter of questioning, concern, and care. We are already set upon the course of our Being, and part of that Being, we find, is to ask into the question of Being. We are the being for whom Being is an issue. Dasein is therefore being-ontological, or “pre-ontological,”\(^ {105}\) because this being has its Being – *is* – “in such a way that one has an understanding of Being”\(^ {106}\) well before that being is aware or questioning or addressing this fact.

\(^{102}\) Ibid., 92:
Being is not a being, nor any ingredient of beings that is itself in being. The Being of the building over there is not another thing of the same sort as the roof and the cellar. Thus no thing corresponds to the word and the meaning “Being.”

\(^{103}\) Heidegger, Martin, *Being and Time*, H or p. 26:
The Being of entities “is” not itself an entity, . . . . In so far as Being constitutes what is asked about, and ‘Being’ means the Being of entities, then entities themselves turn out to be what is interrogated.

\(^{104}\) Ibid., H12, p. 32: “[Dasein is] ontically distinguished by the fact that, in its very Being, that Being is an issue for it.”

\(^{105}\) Ibid.

\(^{106}\) Ibid.
Dasein is therefore thrown into existence, like a stone being cast through the air that suddenly, mid flight, becomes aware that it is hurdling through space and time.\(^{107}\) As such, Dasein comes to face the fact of its existence, and in that takes up a certain relationship to Being.\(^{108}\) Dasein discovers three possibilities in its comportment to its Being. These three possibilities indicate the ways in which Dasein takes up its Being, and thus the way it forms a pre-ontological understanding of itself. Sometimes, as Dasein, we make choices about our existence for ourselves. At other times, we merely slip into our existence, inadvertently landing into possibilities, and perhaps do not yet or will never “choose” them as such. Dasein also grows up into other Being-possibilities. It requires an existential investigation into Dasein’s Being in order to theoretically clarify just what and how these possibilities are or will be for Dasein. We will come to see that *falling* is the proper term for the way the human being of Western metaphysics takes up its Existenz. This existence is the way of life as it unfolds and is determined in its unfolding in various ways as taking hold or neglecting, by Dasein choosing its possibilities, getting itself into them, or growing up within them.\(^{109}\)

How do we discover Dasein’s comportment toward Being, once it begins to be examined and formulated thematically? Dasein’s Being-situation is “delineated in

---

\(^{107}\) I borrow this analogy from Frank Seeburger.

\(^{108}\) Cf. Ibid.:
That kind of Being towards which Dasein can comport itself in one way or another, and always does comport itself somehow, we call existence \([Existenz]\).

\(^{109}\) Cf. Ibid.:
Only the particular Dasein decides its existence, whether it does so by taking hold or by neglecting. The question of existence never gets straightened out except through existing itself.
advance...in Dasein's ontical constitution.” Dasein first finds itself in a world, and this world becomes a question for Dasein to ask. The question is delineated within the context of Dasein’s “world.” In its world, in its facticity, ontically, i.e, within the appropiable and perceptible facts and immediacy of Dasein’s existence, Dasein is closest to itself, immediately present to itself: “Ontically, of course, Dasein is not only close to us—even that which is closest: we are it, each of us, we ourselves.” Despite this intimate closeness of Dasein’s Being, the Being of Dasein is far away.

Ontologically, Dasein must reflect back in order to explicitly interpret its Being; Dasein is always ahead of itself, Being-ahead-of-itself; therefore, Dasein must think back to itself, to its Being from a distance (hence Dasein’s “historicity,” “historicality,” and the historiological nature of Heidegger’s investigation), and, for the most part, only with the utmost difficulty. That is, we run into the utmost embarrassment as soon as we wish to exhibit how “straightforward” this “question of Being” truly is.

---

110 Ibid., H12-13, p.33.

111 Cf. Ibid., H13, p. 33:

But to Dasein, Being in a world is something that belongs essentially. Thus Dasein’s understanding of Being pertains with equal primordiality both to an understanding of something like a ‘world,’ and to the understanding of the Being of those entities which become accessible within the world. So whenever an ontology takes for its theme entities whose character of Being is other than that of Dasein, it has its own foundation and motivation in Dasein’s own ontical structure, in which a pre-ontological understanding of Being is comprised as a definite characteristic.

112 Ibid., H15, p. 36.

113 Ibid., H15-161, p. 36-37:

In spite of this, or rather for just this reason, it [Dasein’s Being] is ontologically that which is farthest. To be sure, its ownmost Being is such that it has an understanding of that Being, and already maintains itself in each case as if its Being has been interpreted in some manner.

114 Ibid., H191-192, p. 236.

115 Cf. Heidegger, Martin. Introduction to Metaphysics, 94-95. In this passage, for example, Heidegger enumerates the innumerable ways in which this simple, unprepossessing word – being – is spoken:
Because of the complexity of this situation, Dasein’s Being remains concealed from it. It is never too early to note what is already laid bare in Being and Time (§44), but also what we will come to see: concealment is the origin of unconcealment, or undisclosedness, i.e., with the essence of truth as such.116 “Dasein is ontically ‘closest’ to itself and ontologically farthest; but pre-ontologically it is surely not a stranger.”117 We have already seen that “the meaning of Being must already be available to us in some way,” in that Being has become the question and the “thing” which leads questioning onward.118

This inquiry must then travel along a “vague average understanding of Being…” That Being is the most self-evident of concepts is revealed in our constant and inevitable use of the word and its variations in everyday language, but in such a way that the singular nature of Being is overlooked, ignored, abandoned by the lack of awareness or articulation of the Difference (as quoted above: “We say ‘being’ and really

—

“God is”: that is, actually present (gegenwärtig). “The earth is”: that is, we experience and believe it to be constantly present at hand (vorhanden). “The lecture is in the auditorium”: that is, it takes place. “The man is from Swabia”: that is, he comes from there. “The cup is of silver”: that is, it consists of… “The peasant is in the fields”: that is, he has moved to the fields, he is staying there. “The book is mine”: that is, it belongs to me. “He is dead”: that is, he has succumbed to death. “Read is the port side”: that is, it stands for. “The dog is in the garden”: that is, it is running around there. “Over all the peaks / is peace”: that is — ???. Does the “is” in the verses mean that it stays there? None of that will do here. And yet it is the same simple “is” . . . . in the “is,” Being opens up to us in a manifold way… Here we are entering the domain of a decisive question: does the “is” become manifold on the basis of the content of the sentence that is attached to it in each case — i.e., on the basis of the domain of that about which the sentences are assertions — or does the “is” — i.e., Being — contain in itself the manifoldness whose folding makes it possible for us to make manifold beings accessible to ourselves in the first place, each as it is?

116 Cf. Heidegger, Martin, Hölderlin’s Hymn “The Ister,” trans. William McNeill (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), 106-7: “what is true stands in an essential alliance with concealment and self-concealing.” We will see this “alliance” borne out when we examine the essence of truth as aletheia, unconcealment, and as concealment, lethia.

117 Heidegger, Martin, Being and Time, H16, p. 37.

118 Ibid., H5-6, p. 25
mean beings”). An “average kind of intelligibility” lies in this as-yet-unformulated everyday use of the same word, “Being,” in such differing statements as “The sky is blue,” or “I am merry.” Being is defined as the beingness or the beingness of beings. This average intelligibility will become the first pivot of the questioning of Heidegger’s analytic, as even “this vague average understanding of Being is still a Fact.”

Everydayness and averageness bespeaks of a certain fuzziness, uncertainty, equivocation, or indeterminacy of our perception and thematized understanding of Being as phenomena. In fact, it is first closer to a complete darkness, to the extent that the question of Being remains completely unattended; the fuzziness is the pre-ontological understanding that pervades our Being-awareness. This average everydayness is the necessary starting place for the existential analytic: Being is not a being itself, but every being is – or is not – by virtue of Being. Though ontically, in existence, Dasein is closer to Being than anything else, ontologically, as we have seen, Dasein is so far from it. Macquarrie and Robinson translate the zunäehst und zumeist as “proximally and for the most part” to indicate a certain unthematized immersion of

119 Cf. Heidegger, Martin, Introduction to Metaphysics, 86:
Suppose that there were no indeterminate meaning of Being, and that we did not understand what this meaning signifies. Then what? Would there just be one noun and one verb less in our language? No. Then there would be no language at all. Being as such would no longer be addressed and discussed. For saying beings as such involves understanding beings as beings—that is, their Being—in advance. Presuming that we did not understand Being at all, presuming that the word ‘Being’ did not even have that evanescent meaning, then there would not be any single word at all. We ourselves could never be those who say. We would never be able to be those who we are. For to be human means to be a sayer. Human beings are yes- and no-sayers only because they are, in the ground of their essence, sayers, the sayers. That is their distinction and also their predicament. It distinguishes them from stone, plant, and animal, but also from the gods. Even if we had a thousand eyes and a thousand ears, a thousand hands and many others senses and organs, if our essence did not stand within the power of language, then all beings would remain closed off to us—the beings that we ourselves are, no less than the beings that we are not.

120 Heidegger, Martin, Being and Time, H4, p. 23.

121 Ibid., H5, p. 25.
Dasein within the dispersal of its everydayness.\textsuperscript{122} Heidegger must follow this pathway to an interpretation of Being.\textsuperscript{123} The modalities of Dasein’s dispersal into everydayness are multifold, but located within Dasein’s Being-with-Others in \textit{das Mann} – the they – and include curiosity, idle talk, distantiality, averageness, and leveling down.\textsuperscript{124} The reason why this intelligibility is in fact “unintelligible”\textsuperscript{125} is because what is lived proximally is lived in what we might call the \textit{immediacy} of everydayness, an unformulated experience in which Dasein is immersed and determined by its \textit{past} or its \textit{tradition}.\textsuperscript{126}

In short, Dasein “\textit{is} its past,”\textsuperscript{127} and becomes it (understood in the dual sense of futural arrival-onto and also befitting, or in agreement with). We already touched upon this modality of Dasein’s everyday Being when we remarked upon Heidegger’s three possibilities of Dasein’s existence, particularly in its last two forms: getting into and growing up into Dasein’s possibilities. In this sense, Heidegger’s path is historiological and genealogical,\textsuperscript{128} in that he aims to lay bear the past in order to “bring ourselves into

\begin{footnotes}
\item[122] Cf. Ibid., §71, H. 370 for “everydayness.”
\item[123] Heidegger, Martin, \textit{Being and Time}, H16-17, p. 38: “In this everydayness there are certain structures which we shall exhibit—not just any accidental structures, but essential ones which, in every kind of Being that factual Dasein may possess, persist as determinative for the character of its Being. Thus by having regard for the basic state of Dasein’s everydayness, we shall bring out the Being of this entity in a preparatory fashion” (BT p 38).
\item[124] Ibid., H. 127, p. 164-165.
\item[125] Ibid., H4, p. 23.
\item[126] Ibid., H20, p. 41:

Dasein has grown up both into and in a traditional way of interpreting itself: in terms of this it understands itself proximally and, within a certain range, constantly. By this understanding, the possibilities of its Being are disclosed and regulated. Its own past . . . is not something which \textit{follows along after} Dasein, but something which already goes ahead of it.
\item[127] Ibid.
\item[128] Ibid., H11, p. 31.
\end{footnotes}
full possession of the ownmost possibilities of such inquiry.” The proximal dispersal of Dasein, however, makes this difficult:

Dasein is inclined to fall back upon its world (the world in which it is) and to interpret itself in terms of that world by its reflected light, but also that Dasein simultaneously falls prey to the tradition of which it has more or less explicitly taken hold. This tradition keeps it from providing its own guidance, whether in inquiring or in choosing. This holds true—and by no means least—for that understanding which is rooted in Dasein’s ownmost Being, and for the possibility of developing it—namely, for ontological understanding.

In this sense Dasein becomes historical and is determined by its tradition: “tradition thus becomes master.”

This situation leaves Dasein with “no ground of its own to stand on.” It cannot make such a history its own, and cannot fashion its own history. This is the situation in which the meaning and the question of Being have been lost, “not been attended to…quite forgotten.” Heidegger calls this situation, among other things, the “oblivion of being”; we will return to this oblivion in due course, but first we must finish following the thread that will take us up to falling as it appears within the course of Heidegger’s existential analytic of Dasein.

In order to draw up its past and make it its own, historical Dasein must make explicit ontologically what lies hidden in immediacy, ontically. Being must be “uncovered in the undifferentiated character which [Dasein] has proximally and for the

129 Ibid., H21, p 42.
130 Ibid., H21, p 42-43.
131 Ibid., H22, p. 43: Tradition takes what has come down to us and delivers it over to self-evidence; it blocks our access to those primordial ‘sources’ from which the categories and concepts handed down to us have been in part quite genuinely drawn.
132 Ibid.
most part...We call this everyday undifferentiated character of Dasein ‘averageness.’”

In averageness, the mode of Dasein’s facing its Being is “fleeing *in the face of it* and forgetfulness *thereof*.”

### 1.6 Heidegger’s Concept of Falling

Without going further into the details of the analytic itself, we now have enough context to introduce Heidegger’s concept of falling. To summarize, Heidegger argues that ontology must, as it were, take a sideways glance at the issue of Being, due to the ontological Difference: Being *is*, in and of itself, but the only access – both existentially and thematically – we have to it consists in our going through, laying out, explicating the kind of beings that we ourselves are. Being must be glanced askance: though Being is not a being, we nevertheless get to it by investigating the Being of beings such as they present themselves as phenomena for us as Dasein.

We must explicate our own Being in order to find the hints of Being that perdure through all beings to, perchance, catch a glimpse of Being itself, *which would arrive in an altogether different way than the way a being presents itself*. This Difference is further complicated by the fact that Dasein finds itself at its own, special kind of remove from its Being. Dasein is lost in average everydayness at the same time that an awareness of its Being is covered over by its traditional understanding and assumptions.

---

133 Ibid., H43, p. 69. Cf. “That which is ontically closest and well known, is ontologically the farthest and not known at all; and its ontological signification is constantly overlooked” (Ibid.).

134 Ibid.

135 Ibid., H371–372, pg. 422–423: Everydynamness is a way *to be*—to which, of course, that which is publicly manifest belongs...That which is *ontically* so familiar in the way Dasein has been factically interpreted that we never pay any heed to it, hides enigma after enigma existential-ontologically. The ‘natural’ horizon for starting the existential analytic of Dasein is only seemingly self-evident.
about itself. Though ontically Dasein lives most immediately in its Being, and for this very reason is lost in immersion: Dasein is farthest from an ontological understanding and experience of this Being. Lost in immediacy, Dasein is provided, proximally and for the most part, with no distance that could afford a glance of the nature of its Being. Within this difficult situation, Heidegger proposes to dive into the very average-everyday and ontical content of Dasein’s existence, in order to elucidate a view toward an ontology of our Being, which is not immediately accessible.

All of this becomes the first clear phenomenological indication of the mode of Dasein’s Being, then: distance from itself, alienation, absorption, dispersal, lostness, etc. Dasein grows up into its existential possibilities, or falls into them. These are not moral categories but phenomenological ones. Dasein stays absorbed in its concerns, and as a result, does not recollect itself and in fact “is not itself.” Dasein is thrown into a world with which it must afterwards come to grips. It shares this world with things, innumerable beings that have the Being of being-present-at-hand and ready-to-hand, such as equipment and trees and animals.

The Being of Dasein reveals itself in that Dasein never comes into this world in an isolated manner, and is therefore constituted by its relationship with other such Daseins. Equiprimordial with Dasein’s own Being, then, is Dasein’s Being-with-Others. Those Others are “those among whom one is too.”

---

136 Ibid., H125, p. 163.
137 Ibid., H53-54, p. 79.
138 Ibid., H118, p. 154. Cf. Ibid., H118, p. 154-155: “By reason of this with-like Being-in-the-world, the world is always the one that I share with Others. The world of Dasein is a with-world [Mitwelt]. Being-in is Being-with-Others. Their Being-in-themselves within the world is Dasein-with [Mit-dasein].”
Let us recall again that the way in which Dasein finds itself, proximally and for the most part, with these other Daseins, is dispersed in average everydayness. *Das Mann* is the name for the average—everyday worlding that takes place with Dasein and with the others who share its Being. Again, this condition of *das Mann* is characterized by curiosity, idle talk, distantiality, averageness, and leveling down. In short, existentially-phenomenologically, *all are lost together, all are afloat in the same raft with regard to the question of Being and Dasein’s Being, and all find themselves in the same place as Dasein in the same average—everyday understanding of Being.* In this condition, in Dasein’s *Aufgehen,* this entire shared existential condition is summarized under the heading of *falling.*

Idle talk, curiosity and ambiguity characterize the way in which, in an everyday manner, Dasein is its ‘there’—the disclosedness of Being-in-the-world. As definite existential characteristics, these are not present-at-hand in Dasein, but help to make up its Being. In these, and in the way they are interconnected in their Being, there is revealed a basic kind of Being which belongs to everydayness; we call this the “falling” of Dasein.139

Apart from the obvious connotation of falling down, the verb *verfallen* also bears the connotations of *deteriorating, collapsing, or falling down.*140 This ‘world’ is the world of immediate concern, of beings-present-at-hand and projects. This falling “into the ‘world,’” (“an die ‘Welt’”) has in the German more of a sense of falling *at* the world, or *against* it. The falling of Dasein is twofold then. It falls into the world of immediate concern, lapses into commonness, everydayness, which is characterized by the condition of *das Mann.* On the other hand, Dasein falls *against* the world by virtue of its distance

---

139 Ibid., p. 219.

140 Cf. Ibid., Note 2, Macquarrie and Robinson, 42, p. 220; “Dasein has, in the first instance, fallen away ["abgefallen"] from itself as an authentic potentiality for Being its Self, and has fallen into the ‘world.’"
from its own Being. Dasein falls away from-, falls into-, and falls against-. Therefore, “An existential mode of Being-in-the-world is documented in the phenomenon of falling.”

Each of the characteristics of Dasein within the They is another attribute of this falling from Being, into and against the world. Idle talk, though it discloses Dasein as Being “towards its world, towards Others, and towards itself,” the understanding of Being that is given therein is a “mode of groundless floating.” Curiosity cheaply “discloses everything,” but by doing so exiles the Being of Dasein into “everywhere and nowhere.” Ambiguity appears to “hide nothing from Dasein’s understanding,” but only by suppressing any real knowledge or decision of Dasein’s Being.

Unless Dasein’s Being is taken up as its explicit concern, it will continue to be a being exiled from itself. Dasein in its everydayness drunkenly stumbles around at the same time it is driven into the mania of its immediate projects and “fascination” with beings present-at-hand. Within falling, the Being of Dasein is itself met as if it were present-at-hand, just like any object. Dasein experiences itself as an object, or as a subject in relation to innumerable objects, for the objects are always beings and situations of beings standing against Dasein. Dasein stumbles about in its unawareness of itself, falling into and against the world. Dasein falls into “groundlessness” and “prepares for itself a constant temptation towards falling.”

Falling has other aspects, that of tranquilizing, alienating, closure in inauthenticity/entanglement, downward plunge, turbulence, lostness.

141 Ibid., H176, p. 221.
142 Ibid., H177, p. 221.
143 Ibid.
Idle talk and ambiguity, having seen everything, having understood everything, develop the supposition that Dasein’s disclosedness, which is so available and so prevalent, can guarantee to Dasein that all the possibilities of its Being will be secure, genuine, and full. Through the self-certainty and decidedness of the “they,” it gets spread abroad increasingly that there is no need of authentic understanding or the state-of-mind that goes with it.

With the obviousness of Dasein’s disclosedness in *das Mann*, Dasein is tempted and tranquilized, sedated by and into everydayness. Why, therefore, would anyone be led to embark upon the potentially disturbing, pointless, if not exhausting, endeavor to examine one’s potentiality-for-Being, or to consider the world constituted with-Others in its condition of *falling*? Still, as “knowledge” expands, Dasein is capable of ontically and listlessly comparing itself to “everything else,” including other forms of Dasein in their ontic potentiality-for-Being. Ever more so, then, Dasein’s delusional “understanding everything” has the *alienating* [*Entfremdung*] effect of driving Dasein even more outside of its own recollection (i.e., recollection of its ownmost possibilities, not recollection as Socratic knowing). In that superficial surveying of “characteristics” and “typologies,” Dasein gets *entangled in and closes off* on itself its own authenticity and possibility. These come to characterize the specific “movements” of Dasein in falling: *downward plunge* [*Absturz*]:

Dasein plunges out of itself into itself, into the groundlessness and nullity of inauthentic everydayness. But this plunge remains hidden from Dasein by the way things have been publicly interpreted, so much so, indeed, that it gets interpreted as a way of ‘ascending’ and ‘living concretely.’

---

144 Ibid., H178, p. 223.
Furthermore, Heidegger argues that the downward plunge rips the understanding from Dasein’s existential possibilities. Instead, Dasein’s Being is “tranquilized,” assuming that it possesses what is needed already, and that everything is within reach, that is, present and possibly present to it.\footnote{145} This being-torn-away from its authenticity and ownmost possibility for Being is “the movement of falling characterized by turbulence.”\footnote{146} This turbulence and movement is the correlate of Dasein’s thrownness, that Dasein “remains in the throw,” though that is never a finalized fact. Thus, Heidegger defines “average everydayness” as

\begin{quote}

Being-in-the-world which is falling and disclosed, thrown and projecting, and for which its ownmost potentiality-for-Being is an issue, both in its Being alongside the ‘world’ and in its Being-with Others.\footnote{147}

\end{quote}

We would be mistaken, again, to judge this falling negatively or as a moral evaluation. On the contrary, falling is a turning away and fleeing from what is ownmost to Dasein’s Being, but precisely \textit{into} that which is “most present,” into entities present-at-hand. What is more, within the context of the existential analytic—which is only always interested in laying bare the structure of the meaning of Being in general and as a whole\footnote{148}—falling is an essentially positive structure in this major sense: falling is a state of Dasein’s Being in which it is disclosed that Dasein is fleeing in the face of

\footnote{145} Cf. Ibid. Dasein’s falling has a kind of motion which constantly tears the understanding away from the projecting of authentic possibilities, and into the tranquilized supposition that it possesses everything, or that everything is within its reach.\footnote{146} Ibid.\footnote{147} Ibid., H181, p. 225. (Emphasis is Heidegger’s)\footnote{148} Ibid., H183, p. 227.
something. In the falling that is fleeing, what that is from which one flees is not yet grasped.

This fleeing is evinced in anxiety. Anxiety is the fundamental state-of-mind in the face of which the turning-away occurs. Where does this anxiety arise from? Anxiety derives from Dasein’s facing its “Being-in-the-world as such.” This means that Dasein, prior to the fleeing that is falling, has a primordial experience with the fact that its Being is not just any Being in particular; its Dasein is not just an entity within-the-world like a table. Remembering that Dasein is ahead of itself, it is properly the nothing and nowhere of Dasein’s Being that confronts it in its potentiality-for-Being. Possibility is what oppresses us. We are reminded of Sartre’s insightful lament, “I am condemned to be free.” What is disclosed in falling, then, is Dasein’s own Being-free, being-free “for the freedom of choosing itself and taking hold of itself.” Dasein’s Being is uncanny in its not-being-at-home.

In the response of falling, Dasein flees away from itself towards entities and the world of entities to find a “secure” ground: “When in falling we flee into the ‘at-home’ of publicness, we flee in the face of the ‘not-at-home’…” Heidegger maintains that this anxiety in the face of Being-one’s-Self that one flees reveals the fundamental character of Dasein as care, Sorge, or solicitude.


150 Ibid., §40, H185-187, p. 228-231.


152 Heidegger, Martin, Being and Time, H188, p. 232.

153 Ibid., H189, p. 234.
1.7 Falling and Death

The ontological signification of the expression “care” has been expressed in the ‘definition’: “ahead-of-itself-Being-already-in (the world) as Being-alongside entities which we encounter (within-the-world)”. In this are expressed the fundamental characteristics of Dasein’s Being: existence, in the “ahead-of-itself”; facticity, in the Being-already-in; falling, in the “Being-alongside”. If indeed death belongs in a distinctive sense to the Being of Dasein, then death (or Being-towards-the-end) must be defined in terms of these characteristics.\(^{154}\)

The uncanniness, or not-at-homeness \([unheimlichkeit]\), of Dasein’s existence is revealed in its utmost as death. Dasein’s known or knowable possibilities end at its death.\(^{155}\) Death conditions Dasein as Being-towards-death, in the face of which anxiety reveals that Dasein flees—in falling.\(^{156}\) Average-everydayness and its dispersal amidst das Mann covers over death as merely “the end,” the same for everyone (leveling) as something “everyone understands”—the same structures revealed in idle talk, curiosity, and ambiguity, as falling; death is the “well-known” event, it is just the fact of the matter, “one dies”—these are evasions of “distantiality” and tranquilization in the face of death.\(^{157}\)

However, Dasein must continue to press into its Being and take up its thrownness and its own death from out of abandonment into the future some-day. Death, to some extent, must be gathered up and lived in a present now. Therefore, in

\(^{154}\) Ibid., H251, p. 293.

\(^{155}\) Ibid., H251, p. 294: “death reveals itself as the possibility which is one’s ownmost, which is non-relational, and which is not to be outstripped.”

\(^{156}\) Ibid., H251, p. 295: “Dasein exists as thrown Being towards its end.”

\(^{157}\) Ibid., H252-255, p. 296-299. Cf. Ibid., H254, p. 298: “The ‘they’ does not permit us the courage for anxiety in the face of death.”
anticipatory resoluteness towards Dasein’s potentiality-for-Being in the face of death—by taking up the very “not-yet” of death as the foreclosure of Dasein’s possibilities—Dasein becomes free for the moment to determine its factual existence:¹⁵⁸

When, in anticipation, resoluteness has caught up the possibility of death into its potentiality-for-Being, Dasein’s authentic existence can no longer be outstripped by anything.

The phenomenon of resoluteness has brought us before the primordial truth of existence. As resolute, Dasein is revealed to itself in its current factual potentiality-for-Being, and in such a way that Dasein itself is this revealing and Being-revealed. . . . The certainty of the resolution signifies that one holds oneself free for the possibility of taking it back.¹⁵⁹

Anxiety is the overbearing response to Dasein’s possibilities, its potentiality-for-Being. Death, on the other hand, is the closure (non-relational), the end of possibilities. Dasein is then caught within this tension of its freedom and its conclusion. Dasein can respond to this dilemma by further falling, losing itself within das Mann, or it can gather itself in the face of death, from out of its dispersal, and gather up the fullness of its temporality and Being—which includes the past and the futural (towards death).¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁸ In The Early Heidegger’s Philosophy of Life: Facticity, Being and Language, (USA: Fordhamn University Press, 2012) Campbell Scott argues that a state of constant authenticity was not a possibility in the Heideggerian schema, that falling was a persistent recurrence that must be met with the renewal of the same anticipatory resoluteness we see here. Furthermore, Scott argues that Heidegger is always “trying to draw out the positive elements of lived experience against the background of the various deceptions and distortions that are, nonetheless, built into factual experience” (xiv).


¹⁶⁰ Cf. Ibid., H385, p. 436 (Emphasis in original): anticipation reveals to Dasein its lostness in the they-self, and brings it face to face with the possibility of being itself, primarily unsupported by concernful solicitude, but of being itself, rather, in an impassioned freedom towards death—a freedom which has been released from the Illusions of the “they”, and which is factual, certain of itself, and anxious.

Only an entity which, in its Being, is essentially futural so that it is free for its death and can let itself be thrown back upon its factual “there” by shattering itself against death—that is to say, only an entity which, as futural, is equiprimordially in the process of having-been, can, by handing down to itself the possibility it has inherited, take over its own thrownness and be in the moment of vision for ‘its time’. 72
Falling therefore brings Dasein face-to-face with its Being, especially to the extent that its possibilities are opened up for it and forestalled by death. The revelation of Being that falling gives, however, offers the possibility for recollecting itself, taking on Dasein’s Being authentically and freely. We will see again and again that falling is intimately related to freedom.

1.8 Additions to a Phenomenology of Falling

Thanks to Heidegger, falling has become a question-worthy phenomena, as in truth all phenomena are to us humans. Phenomena, as it were, are packaged and presented very specifically for us, and call out to us, as epiphaneia, for attention and questioning.

What is it to fall, and how does the phenomenological approach to this question lend toward a critical yet constructive revision of the concept of the fall itself? We are to ask then, into the Being of falling in order to shed new light upon what is being said when we say that humanity is fallen, or is falling.

When we inquire into the being of some phenomenon or another, we are inquiring not into beings themselves, as such or as a whole, but into being itself. What is it to fall? is quite a different kind of question than, “What does a giraffe look like when it falls?” “What are the physical or psychic effects of falling among the elderly?” or even, “What does it feel like to fall?” We will always be working upon the pivot of the

Only authentic temporality which is at the same time finite, makes possible something like fate—that is to say, authentic historicality.
Heideggerian problematic of the ontological difference: “we have our residence in the distinction between beings and being.”\textsuperscript{161}

In these thematic investigations, we are always given over to and within the midst of beings and indeed, obviously, are ourselves beings; yet we cannot therefore conclude that being itself is a being. No matter how rigorously we investigate beings as such or as a whole, we nevertheless always remain within the situation in which being itself is lost in oblivion, amidst the world of beings and their relations.\textsuperscript{162} As history is showing more profoundly every day, we can manipulate, change, control, fashion, direct, breed all kinds of beings, but we get no closer thereby to those most ancient questions of care, of the how of a being, of how beings ought to be—if at all—approached, handled or let go of. We still haven’t arrived at the question of being. A thinking of being remains outstanding, or locked within easily dismissible spiritualties. Right at this point of falling, we will find a pivot and a comportment that engages directly the question of being and the relationship—our relationship, as existing human beings thrown into the world of beings—with being. The concept of falling and fallenness serves as a net to draw up a number of themes, particularly those from Heidegger, into the same discursive place.

Fall and falling are words that direct us also to the heart of this problematic. Not only this problematic, but into the possibility that Heidegger himself foresaw as the inauguration of a new direction for philosophy—into thinking, the meditative or essential thinking that anticipates, leaps and grounds an engagement with being, with

\textsuperscript{161} Heidegger, Martin, \textit{Basic Concepts}, 41.

\textsuperscript{162} Heidegger, Martin, \textit{Introduction to Metaphysics}, 20.
what we most fundamentally are in our being, and the setting up of a “decision” in relation to it.

So we ask yet again, What is it to fall? What is the being of falling? Perhaps after inquiring into this mode of being, we can then develop a rather different understanding of what it means to say that humanity has fallen or is falling. Thus we begin from the decisive starting point of asking into being and its truth (as aletheia) preeminently over and above asking into beings alone; by this we ourselves join in with “the leap” that Heidegger believes must inaugurate the “other beginning.”¹⁶³ “But with the end of philosophy, thinking is also not at its end, but in transition to another beginning.”¹⁶⁴

At the risk of stating the embarrassingly obvious, I am writing these words currently, and the reader will be reading them. By the time you are reading them, I will no longer be writing them, but I am writing to the reader who will have been reading (a Derridean contratempo). The reader is being addressed now simultaneously, will come to be so, once the letter is received, where he or she is, and from where I already am, by the words I am writing. Thus it is fairly remarkable and yet even embarrassing or uncouth to admit this most obvious situation that, by language we are discoursing this moment with one another. It is as if a certain distance is transcended and we stand in an uncomfortable proximity with one another at the moment and place we confess and enter the explicitness of this relational Mit-Dasein together.

We begin with language, here as always. The linguistic “house of being” (a phrase invented by Heidegger) is our dwelling place, our starting place, always. We are

¹⁶³ Heidegger, Martin, Contributions, 15.

in that we are “sayers,” and this by virtue of our “understanding” of being. In *Being and Time*, Heidegger called this evanescent, indeterminate understanding of being the average everyday understanding of Being. It is the hermeneutical horizon within which we find ourselves, the nature of our “thrownness” into Being. Being thereby comes to us as a question because it is always our Being, my Being, which concerns us or myself, respectively.

As we are speaking about falling, then, we are taking into consideration what this question, once addressed, might in turn say about our own being—that is, what it might say about ourselves, where we find ourselves, who or what we are, and also who we are to become. Language, then, is our starting point in this questioning, addressing and thinking. Therefore, it would be appropriate to begin with—but not to remain solely—with the word itself. When we ask about falling/fallenness, we are at first speaking or writing the word and asking what it means; true to the form of language,

---

165 Heidegger, Martin, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, 86:
Suppose that there were no indeterminate meaning of Being, and that we did not understand what this meaning signifies. Then what? Would there just be one noun and one verb less in our language? No. *Then there would be no language at all*. Beings as such would no longer open themselves up in words at all; they could no longer be addressed and discussed. For saying beings as such involves understanding beings as beings—that is, their Being—in advance. Presuming that we did not understand Being at all, presuming that the word “Being” did not even have that evanescent meaning, then there would not be any single word at all. We ourselves could never be those who say. We would never be able to be those who we are. For to be human means to be a sayer. Human beings are yes-and-no-sayers only because they are, in the ground of their essence, sayers, the sayers. That is their distinction and also their predicament...if our essence did not stand within the power of language, then all being would remain closed off to us—the beings that we ourselves are, no less than the being that we are not.

166 Heidegger, Martin, *Being and Time*, H179, p. 223:
Dasein in its state-of-mind, has the character of throwing and of movement. Thrownness is neither a ‘fact that is finished’ nor a Fact that is settled. Dasein’s facticity is such that as long as it is what it is, Dasein remains in the throw, and is sucked into the turbulence of the ‘they’s’ inauthenticity. Thrownness, in which facticity lets itself be seen phenomenally, belongs to Dasein, for which, in its Being, that very Being is an issue” ( ).
this word is our sign for the direction of our thinking, because this word—through tradition and language, and now differently from Heidegger’s pen—has been given to us.

The English verb *to fall* originates from the Old English *feallan*, to fall, fail, decay, from the Proto-European word *pol*, “to fall,” after it formed the Proto-Germanic, *fallanan*. From the Old English noun, *fealle*, we have the meaning of *snare*, or *trap*. Thus there are two meanings of the verb, which becomes a noun when we speak in the nominative, *a or the* fall: 1) there is the physical phenomenon of a thing that is upright or suspended falling down or over, or toppling; 2) then there is a related meaning that involves a kind of decay or failure, when some—thing that is *supposed* to be or stand up or be lifted up, instead falls. The second meaning implies what *ought* to be, what comes forth or is meant to stand, or it implies that something, when it was most or rightly what it was, that it was standing, and now falls out of existence, use, *telos*, and therefore decays or fails or dies.

Let us deal with the first meaning first, the meaning that most relates to the immediate experience of objects (as opposed to beings, or things, which we will come to elaborate). Any object that is standing, suspended in the air, that takes a stand, is said to *fall* when it is no longer *standing* or *suspended*, i.e., *held* or *propelled* in the air.

Let us pause once again to step back to the obvious, to dig deeper into it, but in such a way that the obvious might come to shine in uniqueness, that the old,

---


168 —or at least some sort of temporal change and a consequent valuation: before the case was such, now it is thus.

169 A plant falls when it dies. Falling and death are linked for us, continually, as this dissertation will continue to demonstrate with Heidegger, with Augustine, with Genesis, with, with Nietzsche and, lastly, with Lacan.
uninformative currency of common sense and everyday knowledge might be polished, destroyed, so as to speak something rather more singular and profound that is always confronting, always speaking, as it were—as this is the task that we have set about in this dissertation. As Heidegger is always instructing and performing, we are led to take a step back in order to get to where we already are, to get nowhere except there: “But we do not want to get anywhere. We would like only, for once, to get to just where we are already.”

Thus we begin where we are, as in Heidegger’s fourfold—we begin upon the earth. Falling is a planetary phenomenon, or at the very least, a matter of gravity. As I said before, our being is first and foremost a concern that we take up for ourselves, but it is precisely the nature of that taking up that concerns us most. For our part, then, we discover falling here upon the earth, and so the earth is the most immediate ground of our experience of falling. Quite literally, the earth is the ground toward which, and by virtue of which, falling happens. Without our being upon this planet, which exerts a tug upon everything within a certain radius, we would not be able to know what falling is; we would not, could not, fall. In other words, we would not be capable of falling. Falling in every way, then, is an equiprimordial experience for us humans, but it is an experience that we say every other being which takes a stand (a planetary experience) knows. Not only is every being that takes a stand capable of falling; without exception, every being that does take a stand will and does fall, here upon the earth, necessarily.

---


171 Echoing Heidegger’s use of the word “equiprimordial” in Being and Time.

172 Cf. Deleuze, Gilles, Desert Islands and Other Texts, 1953-1974 trans. Mike Taormina (Los Angeles, CA;
Setting aside the dialectic and the Deleuzian struggle, and with them any purely oppositional, extreme or excessive, or active synthesis of oppositional terms or idealism of any kind, let us return back to the point at hand. Following our observations of *difference*, with the Dao and Heidegger, we could add to the uniqueness of our understanding of this phenomenon of falling by also putting it this way: we *share* falling, the possibility and the reality, with every other being which takes a stand. This is our shared being-in-the-world (and not merely being-*on*-the-world, for we have a being unlike that of mere disinterested objects). At the most primordial level, to the bare phenomenological assertion, we fall, along with buildings, with trees, with mountains, with rain, and with tears. In still other words, that-which-stands shares both the *nature of standing* with all other things which come to take a stand, at the same time that it shares in the other side of the essence of standing: that-which-stands also falls. But just as the night gives over to the day and brings it about, and vice verse, falling gives itself over to and allows standing, and standing gives itself again over to falling.

But we cannot move too quickly before forgetting the necessary intermediary of the *necessary* relation between standing and falling, i.e., *arising* or *raising*. Not only could nothing fall without first standing, but, also, nothing could stand without first a-raising. There are those things that arise *out of themselves*, or rather, arise *from out of* something else. The Greek names this declension the *genitive*, which recalls the word *genesis*. Living beings are of such a nature, but also nonliving things such as mountains, islands, hills,

---

London: Semiotext(e), 2004). If a longer and more expansive view were afforded us, we would perhaps see the whole circus of rising and falling, just as we do in some films when time-lapse views represent the rising and falling and decaying of entire cities in a few seconds. We hear from certain geologists, and from Deleuze in his essay, “Desert Islands,” that if a similar view were afforded us of the earth’s surface over the ages of unimaginable time, we would see the entire face of the globe flowing like water, rising up into mountains and falling back against like ripples and waves upon a river.
icebergs or stalagmites. We name these things as natural, or phusis. Here upon the earth, the beings that humans perceive and interact with, in their being, including the being of humans themselves—these beings arise, stand, and fall.

We have elaborated upon the being of falling in its most immediate, particular terms. Falling is of our nature, our essence, as beings upon the earth. Falling is of our being, as is the hither side of a structure of falling, arising and taking a stand. These contraries, contrary to the dialectic and Deleuzianism, are not antagonistic, not opposed to one another, but rather, in Heideggerian terms, let each other be, let each one come into the fullness of itself by virtue of the other; each gives itself over in the birth of the other.

We quickly notice that we cannot begin with falling: for something to fall, it first has to be capable of falling, that is, it has to be standing, has to take a stand, has to be operational or aright. Things, including beings such as humans, which stand upright are said to fall when they no longer are capable or willing or inclined to do so, but also, when they need to be set back upright. Things that stand up are considered out of their nature, or deficient, degraded, when they are supposed to be upright, standing, but have nonetheless fallen over or down. Another way of saying this is to borrow Heideggerian language (essence): falling is originary for everything that takes a stand; it is part of the essential nature of everything that stands. Standing and falling, in other words, belong to one another in that each gives itself over to the other, gives itself to the other’s becoming.

A fall physical very often implies or germinates another kind of meaning of falling. Planes fall to the earth and we call it a crash or a poor landing. The effect of falling is often the result of a failure, a failing of proper functioning, of hopes, expectations, or will. The numbers that represent the stock market fall or rise,
indicating a drop in the value of the dollar and the economy; if the fall is drastic and fast, the fall is called a *plunge* or a *bottoming out*. 

The phenomenology of the structure of falling offers a number of indications. First, the etymology of the word falling provides the double sense of the term. There is the physical phenomenon of a thing that is falling, but there is also falling in the form of decay and failing. There is a third meaning of *snare or trap*, to fall into a snare. The second meaning indicates an occurrence contrary to design or will or expectation. Even if to fell a tree is a human intention, in order to raise a structure with wood, for example, the tree’s fall is not part of its intent or telos, and is an interruption of that stand. Nevertheless, as with every stand, a fall is bound to occur, in time. Only in death, or final falling, does the phenomenon of falling resolve itself: a tree stands and means to stand until its end comes. Every stand that is taken is met with a subsequent and necessary fall, and a fall comes from a prior arising and standing, and this is true for every such phenomenon. Falling is a culmination of a series, a matter of time and being—arising and standing. 

Humans take a stand upon this earth. Not only do they physically take a stand, but they make a stand, they make a dwelling (and not merely in a structure but as a mode of being, as we will see). Each human must therefore fall, and this includes the demise of their stand upon the earth, the demise of their dwelling, the emptying of their place. However, we human beings take a stand in a unique and different way than any other being that we know of. Without making judgments upon the value, meaning, or self-understanding of other creatures, or even speaking about their ontological status in any way, we can say that, at the very least, we humans take our stand in a human way.
Consequently, our fall is a human fall. Thus when we examine the kind of falls we take we are also shedding a corollary light upon the nature of our stand.

A simple illustration will provide significant insight into the uniqueness of such a fall and stand-taking. Imagine a doctoral candidate who had just successfully defended his dissertation is now proudly walking to his vehicle on the University of Denver campus. Right in front of Penrose Library, his foot stubs on a loose sidewalk brick and he stumbles and falls flat on his face. Immediately, he shoots up and darts his head to every side with horror, looking to see if the gaze of any other passersby have caught sight his humiliation. Before the fall this new Ph.D. was on top of the world, now he is humiliated, ashamed of his foolishness, reminded of his humanness and limitations.

A number of questions immediately arise that indicate the uniqueness of human falling, in that our falling, our standing, and our being can become an issue for us. Why would the student be humiliated, after all? What function does the gaze of others play in his mental life, before and after that fall? What are others, after all, for him, to him, anonymous or otherwise? What role did the fall play in changing the proud new PhD’s intentionality or self-image? Indeed, there were only a few feet between the place the student’s body was located before and after the fall—yet there is another, far greater and qualitatively different kind of distance registered by the student in his fall. What was the difference made, what difference is the fall? What was the nature of that fall which was not at all physical but purely “mental” or “spiritual,” which nevertheless attended his physical fall? What light does the fall throw on such distinctions in the first place? How do we perceive ourselves in moments of triumph? In moments of shame? What is the distance traversed between the two? Would the student be any less
humiliated by saying to himself the simple phenomenological fact, “Well, every-thing falls, but a wall doesn’t feel embarrassed or insufficient when it falls, so why should I?” The absurdity of the reassurance and question themselves open up the abyss between a thing and a person, between the being of a wall and the being of a human, between the being of the fall of one and the being of the fall of another.

1.9 Conclusion

The above conclusions are Heidegger’s highly dramatic, epic statements that earn his work the title of “existentialism.” This is Being and Time’s existential-analytic answer to falling. Not only will falling continue as a major concept within Heidegger’s future work, but the structure laid out here will remain in multiple variations, even after being purified of the existentialist overtones. Later Heidegger will say that Being and Time was too Kierkegaardian. The urgency seen here, however, will arise innumerable times in the swoons of thinking and the meditations upon being’s utmost abandonment. All of the factors at work here, in Being and Time, therefore, will be present in later writings and lectures. The emphasis of falling shifts however more in relation to the essence of truth and the truth of being, as we will see.173

We have accounted for a number of ways in which Heidegger introduces the concept of falling, but let us bring it all together. First, Heidegger elaborates upon the fallenness of Dasein as the way in which the latter finds itself in its Being-in-the-world. Second, this fall leads to and includes the fall from being or the oblivion of being and

173 Heidegger, Martin, Letter on “Humanism” 253: “Forgetting the truth of being in favor of the pressing throng of beings unthought in their essence is what “falling” [Verfallen] means in Being and Time. This word does not signify the Fall of Man understood in a “moral-philosophical” and at the same time secularized way; rather, it designates an essential relationship of humans to being within being’s relation to the essence of the human being.”
falling into and against the world and beings. This is represented in a number of ways throughout Heidegger’s thinking, including as “loss of being,” forgetfulness of being, the era of the total lack of questioning, the essence of technology, etc. Thirdly, and as we will continue to see, falling is also the condition of the Western metaphysical thinking and its codetermined project which brings us to our present day history. This falling characterizes the destiny of Being. A number of sequences and “transformations” of Being have occurred, but they all share the unity given to them by the inception, the “beginning of Western thinking” in which “Being is thought, but not the ‘It gives’ as such.”

Furthermore, even to the extent that being arose as a question-worthy matter, it was quickly forgotten and abandoned in preference to the thinking of beings as such and as a whole. This trajectory is evidenced in our modern treatment of animals in factory farm situations, and our organization and ordering and servicing of the masses of human beings, even to the extent of employing the term “human resources.” Only Being as presence and presencing is thought in this epoch, the name Heidegger gives the metaphysical past to indicate the holding-back of the sending, the refusal to admittance or revelation of Being, of the “It gives” that gives Being.

Thus we can conclude from Heidegger’s many indications that the fall is the name for the history of humankind that springs from an essential encounter, decision and forgetting of the fundamental question of Being. This fall is always the co-determining structure of a continuing decision upon the way that Western thinking set upon from its inception, as the oblivion of being. In Heidegger’s later way of saying it,

---


175 Ibid., 8-9: “The It gives withdraws in favor of the gift which It gives. That gift is thought and conceptualized from then on exclusively as Being with regard to beings . . . . The sequences of epochs in the destiny of Being is not accidental, nor can it be calculated as necessary”
this means that the It gives (Being) was forsaken as a matter of thinking and questioning for the sake of the gift of Being *qua* presence. This is a reformulation, however a nevertheless important one, of the same theme that fills his work from the beginning: the abandonment, silencing, oblivion, of Being. The abandoning occurs doubly, from two sides, which seems mysterious until the elucidation of the terms can occur. Being is abandoned by mortals in their thinking and comportment, and at the same time, being itself abandons mortals to their abandoning, which means the extinguishing of being as such for the sake of the one sole destiny of being *as presencing,* that is, the being of beings in their presencing (e.g., beingness, reality, actuality, existence, etc.). This is nothing new but merely the continuation of a long decision on the part of Western thinking. The consequences are revealed, for Heidegger, in the essence of technology and the unique “claim of Being which speaks from the innermost core of modern technology.”\(^{176}\)

The fall is ours, it has been and continues to be the nature of mortal worlding. But it is not thereby a simple theological fall from grace into reprobation, from perfection into nature. The fall is the word and experience of metaphysical humanity, its history and destiny. It is a decisive word upon the essence (next chapter) of any people who maintain their projects and stultify their minds and practices and institutions in a metaphysical pathway. Heidegger’s philosophy offers us a diagnosis of a problem in a unique and incredibly pertinent manner. His work balances upon a pivot. On one end, no thinker has recently delved so deeply into the phenomena of our shared mortal and civilizational worlding. His “step back”—*to where we already are*—lays bare the

\(^{176}\) Ibid., 7.
fundamental ingredients, long established, of modern human worlding. Like every great thinker, he illuminates how the thinking of humans has formed the world, is forming the world, and shall form the world (to the extent that humans can and do) at the same time.

As such, Heidegger cannot avoid overlap in his understanding of falling and the original conception of falling we see someone like Augustine elaborating. But I will argue in the next chapter that this overlap is not to be confused as the theological presuppositions of Heidegger’s philosophy as much as the phenomenological texture that illuminates Augustine’s conceptualizing of his Fall. 
Chapter 2: Augustine’s Theology of the Fall

“But no one can fall down who does not stand upright, and standing upright walks, and walking stays upon the way.”177

2.1 Introduction

The difference between a Heideggerian phenomenological fall and a theological fall must be clarified, but naturally, the two bear significant points of contact that Heidegger does not explicate. The phenomenological fall is concerned with the primordial question of Being, whereas most forms of the second already have settled that account—but in precise, metaphysical terms, on Heidegger’s reading. To begin with Being as the first question, however, means that neither is an answer already provided nor is the question-answer relationship a casual or common one. Heidegger identifies this as the a priori departure of the two fallings, theological and phenomenological.

That Being has become a question for thinking means that we begin by admitting that we do not know what Being is. We ask because we do not know, but we would like to. As we have seen in the previous chapter, to question means we are already somehow in the draft of that toward which we are questioning. In particular

---

with Being, we attend to the meaning of our average-everyday ideas and experiences; in short, we attend to beings and ask into their Being in order to deliver us in the direction of an inquiry into Being itself. For philosophy, this highest question seeks a ground for human beings, and in such a way that human beings are “interpreted and given an aim.” For Heidegger, this question places us for a moment or longer within groundlessness, in a sphere in which we do not know where our ground is to be found because no presupposed answers can be provided. This is not merely a self-induced falling but a bringing-to-awareness where we are in Heidegger’s phenomenological discovery of falling in metaphysics: falling away from Being into oblivion, crashing against the world and upon beings. The meaning of Being is outstanding, but the majority of our approaches to the question itself further exacerbate our fall away from it.

Heidegger continually distances himself from both the theological notion and the “believer’s” notion of the fall from grace because in these approaches the question of Being is a foregone conclusion, the stance toward Being already predefined. The answer is already given to the extent that it is presumed that God is the author of Being and of all beings. Heidegger is not thereby denigrating theology. On the contrary, on

---

178 Heidegger, Martin, Introduction to Metaphysics, 10.

179 As we will continually see, this falling is characterized in a historical progression that most recently culminates in a particular comportment toward beings, i.e., attack.

180 Regarding the important questions of which/whose theology, which/whose faith, which/whose “believers,” I don’t believe Heidegger’s thinking is as nuanced as it should be. Heidegger is perhaps trapped in a German or European academic bubble. The only “believers” he appears to know are those with self-conscious and articulated theologies that seem to conform to nineteenth-century and twentieth-century Christendom. Despite his whitewashing, however, Heidegger does seem to capture a large swath of a number of older categories, summed up in Western Christendom, within his broad strokes. While ethnographic experience and theory bely every attempt at describing a monolithic or normative Christianity or “faith experience,” in any given Evangelical or liturgical congregation on a Sunday
numerous occasions he attempts to encourage the discipline back to its subject matter, or datum, instead of submitting its inquiry to alien (i.e., philosophical or scientific) standards or methodologies, as he sees it.\footnote{Heidegger, Martin, “Phenomenology and Theology,” from \textit{Pathmarks}, ed. William McNeill (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 55: For in truth this would necessitate that theology once and for all get clear about the requisite of its major task not to borrow the categories of its thinking and the form of its speech from philosophy or the sciences, but to think and speak out of faith for faith with fidelity to its subject matter.} Heidegger further grants what he sees as the “greatness of the task of theology” in an age that only wants to refurbish it with philosophical terms in order to make it more “palatable” and timely.\footnote{Heidegger, Martin, \textit{Introduction to Metaphysics}, 8: To be sure, one can thoughtfully question and work through the world of Christian experience—that is, the world of faith. That is then theology. Only ages that really no longer believe in the true greatness of the task of theology arrive at the pernicious opinion that, through a supposed refurbishment with the help of philosophy, a theology can be gained or even replaced, and can be made more palatable to the need of the age.}

Nevertheless, for Heidegger, the preeminent and most necessary question of philosophy, that of Being, is “foolishness” to theology and to faith. If the answer to the question of Being or that of beings (“Why are there beings instead of nothing?” which Heidegger identifies as the highest question of metaphysics, the beginning of morning, within the vast multitude of theological volumes and devotionals, from hymns to popular worship music, etc., we will find one of the most ubiquitous affirmations that Heidegger is implicating when he says “theological,” “faith” and “believers”: that God is the Creator of everything, every being, and Being itself, and that without God there would be \textit{nothing}, no Being and no beings. When God is proclaimed as Creator, he is metaphysically construed to be the origin of everything, the source of everything, without whom nothing exists. This is true for Anselm to Sarah Palin.

A large number of theologies and theories of religion that post-date Heidegger’s own contribution to philosophical thinking indeed place themselves self-consciously within a post-structuralist (i.e., post-metaphysical) context, the contours of which are set by Heidegger, even if the parentage is lost to many now. From the primary sources to their generalized milieu within the academic-scholarly complex, each of these writers claim to rid themselves of metaphysical baggage and release critical inquiry from the numerous contingent presuppositions and essentializings that condition metaphysics, or Western institutional thought, to date. Though it would take me far afield from my present inquiry, it remains to be seen if these attempts escape metaphysics in the ways that they claim, and the predetermined comportment to being that attends it, or if, within Heideggerian determinations, they continue to function under the domination of metaphysics. Some interesting recent theologians, scholars or thinkers to examine for their fidelity or infidelity to a post-metaphysical thinking would be, among innumerable others, Catherine Keller, Levinas, Altizer, Ott, Caputo, etc. Furthermore, to what extent are such thinkers caught in the same reactions under which metaphysical thinking is subordinate, even in staging oppositions and overcoming that do not at the same time affirm.
philosophy) is to cite the Bible and say that “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth…” it is not that this answer is true or false but that it bears no relation at all to the question. I think Heidegger is rather clever here, but for a point. In reversing Paul’s subversive idea that the wisdom of God is foolishness to the world, and vice versa, Heidegger is reversing Paul to say that the true philosophical questioning is always foolishness from the eyes of faith or from the perspective of theology. While his definitions of faith and theology appear uncritical and essentialist from our perspective—a perspective shaped nonetheless by Heidegger himself in almost inexplicable ways—Heidegger is implying that the questioning he is undergoing may actually be more humble or pious than theological or any preconceived notions. The latter do not even take time to question because they are already assuming very much, particularly when it comes to Being and the existence of beings. If the faith of an individual, for Heidegger, is not also confronted with “the possibility of unfaith,” then what the individual has is “not faith but a convenience . . . an agreement with oneself to adhere in the future to a doctrine as something that has somehow been handed down.” Nevertheless, the questions he is asking are foolishness to theological thinking or the “world of faith,” if by faith we mean the conviction or assertion that God is the Creator of beings and/or Being.

As we saw in the previous chapter, we have an average-everyday understanding of what we mean by Being, but also of falling and the Fall; in a similar way, our common concepts and comportments bespeak of an authentic engagement with the Being of beings, even if that relationship remains inarticulate. In this chapter I will explore to

---

183 1 Corinthians 1:25-27 (NIV).
184 Heidegger, Martin, Introduction to Metaphysics, 8.
what extent the question of Being still rings in the concept of the Fall, taking
Augustine’s model as exemplary of a large contingent of historical Christian theological
thinking on the matter. At the same time, Augustine’s thinking refuses Heidegger’s
determination that theology does not question, and rather, in the context of the Fall,
opens up a significant, potentially non-metaphysical, meditation upon human Being and
thereby Being itself. For Augustine, just as with Heidegger and Lacan, the Fall plunges
human beings deeper into their Being by virtue of their essential experiences, in terms
of failure, the recollection and expression of their radical finitude, and their
delimitations in the face of death.

2.2 Heidegger on the Theology of the Fall

There are few terms that show up as consistently in Heidegger’s thinking that
are so potentially theologically weighted as the concept of falling. Theologically, the fall
is the fall of human beings from a higher state of grace into reprobation. From his first
deployment of the existential term Verfallen, however, Heidegger separates his falling
from that one.185

The Christian concept of the Fall is precisely part of the metaphysical problem
that Heidegger is working to overcome, but let us keep in mind that this overcoming is
never merely a leaving behind or judgment of that which is overcome. Nevertheless, we
cannot overlook the dissonance between the Christian Fall and Heidegger’s falling.

185 Heidegger, Martin, Being and Time, 220:
This term does not express any negative evaluation . . . . So neither must we take the fallenness
of Dasein as a “fall” from a purer and higher ‘primal status’. Not only do we lack any experience
of this ontically, but ontologically we lack any possibilities in which Dasein maintains itself for
the most part.
Again, for Heidegger, the question of being—and therefore the question of falling—is precluded from confessional or theological inquiry because theology does not ask the question without already having answered it. Previously, philosophy was still attuned to the preeminent question of Being when Christianity made its entry and did its supposed damage.\textsuperscript{186}

We would be misled, however, based upon what I have already said about destruction and overcoming, to understand Heidegger to be turning on Christianity, or more actively seeking its destruction. Along the path of thinking, Heidegger is always well aware of the danger of reaction and ressentiment, as Nietzsche formulated them: whatever is reacted against still bears a necessary relation to the one reacting, a dialectical relation that will keep the reactor bound to that which he or she seeks to overcome (Cf. Nietzsche’s priestly caste morality). Heidegger is always clarifying for his audiences that he is not attacking science, reason, logic—for such an approach would merely mire one worse into the problem at hand and would provide no freedom for questioning or any alternative path.\textsuperscript{187} Part of the problem of metaphysics altogether is

\textsuperscript{186} Heidegger, Martin, \textit{Introduction to Metaphysics}, 111:
Christian doctrine then established itself in this chasm, while at the same time reinterpreting the Below as the created and the Above as the Creator, and with weapons thus reforged, it set itself against antiquity [as paganism] and distorted it. And so Nietzsche is right to say that Christianity is Platonism for the people.

\textsuperscript{187} Heidegger, Martin, \textit{What is Called Thinking?} 13: “Any kind of polemics fails from the outset to assume the attitude of thinking. The opponent’s role is not the thinking role. Thinking is thinking only when it pursues whatever speaks for a subject.”
Cf. Ibid., 34: “We should fall victim to a disastrous self-deception if we were to take the view that a haughty contempt is all that is needed to let us escape from the imperceptible power of the uniformly one-sided view.”
that its thinking is dictated by a reactionary modality, by opposition, a subject to which we will in time arrive.\textsuperscript{188}

Thus the issue for Heidegger and Christianity is neither vitriolic, reactive, or dismissive. Nevertheless, Christian ideology has made its own way into the philosophical metaphysical project, and vice versa; Christianity came as a codetermining force in the history of the West, understood as metaphysics, including the formation of its ideation.

2.3 The Classic Augustinian Model of the Fall

Heidegger’s debt to Augustine is by now quite well documented.\textsuperscript{189} One recent dissertation from the University of Chicago by Ryan Coyne argued that, among the self-acknowledged multiple “parricides” of Heidegger’s destruction in Being and Time (Descartes, Kant, Aristotle, etc.), Augustine remains conspicuously absent. The author argues that Heidegger sought, as it were, to disavow the intimacy of his own hermeneutic – particularly in terms of care – from its origins in Augustine’s Confessions. Still, Heidegger insists that his fallenness and falling are not to be confused with the Augustinian model, which implies a fall from a “purer and higher ‘primal status’.” The distance Heidegger places between his and Augustine’s falls, however, cannot ignore some striking similarities. I hope to identify Augustine’s notion of the fall, and to show the differences and similarities between the theological and the phenomenological

\textsuperscript{188} Heidegger, Martin, “Overcoming Metaphysics,” from The End of Philosophy, 85: “Metaphysics cannot be abolished like an opinion. One can by no means leave it behind as a doctrine no longer believed and represented”

concepts of falling. In the end, both experiences have to do with issues of “ultimate concern,” of life and death, and in strikingly similar ways. Nevertheless, we will always allow Heidegger’s contention to remain in the forefront of our minds: “This term does not express any negative evaluation”\footnote{Cf. Heidegger, Martin, Being and Time, H175-176, p. 220: This term does not express any negative evaluation . . . . So neither must we take the fallenness of Dasein as a “fall” from a purer and higher ‘primal status’. Not only do we lack any experience of this ontically, but ontologically we lack any possibilities in which Dasein maintains itself for the most part.}—whatever that may mean. The question I raise here is to what extent, sleeping (or even waking) within Augustine’s concept of the fall of man, is there a nascent questioning of the issue of Being? To what extent does Augustine also practice a phenomenology in terms of falling?

2.4 Augustine’s Fall as Entry of Death Into Life

Augustine wrote the City of God in defense of the accusations lodged by the pagans: that the advent and rise of Christianity was the cause of the fall of the Roman Empire. Within this theo-political treatise we have the demarcation of the two cities, the city of man and the city of God, the first in submission to human will and projects, the second in submission to God the Sovereign of the universe, brought to human knowledge in the soteriological work of Christ, forgiver, Redeemer, and second Adam of a new race and city. From the dawning height of this second city, Augustine reflects now upon the origins of the first in which pride and violence rules, and formulates how the second must overcome the first. This is the context in which Augustine articulates the theology of the fall.
For Augustine, the fall is originary disobedience, the result of which is death. The first nature of man is “vitiated” and altered by an act of disobedience to the perfect will of God. But the way this story plays out from Augustine’s thinking is not so simply stated. For no sooner has Augustine concluded that death is the result of the sin than he immediately gets lost in an aporia of death. It turns out that Augustine does not know when death is, exactly. While we may be tempted to say that this aporia derives from our confusion or the “weakness” of our mental powers, for Augustine, the equivocation of life and death is the necessary result of being-towards-death itself; something is said, therefore, about our being. The equivocation between life and death reverberates and troubles Augustine’s neat definition of the fall from the beginning. Like Derrida, Augustine oversees and follows these equivocations, or différence, of death in language itself. Death comes unhinged from a mere concept while Augustine releases his own discourse to swoon in the face of death’s abyss. Death reveals itself in the breakdown of not merely our language about death, but in any attempt to comprehend it, which, as we will see again and again, as much means to apprehend it in metaphysics’ singular and falling will to power. These kinds of considerations take us into another way of understanding what Heidegger seems, on the surface, to easily dismiss.

Before he notices the waters troubling, Augustine puts it most simply at first. God did not create men like the angels, “completely incapable of death.” However, if humans continued in perfect obedience they would have been granted the immortality of the angels and an eternity of bliss, without the

---

191 Originary in this Heideggerian sense, that it is equiprimordial with and the cause of the being of mortal human beings. Also, as I will continue to unpack, this nature is from the beginning marked by its mortality, for both Heidegger and Augustine, as well as for Lacan.
interposition of death, whereas if disobedient they would justly be
condemned to the punishment of death.¹⁹²

Immediately, Augustine finds it necessary to “explain more carefully the kind of death I
am talking about,” before declaring thereafter even, “I do not know when anyone is
living.”¹⁹³ Augustine further confesses that death is “so troublesome a reality that it
cannot be explained by any verbal formula, nor got rid of by any rational argument.”¹⁹⁴

To assist him in dealing with death, Augustine employs the traditional Classical
distinction between body and soul. The immortal human soul is the gateway to death,
for without the former there could be no latter. The soul is immortal, for it “never
ceases to live and feel,” and it gives life to the body.¹⁹⁵ The body is mortal in that it can
be and will be lifeless. The soul is the life of the body; when it abandons the body, the
body is left lifeless, dead. Being immortal, God is the source of the soul’s life. But when
God’s life is taken from the soul, one dies a “second death.” This is called the “‘the death
of the soul’ because it [the soul] no longer derives life from God.”¹⁹⁶ Otherwise, these
two natures, soul and body, adhere together.

In the fall, human being was “vitiates,” and this change was congenital. Man was
“cast down.”¹⁹⁷ Death enters the entire human family as all the progeny of Adam and

2003), 510.
¹⁹³ Ibid., 518.
¹⁹⁴ Ibid., 520.
¹⁹⁵ Ibid., 510.
¹⁹⁶ Ibid., 511.
¹⁹⁷ Cf. Ibid., 512-513:
Therefore the whole human race was in the first man, and it was to pass from him through the
woman into his progeny, when the married pair had received the divine sentence of
Eve receive their sinfulness genetically, so great is this change in the pair’s nature in the fall. Nevertheless, Augustine’s clear definition is troubled by the persistence of his own analysis. Within the great span of Augustine’s investigation into the fall and original sin, the dimensions and time of death will vacillate from that little moment when the life of the soul forsakes the body to a greater duration, stretching from human birth and engulfing his/her entire life.

The first difficulty arises when Augustine is trying to pinpoint the exact moment of dying:

Thus it is difficult to explain how we can describe people as dying . . .

Therefore a man who is dying must be living; for when he is in the last extremity, ‘giving up the ghost’ as we say, he is evidently still alive, because his soul has not yet left him . . . he is not yet in death, because the soul has not yet departed. But when the soul has departed, he will not be in death, but after it. Then can anyone say precisely when one is in death? . . . As long as the soul is in the body we clearly cannot say a man is not living . . . I do not know when anyone is living.\[198\]

The next chapter title reformulates the issue in a dramatic and surprising way: “The life of mortals: should it be called death?”:

In fact, from the moment a man begins to exist in this body which is destined to die, he is involved all the time in a process whose end is death. For this is the end to which the life of continual changes is all the time directed, if indeed we can give the name of life to this passage towards death.\[199\]

\[198\] Ibid., 518.

\[199\] Ibid.
Indeed, the “whole of our lifetime is nothing but a race towards death,” and every human rushes headlong at the same speed as every other to this end. Man is always “nearing” toward death. Augustine chooses to call this beginning-to-die that arrives with the advent of every life the condition—“to be in death,” death being the “taking away of life,” whereas “everyone is in death from the moment that he begins his bodily existence.” Augustine concludes, because life is being taken away from him from the beginning, that man is “dying all the time.”

To resolve this predicament – when does man die if not the entire time he is living? – Augustine tries to identify three categories—before death, in death, after death, corresponding to three adjectives respectively: living, dying, and dead. He quickly admits again: “This makes it very hard to define when he is dying, that is “in death,” for he/she is neither living (before death), nor dead (after death) but dying or in death.” But each of these leads to another, unacceptable conclusion, and man is never caught in the moment of death, “in death.”

What a strange notion that the being-in-death of a mortal human being is, that it is as impossible to identify as the present moment. Death throws mortal being into a paradox. Death appears and marks the passage of time in the most originary way, in that the time of mortals, human time/existence itself, is inaugurated the moment that death comes into life. To what extent, then, does time come into existence, along with

---

200 Ibid., 519.
201 Ibid.
202 Ibid.
203 Ibid., 520: Therefore he is never detected in the situation of dying, or ‘in death’. The same thing happens in the passage of time; we try to find the present moment, but without success, because the future changes into the past without interval.
the human, with death? All the features here seem to blur. Augustine will continually shatter his reflection upon this impenetrable fact: that death brings human beings into existence at the same time that human being brings death into existence. Without death, no human; without the human, no death. Death is then something more than (though also encompassing) biological death.

Just when we think Augustine has resolved the problem, or at least decided to move on after conceding that we should just conform “to normal usage,” the issue rears its head again, persistently dogging Augustine’s discourse. Scripture itself brings him back to the conundrum, for those who are in death are like those who are “deep in sleep,” yet while one can say that one is sleeping, one cannot say of the one in death that he/she is dying.204 Augustine then launches into a fascinating grammatological analysis that draws together all of these streams and frustrations into profound dissonance.205

Augustine’s grammatical conclusions correspond with my questions about the human, death, and time. In not being able to decline death, the word has been included with adjective (fatuus, arduus, conspicuus), “with no reference to past time . . . without any

204 Ibid., 521:
   But [yet again] this is what I said could not be explained by any verbal formula . . . For how can they be ‘after death’ if they are still ‘in death;’ especially as we do not say that they are dying, as we say that those in sleep are ‘sleeping’ and those in a faint are ‘fainting’, those in sorrow are certainly ‘sorrowing’ and those in life are ‘living’? And yet the dead, until they rise again, are said to be ‘in death’, although they cannot be called ‘the dying.’

205 Ibid., 521:
   Hence I find it significant and appropriate—though it happened not by human design, but perhaps by divine decision—that the grammarians have not been able to decline (or conjugate) the Latin verb mortitur (‘he dies’) by the same rule as other verbs of this form. For from oritur (‘he arises’) comes the past tense ortus est (‘he has arisen’), and all similar verbs are decline in the perfect with the perfect participle. But if we ask the perfect of mortitur, the invariable answer is mortuus est (‘he has died’ or ‘he is dead’), with the doubling of the u. Now mortuus is a word of the same form as fatuus (‘silly’), arduus (‘steep’), conspicuus (‘visible’) and others, with no reference to past time; they are adjectives, and as such are declined without any temporal implications. The adjective mortuus, however, is used instead of the perfect participle as if to give a conjugation for an impossible tense. And so, most appropriately, the verb cannot be declined in speech, just as the reality which it signifies cannot be declined (that is, avoided) by any action.
temporal implications” whatsoever, “as if to give a conjugation for an impossible tense.” Augustine directly asks which of the multiple deaths God intended when he issued his commandment to Adam—death of the soul, of body, of the whole person, or was it the second death? To which Augustine answers, “All of these deaths.”206 The temporality of death remains confounding.

2.5 Death of the Soul, Death of the Body

The arising of the pair’s pudenda, “organs of shame,” around which there was no shame prior, indicate a “novel disturbance,” a flesh that becomes disobedient to the soul as a consequence of the soul’s disobedience to God.207 In this way, the flesh began to “lust in opposition to the spirit” (Galatians 5:17).

which is the conflict that attends us from our birth. We bring with us, at our birth, the beginning of our death and the vitiation of our nature… our body is the scene of death’s assault, or rather of his victory, as the result of that first disobedience.208

Augustine continues his vertiginous equivocation between the temporality of life and death. When God promises, “You will certainly die” if Adam should take and eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, Augustine reminds us that in the Vulgate this is, “literally, ‘You will die by the death’.”209 This, Augustine argues, indicates the second death when the “soul is forsaken by its own life,” which is God. The soul first

206 Ibid., 522.

207 Cf. Ibid. Later on, Augustine says that this insurrection of the body, which now became disobedient to the soul, first evidenced itself in an “anxious curiosity,” and that the two covered their “shameful parts because an excitement, which resisted voluntary control, made them ashamed” (Ibid., 546).

208 Ibid., 523.

209 Ibid.
forsook and is consequently forsaken. Does this mean that the *first* death *is* the *second* death, chronologically? Apparently, for when God asks Adam where he is, when Adam and Eve are hiding themselves in their humiliation, “out of [their] wits with fear,” God is not ignorant of the location. Rather, for Augustine, the Lord was signifying to Adam the *distance* that had grown between them, inviting Adam “to take notice where he was, in that God was not with him.”

The first death, death of the body, comes later both in its reality and its enunciation, when the body is worn out by time and use. Again, elsewhere Augustine identifies the death of the soul, or at least God’s enunciation of it, *before* the death of the body.

There is a strange element evoked in Augustine’s very own being—towards-death of the mortal. The fall introduced death into the life of human beings, and that in at least a twofold way; the second, or total death, however, is not annihilation, since the soul is immortal. Rather, the second death becomes total in that it is an “eternal death.”

Though death in its first sense cannot be declined—Augustine’s punning on grammatical declining and practical refusing—“with the help of the grace of our Redeemer we may be enabled to decline (avoid) that second death.” The second death,

---

210 Ibid., 524.

211 Ibid.

212 Cf. Ibid., 537–538:
   But when God asked, “Where are you, Adam?” he signified the death of the soul, which came about when he forsook it; and when he said, “You are earth, and unto the earth you will go,” he signified the death of the body, which comes about when the soul forsakes it.

213 Ibid., 517.

214 Ibid., 521.
announced first to the human pair, before the death of the body, nevertheless maintains the union of body and soul for “eternal punishment,” whereas this union is severed by the first death.\textsuperscript{215}

According to Augustine, this is the distinction Christ is making when he says that we ought not fear man, who can only kill the body but cannot touch the soul, but rather fear God, who can throw both body and soul into Gehenna.

This temporality of death will always be strange, even in its association with eternity. Because of the fall, the human bears a unique relationship, through death, with time. We are forever “handed over to time and old age, for them to make an end to him.”\textsuperscript{216} As I move forward, I will come again to show that this death and life and this temporality has everything to do with human \textit{being}.

\textbf{2.6 The Fall and the Itinerary of the Soul in Two Cities}

Again, the human being is divided into two, body and soul, the first a lower part, the second the “better part,” the better rational soul breathed into the body, in-spired.\textsuperscript{217} By virtue of an act of free will, death is introduced into life by an attempted usurpation of the natural order, a “lawless presumption” followed by a “just condemnation.”\textsuperscript{218} In its

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{215} Ibid.: There, by contrast, men will not be in the situations of ‘before death’ and ‘after death’, but always ‘in death’, and for this reason they will never be living, never dead, but dying for all eternity. In fact, man will never be ‘in death’ in a more horrible sense than in that state where death itself will be deathless.
\item \textsuperscript{216} Ibid., 537.
\item \textsuperscript{217} Ibid., 542.
\item \textsuperscript{218} Ibid., 512.
\end{itemize}
act of disobedience and defiance, “at its own pleasure the soul deserted its superior.”

As a result, the soul is already dead as much as living.

Because of that original fall there are two cities, two societies within which human beings can partake, the first being necessary; the rule of the second, in the end, will become inevitable. To substantiate the Christian city and to demarcate the boundaries between the two is, of course, Augustine’s reason for writing City of God. The origin of these cities, that is, the splitting of the one family of humankind into two, resides in the place marked by the term “fall,” the fall of man (and woman). Human existence is marked by three singularities and their temporalities. Separating the singularity of creation (ex nihilo) and the redemptive singularity of Christ is this singularity of the fall. The human nature God created with a free will chose itself instead as lord, self-rule over God-rule, and thereby brought death to its life and vitiated its nature, an “alteration” that would pass genetically into all the offspring of those parents whose nature was so vitiated.

While the fall was a determining condition for human Being, and to that extent every human being, the city of man is the society formed out of this initial (originary) decision. Human society is built upon this fissure, the evidence of which shines most profoundly for Augustine in the fact that, since all of humanity shared one ancestor in Adam, it was supposed to have been brought together as one, as one family. This entire human family is supposed to be held together with the “bond of peace.” Yet, since the

---

219 Ibid., 522.

220 Ibid., 545: “The soul . . . may be spoken of as dead because of sin, in that it loses one kind of life, namely the Spirit of God . . . Still, it does not cease to live with a kind of life of its own, however wretched, since it is created immortal.”
bond was broken, there are two cities instead. One city of men chooses to live under the “standard of the flesh,” the other under that of the spirit.221

Man as we have only ever known him—as mortal—came into existence, essentially, at the fall as death entered life. The unity with self and other possible was sundered from the beginning. As a result, man built his city founded upon self-rule and death, just as he brought death to his fellow man in forsaking the pact of filiality, of brother- and sister-hood.222

This strange ek-stasis represents the temporality of an eternal death—i.e., the present and Now—that is that death, too. There is something primordially Heideggerian about this being-towards-death in which humans are caught; or rather, there is something so Augustinian about Heidegger’s being-towards-death, as Augustine is one of Heidegger’s most influential, if disavowed, sources.

At the very least it is this death that is responsible for severing the relations among human beings and spurring them onto violence, as we will see again so profoundly with Lacan. The fault of the flesh is fundamentally a “fault of the mind.”223 “The flesh is the cause of every moral failing,” but “flesh” not in the gnostic

221 Ibid., 547.

222 Cf. Ellul, Jacques, The Meaning of the City, trans. Dennis Pardee (Eugene: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2011), 6. French theologian and jurist, Jacques Ellul, brilliantly articulated the relationship between death, disobedience and the city in modern terms that might be seen as the elaboration of the Augustinian conception. For Ellul, the city is the counter-creation to God’s creation and order. Death actually first makes itself known in the form of Cain’s murder of Abel, and Cain’s subsequent building of the first city—in blatant contradiction of God’s own curse that Cain should be a “homeless wanderer”—further reveals the extent of human rebellion: Cain begins—that is, he reduces God to a hypothesis, to the domain of the superfluous and unreal. Just as history begins with the murder of Abel—since before death there is no way for us to learn man’s history, and the death that resulted in the fall first manifested itself as murder—so civilization begins with the city and all that it represents. With Cain’s beginning with Enoch, we have a sure starting place for all civilization. Paradise becomes a legend and creation a myth.

223 Ibid., 549-550.
understanding in which the body is sinful and corrupted. Rather, the corruptible flesh has become a weight to the soul (as it is contingently for Socrates), become master of the soul—death has made the being of man problematic because it is the punishment for the soul’s rebellion: “And it was not corruptible flesh that made the soul sinful; it was the sinful soul that made the flesh corruptible.”

The root of this fall, for Augustine, the root of all sin, is pride: “the fountain-head of all these evils is pride.” Man’s pride is conditioned by “living by the standard of man” rather than by the “standard of God,” self-rule over God-rule, and this by definition puts human life into “falsehood” as opposed to God’s “truth.” Every sin is a falsehood because, dialectically, seeking to find its good in self-rule, the soul rather finds its misfortune. Pride usurps the natural design in which the soul is called to obedience.

“Now, could anything but pride have been the start of the evil will?” Augustine asks, seeing as the evil act was born from such a will, the evil of which arose “in secret.” In pride, man longs for a “perverse kind of exaltation, to abandon the basis on which the mind should be firmly fixed, and to become, as it were, bases on oneself, and

---

224 Ibid., 551.
225 Ibid., 552.
226 Cf. Ibid.: The fact is that man was created right, on condition that he should live by the standard of his creator, not by his own, carrying out not his own will, but his creators. Falsehood consists in not living in the way for which he was created.
227 Ibid., 553.
228 Ibid., 571: the mother and guardian of all other virtues in a rational creature, seeing that the rational creation has been so made that it is to man’s advantage to be in subjection to God, and it is calamitous for him to act according to his own will, and not to obey the will of his Creator.
229 Ibid.
so remain.” The reversal happens when the changeless is replaced by the changing, when the contingent self attempts to take the place of the changeless Good. By replacing the “changeless Good” as his foundation for himself, he placed a null as his basis. What is more, Augustine reckons that man’s *creatio ex nihilo* is precisely what condition him for a fall.

In the end, ontologically speaking, the fall of the human, brought about by the human being attempting to usurp his/her ground and replacing it with his/her own will, actually brings the human being closer to the *nihil* from whence he/she comes.

Since it did not bring itself into being, and would remain nothing in itself, human being cannot become the ground of itself, the ground of its being. Insisting upon itself, it is “nearer the nothingness” that, in itself, it would still be and, in being-towards-death, already, in ek-stasis, *is*. Indeed, as it insists upon itself it brings itself nearer to nothingness and more fully into the presence of “eternal death.”

Is Augustine caught in a contradiction here, for how is a greater nearness to nothingness commensurate with the eternal death, the deathless death, of the second death? For Augustine, what do nothingness and death have in common? If, say, nothingness is relegated to the time and being *prior* to the existence of an individual human (which is immortal in soul after the soul comes into existence), and if death is that which *follows* (if not conditions through the presencing of second death) that

---

230 Ibid.

231 Ibid., 572:

But only a nature created out of nothing could have been distorted by a fault. Consequently, although the will derives its existence, as a nature, from its creation by God, its falling away from its true being is due to its creation out of nothing. Yet man did not fall away to the extent of losing all being; but when he had turned towards himself his being was less real than when he adhered to him who exists in a supreme degree. And so, to abandon God and to exist in oneself, that is to please oneself, is not immediately to lose all being; but it is to come nearer to nothingness.
existence, how can it be said that in insistence of its own will and self-love the human
comes "nearer to nothingness," if nothingness is only the condition of the soul’s
preexistence and is not where its existence is headed, whether that being is headed for
the Heavenly City or the eternity of the second, deathless, death?

I would not know how to resolve this situation except by delving further into an
ontological investigation like Heidegger’s. In doing so, we would run up to the same
hesitation and linguistic and real aporia that Augustine expresses, that in dealing with
death and nothingness we are approaching “a reality that cannot be explained by any
verbal formula, nor got rid of by any rational argument.”232 Heidegger expresses it in
strikingly similar terms in his later work, too, by saying that mortals are such because
they “are able experience death as death.” This does not mean that they know what they
experience when they face death, but as death they are presented with death as death.
Mortals are called such “because they can die” and face the “shrine of Nothing.”233

Augustine himself has in some way prepared the question of Being that
Heidegger is keen on, and even in strikingly similar terms: the question is the degree to
which death and time and the being of mortals are interwoven. For Heidegger, mortals
are, in their being-towards-death, not deficient due to their experience of death; death is
rather a capability by which Being presences in relationship. Augustine may contend
that death is an evil, but at times he says that the fall of death opens us up to the

232 Ibid., 520.

233 Heidegger, Martin, “The Thing,” from Poetry, Language, Thought, 176:
... that is, of that which in every respect is never something that merely exists, but which
nevertheless presences, even as the mystery of Being itself. As the shrine of Nothing, death
harbors within itself the presencing of Being. As the shrine of Nothing, death is the shelter of
Being. We now call mortals mortals—not because their earthly life comes to an end, but because
they are capable of death as death. Mortals are who they are, as mortals, present in the shelter of
Being. They are the presencing relation to Being as Being . . . Rational living beings must first
become mortals
possibility heretofore precluded from human being. The fall and death are a capability in that in humiliation, human nature is returned to the possibility of locating its source again.

2.7 Conclusion

Thus, in his own way, Augustine brings us to the limits of the mind in his concept of the fall. Through a fault of mind, a secret sin, cultivated/inspired by the fantasy of a cunning word—“You will be like gods”—the will fell into self-willing, self-pleasure, and tried to replace its ground, its being, with itself, to become the basis of its own being; the result of which brought itself nearer to nothingness and introduced itself to punishment for disobedience unto death. Augustine concludes: “. . . no one can fail to see that there is a fall where there is an obvious and unmistakable transgression of a commandment.”

Contrary to this “sinful persuasion,” paradoxically in the divine economy of the Heavenly City, “exaltation abases and humility exalts,” for the former sets itself up necessarily for a fall while the latter plants its feet firmly upon solid ground, “makes the mind subject to what is superior.” Augustine articulates the double structure of falling: the structure of the fall is dictated by the nature of the stand taken; and the “devout humility” that begins from where each human finds him/herself ensures that the person can stand firmly upon his/her ground. Augustine goes further to say that humiliation is the good of the fall.

---

234 Augustine, City of God, 573.

235 Ibid., 572.

236 Ibid.
I venture to say that it is of service to the proud that they should fall into some obvious sin, which can make them dissatisfied with themselves, after they have fallen through self-complacency. Peter’s dissatisfaction with himself, when he wept, was healthier than his complacency when he was over-confident. We find the same thought in a verse of a holy psalm: “Fill their faces with shame, and they will seek your name, Lord,” which means: “They set their heart on themselves in seeking their own name; let them set their heart on you, by seeking yours.”

We do not have to embrace Augustine’s metaphysics or theology to appreciate the clear phenomenological structure of falling that he is articulating in his own concept of the fall, one bearing striking resemblance to Heidegger’s falling. Heidegger in turn uses falling to describe the condition, tradition and culmination of the history of metaphysics. Strangely enough, Augustine is some kind of mean between Heidegger and Lacan: the tradition of metaphysics replicates this structure of falling in Western thinking and civilization, reaching its culminations in Nietzsche’s overcoming of metaphysics. That is, in tracking the falling of metaphysics through to its end, we will see the very turn and humiliation Augustine prefigures and advocates in that late prophet of the will to power who at the closure of this/his history, will, in his own humiliation, turn instead at his final moment to another kind of power the West has never honored—will-lessness. In Nietzsche this force is exemplified in the humiliation of his collapse in Turin and his last signature as “the Crucified.” And on the other side, Lacan exhibits the same relationship of death and the nothingness of the subject to the aggressiveness of its self-assertion in reaction to its constitutional powerlessness and emptiness/absence. It is the

---

237 Lacan comes so terribly close to this very formulation and idea in his neologism self-suffiance. Unfortunately, this philosophy grasps that negativity only within the limits of a self-sufficiency* of consciousness, which, being on of its premises, ties the illusion of autonomy in which it puts its faith to the ego’s constitutive misrecognitions. (Lacan, Jacques, “The Mirror Stage as Formative of the I Function,” from Écrits, 79.)

238 Augustine, City of God, 573-574.
narcissism and insistence of the subject that damns the subject to a life of death, a living death, just as Augustine postulates. Lacan, furthermore, will even offer that Augustine prefigures psychoanalysis.

But in all of these cases the phenomenological structure remains. Philosophically, civilizationally, practically, individually, we fall to humiliation due to the nature of our stand. That humiliation is the plunge that in turn holds within itself a uniquely human possibility, that we might stop, take stock of our humiliation, that we were brought thereby back to our *humus*, to the ground, to the earth, where we derive from and dwell upon, facing illimitable death with one another, exorbitantly limited in power and knowledge, and able therefore to start anew right where we already are, the last place our perpetual falling would have us land.

Throughout the rest of this dissertation I am concerned with attending to the uniqueness and simplicity of such questions. What is falling, for us, and what does it tell us about ourselves, our being, and Being itself? The light this everyday and ubiquitous experience sheds upon these questions is momentous, and I will follow the path set out by Heidegger first and, later, by Lacan.

We have already seen how Heidegger provides an elaboration of the concept of falling as a phenomenological/existential/ontological exploration of human being as Dasein. Falling is the way that our being takes place, the *da* – here/there – of our Sein, first and for the most part. The mode of our being is characterized by this phenomenon of falling. We fall away from ourselves, our being, and into the world and against beings in the world. In falling, we are characterized by, among other things, dispersal, average everydayness, absorption, submission to the They, tranquilizing, alienating, closure into
inauthenticity, downward plunge, curiosity, turbulence, lostness and fleeing in the face of death.

In the next chapter I am going to follow this trail of falling into Heidegger’s so-called later thinking. While Heidegger drops much of the existential analytic vocabulary of *Being and Time*, not only does the structure of falling always remain discernable and constant, but Heidegger elaborates the concept of falling into the broader discourse of the truth of being. Falling, I will show, has to do with the human relationship to being and to the truth, the *aletheia*, of being. Falling is the mode of human comportment to truth itself, and the *how* in which humans in Western metaphysics find themselves in the truth.

For Heidegger, the realities of death, Dasein, comportment, etc., remain preeminent in the experience of falling. But always there will stand this strange tension in which Augustine’s concept of the fall resonates so profoundly and these precise junctures with Heidegger’s concept. *Pride* and *humiliation* are the co-conditioning experiences of falling. The presencing of death, human being-towards-death is both introduced to the human and precipitated by its falling; at the same time, its falling retrospectively reveals its freedom. Particularly within Western metaphysics, humans have placed themselves, their minds and wills within a strange comportment to truth, one that ensures a unique and certain kind of fall. Humiliation can only be the consequence. Even human thinking is riddled with this “fault of mind,” this in-sistent comportment, attack upon beings, and abandonment of Being that ensure the metaphysical fall. Since metaphysics qualifies the kind of thinking of Western humanity, the fall – from its Augustinian, Heideggerian and Lacanian explications – qualify the
mode of metaphysical being. Metaphysical humanity takes a certain stand and is destined for a certain fall, and all of this in his relation to being. As Heidegger will demonstrate, Nietzsche is the prophet and exemplar of this stand and fall in the will to power (and death of God), the singular, defining concept and destiny of metaphysical falling. In Lacan we will gain a conversance with the subjectivity that forms around this continuing turbulence.
Chapter 3: Heidegger and the Genesis of Truth

3.1 Introduction

Why is truth so essential for Heidegger, but in a retrospective sense that harkens back to the ancients, to Greece? “Everything depends upon this alone, that the truth of being come to language and that thinking attain to this language.” Indeed, “the essence of truth is the truth of essence.” The essence of truth is preeminent because the way this essence has been determined philosophically has been reciprocally codetermining for Da-sein under the auspices of Western metaphysics. The direction of Western metaphysics derives from decisions about this essence of truth, but these decisions were made long ago and remain continuously determinative. The determination of the essence of truth determines, according to Heidegger, what is regarded as true in any given epoch of this history and, furthermore, “what is thrown away and passed over as untrue.”

Heidegger sees every instantiation of metaphysical thinking, no matter how diverse, as a similar stance undergirded by a single, more originary decision upon the essence of truth. It is not obvious to us that and how this essence of truth has changed, and therefore we are unclear as to what the effects on “historical human beings” might be. We may hint here again that what Heidegger is addressing in this passage and in all

---


of his thinking on the essence of truth is originarily, i.e., from the *Ursprung*, the well-spring that keeps on springing in the presence of the thing, related not only to the question of falling and metaphysics, but just as importantly to the question of the divine, the holy, the gods, the godhead, and even the dead, the invisible, the hidden—all that which is (increasingly) precluded from that inceptual, metaphysical decision on the essence of truth that still (thinks it) reigns over what is true and “what is thrown away and passed over as untrue.” It *thinks it* reigns, but time reveals that every “object” of such a thinking proves how limited its power actually is; and furthermore, the essence of technology comes to reveal just how confined and powerless in the human is by the reins by which we think we reign metaphysically. This self-appointed and hasty judgment of the true and untrue that stems from the previous, ancient decision on the essence of truth has everything to do with what comes to be called the “death of God” and, furthermore, the thinker’s relationship to this death.\(^\text{242}\) The way we define the essence of truth bears immediately and genealogically with the essence of the human and, therefore, the human being’s relation to the essence of the holy and God—which is

\[^{242}\text{Cf. Heidegger, Martin, “Letter on ‘Humanism,” from Pathmarks, 264: “Because we refer to the word of Nietzsche on the ‘death of God’ people regard such a gesture as atheism. For what is more ‘logical’ than that whoever has experienced the death of God is godless?”}]

In the *Letter on “Humanism”* (1946), this labeling untrue is combined with modern devolution under the dominion of *das Mann*, of public opinion:

> But because it stems from the dominance of subjectivity the public realm itself is the metaphysically conditioned establishment and authorization of the openness of beings in the unconditional objectification of everything…In this way language comes under the dictatorship of the public realm, which *decides in advance what is intelligible and what must be rejected as unintelligible* [emphasis added]. What is said in *Being and Time* (1927), sections 27 and 35, about the ‘they’ in no way means to furnish an incidental contribution sociology…Rather, what is said there contains a reference, thought in terms of the question of the truth of being, to the primordial belonging of the word to being. This relation remains concealed amid the dominance of subjectivity that presents itself as the public realm. (Ibid., 243)

This passage already highlights all the features that we will explore about *das Mann* in its proper place below, but it also links up a number of features together that are not immediately visible within that context, namely, that the “question of the truth of being” is the concealed relation with the “primordial belonging of the word to being.” The combination of the change in the essence of truth with the domination of public opinion is an important linchpin.
very special for thinking in that the divine is something which *is and remains in no wise determinable by humans.*\(^{243}\) All of this we will arrive at again over the course of time.

But for now, the way the essence of truth is determined as reciprocally codeterminative for the essence of *metaphysical* humankind; therefore, this relationship is essential for the *comportment* of human beings toward other beings – including to any god or gods. Hence in the “Letter on ‘Humanism’” we find a powerful synthesis passage in which Heidegger argues that human beings are “thrown” by being into the truth, unconcealment, of being. In being thus thrown, we are meant to “guard the truth of being” and be the “shepherd of being” by letting beings arise and depart in their own destiny, thrown as they are by being, too. Humans do not decide if or how beings appear, particularly those beings named as gods: humans cannot decide “how God and the gods or history and nature come forward into the clearing of being, come to presence and depart.” The uniqueness of the human place, then, is the nature of the stand within the opening of the truth of beings that being unconceals or conceals. This stand is correspondingly determinative in the structure of falling.\(^{244}\)

Here we can see that the truth of being is the crux of all of Heidegger’s philosophy: “the *essence of truth is essentially one with the essence of Being itself.*” Also: “*The truth of be-ing is the be-ing of truth.*”\(^{245}\) The English word *truth,* from the Old English *twieweth, treoweth,* means “faithfulness” or “constancy.” *Aletheia,* however, according to

\(^{243}\) Cf. Heidegger, Martin, *The Question Concerning Technology,* 49:
Whether the god lives or remains dead is not decided by the religiosity of men and even less by the theological aspirations of philosophy and natural science. Whether or not God is God comes disclosingly to pass from out of and within the constellation of Being.

\(^{244}\) Heidegger, Martin, “Letter on ‘Humanism’,” from *Pathmarks,* 252.

Heidegger, is best translated as unoncealment or unhiddenness; furthermore, this unconcealment is related to a clearing. Most simply stated, the essence of truth is unconcealment (Unverborgenheit). This original Greek definition of truth underwent a transformation that was decisive for the history of the West, however: it transformed from a human engagement with the play of unconcealment and concealment of being to the freedom of a rational being to assent to ideas that correspond to things, represented in the formula, adaequatio intellectus et rei.

Heidegger therefore lays out the path of a fall occurring concomitantly with the renegotiation of the essence of truth and the destiny of Western metaphysics, and therefore marks a change in the thinking comportment to the truth of being and to beings as a whole, which culminates in the modern essence of technology (as the current reigning truth of being).

---

246 Cf. Heidegger, Martin, Heraclitus Seminar, trans. Marnie Hanlon (London: Continuum, 2007), 162: Our concern is to experience unoncealment as clearing. That is what is unthought in what is thought in the whole history of thought. In Hegel, the need consisted in the satisfaction of thought. For us, on the contrary, the plight of what is unthought in what is thought reigns. See also, Heidegger, Martin, “The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking,” from On Time and Being, 66: Accordingly we may suggest that the day will come when we will not shun the question whether the opening, the free open, may not be that within which alone pure space and ecstatic time and everything present and absent in them have the place which gathers and protects everything.

247 This notion of truth is explicated even in Being and Time, along with the its contrast with all the historical “truth-relations” (adaequatio, agreement, correctness, correct judgment, assertion, etc.). Cf. Heidegger, Martin, Being and Time, H212-230, p. 236-273. As following investigations will confirm, “The Being of truth is connected primordially with Dasein” (p. 272).

248 Heidegger, Martin, “Plato’s Doctrine of Truth,” from Pathmarks, 168: “And for a long time now in Western thinking, truth has meant the agreement of the representation in thought with the thing itself: adaequatio intellectus et rei.”

249 Heidegger, Martin, The Question Concerning Technology, 43: “The danger is the epoch of Being coming to presence as Enframing.”
3.2 The Truth of Plato, and Beyond

This “transformation in the essence of truth” occurred decisively in Plato when the essence of truth as unconcealment was subordinated to the essence of idea, to see, namely the idea of ideas, the *agnostos*. With Plato, the essence of truth “gives up its fundamental trait of unhiddenness” for the *idea*: “the *idea* gains dominance over *aletheia*” in Plato’s “allegory” of the cave.

The first thing we notice about unhiddenness (*aletheia*) is that truth is “a fundamental trait of beings themselves.” It is the region of the open itself that provides a place for beings to step out into their epiphany, and it is that region that they bring along with them in their presencing, that allows for their presencing. “Truth originally means what has been wrested from hiddenness.” For Plato, however, “the expository power behind the images of the ‘allegory’ is concentrated on the role played by…” according to Heidegger, the light: “…the fire, the fire’s glow and the shadow it casts, the brightness of day, the sunlight and the sun. Everything depends on the shining forth of whatever appears and on making its visibility possible.” Hence the *idien*, “to see,” which reorients the truth from outside of the human to within the perimeter of the human faculty of perception. Unconcealing, then, has been subordinated to the idea, to a human “catching the sight of . . .” Truth is thereby redefined as relative to human sight and seeing: truth means catching sight of the idea...

---

250 Heidegger, Martin, “Plato’s Doctrine of Truth,” from *Pathmarks*, 177.
251 Ibid., 176-7.
252 Ibid., 177.
253 Ibid., 171.
254 Ibid., 172.
as it shine’s before mental perception. As a result, truth becomes a matter of human perception; therefore, all that is true will be placed relative to human perception, while the untrue will increasingly be relegated to what cannot be seen or shown.\(^{255}\)

Following this incremental metaphorical reorientation of truth, the sun bestows a “sunlike” power to the eye, which in turn is able to receive and apprehend what appears. In Plato’s *Republic*, Socrates says that sight is sunlike, it receives its power from the sun and overflows that power to shine the light of sight upon what is and can be seen.\(^{256}\)

According to Plato, it is the *agathon*, the form of the Good, “the idea of ideas” that gives the truth to what we can know and the knower’s power to know. The Good is more beautiful than knowledge and truth, both of which it makes possible. It is not responsible only for the being-known of objects of knowledge but also for their being as such. Nevertheless, Socrates goes on, the Good is “not being” but superior to it in “rank and power.”\(^{257}\)

Heidegger’s reading follows Plato’s closely here, for the *agathon*, the idea of the Good is, in other words, capable of bringing the thing into being, making it knowable

\(^{255}\) Ibid., 173:
the unhidden always as what is accessible thanks to the idea’s ability to shine. But insofar as the access is necessarily carried out through ‘seeing,’ unhiddenness is yoked into a ‘relation’ with seeing, it becomes ‘relative’ to seeing.

\(^{256}\) Cf. Plato: Complete Works, “The Republic,” from *Complete Works*, trans. John M. Cooper and D.S. Hutchinson (Indianapolis: Hackett Pub., 1997), VI, 508: Sight “is the most sunlike of the senses…it receives from the sun the power it has, just like an influx from an overflowing treasure.”

\(^{257}\) Ibid., VI, 508.dff-509d:
So that what gives truth to the things known and the power to know of the knower is the form of the good [the idea of ideas]. And though it is the cause of knowledge and truth, it is also an object of knowledge. Both knowledge and truth are beautiful things, but the good is other and more beautiful than they…you should also say that not only do the objects of knowledge owe their being known to the good, but their being is also due to it, although the good is not being, but superior to it in rank and power.
(i.e., visible), and of making the knower capable of knowing. The conclusion, for Heidegger, is that if our comportment to being is always decided as a matter of the idea of ideas, catching sight of a “visible form,” then our efforts regarding what is true must be making seeing possible and making beings visible. What is required is “correct vision,” but this also includes being capable of placing beings before human perception so as to face the decision of truth or falsity. How we achieve this correct vision involves education and the solidification of the particularly metaphysical form of comportment toward truth.

Through the “turning” of παιδεία, “education/formation”, Bildung, “the gaze becomes more correct,” i.e., fixed more into “direct alignment” with the visible form, the idea of which makes the former visible to the understanding. The human comportment towards beings is thus shifted from unconcealment of beings themselves into the correctness of the gaze. Thus truth is defined as the correctness of apprehension and assertion.

Aristotle is even more solidly within this fissure developing in the essence of truth. On Heidegger’s reading, the false and the true no longer are so of things

---

258 Heidegger, Martin, “Plato’s Doctrine of Truth,” 174: “that which is capable of something and enables another to be capable of something. Every idea, the visible form of something, provides a look at what a being is in each case.”

259 Ibid., 177: “Truth becomes ὀρθότης, the correctness of apprehending and asserting.”

Cf. Heidegger, Martin, The Question Concerning Technology, 6:

To be sure. The correct always fixes upon something pertinent in whatever is under consideration. However, in order to be correct, this fixing by no means needs to uncover the thing in question in its essence. Only at the point where such an uncovering happens does the true come to pass [sich ereignet]. For that reason the merely correct is not yet the true. Only the true brings us into a free relationship with that which concerns us from out of its essence.

260 It would only make sense that there would be a struggle over the essence of truth, one that is albeit fairly unrecognized in the precision of its delimitations until Heidegger’s contribution (even today, we have a struggle going on that is located within the binary of “relative” vs. “absolute” truth, of interest to
themselves, but the relation lies solely within the intellect. Heidegger concludes that it is the “assertion of a judgment,” made on the part of the intellect where truth and falsity lie. An assertion is true insofar as it “conforms to the state of affairs.” Truth defined thus loses its relation to aletheia; rather, aletheia is thought as correctness, and this is the essence of truth according to metaphysics.

From now on this characterization of the essence of truth as the correctness of both representation and assertion becomes normative for the whole of Western thinking.

The primary consequence of all of this is what Heidegger calls the “humanism” inaugurated by Plato that always remains the same, even into its modern nomenclature, “whereby human beings, in differing respects but always deliberately, move into a central place among beings, of course, without thereby being the highest being.” This centrality is grasped by the metaphor of sight and seeing and light. Plato’s essence of

---

261 Heidegger, Martin, “Plato’s Doctrine of Truth,” from Pathmarks, 178: “In fact, the false and the true are not in things (themselves)...but in the intellect.”

262 Ibid., 178-179. Heidegger then goes on to “cite the guiding theses that typify the characterizations of the essence of truth in the main epochs of metaphysics.” Aquinas: vertai propri propituer in intellectu humano vel divino: “Truth is properly encountered in the human or in the divine intellect.” Descartes: “Truth or falsehood in the proper sense can be nowhere else but in the intellect alone.” And Heidegger cites the Nietzschean inversion that still remains within this essential thesis on truth: “Truth is the kind of error without which a certain kind of living being could not live.”

263 Ibid., 181.

264 It is interesting here again to return a moment to Henry and his “philosophy of Christianity,” for the sake of elucidating the thematic “Christo-logical” thread that will be exposed fully, in the final part of this dissertation, after Heidegger has offered all the way along the path that he himself could go. We see here yet again an argument that Christianity bears within it another phenomenology entirely than that shared by the provenance of Greek thinking. Heidegger continuously sees Christianity as one of the greatest proponents and propogations of metaphysics itself. Henry’s most fascinating rebuttal lies in this fabulous
truth is not therefore located historically in the past, but is rather ever-present and continuously unfolding as world history and globalization modernity.\footnote{Heidegger, Martin, “Plato’s Doctrine of Truth,” from \textit{Pathmarks}, 182-182: The essence of truth as it is presented with Plato’s philosophy is not located historically within the past but is rather “present as the all-dominating fundamental reality—long established and thus still in place—of the ever-advancing world history of the planet in this most modern of modern times.}

Truth taken as such means that “one thinks all being according to ‘ideas’ and evaluates all reality according to ‘values.’”\footnote{Ibid., 182.} This displacement of the essence of truth is a displacement of the place of truth itself.\footnote{Cf. Heidegger, Martin, \textit{Being and Truth}, trans. Gregory Fried and Richard F. H Polt (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010), 96: “The characterization of truth as correctness displaces truth into the proposition”} Whereas truth was once conceived as a matter of beings—and earlier even, a matter of being—the locus of truth has been displaced into the centrality of the human subject, into the mind of the human, which becomes the seat of judgment, the adjudication of truth and falsity, the gravity around which all things must bend and before which all things must bow. The progress of Western metaphysics as the history of this concealed truth of being, the epochs of its long-varying decision, confirms this.

We find, then, that the fall of metaphysics at its inception always includes this essential feature: the human being is self-appointed within the center of things, as commander-in-chief, as judge of the highest things—whereas it used to be that the

\footnote{Heidegger, Martin, “Plato’s Doctrine of Truth,” from \textit{Pathmarks}, 182-182: The essence of truth as it is presented with Plato’s philosophy is not located historically within the past but is rather “present as the all-dominating fundamental reality—long established and thus still in place—of the ever-advancing world history of the planet in this most modern of modern times.}
highest things were the judge of him.\textsuperscript{268} Right at the inception of Western metaphysics, with Plato, we find the early instance of a long decision of humans to “move into a central place among beings.”\textsuperscript{269} While this decision may be carried out with innumerable variations, it is always within the essence of falling. Falling humans always elevate themselves “higher” – or rather, into a different, untenable sphere – than knowledge of their being provides for; they overreach, just as Kant diagnosed human thinking overreaching in metaphysics itself, even though Kant actually heightens the centrality of subjectivity to apperception. Both Montaigne and Pascal used the French word \textit{portée} to say that human nature is always in the business of overreaching itself:

“Let us then know our reach [\textit{portée}]. We are something, and not everything….Our intelligence occupies in the order of intelligible things the same place as our body in the extent of nature.”\textsuperscript{270}

Falling humanity, however, even goes so far as to attempt to submit truth to its own subjective dominion; indeed, as we will discover with Lacan, even inventing subjectivity itself to pull off the charade.\textsuperscript{271} We will come to see that Nietzsche is the

\textsuperscript{268} It is difficult to square this argument with the fact that Plato still subjects all of human being to The Good itself, the highest of the forms toward which all appearances and object turn and unsuccessfully aspire to incarnate. Nevertheless, Heidegger’s argument here becomes increasingly solid as we move along the unfolding of Western philosophy.

\textsuperscript{269} Heidegger, “Plato’s Doctrine of Truth,” 181.

\textsuperscript{270} Shattuck, Roger, \textit{Forbidden Knowledge: From Prometheus to Pornography} (San Diego: Harcourt Brace, 1997), 29.

\textsuperscript{271} This point raises a number of associations which cannot be fully explored here, but ought to be mentioned, at least. We will address the way in which Nietzsche brings this opposition to its highest pitch in a later chapter. First, that of Nietzsche. In his infamous section from “Twilight of the Idols” from \textit{The Portable Nietzsche}, trans. Walter Arnold Kaufmann (New York: Penguin Books, 1976), entitled, “How the ‘True World’ Finally Became a Fable: The History of and Error,” the “true world” is summed up in the wisdom of the philosopher or sage or pious one, and importantly in our current context, Nietzsche states: “A circumlocution for the sentence, ‘I, Plato, am the truth’” (\textit{The Portable Nietzsche}, 485). It might also be considered to what extent truth is related to the parable of the madman (“death of God”) in \textit{The Gay
final Event of this attempt. Even to speak of “submitting truth” however is already a
misnomer, which is why I qualified the phrase with the “attempt.” Truth, as the truth of
being, in no wise submits itself to the whims of the human beings; rather, it is the
human being who by its comportment toward truth, and thereby toward being, bends
and transforms its own nature against or with this truth, in the manner of its own
“definition” of, or comportment to, that essence. This is, continually, what we mean by
the reciprocal, codetermining nature of the truth of being and the human comportment
to it, thus far as the reign of metaphysics.272

Science, §125. And lastly, related to Nietzsche, we might consider the function of inventing a memory,
specifically the memory of physical pain first, then the sting of conscience later, in a creature in order to
make it behave, from “Genealogy of Morals” from Basic Writings of Nietzsche.

Probably no greater, more subtle examination of this particular harebrained endeavor exists over
Jacques Derrida’s. Derrida’s discovery of deconstruction—deconstruction being something that happens
with the supremacy of every “transcendental signified,” not something that a method conscientiously
enacted by an agent—which reveals the infinite slippage of difference, the differing deferral of every
signified and signifier. “In this sense, difference is not preceded by the originary and indivisible unity of a
present possibility that I could reserve…What defers presence, on the contrary, is the very basis on which
presence is announced or desired in what represents it, its sign, its trace…” (Derrida, Jacques, Positions,
trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 8.)

Cf. Foucault, Michel, The Hermeneutics of the Subject: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1981-1982,
trans. Graham Burchell (New York: Picador, 2005), 8-9; Cf. Ibid., 485:
The care of oneself is a sort of thorn which must be stuck in men’s flesh, driven into their
existence, and which is a principle of restlessness and movement, of continuous concern
throughout life . . . . I will try to show you, how generally speaking the principle that one must
take care of oneself became the principle of all rational conduct in all forms of active life that
would truly conform to the principle of moral rationality…It seems to me that the stake, the
challenge for any history of thought, is precisely that of grasping when a cultural phenomenon of
determinate scale actually constitutes within the history of thought a decisive moment that is
still significant for our modern mode of being subject . . . . In thinking that philosophical asceticism
should be understood as a certain way of constituting the subject of true knowledge as the
subject of right action.

272 This is not a simple reversal or dialectic of truth which places it back into a pre-modern form, or in
terms of the Absolute Truth to which human beings must acquiesce their will and assentance. First of all,
the inclusion of the point on freedom precludes this conflation. Still further, the sense of truth as the
“open region” confounds such a confusion, and undermines the concept of truth as correctness or adequatio.
And lastly, the nature of this truth is located in the provenance of being itself, and this relationship with
humans derives from the fundamental meeting point, the mutual giving over of thinking and being, the
Ereignis - event of appropriation, or en-owning – of the one to the other. This is what makes the Dasein of
a human the humble, impoverished shepherd of being, rather than a suppliant servant or a valiant,
redoubtable knight or philosopher-king. The human being who takes up this call gains “the essential
poverty of the shepherd, whose dignity consists in being called by being itself into the preservation of
3.3 Truth from Proposition to the Freedom to Let Beings Be

With truth as *aletheia* always in play, Heidegger thinks about the essence of truth in “On the Essence of Truth” in a far more dynamic way than in the more academic “Plato’s Doctrine of Truth.” With one foot on the ground on the other side of the overcoming of metaphysics in which a different kind of speech faithful to the truth of being is possible, Heidegger goes through the traditional metaphysical definition of truth as correctness in order to recover the lost essence of truth.

Despite any number of truths – technical, practical, scientific, artistic, philosophical – “On the Essence of Truth” aims at “the one thing that in general distinguishes every ‘truth’ as truth.”²⁷³ Heidegger begins by going through the common view. What is true therein is what is *actual*, actually the case; thus the true is what is in accordance with what we “always and in advance” already mean when we say something is the *actual* or is not in accord with the actual. This is truth as a matter, but truth also comes as a *proposition*, and both must be in accordance with the actuality of the matter. This also means *correspondence*, thus, as in *veritas est adaequatio rei et inellectus*, “truth is the correspondence of the matter to knowledge.”²⁷⁴ In medieval Western Christian theology, the true is a question of whether the proposition or idea measures up to the *intellectus divinus* and “satisfies its idea.” The same structure applies, according to Heidegger, even when this theology is secularized and the transcendental signified is “worldly reason.” Untruth, on the other hand, is falsity outright, the non-accordance of

²⁷⁴ Ibid., 138.
the proposition and the matter, incorrectness, and therefore it “falls outside the essence of truth.”

But how does this correspondence of a proposition to the matter receive its guarantee in the first place? By asking this question, Heidegger sets out toward the essence of truth. Each proposition must be related to the thing itself; that is, for example, in a statement about a true (real) coin, “the statement regarding the coin relates ‘itself’ to this thing in that it presents [vor-stellt] it and says of what is presented how, according to the particular perspective that guides it, it is disposed.” The thing must stand forth present, in some manner, in order to be able to assure the statement’s veracity: “to present here means to let the thing stand opposed as object. As thus placed, what stands opposed must traverse an open field of opposedness…” This, consequently, is why testimony cannot be proven without witness, human or otherwise, or why we use evidence to test whether one is “telling the truth” or not (i.e., the correspondence with testament and matter). Heidegger is saying, in so many words, that the essence of truth is located in this space between the testimony and the “truth of the matter.” The “truth” of the “truth of the matter” is the situation within which and against which both the proposition and the matter stand in relation to one another. Within this space, the statement and the thing enter into an “open region” “as a domain of relatedness.”

---

275 Ibid., 139.

276 Ibid., 141.

277 Ibid.: “The relation of the presentative statement to the thing is the accomplishment of that bearing [Verhältnis] that originarily and always comes to prevail as a comportment [Verhalten].”
open region of what is present in Western discourse was once called “being.” In each case, the human “comportment stands open to being.”278

This “openness of comportment” is the “pregiven standard for all presenting,” as it has a priori established the way anything will or will not be presented. In contradistinction from the Platonic and metaphysical view of truth, Heidegger declares, “Thus the traditional assignment of truth exclusively to statements as the essential locus of truth falls away. Truth does not originally reside in the proposition.”279

In something of an innovation and a surprise, Heidegger goes on to link the essence of truth to – out of – freedom, a place where we would least expect, seeing as truth is traditionally that which compels us to admittance, agreement and proper correspondence (propositionally speaking).

Only if this pregiving has already entered freely into an open region for something opened up that prevails there and that binds every presenting [“can the initiation into an accord occur”]. To free oneself for a binding directedness is possible only by being free, for what is opened up in an open region. Such being free points to the heretofore uncomprehended essence of freedom. The openness of comportment as the inner condition of the possibility of correctness is grounded in freedom. The essence of truth, as the correctness of a statement, is freedom.280

The human being, in its Dasein, is thrown into the open within the field of the disclosedness of beings, cast into the vortex and play of beings. That is, the human
being is thrown into being, Da-sein, the there-and-here-taking of being. Human Dasein finds itself immersed within beings, and historically tries to ground itself within the flux and flow of these beings, but always at a cost; this is the modus operandi of metaphysics itself: “In truth, however, it always thinks only of beings as such…” Human Dasein is the place-taking and making for a comportment towards beings. The essence of freedom is the comportment to beings in such a way that beings are allowed to be, “to let beings be,” i.e., that freedom “manifests itself as the exposure to the disclosedness of beings.” To “let be” is not indifference but rather a form of profound engagement with beings.

Freedom is the free engagement in the disclosure of beings as such. “Disclosedness itself is conserved in ek-sistent engagement, through which the openness of the open region, i.e., the ‘there,’ [Da], is what it is.” Ek-sistence is the

---

281 Seen here in a different inflection, however, in Heidegger’s Kehre, in which Dasein takes up its being and becomes the shepherd of beings: “The thrown thrower enacts the first, grounding throw as projecting-open [entwurf] beings unto be-ing” (Heidegger, Martin, Contributions, 32).

282 Heidegger, Martin, “Letter on ‘Humanism’,” from Pathmarks, 252. Cf. Ibid., 253: Because the human being as the one who ek-sists comes to stand in this relation that being destines for itself, in that he ecstatically sustains it, that is, in care takes it upon himself, he at first fails to recognize the nearest and attaches himself to the next nearest [beings]. He even thinks that this is the nearest. But nearer than the nearest, than beings, and at the same time for ordinary thinker farther than the farthest is nearness itself: the truth of being.


284 Ibid., 144:

…to engage oneself with the open region and its openness into which every being comes to stand, bringing that openness, as it were, along with itself. Western thinking in its beginning conceived this open region as ta aletheia, the unconcealed….engagement withdraws in the face of beings in order that they might reveal themselves with respect to what and how they are, and in order that presentative correspondence might take its standard from them. As this letting-be it exposes itself to beings as such and transposes all comportment into the open region. Letting-be, i.e., freedom, is intrinsically exposing, ek-sistent.

285 Ibid., 145.

286 Ibid.
ecstatic temporal-spatial extending of the human being into a comportment of letting beings be. Heidegger now is taking on one of the most obstinate metaphysical presuppositions: that freedom is in the nature of the individual. Rather, Heidegger argues,

The human being does not ‘possess’ freedom as a property. At best, the converse holds: freedom, ek-sistent, disclosive Da-sein, possesses the human being—so originarily that only it secures for humanity that distinctive relatedness to beings as a whole.”287

Freedom, then, “understood as letting beings be, is the fulfillment and consummation of the essence of truth in the sense of the disclosure of beings.”288 Freedom is defined as letting beings be, to stand forth in their revealing, and in their concealment.

Therefore, “the essence of truth reveals itself as freedom.”289 Still, we have not looked at the full scope of this essence and this freedom. Furthermore, we are obliged to remember the fact of falling, which arises yet again here, decisively within the context of freedom and the essence of truth. For we have only seen that freedom is enacted in the comportment toward letting-beings-be, but not what “negative” freedom might look like, in not letting beings be. While this discussion harkens back even to Heidegger’s initial formulation of falling in Being and Time, a number of new inflections arise here that help us in our construction of falling as a whole thematic and deeper concept in relation to the truth of being and the essence of human being.

287 Ibid.,

288 Ibid., 146: “Truth is disclosure of beings through which an openness essentially unfolds. All human comportment and bearing are exposed in its open region. Therefore the human being is in the manner of ek-sistence.”

289 Ibid., 147.
The freedom of the human being, within the open region, in comportment to beings as such and as a whole, would most properly be one of humility, a stepping back out of the way (out of in-sistence, as we will see, into what will be called die Gelassenheit zu den Dingen, “releasement toward things”\textsuperscript{290}, of letting beings be. However, this is not the case: falling is rather our condition. Engagement of the human being, proximally and for the most part, is rather involved in a bearing towards beings that does not allow them to be as such, and this in a few modes of comportment, the way we face beings. These modes can be organized into three categories that exhibit in their own right three different epochs of the history of being. 1) Being as substances, within the Greek, Roman, and Western Middle Age context. 2) Beings as objects: By re-presentation and perception of beings as object, that which stands \textsuperscript{291} \textit{[Gegenstand]} present over against the subject, either in perception or experience, presencing (proximity), though after Kant this latter either/or distinction is rather complicated as perception is transformed to apperception, the synthetic unity combining the a priori categories of the understanding with the “immediate representation, that is, intuition” of objects of experience, representations of objects of experience, i.e., not things themselves.\textsuperscript{291} 3) Beings as standing reserve within the Enframing of the essence of technology: in this modality, beings are called forth to stand and offer themselves en masse for the ordering of the standing-reserve in the essence of technology (Ge-stell).\textsuperscript{292} These are the modalities of

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item\textsuperscript{292} Heidegger will continuously discourse with these three modalities of comportment within which metaphysics has fostered its Western mind. In his discourse on the thing, he will propose a thinking of things that is powerfully overcoming of every object-oriented philosophizing.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
comportment in freedom to not let beings be but instead to predetermine and determine them in terms of mental representations. That is the nature of the freedom within which the human beings stands, particularly the freedom that lands him in falling’s downward plunge. That stance, most decisively for the fall Western metaphysics and for its destiny, takes its place within untruth.

3.4 The Essence of Truth as Untruth

Just as truth is disclosedness of beings, or the open of unconcealment, un-truth proper is also not essentially incorrectness or falsity or semblance, but is undisclosedness, concealment, which *is as proper to the essence of truth itself (i.e., the truth of being) as unconcealment*, and not a departure from it or something that sits outside of or opposed to it.293 Heidegger calls this “the mystery,” the concealing of what is concealed, “the concealing of what is concealed as a whole, of beings as such.”294 This mystery is older than every “letting-be…which in disclosing already holds concealed and comports itself toward what is concealing.”295 This non-essence is rather the “pre-essential essence” of truth as unconcealment.296 This “originary non-essence of truth, as un-truth, points to the still unexperienced domain of the truth of Being (not merely of beings).”297

---

293 Heidegger, Martin, “On the Essence of Truth,” from *Pathmarks*, 148: Precisely because letting-be always lets beings be in a particular comportment that relates to them and thus discloses them, it conceals beings as a whole. Letting-be is intrinsically at the same time a concealing. In the ek-sistent freedom of Da-sein a concealing of beings as a whole comes to pass [ereignet-sich]. Here there *is* concealment.

294 Ibid.

295 Ibid.

296 Ibid.

297 Ibid., 149.
This non-truth “holds sway throughout the Da-sein of human beings,” and rather reveals itself in Dasein’s bearing to this mystery—as human being-historical destiny. This destiny involves the forgottenness of the mystery, which is intrinsically involved with the forgottenness or oblivion of being itself, of course.\textsuperscript{298}

It is precisely at the point that human beings take up their residence (as opposed to proper dwelling) in “what is readily available” that they do not “let the concealing of what is concealed hold sway.”\textsuperscript{299} This is precisely what Heidegger means when he reiterates the meaning of falling in the “Letter on ‘Humanism’, as “Forgetting the truth of being in favor of the pressing throng of beings unthought in their essence.”\textsuperscript{300} The

\textsuperscript{298} Ibid., 149:

the human being takes his bearings constantly in his comportment toward beings [and never being as such]; but for the most part he acquiesces in this or that being and its particular openedness. Humans cling to what is readily available and controllable even where ultimate matters are concerned.

Cf. Ibid., 149-150:

And if the human being sets out to extend, change, newly assimilate, or secure the openedness of the beings pertaining to the most various domains of his activity and interest, then he still takes his directives from sphere of readily available intentions and needs….But the forgotten mystery of Dasein is not eliminated by the forgottenness; rather, the forgottenness bestows on the apparent disappearance of what is forgotten a peculiar presence \[\text{Gegewart}\]. By disavowing itself in and for forgottenness, the mystery leaves historical human beings in the sphere of what is readily available to them, leaves them to their own resources. Thus left, humanity replenishes its “world” on the basis of the latest needs and aims, and fills out the world by means of proposing and planning. From these human beings then take their standards, forgetting beings as a whole…Human beings are the more mistaken the more exclusively they take themselves, as subject, to be the standard of all beings.

This passage, after the ellipsis, indicates a paradox—by attempting to secure themselves within the sphere of the most immediate beings, to gain a foothold there, the forgottenness of the mystery ensure that human beings “forget beings as a whole.”

\textsuperscript{299} Ibid., 149.

gravity of falling places inordinate, frustrating demands on the human based upon
his/her stance, and this condition is the effect of errancy.301

Erring is destinal, to use Heidegger’s word, as well as one of the features of
falling: “errancy belongs to the inner constitution of the Da-sein into which historical
human beings are admitted.”302 Errancy is not merely a mistake or chain of mistakes but
the “kingdom” or “dominion,” that is, an history composed of innumerable errors. This
errancy is determined by a predetermined openness of Dasein, and dominates them to
the extent that the openness of Dasein’s comportment is turned toward falling. Yet,
errancy maintains the possibility that, in Dasein’s ek-sistence, in the free range of its
engagement with aletheia of Being and beings, that Dasein also “may not let themselves
be led astray.”303

Errancy becomes oppressive, as well as the mystery exerts its rule, because
historical humanity is needful of constraint. The mystery, the kingdom of errancy, is the

---

301 Heidegger, Martin, “On the Essence of Truth,” 150: “The human being’s flight from the mystery
toward what is readily available, onward from one current thing to the next, passing the mystery by –
this is erring.”

302 Ibid.

303 Ibid., 150-151:
Errancy is the open site for and the ground of error. Error is not merely an isolated mistake but
the kingdom (the dominion) of the history of those entanglements in which all kinds of erring
get interwoven….The errancy in which any given segment of historical humanity must proceed
for its course to be errant is essentially connected with the openness of Dasein. By leading them
astray, errancy dominates human beings through and through. But, as leading astray, errancy at
the same time contributes to a possibility that humans are capable of drawing up from their ek-
sistence—the possibility that, by experiencing errancy itself and by no mistaking the mystery of
Da-sein, they not let themselves be led astray…in the ek-sistence of his Dasein the human being
is subjected to the rule of the mystery and at the same time to the oppression of errancy. he is in
the needful condition of being constrained by the one and the other…Dasein is a turning into need.
way by which the truth of being conceals itself, shelters itself, away from falling
metaphysical humanity. It is the “self-concealing” of Being.\textsuperscript{304}

The truth of being is the being of truth. The first thing we notice about the truth
of being is that being is a strange thing, a strange word, even though it is the most
ubiquitous. Being “is.” Because of its familiarity it is farther than every being at the same
time that it is nearer to us than every being, even nearer than God. Heidegger argues
that “Being is nearest.”\textsuperscript{305} Yet because of the dominion of errancy, once again, humans
are always caught in the midst of beings and just trying to get a handle there without
ever turning to being as such.\textsuperscript{306}

In terms of truth as \textit{aletheia}, the truth of being “as the clearing itself remains
concealed for metaphysics.” It is very important to remember that metaphysics is not
evil or degenerate or blamed for what remains concealed in its thinking. We have seen
what “overcoming,” “destruction” means, and it does not include that metaphysics is a
great defect of Western history.\textsuperscript{307} A primary truth of being \textit{is} indeed revealed within
metaphysical thinking, but this truth has never been honored as such.\textsuperscript{308}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{304} Ibid., 153.
\end{flushright}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{305} Heidegger, Martin, “Letter on ‘Humanism’,” from \textit{Pathmarks}, 252.
\end{flushright}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{306} Ibid.: 
Being is essentially farther than all beings and is yet nearer to the human being than every
being, be it a rock, a beast, a work of art, a machine, be it an angel or God. Being is nearest. Yet
near remains farthest from the human being. Human beings at first cling always and only to
beings. But when thinking represents beings as beings as beings it no doubt relates itself to being. In
truth, however, it always thinks only of beings as such; precisely not, and never, being as
such...It thinks from beings back to beings with a glance in passing toward being.
\end{flushright}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{307} Ibid.: “However, this concealment is not a defect of metaphysics but a treasure withheld from
\textit{metaphysics} yet held before it, the treasure of its own proper wealth.”
\end{flushright}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{308} Ibid., 256:
Being comes to its destiny in that \textit{It}, being, gives itself. But thought in terms of such density this
says: It gives itself and refuses itself simultaneously. Nonetheless, Hegel’s definition of history as

This truth, even the truth of being’s abandonment or oblivion as metaphysics, is of the proper essence of truth itself, that essence which was foregone and forgotten early on in the conversation of Western thinking, when the essence of truth was replaced with correctness. But when the essence of truth is restored as unconcealing, then it must be held simultaneously that the other side of this essence—that is, a side of truth itself—is concealing, hiddenness; hiddenness and concealing are not a priori falsity, nor in any way opposed to truth. This so-called non-essence of untruth can only be seen as belonging together with the essence of truth itself as unconcealment. Whatever is unconcealed to us, whatever rises into view in the open clearing (being), is still presenting, in its very appearing, something more that is still withheld, still concealed. Unconcealing in fact necessitates a remainder of concealing. Thus the listening and speaking of the truth of being is equally engaged with the hidden.

The truth of unconcealing—of being as the clearing-open that allows what comes forth to be unhidden—has been concealed from the history of metaphysics. However, this means that metaphysics, as it were, came in from the back end to being (in terms of thinking). What has been concealed therein? The essence of concealing, hiddenness as such, is as much the truth of being and has been itself presenced to the thinking of metaphysics all along as oblivion. Concealment itself is truth present in the development of “Spirit” is not untrue. Neither is it partly correct and partly false. It is as true as metaphysics, which through Hegel first brings to language its essence—thought in terms of the absolute—in the system. Absolute metaphysics, with its Marxian and Nietzschean inversions, belongs to the history of the truth of being. Whatever stems from it cannot be countered or even cast aside by refutations. It can only be taken up in such a way that its truth is more primordially sheltered in being itself and removed from the domain of mere human opinion. All refutation in the field of essential thinking is foolish. Strife among thinkers is the “lover’s quarrel” concerning the matter itself. It assists them mutually toward a simple belonging to the Same, from which they find what is fitting for them in the destiny of being.

309 This point recalls the belonging together of night and day seen above, along with the belonging together of rising-standing-falling.
metaphysical thinking in that being *refuses* to submit itself as such to metaphysical thinking. This was the fundamental insight that set off Heidegger’s turn: that even in concealing, something of the truth of being was revealed, if the thinker or the poet could endure the abyss and draft that resides therein.310 The thinker must, in his or her Da-sein, experience the “distress of the abandonment of being”; the thinker must “turn into the hesitant self-refusal that reigns as the essential swaying of be-ing.”311 This is the “echo of refusal” of being’s presencing, the refusal and absencing that is nevertheless presenced. Distress reaches its “utmost” when it is discovered that this most distress-worthy, or at least question-worthy problem of being is not even experienced as a problem; therefore, there appears an even deeper, driving “distress of [the] lack of distress.”312

### 3.5. The Truth of Being as Thing and World

There is yet one more, necessary bend in our detour through the being of truth and the truth of being, one that addresses some of Heidegger’s more “cryptic” teachings, the being of the thing. We must look at this episode because it is crucial for a number of reasons. 1) In thinking the thing, the truth of being is given a rendering that explodes and liberates it from metaphysical thinking; 2) because, in thinking, the thing is restored to the brilliance of its being, thus by a new way of saying we overcome the modalities of

310 Heidegger, Martin, *Contributions*, §207, 231: But self-sheltering-concealing is the fundamental teaching of the first beginning and its history (of metaphysics as such). Self-sheltering-concealing is an essential characteristic of be-ing — precisely insofar as be-ing needs truth and thus en-owns Da-sein and is thus in itself originally: enowning [*Ereignis*].

311 Ibid., 12

312 Ibid., 75. Cf. Ibid., 53: “…distresslessness presides. In truth, though in a concealed manner, distresslessness is the authentic distress.”
erring and falling; because precisely at this point the divine, the holy, the divinities, the Godhead make their firmest – first post-critical, post-metaphysical – appearance in Heidegger’s public teaching.

Once again, we find Heidegger’s thought is always in process, deterritorializing and reterritorializing, to borrow from Deleuze and Guattari; that is, Heidegger is always engaged with de-sedimenting the metaphysical plane of thought, and to do that he must be simultaneously engaged, therefore employing, the language of metaphysics at the same time as aggrandizing another form of speech that gives voice to the truth of being. In other words, Heidegger is always having to wrest his discourse out of metaphysics at the same time as he affirms the latter; most of all, his own discourse would become completely incommunicable if he abandoned metaphysical speech altogether. The striking irony about the apparent complexity of this situation is that the leap or step back that Heidegger employs in his turning leads him to a terminology rather older and simpler than the ones we are used to under the predominance of metaphysical speech: “the step back that lets thinking enter into a questioning that experiences—and lets the habitual opining of philosophy fall away.”

After all, what could be simpler and more unimposing (let alone philosophically uncomplicated) than a


But what is dismantled? Answer: that which covers over the meaning of being, the structures amass upon one another that make the meaning of being unrecognizable . . . . But it is now clear that the various coverings of the originary sense of being maintain an essential relation to what they cover over. The history of metaphysics thus receives, from the ground up, another meaning. From now on, its various basic positions can be understood positively as transformations of the original meaning. Each time new, they follow upon one another, belong together in the unity of a single destiny – hence the name destiny of being Seinsgeschick to indicate the epoch of being. In the history of this concealment of being, which the history of metaphysics presents, thinking can pursue the history of being itself and consequently make a beginning with the next step along its path: the taking-into-view of being as being.

thing (a jug, for example, or a bridge), to dwell and dwelling, or the members of this new and unfamiliar fourfold, sky, earth, divinities and mortals? Heidegger gambles that these simple words spring from an older, originary engagement – an event of appropriation, an en-owning, an Ereignis – of language with the truth of being, words that Heidegger wishes to open up once again to the possibility of die Sage die Sein, der Sein-Sage. In still other words, Heidegger is risking his own Ereignis with what is concealed in the mystery. If forgottenness of the mystery is what abandons human beings to that which is most readily available, then what is truly left, from the standpoint of thinking, is to turn once again to things that stand near, within, out of, through which, as we have seen, the essence of the truth (aletheia) of being is supposed to lie more originarily.\footnote{Heidegger, Martin, “Memorial Address,” from Discourse on Thinking, 47: “It is enough if we dwell on what lies close and meditate on what is closest; upon that which concerns us, each one of us, here and now; here, on this patch of home ground; now, in this present hour of history.”}

As we said in point 1 above, this thinking therefore actually achieves a greater liberation from metaphysical speech than Heidegger had previously achieved. This is simultaneously what makes this particular instantiation of his thinking the most troubling, misread, and easily dismissed.

In the step back and the leap\footnote{Cf. Heidegger, Martin, “The Thing,” from Bremen and Freiburg Lectures, 19: When and how do the things come as things? They do not come through the machinations of humans. But they also do not come without the vigilance of the mortals. The first step to such vigilance is the step back from merely representational, i.e., explanatory thinking into commemorative thinking.} out of metaphysics, to whatever extent it can be achieved or to which Heidegger achieved it, the issue moves from being the re-
presentation of beings, i.e., the positing of concepts of beings, enshrouding beings in the
presupposition of ob-ject (that which stand against, Gegenstand) to the effulgent, humble
self-presencing of the thing. The thing is like one of Marion’s “saturated phenomena”;
the thing overflows its slight character with its own truth, its unique and very own
unconcealment of being. The thing is not an object of (possible) experience, not a
representation of intuition or concept; it is not an object in relation to an idea, or the
content of an idea, nor the matter that stand in relation to the concept… In the
beginning, the thing things, the thing is—“…but for once let it stand where it stands . .
. Because to this day, thought has never let the tree stand where it stands.”317

The thing, a jug for example, stands on its own.318 But, say, instead of making
the jug an object of representation, we explain the causes of the jug, that by virtue of
which it consists and stands (the Aristotelian material cause: the clay, the wheel; the
sufficient cause: the potter; and so on). Even though we are no longer taking the thing
up into a mental representation, as an object of representation, we are still positing the
thing “in terms of production,” while holding on to its self-standing. Therefore,

sense of a spring. The spring leaps away, away from the habitual idea of man as the rational
animal who in modern times has become a subject for his objects. Simultaneously, the spring also
leaps away from Being. But Being, since the beginning of Western thought, has been interpreted
as the ground in which every being as such is grounded. …Where does the spring go that
springs away from the ground? Into an abyss? yes, as long as we only represent the spring in the
horizon of metaphysical thinking. No, insofar as we spring and let go. Where to? To where we
already have access: the belonging to Being. Being itself, however, belongs to us; for only with us
can Being be present as Being, that is, become present . . What a curious leap, presumably
yielding us the insight that we do not reside sufficiently as yet where in reality we already are.

317 Heidegger, Martin, What is Called Thinking, 44.

318 Heidegger, Martin, “The Thing,” from Bremen and Freiburg Lectures, 5:
The thinghood of the thing, however, does not reside in the thing becoming the object of a
representation, nor can the thinghood of the thing at all be determined by the objectivity of the
object, not even when we take the opposition of the object as not simply due to our
representation, but rather leave opposition to the object itself as its own affair.
“standing-on-its-own is that toward which producing is directed.”

The thing is still thought in terms of object and objectivity in this way, however. We could also take the jug as the self-showing of an “outward appearing” (the eidos, the idea). This is still not, as we have seen, the way to think a thing, as this process of representation nevertheless falls upon the power of a subject who perceives first, then understands qua the accordance of the idea with the thing. We could further take the void and emptiness of the jug to be the void around which the potter has formed the clay. However again, immediately the scientific view would impinge upon us and assert that there was nothing empty in the jug, but that actually, as soon as you pour something into it, you replace one substance (the air and what composes it) with another, water or wine. Nevertheless, “Science only ever encounters that which its manner of representation has previously admitted as a possible object for itself . . . Science make the jug-thing into something negligible, insofar as the thing is not admitted as the standard.”

The thing has been annihilated, lost to thinking for a long time, as we have seen.

If a thing were to appear, following the track of the essence of truth, it would “first light itself up from itself and shown itself to him in the light that it brings with

---

319 Ibid., 6.
320 Ibid., 8.
321 Ibid., 8-9: The explosion of the atomic bomb is only the crudest of all crude confirmations that the thing as thing remains nullified . . . If the things had ever shown themselves as things, then the thinghood of the thing would have been evident. It would have laid claim to thinking. In truth, however, the thing remains obstructed as thing, nullified and in this sense annihilated. This occurred and occurs so essentially that the things are not only no longer admitted as things, but the things have not yet ever been able to appear as things at all.
it.”\textsuperscript{922} Here it is not the light of the mind, consciousness, the Sun of the Idea of Ideas, but rather the light—and open—that the thing brings with it itself.

Before scientific considerations broke off the trail of thought, Heidegger announced that it was the holding, the empty, of the jug that directed us to the self-lighting of the jug. The jug holds, and it is a two-fold holding: taking and retaining. The unity of the twofold holding is held in the pouring out. When the pouring occurs, the holding “is authentically how it is.”\textsuperscript{923}

This gathering is the Old High German meaning for \textit{dinc} (thing) that Heidegger recovers to discuss the essence of the thing, or just simply, the thinging of the thing. We must keep many points in view as Heidegger steadily uncovers all the things gathered into the thinging of the jug.

The jug now things in that it brings forth in a gathering “the full essence of giving \textsuperscript{[des Schenkens]}: the gift \textsuperscript{[das Geschenk]}. The jughood of the jug essences in the gift of the pour.”\textsuperscript{924} The “gift of the pour can be a libation,” either of water or wine. But in that gift abides the spring, and in the spring the stone and the “dark slumber of the earth,” which in turn receives the gift of rain and dew from the sky. Thus, Heidegger says, in the gift of the pour “abides the marriage of sky and earth.” Likewise with the “betrothal” in the wine: abiding there is the fruit of the vine, the nourishment of earth, the sun of the sky. “In the essence of the jug there abides earth and sky.”\textsuperscript{925}

\textsuperscript{922} Ibid., 9.

\textsuperscript{923} Ibid., 10. Cf. Ibid.: “The outpour from out of the jug is a giving \textsuperscript{[Schenken]}: In the gift of the pour there essences the holding of the vessel. This holding requires the empty as what holds. . . The giving, whereby the jug is a jug, gathers in itself the twofold holding and does so in the outpouring.”

\textsuperscript{924} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{925} Ibid., 10-11. Cf. Ibid.:
This is really one of the most extraordinary leaps that Heidegger ever made, one that we have long been preparing for by investigating his philosophy of truth. It is hard to even put together the degree to which this leap takes his and our discourse outside of the realm of all metaphysical predetermination. Why? Because whatever things are, they are not merely isolated things, marginalized either in objective reality or within mental representation. In thinging, in gathering, there is an abiding, weilen. Every abiding “remains for a while” (eine Weile), is a duration (die Weile). The way in which metaphysics is overcome here is how the abiding is no longer determined by the presence of an object, a force, or a substance/substratum, or by the presence of a subject-object relation. We see in this thinking-saying that “in the water of the gift there abides the spring,” not that there is a metaphor or cognitive relation to the spring that we can summon up in representation or rationalization. Very firmly, in the gift of the water abides the spring. In the spring abides the stone and slumber of the earth. In the water of the spring “there abides the marriage of sky and earth.” Sky and earth also abide in the wine, but in a different way, a different whiling (eine Weile). We see that the work of earth and sky (the nourishment of earth and sun of sky) abide together, indeed are betrothed to each other, which will be the continuing sense that the thing reveals: the giving over of one to the other in their abiding, in the gathering of a thing (i.e., thinging). Because the gift of a pour is the essence (jughood) of the jug, within that

---

In the water of the gift there abides the spring. In the spring abides the stone and all the dark slumber of the earth, which receives the rain and dew of the sky. In the water of the spring there abides the marriage of sky and earth. They abide in the wine that the fruit of the vine provides, in which nourishment of the earth and the sun of the sky are betrothed to each other. In the gift of the water, in the gift of the wine, there abides in each case the sky and earth. The gift of the pour however is the jughood of the jug. In the essence of the jug there abides earth and sky.
essence “there abides earth and sky.” These two are as much given over to one another as the twofold holding of the jug.

But it does not stop there; thinging goes on to include divinities and mortals within the gathering of the thing. The drink not only quenches mortal thirst but enlivens their rest and sociability. At times the gift of the pour is offered as a libation or a consecration, at which time the pour is a gift to the divinities. In this the gift is an “authentic gift,” when the jug essences most purely as the giving gift. Heidegger traces the word “to pour,” GieSen, to the Indogermanic, ghu, which means sacrifice. So when the gift of the pour is a libation, mortals are abiding in their own way with the gods, and the divinities who receive back their gift receive the donation.326

Thus we have the fourfold abiding singularly within the thing as it essences as the gift of the pour. When the gift is as such it fulfills that being-imperative in which the freedom of truth and the freedom of the human are consequently realized: when we let be the earth and sky, divinities and mortals. In thinking, we let these abide [ver-weilen] not as merely something present-to-hand. Nor is this a passive activity. Letting abide brings the four into the light that is their own. In letting each one be and unfold with the

326 Ibid., 11-12:

The gift of the pour is a libation for the mortals. It quenches their thirst. It enlivens their efforts. It heightens their sociability. But the gift of the jug is also at times given for a consecration . . . it does not appease a thirst. It appeases the celebration of the festival on high. Now the gift of the pour is neither given in a tavern nor is the gift of a libation for mortals. The pour is the oblation spent for the immortal gods. The gift of the pour as oblation is the authentic gift. In the giving of the consecrated oblation, the pouring jug essences as the giving gift. The consecrated oblation is what the word “pour” actually names: offering and sacrifice. “Pour” [GuS], “to pour” [gieSen], in Greek reads: [keein]; Indogermanic: ghu. This means: to sacrifice. Sufficiently thought and genuinely said, where it is essentially performed pouring is: donating, sacrificing, and therefore giving . . . In the gift of the pour that is a libation, the mortals abide in their way. In their gift of the pour that is an oblation, the divinities abide in their way, divinities who receive back the gift of the giving as the gift of a donation. In the gift of the pour, the mortals and divinities each abide differently. In the gift of the pour, the earth and sky abide. In the gift of the pour there abides at the same time earth and sky, divinities and mortals. These four, united of themselves, belong together. Obligingly coming before all that presence, they are folded into a single fourfold.
others in the way that they do in the gathering of the thing, they are “entrusted” to each other, and are thus unconcealed.\textsuperscript{327}

Thus thinging is the “gathering-appropriative letting abide of the fourfold.”\textsuperscript{328} In the thinging, the gathering, the essencing of the jug is gathered each of the four in a \textit{stand}, in a while/whiling/duration. Each is given over, entrusted to each other, in their own way. The gift of the pour reaches its essence when it is given as a gift as such. This free giving is most evident in the oblation to the divinities because the gift is a sacrifice, an offering poured out, in Bataille’s sense, squandered.\textsuperscript{329} The gift that was given, in the abiding of the fourfold, is given back to the giver(s) as gift. The gift gathers these together—giving and entrusting each one over to one another. There is then a mirroring occurring; we have seen these features in our investigations of being. The truth of being is hinted at in the \textit{es gibt}, the “There is/It gives.” Here, the truth of being is seen to take a wholly unique stand within the thing, \textit{as} the thing as gathering. In this sense, truth is returned to the thing, just as \textit{aletheia} sprung forth from the unconcealment of things in the Greek sense. The thing, as gathering, mirrors being itself in its being. Each of the four belong together and mirror and give each other light and uniqueness.\textsuperscript{330}

\textsuperscript{327} Ibid., 11-12:
In the gift of the pour abides the single fold \textit{[Einfalt]} of the four. The gift of the pour is a gift insofar as it lets the earth and sky, divinities and mortals abide. Indeed letting abide \textit{[ver-weilen]} is now no longer the mere perseverance of something present at hand. Letting abide appropriates. It brings the four into the light of what is their own. From the single fold of this, they are entrusted to each other. At one in this reciprocality they are unconcealed.

\textsuperscript{328} Ibid., 12.


\textsuperscript{330} Heidegger, Martin, “The Thing,” from \textit{Bremen and Freiburg Lectures}, 18:
In the very way that each of the four is in the gathering for the fourfold of a thing, each is simultaneously given over to its essence as it freely gives the essence of the other to the other. Heidegger proceeds through each of the four, but each one, when it is “sufficiently thought and genuinely said,” and concludes each one with the formulation, “When we say earth then we already think, in case we are thinking, the other three along with it from the single fold of the fourfold.”\textsuperscript{331} If thinking is indeed accomplished here, then all three come along in their own way with the one said. In this gathering, furthermore, nearness reigns. In the thinging of the thing, earth and sky, divinities and mortals come near to each other as they remain safeguarded in remoteness, that is, none can be disclosingly given in the sense that they are subjected to the other or submitted to representation.

This is, ultimately, the first and major step into Heidegger’s teaching of what it looks like to let beings be. Each comes very naturally to disclose its essence in the “round dance of appropriation” \textit{[Reigen des Ereignens]}. This round dance is a ring that rings by its play as a mirroring. Appropriating, it lights up the four in the gleam of their single fold. Gleaming, the ring everywhere openly brings the four into the ownership of the riddle of their essence…a circling \textit{[das Gering]}. In the circling of this playfully-mirroring ring, the four nestle into their united essence and nonetheless

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{331} Ibid., 16.}
each respectively into its own essence. Supple in this way, they join pliantly and worldingly the world.\footnote{332}{Ibid., 17.}

A thing’s essence, as well as the four of the fourfold, is \textit{pliant} and \textit{nimble}, a ringing round dance. When the four join as such, we experience the worlding of world: “The world essences in that it worlds. This says: the worlding of world is neither explicable by nor grounded upon anything other than itself.”\footnote{333}{Ibid., 18.} Explanation and causes and grounds are “unsuitable for the worlding of world.” Rather, we “allow worlding” when we “thoughtfully remember” the essence of the thing as it “concernfully approaches us,” which is one of the older Latin meanings of the \textit{res}- in \textit{res-publica}. Thinking in this way, “we are met by the thing as thing.” We are \textit{conditioned} – \textit{Be-Dingten}, be-thinged – and thus “We have left the arrogance of everything unconditional behind us,”\footnote{334}{Ibid., 19.} and “insofar as we protect the thing as thing, we dwell in nearness. The nearing of nearness is the authentic and sole dimension of the mirror-play of the world.”\footnote{335}{Ibid. Cf. Heidegger, Martin, “Language,” from \textit{Poetry, Language, Thought}, 199: \begin{quote} The word ‘world” is now no longer used in the metaphysical sense. It designates neither the universe of nature and history in its secular representation nor the theologically conceived creation (\textit{mundus}), nor does it mean simply the whole of entities present (\textit{kosmos}). \end{quote}}

In a different way, about ten months after “The Things” lecture was delivered, another lecture, “Language,” points further to the clarification of worlding in terms of language.\footnote{336}{Cf. Heidegger, Martin, “The Nature of Language,” from \textit{On The Way To Language}, 72: \begin{quote} No matter how we put our questions to language about its nature, first of all it is needful that language vouchsafe itself to us. If it does, the nature of language becomes the grant of its essential being, that is, the being of language becomes the language of being. \end{quote}} In the act of naming, a name “calls into word...Calling brings closer what it calls.” This calling, properly thought however, does not \textit{demand} that something come

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \footnote{332}{Ibid., 17.}
\item \footnote{333}{Ibid., 18.}
\item \footnote{334}{Ibid., 19.}
\item \footnote{335}{Ibid. Cf. Heidegger, Martin, “Language,” from \textit{Poetry, Language, Thought}, 199: \begin{quote} The word ‘world” is now no longer used in the metaphysical sense. It designates neither the universe of nature and history in its secular representation nor the theologically conceived creation (\textit{mundus}), nor does it mean simply the whole of entities present (\textit{kosmos}). \end{quote}}
\item \footnote{336}{Cf. Heidegger, Martin, “The Nature of Language,” from \textit{On The Way To Language}, 72: \begin{quote} No matter how we put our questions to language about its nature, first of all it is needful that language vouchsafe itself to us. If it does, the nature of language becomes the grant of its essential being, that is, the being of language becomes the language of being. \end{quote}}
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
forth into ‘proximity,” understood as the overcoming of measurable, calculated distance in space and time. Calling “brings the presence of what was previously uncalled into a nearness.” The call calls out to, “[i]nto the distance in which what is called remains, still absent.”\textsuperscript{337} The calling “calls into a nearness” but “does not wrest what it calls away from the remoteness…” It calls

always here and there [\textsuperscript{3}resonance of the Da- of Da-sein should ring forth here]—here into presence, there into absence. Snowfall and tolling of vespers bell [\textsuperscript{4}from the poem Heidegger is discussing] are spoken to us here and now . . . They are present in the call. Yet they in no way fall among the things present here and now in this lecture hall. Which presence is higher, that of these present things or the presence of what is called?”\textsuperscript{338}

Once again, we find Heidegger issuing here a direct challenge to metaphysical thinking, and to what Derrida called its “privilege of presence.” Things that are metaphysically speaking not present but absent, are in their own way present. Heidegger even rhetorically challenges his audience to consider which is “higher,” the presencing of the thing or the proximal presence of an object. The bidding call is an inviting, according to Heidegger, inviting “things in so that they may bear upon men as things.”\textsuperscript{339} In thinging here, the fourfold “unfolds world, in which things abide…” “The world grants to things their presence. Things bear world. World grants things.”\textsuperscript{340} Language is the grant, the house of being. The poetic word “Where the word breaks off no thing may be” “points


\textsuperscript{338} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{339} Ibid., 197.

\textsuperscript{340} Ibid., 199.
to the relation of word and thing . . . that the word itself is the relation, by holding everything forth into being, and there upholding it.”

We have always been wandering within the field of a question of presence and absence. The history and thinking of metaphysics leaves us with hard and fast rules as to what is and can be real, in that what is real is that which is or can be or has been submitted to presence (the ancient name for Being\(^{342}\)) and the reckoning (the more recent name, Enframing) built on metaphysical modalities of presence. We end with two final passages (really one, broken into two) that reveal the highest pitch of paradox in Heidegger’s confrontation with metaphysical thinking. With these passages we are left with a certain breathlessness, as after a leap. They leave us—if not in confusion and disdain—with a strange intimation of the truth of being that we cannot reason to or directly explain. Nonetheless, if our hearing has been attuned by the previous lengthy discourse on the essence of truth; if we are granted a hearing and gathered into a moment of grace from falling, will strike. This strike is like a sudden insight \([\text{Einblick}]\) resembling the view allotted to a night landscape as its lit up by a lightning strike. Not only is the landscape illuminated, but we ourselves are struck, struck into an open region within the aletheia of being. These passages therefore illuminate the true fruit of Heidegger’s entire labor with the essence of truth and, in my estimation, evince the most radical of his insights. In this sudden leap, Heidegger enters and throws us into a free field in which the binaries of metaphysical presence and absence suffer a barrage of sense which floods and overflows their prescribed borders. What is more, here we see thinking’s relationship to being in a new light. These words will launch us squarely into

---


the question of the truth of being in relationship to the gods, God and the death of God that we will take up in subsequent chapters.

Even when we relate ourselves to those things that are not in our immediate reach, we are staying with the things themselves. We do not represent distant things merely in our mind—as the textbooks have it—so that only mental representations of distant things run through our minds and heads as substitutes for the things. If all of us now think, from where we are right here, of the old bridge in Heidelberg, this thinking toward that location is not a mere experience inside the persons present here; rather, it belongs to the nature of our thinking of that bridge that in itself thinking gets through, persists through, the distance to that location. From this spot right here, we are there at the bridge—we are by no means at some representational content in our consciousness. From right here we may even be much nearer to that bridge and to what it makes room for than someone who uses it daily as an indifferent river crossing. Spaces, and with them space as such—“space”—are always provided for already within the stay of mortals. Spaces open up by the fact that they are let into the dwelling of man. To say that mortals are is to say that in dwelling they persist through spaces by virtue of their stay among things and locations. And only because mortals pervade, persist through, spaces by their very nature are they able to go through spaces. But in going through spaces we do not give up our standing in them. Rather, we always go through spaces in such a way that we already experience them by staying constantly with near and remote locations and things.

When I go toward the door of the lecture hall, I am already there, and I could not go to it at all if I were not such that I am there. I am never here only, as this encapsulated body; rather, I am there, that is, I already pervade the room, and only thus can I go through it.343

According to Heidegger, if we are thinking—in the way thinking properly proceeds as a way—of the Heidelberg bridge, we are there. By virtue of our thinking relationship to being ("For it is indeed the same, both thinking and being"—as Heidegger translates Parmenides' infamous and mysterious line) we persist through the distance and can be even more present than one who uses the bridge merely as an “indifferent river

---

crossing.” This is the true meaning of ek-sistence and the *freedom* it is granted in the unconcealment of being. This truth is the final assault upon our idea of truth that is rooted within the metaphysical binary of presence and absence, of an “encapsulated” body, and necessarily of the presence – however unthought as yet – of that which is “not” present but absent, such as the Heidelberg bridge, the god, or the dead. The Da- of Da-sein is here placed within its ultimate ek-stasis, no longer bound by metaphysics, into a new “logic” of here/there–being for the ruthless conclusion of all the hinting that Heidegger ever prepared on the matter.

These words form an outright rejection of metaphysical dogma, an essential gesture. Heidegger proves himself to have launched out, leapt out right into uncharted territory, unimaginable territory to anyone and everyone still lulled by or confident in metaphysical dogmatics. We will only force these uncanny Heideggerian words into absolute absurdity by comparing them to these unquestionable metaphysical dicta. Simply (metaphysically) stated, it is strictly impossible to be somewhere, sometime, *I am not*. I cannot be here, in Ava, Missouri in the Ozark Mountains at an abbey, for example, and think of the Iliff School of Theology and thereby be there.

The deepest roots of metaphysics are exposed by this claim otherwise. Notice, however, Heidegger’s claim is not that *I am not* at the Iliff School of Theology—it is that *I am there already*, and only thereby could I arrive there. But, according to metaphysical dogma, if I am here, I cannot be elsewhere. But perhaps I can only *imagine* myself there, or project my face as a representation on a screen there via Skype; someone there could think about me, too, or imagine that I am there. But *I am here.* That
is, I am present here and do not exist elsewhere, do not transcend the presence of my body here. I am not somewhere else.

Heidegger has us by the tail, however. If we have made the slightest turn to raising into question the convictions of metaphysics, the entire metaphysical structure has been implicated in its questionableness. If we have entertained and somehow agreed to the slightest questionableness of thinking, of things, of being and truth, we are caught in the glint of being. If we have at all seen how human dwelling is upended and challenged on every front, by the way it is falsely secured within the realm of the most readily available beings—being to consume, to play with, to make love to, to hang our hat on, to lord over, to control, to plan and count and value, to organize, etc. We are caught if we have agreed for a moment that maybe this Being thing is bigger than we really initially thought. We are caught if we’ve never really thought too much about being before, and how we comport ourselves toward beings and toward being, and rather stay caught up in the vortex of spinning things, of the speed of knowledge and information and digital communication, wrapped up in collecting and dispelling and squelching and stopping and mixing and reproducing, copying and saving, understanding—beings. We are caught if distraction or being lost in “projects” and status (or statuses, as far as social media is concerned) and intellect and culture and money confronts us every day—if any such admissions are made, we are caught in the glint of being as it reflects through Heidegger’s words. It is not a moral judgment but a

---

344 Cf. Heidegger, Martin, “What is Metaphysics?” from *Pathmarks*, 82:

> every metaphysical question always encompasses the whole range of metaphysical problems . . . From this we conclude that metaphysical inquiry must be posed as a whole and from the essential position of the existence [Dasein] that questions.
phenomenological, everyday, well-known fact. And to admit thinking and being share a relation? Yes, we had never thought of that, either. But of course!\footnote{Heidegger, Martin, “The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking,” from On Time and Being, 68: “We must think \textit{aletheia}, unconcealment, as the opening which first grants \textit{Being} and \textit{thinking} and their \textit{presencing} of that \textit{presence} itself.”}

If the seed has fallen on good soil, we will have long heard the disquiet uttered by our minds, by a troubling of the waters, even \textit{things raising greater challenges} right at the moment it seems like we are ready to “assume dominion of the earth as a whole.”\footnote{Heidegger, Martin, \textit{What is Called Thinking}? 57.}

If we have ever felt a shudder at the hearing of Zarathustra’s mysterious word, “the wasteland grows” . . . Or perhaps we feel weighed down by beings, by a few beings (ones whom we love who are causing us grief, or one that we hate whose grief-giving is somehow still less bitter, or the flat tire on the drive to work…), by the sheer weight of beings? And perhaps we have thought that it’s the way we deal with things and think about them and face them that trips us up?

If you have felt a tug, involved with whatever being or beings or circumstance of beings, you have felt the tug of be-ing itself. If you have been grateful, you have been grateful for be-ing itself. Even if you were grateful to a being—whether a god or a faithful friend or the sight of all the visible galaxies floating in black endless space, together, millions upon billions of them; or if you were grateful for a merciful life or death—then you have been grateful for being. If you have ever thanked anyone for anything, before all else you were thankful for being.

Indeed, we show and observe every day an exorbitant expenditure of celebration and gratitude over \textit{being}—and we are so weighed down and thoughtless (“thought poor,” as Heidegger says in the “Memorial Address”) that we do not even see it. This is

---
now what we call the Fall, this is the oblivion of being as such—obliviousness to that which should be most obvious, above all most present. But instead, when a thinker such as Heidegger or Heraclitus gets up to tell us that we have not thought enough about being, and tries to get us to think about being—to this day, the initial response for all is—obviously. Obviously. Either, obviously this being is the most general, abstract, inapplicable, impractical of questions and terms, or obviously we know what it means, or obviously we cannot know what it means. It rarely dawns on us that this question of being is the question that underwrites everything, even questions of god, humanity, language, and truth. Heidegger addresses these obviously’s in Being and Time, which we have already covered in a previous chapter: Being is seen as the most universal concept, the most indefinable, and the most self-evident. Even if, Heidegger retorts, it is the most universal, it is still the “darkest of all,” even if it is indefinable, that “would not eliminate the question of its meaning.” Even if it is most self-evident, “it demands we look the question in the face.”

It is the investigation that leads to the later Great Passages that brings us up short and insolent. Because Heidegger’s analysis cuts to the root of the all of our metaphysical prejudices, we are—if we have made any sort of entry into the problematic at all with anything more than scholarly désintéressement, if any thinking has occurred—bound anew to the questions concerning presence and absence, perhaps even before others such as god, reason, logos, thinking, dwelling. We have seen that a Kehre has indeed taken place. We have seen how we think of objects as standing against us and how we in turn stand against them, we come to challenge—and, ultimately, submit

---

347 Cf. Heidegger, Martin, Being and Time, H3-4, p. 22-23: “The very fact that we already live in an understanding of Being and that the meaning of Being is still veiled in darkness proves that it is necessary in principle to raise this question again.”
ourselves to the same challenge—to measure up, stand in line, produce, multiply, die, labor, submit to our grasp in hand, to memory, reason, investigation—we have thus seen we have a comportment dis-order. Some people, in their engagement with being and the onslaught of beings as a whole, even complain that everything is failing; that soon civilization will fail, and, who knows, maybe Jesus will come rapture all the Christians. Because things \textit{will not submit}, many would rather everything not be, or not be like it is, at least in their shared imagination.\textsuperscript{348} Part of the gratitude for being, however, the affirmation of being, is that all are gathered into the community of beings, even those fixated on the \textit{nihil}. Even those who want the end of the world are still grateful that another, better world is coming—or even nothing—that death, too, holds promise and hope; these, too, are grateful for being. For even being otherwise, yonder, has to have its here and now. Every tomorrow has to have its today, for these two belong together. Every night has to have its day, and vice versa; everything unconcealed has to belong first and foremost to concealment. This is true “on earth, as it is in heaven.”\textsuperscript{349}

\textsuperscript{348} We think of apocalyptic prophecies, doomsday imaginings and preachings, but also apocalyptic literature, arts and movies, and even \textit{news} and scholarship: the popular imagination—particularly that of the U.S.—is captivated by the undead, the Catastrophe in every form, i.e., world wars, the zombie, undead, vampire, technical man, economic bureaucratic, subjective, ecological apocalypse.

\textsuperscript{349} In developing a theory of religion, this point is worth a little more consideration. Let us consider the many who “believe” heaven, what comes after death, will be a better place than earth. We must question the fact that heaven is still very much like earth, considered in every way. There will be very similar beings there, for most who believe. We will have perfected bodies, spiritual bodies, but we will still be \textit{us}, we not be free of the memory that makes us \textit{us}, either. There will be our family members—but only the good ones!, lost pets, dinosaurs perhaps, the greatest humans in history, mansions, glass rivers and milk and honey and lions lying next to lambs . . . Very much will be the same, only “perfected,” that is, without strife, sin, pain.

In setting about into questioning, we are raising a further kind of affirmation of what is called “metaphysics” than what often allows. We are taking a generous, open view to things that we still may not be looking at properly, because our comportment is fallen. Therefore, if we embarked upon an analysis of the experience of faith from a rooted Heideggerianism, particularly related to the current juncture I have been articulating within this investigation, we would begin to conceive anew some of how
Thus we revisit the ingrained opinion that there is no \textit{there} in our \textit{here}, that the \textit{Da of Da-sein} does not reveal a similar thing (a gathering), and thereby a worlding. This, too, has to be question-worthy at this point, i.e., worthy in the high sense, worthy to be questioned, as Plato knows we must question up to the Highest Things from below. Here \textit{and there} belong over to one another, essence in the same way that the truth of being is revealed in things—yet ours is still another kind of being conditioned, be-thinged, be-gathered, be-gathering. This is the open and sway of the sweep, the extent or dimension, of the \textit{Da}, the here and the there and their ultimate relation in and to being, of human ek-sistence. Thus we take the initiative for a step back, an opportunity afforded us by the thinkers (not only Heidegger, but many more, including those so-called metaphysical thinkers, who were in a concealed way, according to Heidegger, always-already questioning into and discoursing on the truth of being; and even more explicitly, the pre-Socratics such as Parmenides and Heraclitus), an enabling to question, to begin on a path that proceeds in the current of questioning as “the piety of thought,” as Heidegger calls it.\footnote{Heidegger, Martin, \textit{The Question Concerning Technology}, 55.} We ought to feel a great thanking arising, a great affirmation, therefore, in response to the bidding of being.

deepest held prejudices and thoughtlessness regarding those seemingly \textit{most metaphysical} aspects of our otherwise supposedly post-metaphysicalizing world. Thus, we will proceed a moment further.

Scholar and academics like to call this concept of heaven a “belief,” but that would ignore the immense quality of \textit{hope} and \textit{gratitude} that accompany it. The world \textit{as it is}, here and now, is radically affirmed, from the best \textit{to the worst, as that which will have happened}. We would like everything to pretty much be the same—\textit{except forever}. Ironically enough it is Nietzsche—the great antimetaphysician par excellence—who defines this as the highest value, \textit{amor fati}, and his greatest, most abyssal thought: the eternal recurrence. Ironically, again, it is strange that more explicitly anti-metaphysical scholars and thinkers have not noticed this strange affirmation, along with many others within “established religions” or religious movements—inside and outside every spectrum of normativity—and seen such traits as inherently post-metaphysical rather than staunchly and dangerously metaphysical.
Indeed, as a last note, perhaps Heidegger’s greatest achievement is to link for us the belonging together, the very sameness, of *thinking* and *thanking*.

Thought is in need of memory, the gathering of thought. The Old English *thencan*, to think, and *thancian*, to thank, are closely related; the Old English noun for thought is *thanc* or *thone*—a thought, a grateful thought, and the expression of such a thought; today it survives in the plural *thanks*. The “thanc,” that which is thought, the thought, implies thanks. . . . The originary word “thanc” is imbued with the original nature of memory: the gathering of the constant intention of everything that the heart holds in present being . . . In giving thanks, the heart gives thought to what it has and what it is. The heart, thus giving thought and thus being memory, gives itself in thought to that to which it is held. It thinks of itself as beholden, not in the sense of mere submission, but beholden because its devotion is held in listening. Original thanking is the thanks owed to being.\textsuperscript{351}

3.6 Conclusion

In his reflection upon the truth of being, Heidegger is in the business of reversing at least three metaphysical dicta, each of which builds upon the first into a decided overcoming of metaphysics itself. First, as we saw in “Plato’s Doctrine of Truth” and again in “On The Essence of Truth,” truth is not properly, essentially located within the understanding of a person but is located in the open range that allows beings to step out into the open, and *is* indeed their presencing; truth is a quality of beings, given to them by being itself. Secondly, the essence of truth is freedom. This may sound surprising, particularly when truth is traditionally what *compels* the individual to accord his or her thoughts into a correct view with the matter truthfully thought. For the first time, truth indeed does make you free, as Christ promised, whereas before – and still well after in the requirements of logic – it enslaved one to

\textsuperscript{351} Heidegger, Martin, *What is Called Thinking?* 138-141.
“necessity,” it compelled one to confess the truth. Thirdly and relatedly, the truth of being, the being of truth, houses under its provenance an essential relation to absence. Over the course of metaphysics, truth became submitted to that which was present, either in the substance or the matter (at hand), which could be used to verify the correspondence of any proposition claiming veracity, or the presence of a thing to an idea. Rigorously thought, this third point leads us up to the insight of our final passage from “Building Dwelling Thinking” in which the strictures of the metaphysical assumption that relegates presence to that which can be present to the body and to the senses is rendered speechless.

From the history of metaphysics, Heidegger draws out the trajectory of falling. Phenomenologically, falling is the mode in which human Dasein finds its existence for the first time, dispersed into das Mann, crashing into the world, falling upon beings, fleeing in the face of death (inauthentic being-towards-death). But in this chapter, I have outlined the ways Heidegger articulates metaphysical falling from the root of its

---

352 This is the power of truth in its executable function, its human relationship to power, long wielded as the what Foucault calls the “incorporation of power”: “power had to be able to gain access to the bodies of individuals, to their acts, attitudes, and modes of everyday behavior” (“Truth and Power,” from Power (The Essential Works of Foucault, 1954-1984, Vol. 3, ed. James D. Faubio, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: New Press, 2000), 125). Here is an important moment to insert Foucault’s profound words, one of the greatest investigators of metaphysical humanity to come along, particularly in studying the establishment of dominance, the biopowering of bodies and the biopowerful forced confessions and constructions of the self. Foucault’s analysis of truth-saying and truth-structures lays bare the mechanics of power used to form, control, dominate, organize and resource human beings, particularly those who stand outside of the truth as “perverts,” the insane, the criminal, etc.

However, Foucault’s final and arguably best work was directly engaged with the freedom of truth exemplified in the ancient Greek notion of parrhesia, truth-telling, and this no more joyously and beautifully exemplified in Diogenes of Sinope, the Cynic: “The Cynic is a king; he is even the only king. Crowned sovereigns, visible sovereigns, as it were, are only the shadow of the true monarchy” (Foucault, Michel, The Courage of Truth (The Government of Self and Others II): Lectures at the Collège de France, 1983-1984, trans. Arnold I. Davidson (New York: Palgrave Macmillian, 2011), 275). In his greatest work,—delivered in the year of his death—Foucault overcomes mere genealogy of power and rather proclaims the absolute realm of human power even in the most abject material circumstances—the power and freedom and sovereignty inherent and at play in the truth.
inception, particularly in relation to the *truth of being and the being of truth*. Being the *Dasein* of being itself, human being is a revelatory gesture of being.

Truth, in its original Greek form of *aletheia*, had more to do with unconcealing, revealing and disclosing than it did with adequatio, correspondence, accuracy, factuality, representation, etc. All of these latter modes are derivative and/or secondary, with a twofold *aletheia* as their ground: as the open region and as unconcealment. Over time, metaphysics has distorted the human relationship to truth from something in which we reside to something that is possessed, stored away, and represented in the mind in propositions and ideas that “correspond” to things. It became something we judged and were the center of.

Within this attempt to submit truth to human faculty, however, truth still bears itself out in its essence, which is freedom. Situated at the heart of truth is freedom; freedom is the essence of truth. “The essence of truth reveals itself as freedom” in that human being is ek-static, existing within the throw among beings and across time, able to comport itself freely to beings and to being. As such, it can exist in this comportment by letting being be or not letting beings be. By not letting beings be in falling, the human defines things on its own terms, particularly in submitting beings to the endless demands of presence, presence to be viewed, held, possessed, manipulated, bought and sold, used, produced, stored, transformed into energy, etc. This is the form of *attack*. To let beings be, however, would be to authentically take up freedom as the essence of truth. Freedom, “understood as letting beings be, is the fulfillment and consummation of
the essence of truth in the sense of the disclosure of beings.” Letting beings remain in the open and step into and out of that open has the ring of an aletheic-etic. This includes letting those beings (as well as being) which do not, will not, have not and maybe never will submit themselves to presencing are also let be to be what they are. Every unconcealment necessarily reflects its remainder of concealment, absence, the undisclosed, the hidden, the secret or invisible. Instead of forcing or attempting to make these things/this being seen, visible, presentable, imaginable, rationalized, etc., freedom is free to let be. Dasein, in its freedom, takes up its place within the open and attends to the truth of being.

In this freedom, then, within the essence of truth, Dasein comports itself freely in the midst of beings and toward the truth of being. In doing so, in leaving the nonessence of truth and untruth to be as well, human being qua Dasein lets the mystery remain as such, without trying to imagine it can contain, fathom, explain, expose that mystery. At the ground of all disclosedness remains the originary mysterious undisclosed as such, and it remains still, even on the hither side of the unconcealment of beings.

In falling, however, the “concealing of what is concealed” is not honored in what Heidegger calls our in-sistence. Freely comporting itself within truth, metaphysical man has chosen rather to cling to beings most immediate and controllable, and to turn as many beings as possible into these graven idols. Metaphysical Dasein even tries to give substance to its existence and world, to weigh down its thrown being-towards-death and flee in the face of it, to grab onto objects of representation in the plummet of falling.

Heidegger, Martin, *What is Called Thinking?* 146: “Truth is disclosure of beings through which an openness essentially unfolds. All human comportment and bearing are exposed in its open region. Therefore the human being is in the manner of ek-sistence.”
Dasein’s falling is exacerbated thereby. The human falls thus into errancy, holding onto the nearest, most graspable, beings. Errancy is the kingdom of error, a permanent existential possibility. This errancy is also the forgottenness and oblivion of being, which fails to even be a question when beings are all that is concernful for Dasein.

Yet, this condition is still a revealing of being, and the being of Dasein: Dasein remains free to return to authentic freedom of comportment, even still. It can understand that even the oblivion of being is the self-withholding of being, the self-refusal, self-securing, self-protecting of the mystery of being—and all of this is a kind of being’s givenness. Being does not hand itself over to be harnessed, to be subjected solely to human demands, always retaining its radiance and self-sovereignty. Heidegger senses that so much remains to be said about this absencing of being that the truth of hiddenness itself lies within this experience. Being reveals itself in hiddenness and as refusal. The ringing of this truth resonates throughout Dasein’s worlding, and calls it into a greater attunement and reticence, listening, questioning and wonder.

Part of Heidegger’s project to restore that human freedom within the wider sweep of aletheia comes in the form of his thinking of the thing. The thing has yet to be thought in metaphysics in any way other than as an object or a mere thing. In this way, the thing is always obstinate, slipping from our grasp, kicking back on us in our projects of consuming, reproducing and ordering them. But thing-qua-object could do nothing but revolt and refuse our grasp, both in practice and in thought, for that grasp is overweening, coming in the form of attack. The history of metaphysics is marked by this revolt, even to the extent that human beings are in the same way conceived and used, and being (and gods) continues its flight.
Properly thought, however, addressed by meditative thinking that has taken the *aletheia* of being into its utmost concern—and not reducing the matter to understanding, not manipulating, not apprehending and deploying functionality, etc.—the thing opens up in a way that disrupts and decenters metaphysics. The human allows (because it doesn’t have to, i.e., in freedom) the thing to be, for and as nothing but its own self-unfolding and unconcealing, its being. As we thoughtfully step into that unconcealment that the thing (a jug, a bridge) brings with it, a fuller experience of the inner and primordial relationship between being and thinking impinges upon our thought. The thing things, as Heidegger traces the word’s root back to the meaning of *gathering*. The jug, for example, is a gathering of earth, sky, divinities and mortals. Each of these is found taking a stand in its own way in the jug’s thinging, or juggling. These abide in the thing, and are the way of its thinging. Yet, in the way that the thing things, each of the fourfold is found betrothed to the other, giving itself over to the other and being given over by the others—all in their own way as the gathering of the particular thing. When we speak of one, the other three are thought. The jug is fashioned from the earth’s clay, stands upon the earth, receives the gift of water from the sky and earth, and offers it back as water and wine as a gift to men and as a libation to the gods. The vineyard springs from the ground, the grapes are nourished and offered to the sky and sun, which in turn feed them with water and light. Conquerors, lovers and priests celebrate their success with this gift and gift-giving. The essence of the jug, in pouring, is realized in gifting.

And the bridge at Heidelberg brings us to the pitch of Heidegger’s revelation, in that space and time bear an uncanny relationship to thinking, when thinking it is.
Nearness is held together and gifted through remoteness, and in this way it comes to awareness that the human is not captured within an isolated body. In thinking, we can somehow be at the bridge in Heidelberg, in letting that being be as well, without attempting to submit it to mere representation. Furthermore, the thinging of the bridge also reveals the fourfold. In such things we find human worlding. In thinking meditatively in this way, however, a different kind of dwelling is on offer to humans, a wider world that brings itself to us and unconceals previously unthought solutions and joys, insofar as we dwell in order to think and think in order to dwell. Dwelling with things and in the world offers the most profound corrective to the obsessive, problem-oriented problem-solving—calculative—thinking. This is Heidegger’s central contention.

The ek-stasis of human being drags falling humanity unwittingly further into its plunge. Metaphysical thinking grounds and perpetuates and exacerbates every characteristic of falling. We are caught every day in the velocity of this plunge, especially as we frantically and fearfully attack the problems that face us as individuals, societies and humans. This harried existence is conditioned by a form of thinking that I have been outlining, at times called “calculative,” at others called “representative,” but always metaphysical. At the root is a failure to heed being itself, and rather the aggressive attempt to manipulate - even if with the desire to “save” - beings. Yet falling ensures that we fall further away from the goal, or that new and unimaginable—if not insurmountable—challenges derive from the way we think and “handle” these
problems—a climate catastrophe, for example, brought about by our “success” in other projects that leads to interminable human and ecological crises.554

The falling, however, could register its jolt, humiliation (being brought back to where we are), and provide a new humility, a new thinking that dwells and invites dwelling. Such thinking is not useful because it offers no immediate solutions, and it is inefficient because it is not a product of production or determined by a predetermined cause and effect relationship—thus it does not work on schedule or on demand or on time as we would have it. Yet it is slowness that is needed, slowing down, even stopping, to counteract the ever-increasing velocity of falling away and into and against—into the oblivion of being. The falling, too, must be affirmed, in that it brought us here, brought us to this point of accepting that we have been lost in the thicket and struggle of and with beings. And right there we find the quiet whisper that kept

---

554 Ivan Illich powerfully demonstrates the structural articulation of this thinking within the context of modern industrialized society. In his *Tools for Conviviality*, Illich describes the two watersheds conditioned by the rise of industrialized technologies, all of which could be easily translated in terms of Heidegger’s “essence of technology” and from the point of view of our metaphysical relationship (falling) to beings and things, rooted in our relationship to being itself.

The first watershed is the rapid and world-historical advancement of technologies medical, transportation, educational (and we might add today, computing, digital/virtual, genomic, etc.). With the first watershed comes the optimism and motivation to apply these advances to a panoply of human endeavors and problems. These advances offer a new and bright future, for the curing of a certain number of diseases, speeding transportation along to previously unimaginable velocity and to unforeseen locales, open the mind to other applications. As such, the industries develop which specialize and advance these first innovations, but they also oversee the rules, dispersal and application, and therefore the politics, of these products, technologies and tools.

A second watershed is entered once the industrialization of these technologies has reached a crisis point. Those specialists are now the sole determination of the use and dispersal of such technologies, and thus are an élite that holds the industry in their control. Furthermore, new and unforeseen complications arise that the massive industrialization of these technologies create. A new proletariat forms outside of those who have certified knowledge and verified access to these technologies and education. The new tools and their proliferation become destructive in and of themselves to society as a whole and to the freedom of individuals to determine the use of these products. For the medical industry, for example:

. . . the total social cost exacted by medicine ceased to be measurable in conventional terms. Society can have no quantitative standards by which to add up the negative value of illusion, social control, prolonged suffering, loneliness, genetic deterioration, and frustration produced by medical treatment. (Ivan Illich, *Tools for Conviviality*, New York: Harper & Row Publishers, Inc., 1973, 7)
Heidegger wandering and pondering, the whisper of the most obvious and ever-present that we have yet to attend to. Thus the truth of being calls.
Chapter 4: Heidegger and The Truth of Genesis

Forgetting the truth of being in favor of the pressing throng of beings unthought in their essence is what “falling” \([\text{Verfallen}]\) means in Being and Time. This word does not signify the Fall of Man understood in a “moral-philosophical” and at the same time secularized way; rather, it designates an essential relationship of humans to being within being’s relation to the essence of the human being.

- Heidegger, 1946\textsuperscript{355}

4.1 Introduction

The literary-historical origin of the concept of the Fall is, of course, located by the Christian tradition within the Israelite origins story in the biblical book of Genesis. But this does not indicate that a genre of “fall” stories is not ubiquitous in human culture. The Anasazi, the Daoist, the !Kung and the Zoroastrian all have “myths”\textsuperscript{356} describing some kosmos formation – an organization, putting together of things, and some, usually unforeseen consequence or event that sets awry humans and creation; chaos ensues or threatens, and some effort, divinity or person is employed to bring balance once again. The creation and “fall” narrative of Genesis is perhaps more invisible than these stories, more impenetrable simply by virtue of its ubiquity in Western cultural representation and allusion in the Western philosophical and literary traditions. As the literary theorist Roger Shattuck states in his work Forbidden

\textsuperscript{355} Heidegger, Martin, Letter on “Humanism,” 253.

\textsuperscript{356} More on this word below
Knowledge, our idea of this fall narrative (though the word is never used by Schattuck) is deceptive because the story is so ingrained into our cultural imagination: “Despite its familiarity, the creation story from Genesis is as invisible to many of us as air, or as our own personality. It surrounds us too closely. We cannot stand back in order to see it better.”\(^{357}\) This is why a rereading of the story is incumbent upon us in order to let some of the most potent and ill-considered details of falling stand out firmly in relief.

According to Genesis, the man and the woman (not yet Eve, according to the text) are placed in the garden to enjoy communion with each other and with God. They are provided with every good thing: plentiful resources, peace, free use of their time, no failure of constitutions, and consequently, no death. There is only one slight prohibition that the couple must maintain: they are instructed by God never to eat the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, lest they die. The first man and the first woman, however, come to disobey the command and therefore “fall from grace.” Death and strife enter the world, our world, as a result, and they are banished from Eden.

Let us start by imagining their fall was ever so slight, a mere shadow which passed along the mind. In this way, this myth takes on the hue of a mytho-poetical narrative, when we come to realize that the distance fallen was ever so slight, and precisely thereby the farthest fall of all, one that continues with us today only as the subtlest spiritual and interpersonal human condition under the determination of metaphysics.

This man and woman were not so very far from us, especially when we can so easily sympathize with the change effected by their disobedience, whereas it is more.

---

\(^{357}\) Shattuck, Forbidden Knowledge, 50.
difficult to imagine the cosmic, ontological shift voiced by theologians or a poet like Milton. \(^{358}\) Let us then imagine this fall in the context of a well-known experience. *Humiliation* is such a well-known experience, and it is this word which most fully characterizes and opens up a view of the experience undergone by the Man and the Woman in their fall.

As we see phenomenologically, falling is intimately associated with humiliation and humility. “Humiliation” of course is a form of the verb “to humiliate,” which derives from the Latin verb *humiliare*, which derives from *humilis*. *Humilis* means *low* or *lowly*, and derives from the Latin word for *ground*, *humus*. \(^{359}\) I will be examining this relation for the entirety of this work, taking a number of different vantage points in the face of this endlessly rich thematic. When we first see this humiliation as a *little difference* rather than an *ontological crisis or emergency*, we can then be acquainted with it, and see in Adam and Eve a critical turning constituent to human falling and therefore to human being. The conclusions will naturally lead from there, along with the associations of the fall narrative with the structure of Heideggerian falling. In anticipation we can cite Augustine: “we were all in that one man [and that one woman].” \(^{360}\)

When we considered falling phenomenologically, we articulated its primordial being among beings, and then touched upon the nature of falling in terms of the *truth of*

---

\(^{358}\) Forth reaching to the fruit, she plucked, she eat.
Earth felt the wound, and Nature from her seat
Sighing through all her works gave signs of woe
That all was lost.
….Earth trembled from her entrails, as again
In pangs, and Nature gave a second groan. (*Paradise Lost*, IX, 781-83; IX, 1000-1001)


\(^{360}\) Augustine, *City of God*, 523.
being. But when it comes to the fullness of human falling we must add a number of complexities that extend to the attestation and self-attestation of what the human is, particularly in its mode of falling. These complexities, however, arise along with the nature of the human as we experience and articulate it from out of the metaphysical/Western viewpoint. Western subjectivity is constituted by falling, and therefore by humiliation. Historically and even theoretically, this is a negative fact, so negative that we are offended by the very notion and seek to dispense with it; but offense, rejection and evasion are not strong enough anecdotes against serious contemplation and only ensnare us further into a greater form of debasement, summarized best in Nietzsche’s conceptualization of reactivity and ressentiment. On the contrary, as we have seen, the Heideggerian affirmation frees us from valuing this history dismissively and negatively. To view this situation we must take a number of perspectives; the first was phenomenological/Heideggerian; one will be psychoanalytic, but the next will be mythological, from the myth of Genesis from which the theological concept of the Fall derives. All of our Heideggerian discoveries bear on the following conversation.

I define myth in this chapter in a very strict sense. I do not mean myth as imagination or transubstantiation of the impossible, shattering Real into a fantastical, digestible fairytale-reality by which human beings wrest back their agency and psychic balance from the forces of fate, the will of the gods, or just their own frailty.\textsuperscript{361} Myth is

\textsuperscript{361} This is the popular contemporary psychoanalytic-ontological reading as it is simultaneously the still-relying Enlightenment view upon myth that stretches from Voltaire, Montagne, Hume, all the way through rationalism, positivism, objectivism, to today. Thankfully the “postmodern turn” has provided a number of services to contemporary anthropology, and vice versa, in reversing the prejudice of myth as being the cartoon-drawing, security-blanket creations of tall children, from the ancients to modern
not here considered to be a people’s subjective or collective compensation for their weakness or as an explanation for the cosmos or its laws or events that befall them when they are bereft of scientific explanation. Nor is mythos a “noble lie” that the powerful, the bourgeoisie or the colonizer tell the proletariat or subaltern in order to sanction and perpetuate the domination of the latter in historical social and economic hierarchies. A myth is not necessarily ideology, though it can be certainly thus employed in a derivative sense; nor is it a mere imagistic explanation that stands in and waits for the coming of a clearer, scientific rationale. While a myth can be and perhaps is many of these things, we should rather cite Heidegger on the matter of mythos:

Myth means the telling word. For the Greeks to tell is to lay bare and make appear—both the appearance and that which has its essence in the appearance, is epiphany. Mythos is what has its essence in its telling—what is apparent in the un-concealedness of its appeal. The mythos is that appeal of foremost and radical concern to all human beings. Logos says the same; mythos and logos are not, as our current historians of philosophy claim, placed into opposition by philosophy as such; on the contrary, the early Greek thinkers (Parmenides, fragment 8) are precisely the ones to use mythos and logos in the same sense. Mythos and logos became separated and opposed only at the point where neither mythos nor logos can keep to its original nature. In Plato’s work, this separation has already taken place. Historians and philologists, by virtue of a prejudice which modern rationalism adopted from Platonism, imagine that mythos was destroyed by logos. But nothing religious is ever destroyed by logic; it is destroyed only by the God’s withdrawal.362

---

362 Heidegger, Martin, What is Called Thinking?, 10. Add to this another similar passage in which the truth of being is related to mythos, and further related to poetic and thinking. Cf: Heidegger, Martin, Hölderlin’s Hymn “The Ister,” 111:

Granted that “mythology” is not some doctrine of the gods invented by humans because they are not yet “mature” enough to do exact physics or chemistry, and granted that mythology is that historical “process” in which being itself comes to appear poetically, then thinking in the sense of essential thinking stands in an originary relation to poetizing.
A number of important features arise from this quote relating *mythos* to the conversation in our previous chapter on truth. *Mythos* is in essence a telling, a telling that lays bare and makes something appear. This telling raises itself into truth as unconcealedness, and is therefore in direct relation and bearing to the truth of being. Myth is then the self-telling of something regarding the ek-sistence of human beings in relation to the truth of being. Those pre-Socatics, closer to the original wellspring of the thinking that branches into the path of metaphysics and the unspoken, concealed history of Being, “use *mythos* and *logos* in the same sense.” *Logos* is both speaking, word, the speaking of language—and thinking. Heraclitus instructs his readers to look right past him in the quest for wisdom [*sophon*], rather to attend to the *Logos*: “For wisdom, listen not to me but to the Word, and know that all is one.”363 Every telling, then, calls out for a hearing.364 And though, “by virtue of a prejudice which modern rationalism adopted from Platonism” (the Platonic prejudice against myth and poetry), historians and philologists imagine that *mythos* was “destroyed” by *logos*, myth was conquered by the metaphysics of reason, that in no way can render the speaking silent, just as Heidegger piously365 confirms: “nothing religious is ever destroyed by logic; it is


364 Cf. Heidegger, Martin, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, 142-143: To this extent *logos* is also a gathering: Gathering is never just driving together and piling up. It maintains in a belonging-together that which contends and strives in confrontation. It does not allow it to decay into mere dispersion and what is simply cast down. As maintaining, *logos* has the character of pervasive sway, of *phusis*. . . by unifying what contends, the gathering maintains it in the highest acuteness of its tension.

365 By piety we mean to say, the way that leaves God to be God, if God will “be” at all. On this emphasis of the relationship between God and being and piety, Cf. Marion, *God Without Being*; Raschke *The End of Theology*, and *The Next Reformation*. Also, Cf. Seебurger, Frank. *God, Prayer, Suicide and Philosophy: Reflections on Some of the Issues of Life* (North Charleston: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2013), 35:

What is needed is to free God from the chains of being, most especially when being has become no more than the reality of actuality and efficacy. God has power over being, not being over God.
destroyed only by the God’s withdrawal.” Hence we are listening to a “religious” word, one that is involved with the God’s presencing and withdrawal, God’s unconcealment and concealment. This is the philosophical landscape in which we can now turn to the Genesis myth.

What I am examining mytho-logically, then, is another kind of laying bare and making appear that we have already addressed phenomenologically. Phenomenologically, we exposed the nature and being of falling—in its own way. By this means we caught a glimpse into the being of falling, the falling of being, and what it means for us. Both of these tellings in their own way will continue to mutually inform and elucidate one another in such a way that falling will continue to be constituted as an historical-philosophical concept. In other words, Adam and Eve have as much to say to us about being as Duns Scotus, Husserl, Heidegger, Plato or Einstein—perhaps even more.

It would be unfortunate to let this moment slip by without turning first to a meditation on Heidegger’s thinking on poiesis and the essence of poetry, as both a way of further theoretically clarifying my approach to the Genesis narrative and structure, that is, the nature of its own speaking. We bring up poiesis here also to introduce the poetic, which will become an essential part of my claim in my conclusion: the nature of poetry will be a site of entering a thinking pathway upon the subject of the divine and, in further work, Jesus Christ; that future work will read his existence (as much as his essencing, the ur-sprung that keeps on springing), as much as his teaching, as a poetic

---

But that means that God must also have the power not to “be.” God must be capable of not being, able not to be, “up to it,” as up to a challenge. What we need is not a God who may be, but a God who can not be.
grounding for a site\textsuperscript{366} of the truth of being, particularly in relation to our concept of falling. Christ is, par excellence, “the one and only” – Hölderlin’s “Der Einzige,” who \textit{gets back up} after the Last Fall. This word is not scientific, and beyond that, it is even less metaphysical. In fact, it is through insisting upon the \textit{poiesis} of Christ that we would hazard a step back – or a leap – into an unforeseen possibility for a non-metaphysical speaking, a site for the overcoming of metaphysics and for the preparation of that “other beginning.”\textsuperscript{367} Furthermore, poetry takes its essence from the essence of the truth of being. The essence of poetry is grounded, however, within the essence of language. By taking this direction in my observations, I will further introduce the Genesis narrative of the Fall as primarily rooted in a misrelation to language, language being part of the essential complex of the truth of being, the essence of truth, and human \textit{being}. Language


\textsuperscript{367} In his masterful phenomenological work of Christianity, \textit{I Am the Truth: Toward a Philosophy of Christianity}, Michel Henry, articulates the singular revelations of the “Truth of Christianity.” He argues that this Christian Truth is different from the ontological Truth of the “world” – employing, of course, a Christian distinction – that the Christian Truth overcomes the world’s truth, which is established in the incommensurable difference between that which reveals (truth), and that which the revealing shows (i.e., truth as metaphysical, as a subject-object relationship). “…\textit{it is Truth and Truth alone that can offer us access to itself…”} (9). As we saw, this reading is complicated by Heidegger’s investigations on the essence of truth, but Henry offers a valuable insight into understanding the unique phenomenology of Truth within Christianity: that distinction between the truth and that which it reveals is collapsed in that “What manifests itself is manifestation itself…the revelation of revelation…pure Revelation that reveals nothing other than itself. God reveals Himself” (25). The interesting thing is what Christianity does with the “truth of the world”:

\begin{quote}
It is the first decisive characteristic of the Truth of Christianity that it in no way differs from what it makes true. Within it there is no separation between the seeing and what is seen, between the light and what it illuminates. And this is because there is in that Truth neither Seeing nor seen, no Light like that of the world. From the start, the Christian concept of truth is given as irreducible to the concept of truth that dominates the history of Western thought, from Greece to contemporary phenomenology. (24)
\end{quote}

For Christianity, according to Henry, it is Life itself that reveals itself, in both achieving the revelation and revealing only itself. “The world, too reveals and makes manifest, but within the ‘outside,’ casting a thing outside itself…in such a way that it never shows itself as other, different, external, in its setting of radical exteriority that is the ‘outside-itself’ of the world” (29).
bears with it a singular relation, as each member of this relation does. Language is the "house of Being. In its home human beings dwell."368

Wallace Stevens speaks a word on poetry that sums up well Heidegger’s own:

“Poetry is the revelation in words by means of the words.”369 In poetizing, there takes place, takes a stand, a gathered Saying [die Sage], as Heidegger comes to translate logos at times. Poetry is a unique blessing, a singular necessity and call springing from the heart of humanity’s engagement with language. But a more common view is that language is a tool, a capacity or property of human nature, a way of storing and sharing information, expressing externally internal mental content, etc. We get off the path of this commonness and glazing over the issue by the strange tautology by which Heidegger makes his own entry into the essence of language. His famous word reads, “Language is language,” and “Language speaks.”370 We can do little but short shrift to Heidegger’s expansive philosophy of language here, but a few indications must serve to begin the approach to poetry’s unique place in language.

In brief, language is often the most problematic feature of Dasein to render non-metaphysically. Heidegger’s great challenge is to shift our comportment to language away from all metaphysical predomination into an openness to experiencing language on its own terms.371 It is no accident that strangeness is an operational process of


371 Heidegger, Martin, “The Nature of Language,” from On the Way to Language, 57: The three lectures that follow . . . are intended to bring us face to face with a possibility of undergoing an experience with language. To undergo an experience with something . . . means that something befalls us, strikes us, comes over us, overwhelms and transforms us. When we
Heidegger’s thinking, for to say something strangely, uncommonly – particularly an inflection or variation on a word or idea that otherwise in danger of being lost in the fall of commonness and the trap of apparent self-evidence, which would render the speaking of the word silent for us – first intervenes in destabilizing the deafness of our listening. By rendering something common strange instead, the obviousness of the deaf march of automated rationality and common sense are interrupted, and the strange thing draws attention to itself in a way that would otherwise be missed. This is Heidegger’s methodological – destructive or otherwise – first response to the abyssal tug of falling: to voice the problem in which words and speech fall no less than human being.\footnote{Heidegger, Martin, “Building Dwelling Thinking,” from Poetry, Language, Thought, 147: That language in a way retracts the real meaning of the word bauen, which is dwelling, is evidence of the primal nature of these meanings; for with essential words of language, their true meaning falls into oblivion in favor of foreground meanings. Man has hardly yet pondered the mystery of this process. Language withdraws from man its simple and high speech. But its primal cell does not thereby become incapable of speech, it merely falls silent. Man, though, fails to heed this silence.}

It is not inconsequential that Heidegger speaks of falling when he says that the “essential words” of language “fall silent” in the torrent of foreground meanings. This “falling into oblivion” and “falling silent” of words mirrors in language (as an Ereignis) – as we saw in terms of oblivion, forgottenness, concealment, mystery and errancy – the destiny of the truth of being in the condition of falling. Falling reveals itself once again as essential to human comportment even in language. Language is implicated in a falling away parallel to that of being. Language too falls into oblivion: the falling silent of language, that is, the silencing of the call of language in its voicing of the truth of being – not only with regard to certain words or tongues but in regards to the self-talk of ‘undergoing’ an experience, we mean specifically that the experience is not of our own making; to undergo here means that we endure it, suffer it, receive it as it strikes us and submit to it. It is this something itself that comes about, comes to pass, happens.
sheltering of the holy which may yet find ways of announcing itself. The falling away into oblivion of the “primal nature” of the meanings of words into “foreground meanings.” This falling is always the tug of the counter-essence of metaphysical humanity, and in language this falling is represented as, once again, a misrelation of the human to its Da-sein, a matter of comportment. At the heart of the plummet and velocity of falling is the human misrelation to its essence, being, its proper abode, and in particular here, a misrelation to the essence of language.373

If language speaks, it is not that humans do not, of course, but that humans speak only the voicing of the appeal of language, or the response: “Man speaks when, and only when, he responds to language by listening to its appeal . . . Language beckons us at first and then again at the end, toward a thing’s nature.”374 Mortals “speak insofar as they listen . . . this speaking that listens and accepts is responding.”375 To relate the current discussion to the last, “The primal calling, which bids the intimacy of world and thing to come, is the authentic bidding. This bidding is the nature of speaking.”376 Poetry’s connection with the essence of language is rendered here: poetry is the purest site in which human responding to language’s speaking occurs: “It speaks by bidding the bidden, the thing-world and world-thing” into an en-owning (Ereignis) in which world...

373 Ibid., 144:
It is language that tells us about the nature of a thing, provided that we respect language’s own nature. In the meantime, to be sure, there rages round the earth an unbridled yet clever talking, writing, and broadcasting of spoken words. Man acts as though he were the shaper and master of language, while in fact language is the master of man. Perhaps it is before all else man’s subversion of this relation of dominance that drives his nature into alienation…Among all the appeals that we human beings, on our part, can help to be voiced, language is the highest and everywhere the first. (Emphasis original)


376 Ibid., 203.
and things deliver each other over into their essence, like the fourfold.\footnote{Ibid.} Within that center where “dif-ference” occurs, world and thing and word gather together with one another, “by letting things rest in the world’s favor . . . by letting the world suffice itself in a thing.”\footnote{Ibid., 204.}

“…Poetically Man Dwells…” is the name of a late lecture, and the word that Heidegger continually brings up in discussions on poetry and language. “Poetry first causes dwelling to be dwelling. Poetry is what really lets us dwell . . . Through building. Poetic creation, which lets us dwell, is a kind of building.”\footnote{Ibid., 213.} The Greeks thought of \textit{techne} as “that revealing that brings forth truth into the splendor of radiant appearing.” The \textit{poiesis} of the fine arts was also called \textit{techne}.\footnote{Heidegger, Martin, \textit{The Question Concerning Technology}, 34. Cf. Heidegger, Martin, “Hölderlin’s Earth and Heaven,” from \textit{Elucidations on Hölderlin’s Poetry}, trans. Keith Hoeller (Amherst: Humanity Books, 2000), 186: “Art, as the pointing that allows the appearance of what is invisible, is the highest kind of showing. The ground and the summit of such showing again unfold themselves in saying as poetic song.”} Poetry is a revealing at the same time it is a building for dwelling.\footnote{Heidegger, Martin, “Building Dwelling Thinking,” from \textit{Poetry, Language, Thought}, 147: The Old Saxon \textit{wunon}, the Gothic \textit{wunian}, like the old word \textit{bauan}, mean to remain, to stay in a place. But the Gothic \textit{wunian} says more distinctly how this remaining is experienced. \textit{Wunian} means: to be at peace, to be brought to peace, to remain in peace. The word for peace, \textit{Friede}, means the free, \textit{das Frye}, and \textit{fry} means: preserved from harm and danger, preserved from something, safeguarded. To free really means to spare. The sparing itself consists not only in the fact that we do not harm the one whom we spare. Real sparing is something \textit{positive} and takes place when we leave something beforehand in its own nature, when we return it specifically to its being, when we “free” it in the real sense of the word into a preserve of peace. To dwell, to be set at peace, means to remain at peace within the free, the preserve, the free sphere that safeguards each thing in its nature. \textit{The fundamental character of dwelling is this sparing and preserving}. It pervades dwelling in its whole range. That range reveals itself to us as soon as we reflect that human being consists in dwelling and, indeed, dwelling in the sense of the stay of mortals on the earth.} Dwelling is the proper stay of mortals upon the earth, \textit{as} mortals, under the sky and before the divinities. In dwelling, mortals take up their stay,
safeguarding the spring of their essence within the fourfold, amidst and with things, and in the world. Dwelling sets mortal nature into its proper place, into the “preserve of peace.” Earlier, Heidegger says, “To dwell poetically’ means to stand in the presence of the gods and to be struck by the essential nearness of things.” 382 We will observe other parts of the nature of poetry and poets when we arrive at our discussion of the divine.

I follow Heidegger strictly in all of this for a very strategic purpose: to enact a bending of speech by which we begin to elide some of those most questionable terms and assumptions of metaphysical thinking. This is necessary to proceed through the investigation of falling. In the beginning, we maintained our discourse within a more familiar vernacular resonating with contemporary philosophical jargon, which is supposed to be more comprehensible to us because it is more ubiquitous in the language of our various academic discourses. This is the language that Heidegger in fact helped above anyone else to voice in the beginning, which became known as existentialism and phenomenology, and flowed into endless tributaries from there. Nevertheless, as stated early on, this is precisely the form of discourse Heidegger found he had to leave behind in order faithfully to continue down that path upon which that previous discourse inaugurated his thinking. In articulating the essential nature of falling, first in relation to its own being (phenomenologically), then in its relation to the human being and the essence of the truth of being, this discourse more and more undergoes its own

382 Heidegger, Martin, “Hölderlin and the Essence of Poetry,” from Elucidations on Hölderlin’s Poetry, 60. The poet is the ‘one who has been cast out—out into that between, between gods and men’ (Ibid., 64). Poetry is also a founding; to found is “to preserve everything as permanent and for itself,” (Heidegger, Martin, “Hölderlin’s Earth and Heaven,” from Elucidations on Hölderlin’s Poetry, 187). Cf. “The poet experiences an authority, a dignity of the word that which nothing vaster and loftier can be thought. But the word is also that possession with which the poet is trusted and entrusted as poet in an extraordinary way. The poet experiences his poetic calling as a call to the word as the source, the bourn of Being. The renunciation which the poet learns is of that special kind of fulfilled self-denial to which alone is promised what has long been concealed and is essentially vouchsafed already” (Heidegger, Martin, “The Nature of Language,” from On The Way to Language, 66).
Destruktion and recovery. At the same time, in the hesitant insistence upon the necessity of another bearing, a speaking occurs by which we can lay aside some of the most fundamental tenets of metaphysical dogma. This does not occur in a Nietzschean rejection but as a perduiring memory (and gratitude as befits thinking’s relation to thanking) of the leg of the path that led us the longest possible way to where we are, individually and as a civilization.

That way has yet cast us upon the desideratum of another road in the striking off of Heidegger’s path. This other path is the “other beginning,” one that is attained by the turning, or the leap.383 The leap is out of the perpetual falling of metaphysics, onto the ground we stand upon, perhaps for the first time: “We moderns can learn only if we always unlearn at the same time . . . we can learn thinking only if we radically unlearn what thinking has been traditionally.”384 As Heidegger often states, it is the strange leap or step back that lands us right where we are, which indeed is the longest journey, the one that brought us to where we are. “[H]ow is that supposed to get us anywhere? But we do not want to get anywhere. We would like only, for once, to get to just where we are already.”385 Achieving this involves the radical attendance to simplicity, to the simple and humble, and that means a foregoing at times of all the variety of metaphysical complexities and nuances, based as they are on assumptions, or rather, upon a long-standing yet forgotten decision. Only at a time of the utmost confusion, then, can we have philosophical—supposedly thoughtful—tomes that span hundreds of pages and are


still incapable of saying as much as a tiny charred, mysterious but nevertheless effulgent fragment of an ancient thinker such as Heraclitus

By laying bare all of this we can make entry into a new kind of reading of the original Fall passage from the Bible. In letting this Scripture stand up before us in the dignity of mythos and as poiesis— but not a priori as the Word of God—we allow it to stand as a telling, as a speaking, which might wish to say something about our most originary essencing, our relation to being, to god, to the truth of being and the essence of language. In honoring the Bible thus, however, we also do not treat it as having dropped fully formed from the sky, as infallible, nor as an object of scholarly investigation, as a priori authoritative, or as a document which is in itself even significant—except, that is, in view of the worlding that ensued and ensues from the human engagement with its speaking, and the worlding from which it speaks itself. In content, but perhaps also in production, it lays bare a unique glance into the misrelation of human comportment we call falling. As such it would not speak solely to one group of people, even solely to the people from whom the story springs, but as mythos, to all people, or at least to us “Westerners,” whose origins more or less mysteriously and strangely are drawn up into and out of this story, and to whomever is concerned with the destiny thereof. As poetry, additionally, it exposes the dwelling place of mortals, upon the earth, under the sky, before the divinities, and in relation to themselves. As poetry, it poetically speaks the founding of a people—and not merely the historical Israelites, but metaphysical humanity, the destiny of Western thought, and perhaps for a long time yet to come. As telling of logos, as mythos, as poiesis, this story unfolds thing and world in its own way. This is the stance I take to the Genesis story, in hopes that a calling will issue
out of it, just as originary a bidding – that calls for response – than that of any poet or thinker, any Hölderlin or Heidegger. We have already made the leap, whether we know it or not.

4.2 The Truth of Genesis

Before all else, then, I read the source story of the Fall in Genesis as a story that brings the human engagement with truth out into the open. We now understand this truth in its twofold essence as both unconcealment and concealment. Furthermore, only the human *comportment* towards truth is at issue, essentially, for the truth of the matter resides precisely in things and the unfolding of the world out of the *aletheia* of being. It is not a content existing in the mind that can be reproduced or represented, transmitted as discursive or nodal form, or as information. Rather, the story bares how a human being—or even human beings as a whole—bear themselves within, towards, away from or against the twofold essence of *aletheia*. Reading the fall narrative with this structure in mind actually allows it to speak in ways that it cannot when we are deadened by theological and/or literary (i.e., metaphysical) presuppositions. We let the text speak for itself in this regard, and the connections to a Heideggerian philosophy become in and of themselves apparent.

Giorgio Agamben—who was a student of Heidegger and present at Heidegger's 1966 Le Thor seminar—takes up this relation of truth, knowledge and the Fall directly in “Nudity,” but only develops it so far. Agamben argues that there was no specific “content” in the fruit that the Woman and Adam ate, and that is demonstrated by the fact that it was an awareness of their nudity (absence of clothing) that the pair became
conscious of as a result of the fruit. There was a corresponding “absence of content of humanity’s first knowledge.”\textsuperscript{386} This is certainly only a slight difference that befalls the Man and Woman: not to know an object of knowledge, certainly not any positive content comparable to the knowledge of good and evil, but to know knowability itself, “an absence of veils, only a possibility of knowing.”

The nudity that the first humans saw in Paradise when their eyes were opened is, then, the opening of truth, of “disclosedness” (\textit{a-letheia}, “unconcealment”), without which knowledge would not be possible. The condition of no longer being covered by the clothing of grace does not reveal the obscurity of flesh and sin but rather the light of knowability. There is nothing behind the presumed clothing of grace, and it is precisely this condition of not having anything behind it, this pure visibility and presence, that is nudity. To see a body naked means to perceive its pure knowability beyond every secret, beyond or before its objective predicates.\textsuperscript{387}

It sounds as if “the light of knowability” revealed in that fateful moment could also be seen as the revelation that knowledge is now capable of filling in and comprehending objects within that open region.\textsuperscript{388} In the “absence of veils” everything can potentially be known in nudity, in the “possibility of knowing.” When the bodies of the lovers (do we dare risk the term? before, or after, the Fall?) are revealed to each other as naked,


\textsuperscript{387} Ibid., 81.

\textsuperscript{388} For, as we have seen, knowability as such does not imply the relation to a-letheia that Agamben seems to assume it does here. Aletheia is, as he rightly states, more like the open itself, not knowledge or content in one’s head. The more primary feature of a relation to aletheia in this regard would be a knowability of the possibility of presencing \textit{and} hiding, that now the pair know that objects are encounterable, and that in a complex way. Even before knowledge, there is the face-to-face of the presencing of the perceiver and perceived; however, it is the encounterability and the knowledge thereof that seems to be more true to the nature of aletheia. To say it in another way, which segues into my own considerations: after the fall—being deceived—the man and woman are introduced to the fact that everything potentially knowable has this “dark” quality: knowledge and presence can be given or attained, but it can be \textit{held back, concealed, in the very act of its givenness}. The conclusion that Agamben comes to is more in line then, after this slight, but essential, adjustment.
perhaps only then did they become lovers in any meaningful sense, in that they realized suddenly that they were knowable, open to be known. Nonetheless, from the gaze of the Other – each other and God – they attempted to hide themselves.

From this Agamben further speculates that when knowability itself was revealed to them, they conceived their previous “clothing of grace, the justice that comes with the observance of the commandments,” not as beatitude and fullness but “as a state of weakness and atechnia (that is, a lack of applied knowledge).” This is perhaps confirmed in the fashioning of the clothing, the first technical art, the first “artificial” creation of man apart from God (if we do not count naming). This first creation concealed the couple’s newly discovered knowability. Therefore, sin leads the couple to perceive their Edenic condition as a lack. The two are plunged into a “vain search for technical knowledge and the sciences that distract them from the contemplation of God.”

In this way, nudity arose from a loss of the pure knowledge of the contemplation of God and substituted knowability per se with “applied and earthly knowledge.” Agamben argues that the “Fall is therefore not a fall of the flesh but of the mind. At stake in nudity and the loss of innocence is not this or that other way of making love but the hierarchy and modalities of knowledge.”

Agamben’s analysis is a helpful introduction to a number of the features I will be raising in my own reading; his discourse is instructive in Heideggerian thinking. We

---

389 Ibid.
390 Ibid., 82.
391 Ibid.
392 Ibid.
will come again to meet him in the concluding discussion, but for now we move on and back up to the beginning.

The story of Adam and Eve actually occurs in the second creation story. In this latter version, God creates all things, but not yet animals; God creates a human, a man first, composed of the earth and enlivened by the breath of God. This man is placed within the voluptuous garden where he makes his dwelling in the preserve of peace God

---

Intimations of the fourfold ought to ring loudly here, for the earth is as much — whether we know it or not — for us as for the writers and redactors of this story—that upon which mortals dwell and spring from, under the sky, before the divinities (here Yahweh). Already we have the statement upon human nature, that it is composed of, set upon, the earth, before the Lord and in relation to the Lord. From this world all things thing, a world gathers and unfolds and unfolds things—all within the ringing singlefold of the four.

Hearing the ringing fourfold here is not an imposition of Heideggerianism upon the text, for the fourfold is inarguably more originary than the biblical text itself, and to the extent that the text gathers a speaking at all, it does so before anything else within and out of a relation to the fourfold. The factum “language speaks” takes up its appropriate place here precisely when we see the tautological nature of every true (i.e., aletheic) speaking, i.e., true in that it speaks out of undergoing an experience with language and the aletheia of being. When human speaking has been submitted to the speaking of language, what we hear from the former is the same as what issues from the latter. At its highest, this is seen in mythos and poiesis.

The essence of Scripture—that which stands scripture up as Scripture and holds it there—therefore reveals itself not in the apologetics or reification it receives by the “followers” over which whatever “faith tradition” the Scripture prevails; nor does it receive validation by tradition, or as the word of God—unless God proves it to be thus, but that is up to God. But in its own tautologos, “repeating what has been said,” “repetition of the same,” Scripture reveals its own self-evident listening and responding out of the bidding of things and world. Scripture is as such in that it grounds and founds itself poetically in the speaking word, in the aletheia of things and world. Scripture properly en-owns itself over in an Ereignis, an event of appropriation, over to the truth of being and being (or by way of being, some god), and that truth, the aletheia of being itself, responds in that it grants the merit or favor that the telling thereby receives for its fidelity. Scripture has no a priori grounding in this truth. In its tautology, Scripture sets itself apart from other human speech not because of its unique message but because of the sheer commonness of its saying. It garners its authority by, as it were, saying what everyone already knows, but saying it again. In this way we stumble upon Socrates’ conception of knowledge as remembrance, recollection; therefore, the intimation arises that Scripture is a matter of knowledge, in the Socratic sense. Recollecting and re-membering are precisely the singular work of Scripture, but only insofar as Scripture shares this singularity universally, with all, for it is the singularity that all speech is capable of as such, as the co-responding to the truth of being. Scripture is in the end the revelation not of God’s Word but of the pure possibility of human speech, the possibility to adequate, to equal-to, to utter, and to essence out of and into the highest calling of Being itself.

Any attraction that Scripture maintains is the gravity of the worlding that presences in its speaking, the gravity in which human beings feel themselves pressed by—but not necessarily pressed down by. Upon reading Scripture, if it is Scripture, i.e., that it essences out of the truth of being, human beings themselves are gathered into and by its Saying, into the open region of truth. Furthermore, human beings are gathering into the stay of their dwelling in that Scripture, if it is Scripture, delivers humans into their being, the “preserve of peace”—which is, again, the meaning of “dwelling” (cf. “Building Dwelling Thinking,” 147).
provides. The garden is called Eden, and man is placed there “to work it and take care of it.”\textsuperscript{394} God issues his prohibition to Adam, a “warning”: “You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die.”\textsuperscript{395} Thereafter God says that man should not be alone, and so God creates all the animals and brings them to Adam to see what he will name them. There he names all the creatures God created, just as he will name and call his future wife, first as Woman, then as Eve.\textsuperscript{396} After the creation of the animals for Adam, “still there is no companion suitable for him,” so God “caused” Adam to fall asleep, takes out a part of his side, closes up the place, makes a woman and brings her before Adam.\textsuperscript{397} And this brings us to the Fall narrative.

Contrary to popular opinion, the Fall of Man does not occur because of a \textit{lying} serpent per se.\textsuperscript{398} Strictly speaking, the serpent may not quite be said to lie.\textsuperscript{399}

\textsuperscript{394} Gen. 2:15 (New International Version).
\textsuperscript{395} Ibid., 2:16-17 (NRSV).
\textsuperscript{396} Cf. Heidegger, Martin, “Language,” from \textit{Poetry, Language, Thought}, 196: This speaking names . . . . What is this naming? . . . it calls into word. The naming calls. Calling brings closer what it calls. However this bringing closer does not fetch what is called in order to set it down in closest proximity to what is present, to find a place for it there. The call does indeed call. Thus it brings to presence of what was previously uncalled into a nearness . . . Where to? Into the distance in which what is called remains still absent . . . The calling here calls into a nearness…

If we take a step back from the Man’s naming and calling we can see another of the strange ways this being-passage speaks to our reading. The story itself names and calls out of the essence of Scripture, and not merely that of Judeo-Christian origins. In its responsorial modality, \textit{Genesis} gives form, as “revelation in words by means of the words,” to quote Stevens again, to human worlding.

\textsuperscript{397} Genesis 2:20f-22 (New Living Translation). It is interesting to note, in light of previous discussions, how the woman is here treated like an object. She is “made” whereas the man was “formed.” But beyond that, God “brought her to Adam.” That is, God brings the woman to stand before Adam, to be beheld. An object is that which stands against. In the worlding that developed around this \textit{mythos}, it is telling that the first glimpse we have of the woman is in her being treated like an object.

\textsuperscript{398} Though he is the most “cunning” of the creatures, we could not even leap to the conclusion that the serpent is \textit{evil}, as he is most certainly created by God, and therefore one over whom God proclaimed prior,
Consequently, it is at least not a lie that the woman believes and acts upon, but rather a fateful linguistic equivocation, the nature of which we are to question. Because of this, the meaning of the story remains hidden to us, especially to the extent we presume we have already read and know it by heart.

The serpent begins by asking the woman a question. He inquires, but in a way that either suggests he does not know the correct version God’s prohibition, or that he feigns not to know or to know only part of the injunction. Why does he confuse the facts and instead ask, with seeming insolence, “Did God really say you must not eat any of the fruit in the garden?”2400 Because the narrator begins with the description of this serpent as the “shrewdest of all the creatures the Lord God had made,”2401 as cunning, it is possible that the subterfuge upon which the serpent embarks begins with this seemingly ignorant question, implying further that the inquisitor purposefully misquoted God’s command. But why would he do that? What is the serpent’s intent in presenting himself initially, though shrewdest of all, as ignorant and misinformed? Or does the author editorially intervene, aiming to show that, despite the fact of his cunning, the serpent is, from the beginning, ill-informed, especially in his desire to misguide? Is this the way the narrative characterizes the serpent’s project as ill-willed, deceitful, evil? We are not given a way to an answer but are rather forced to sit uncomfortably with this unsettling, undecidable (aporetic) ambiguity from the beginning of the narrative.

“*It is good.***” And the assumption that the serpent is Satan implicates us in an even greater violence against the text.

2399 It is not clear the serpent is lying if “to lie” is defined as an intentionally false statement meant to deceive another. We may be able to make a case for deception, but not lying.

2400 Genesis 3:1 (NLT).

2401 Ibid.
Interestingly enough, in this way we are ourselves put on guard from the outset, to grow suspicious in a way that the woman herself is incapable of. From the mythological perspective, a profound genius is evinced in that the wariness the narrator induces in the reader is precisely couched in that other domain, the other side of the abyss across which the woman herself cannot yet fathom because she has not yet fallen to this hither side. We however are situated on this other side of the fall, the (presumably) knowing side, and the narrative structure itself highlights this difference in that we are inspired to our “properly human” incredulity right at the point where the woman experiences naiveté—if not arrogance.

Why do I say “arrogance”? It is in the woman’s confident retort, her “Of course!...” that we see her ignorance, or “innocence,” her unwariness in the face of this threatening deceiver, who may merely be playing a game, having a bit of fun, the consequences of which will determine all of human history as falling, according to this mytho-logical telling, this laying-bare. The woman appears to have no clue that she is in a struggle for her own nature, a struggle to assume knowledge of that which she is not supposed to know, that which has not been given to her to know. Or if she does perceive the struggle she is involved in, she does not sufficiently reckon either the skill of her opponent or the inadequacy of her own resources in the game, or both. For reckoning both would require knowledge that she does not yet possess, the knowledge of the difference between good and evil – the knowledge that will be given. For it must be deduced that in being ignorant of good and evil – and therefore the difference between the two – the woman cannot even know that she is capable of being misled, that she is
ignorant of the fact that she can be in a state of error. She does not even know that she is capable of falling, and cannot know—until she already has.

The serpent’s very questioning perhaps serves to boost the woman up in her own estimation. If our reading admits the possibility that the serpent is informed of the correct language of the prohibition, then we again see the irony of the relation. Like a parent who, in play, says something incorrectly so the child gets to show how much it knows, the serpent allows the woman to proudly face her challenger’s “ignorance” with the correct answer. Either way, she clarifies for him, the pair may actually eat of any fruit except that of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. If they eat it, if they even touch it, they will die – the prohibition on touching is a detail that is not included in God’s original prohibition to Adam when it is recounted just prior in the narrative. Why, for that matter, does the woman add something to God’s original word? Is this merely the oversight of some later redactor, or the sign of a mythological accretion of another kind of prohibition? Why does she add that she is not even allowed to touch the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil when explaining the situation to the serpent? Once again, a sure answer is impossible without disregarding the boundaries set by the text, but it is essential to note that already twice now, within the first few lines, the narrative has expertly represented two individuals – first the serpent, then the woman – dealing willy-nilly, carelessly (or very slyly), i.e., irreverently, with God’s word.

Already, then, we are being introduced to what I argue is the key theme of this entire mytho-logy: that the fall derives not merely from pride or disobedience but from a fundamental dalliance with the essence of truth itself, represented mythologically here in the Bible, but indeed in every word that is spoken in the myth. Yahweh, the humans,
the serpent—all are set upon the stage of a struggle in language, the “house of being,”
and language is enacted and employed in such a way as to reveal a fundamental
misrecognition of the humans to truth (of being) itself.402 This story is a story of the
human misrelation to truth, and therefore, relatedly—but in a way we have to think
out—of their disobedience to God, but in such a way that, as Heidegger was keen to
discover, truth is simultaneously the truth of being and the being of truth.

The man and woman “become mortal” (let’s bracket the meaning of this) in
fulfillment of the promise of God: “if you eat of the fruit of this tree you shall surely die.”
But the *equivocation provided* with this promised death is precisely what the cunning
serpent relies upon in order to seduce the couple. The serpent was correct, but only
within a strange parallactic glance403 by which he was able to initiate this very

402 Cf. for a psychoanalytic commentary on this matter, Lacan, Jacques. “Presentation on Psychical
Causality,” from *Écrits*, 140:
This misrecognition can be seen in the revolt through which the madman seeks to
impose the law of his heart onto what seems to him to be the havoc [*désordre*] of the
world. This is an “insane” enterprise . . . in that the subject does not recognize in this
havoc the very manifestation of his actual being, or that what he experiences as the law
of his hear is but the inverted and virtual image of that same being. He thus doubly
misrecognizes it, precisely so as to split its actuality from its virtuality. Now, he can
escape this actuality only via this virtuality. His being is thus caught in a circle, unless
he breaks it through some form of violence by which, in lashing out at what he takes to
be the havoc, he ends up harming himself because of the social repercussions of his
actions.

403 I am borrowing a relevant term from Slavoj Žižek, who will return with slobbering gusto in the chapter
that flows out of the current one. Parallax is of course a stellar notion that involves the apparent
displacement of an object caused by a change in the perspective of observation. Žižek’s “twist” of this
notion is to assert that, ontologically and subjectively, this parallax is not a “subjective” fact that changes
based on the observer’s position with objects out there. Rather, taking from Hegel’s dialectic, Žižek sees
the subject and object exist in an “inherently mediated” position by which “an ‘epistemological’ shift in the
subject’s point of view always reflects an ‘ontological’ shift in the object itself…the subject’s gaze is
always-already inscribed into the perceived object itself.” This “reflexive twist” is the means by which I
“bear witness to my ‘material existence’,” “by which I myself am included in the picture constituted by
me—it is this reflexive short circuit, this necessary redoubling of myself as standing both outside and
inside my picture, that bears witness to my ‘material existence.’ Materialism means that the reality I see is
never ‘whole’—not because a large part of it eludes me, but because it contains a stain, a blind
spot, which indicates my inclusion in it” (Žižek, Slavoj. The Parallax View (Cambridge, Mass.; London: MIT), 2009),
17.). For our purposes, this parallactic view is perfectly summed up thus: “Every field of ‘reality’ (every
‘world’) is always-already enframed, seen through an invisible frame. The parallax is not symmetrical,
becoming-human nature into the world and to simultaneously view and speak from it himself; for he was correct, in a manner of speaking—but in that very “manner of speaking” the enunciation itself was ushered from out of a fundamental delusion and misrelation that would come to characterize human being itself. “You won’t die!” the serpent exclaims, “God knows that your eyes will be opened as soon as you eat it, and you will be like God, knowing both good and evil.”404

composed of two incompatible perspectives on the same X: there is an irreducible asymmetry between the two perspectives, a minimal reflexive twist. We do not have two perspectives, we have a perspective and what eludes it, and the other perspective fills in this void of what we could not see from the first perspective” (Ibid., 29).

What I investigate in the Genesis passage is precisely such a “minimal reflexive twist”—explained further in the chapter on Lacan—of two asymmetrical perspectives. Both perspectives exist however, in Zizekianese, in a Non-Whole, in a gap in the One, a non-coincidence within reality itself. We are really bridging Zizek and Heidegger at this point. For the Word of God, represented in the prohibition/warning is One, univocal and absolute, but the inclusion of the “human beings” is the “stain” and blind spot by which the non-coincidence of the One manifests, or betrays, itself: the other side of this non-hole is the concealment (the hither side of revealed aletheia) that rests, safeguarded, secured, hidden (fully concealed) within or behind God’s original proclamation.

In their inclusion into creation, however, the couple is not mere puppet or subject to God’s command. The simple “Don’t eat or you’ll die” is simply enough—only not. There need be no explanation or further excursus on God’s part; God’s word ought to be enough, as it is from God. However, the two are active participants in the reality that bears a certain, undetermined kind of relation to the truth of being. The so-called first perspective is represented by the Woman in which the initial “human” perspective is tautological, properly scriptural (see note on Scripture above): to repeat the same thing—only not scriptural, for the repetition of the Same comes with a difference, the addition of the prohibition not to touch the fruit. Even initially the Word is fractured, sundered by a repetition with a difference (Deleuze). The second perspective is enunciated by the serpent, and it is this perspective that is already the properly human perspective, that of incredulity, pride, doubt—however one wants to split the pie at this point.

The parallax occurs in a retrojection; the object, here the essencing of the human, is changed, rather displaced, in the shift of perspective itself. The enunciation of the second perspective, which is also the truth of the matter, the concealed truth—that partaking of the fruit will cause the people to be like God, knowing both good and evil—is itself the human perspective, hissed by an animal, which cannot itself be known or experienced until the choice has been made to fall into that very perspective, to partake in it. The future-human-essence as it were glances backward and draws up the couple into the fullness of their nature; the two could not have known or experienced the truth of the matter until the Fall, until some essential feature of human nature was initiitated and became what it was. Once they have the knowledge, the act is fulfilled, death is come, as well as a new portion of divinity: “knowing everything,” God says, “both good and evil” (Genesis 3:22)

All of this raises the question to what extent Adam and Eve were themselves subjectivized by this Fall in a way that Lacan speaks to, and what the Genesis narrative says about that process. Furthermore, Lacan offers an explanation of this process that reveals the relationship between subjectivity and Western metaphysics by way of its suffering.

404 Genesis 3:4–5 (NIV).
We see the misrecognitions at work. First, the serpent subtly twists the meaning of the words “you shall surely die” into the very opposite, “you will not die!” This is not a lie. Was he not telling the truth—in some manner of speaking? The serpent says that if the man and woman partake of the fruit that they will not die but rather see, whereas the promise of God was that they would in fact die. Indeed, after they partake of the fruit, the serpent’s words are revealed as true: they do see and do not die. They will continue to live, but now in a way in which Death already is their reality: the man and the woman become mortal.

In its intervention the serpent helps instantiate a new worlding for man and woman. Another creation leaches itself off of God’s, springs violently from its ribs, and will come to be typified in Cain’s cities.405 Let us examine the details of this new worlding.

Let us first compare the two enunciations. God’s decree is simple and presumably unequivocal. For those who partake of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, God announces simply, “you shall surely die.” Within the narrative voice, we can safely assume that the Creator’s word possesses more truth than the serpent’s, in the sense that God speaks truly and is not cunning, misleading or confusing in his pronouncement. Nevertheless, as a feature of every truth-as-aletheia, the whole picture (or sphere, in the image of thought of the ancient Greek experience), the entire space of the clearing, is not given to the view of the mere perspectival human being, who as yet in this tale may have no perspective to speak of. In fact, the serpent,

---

405 Genesis 4:17 (NLT).
the other perspective, is correct to imply, and to almost say out loud: “You do not see now, but you will see.”

Life after the fall is something different for the humans before death, something that cannot otherwise be seen or experienced once death enters the picture, i.e., once man and woman fall into their being as mortals. Therefore, it must be understood that the distinction that God makes between life and death here is of a fundamentally different kind than life understood in purely biological terms.406 The Death that comes to meet these beings after they partake of the fruit is not the kind that renders their bodies immediately lifeless. Pointedly, these beings live on after Death has come upon them. Paradoxically (parallactically) however, the man and woman cannot discover the meaning of all this until after they have eaten the fruit, when they take on the curse that determines them as those who shall surely die.

It is of the nature of the truth-as-aletheia of God’s enunciation that what is revealed simultaneously leaves something concealed from view. As Heidegger recalls in the Greek experience of truth-as-aletheia, “The covering involved in [pseudos], however, is always at the same moment an unveiling, a showing, and a bringing into appearance.”407 In our case, it is the knowledge of what this true Death announced by God looks like, or is. The man and woman initially do not have access to this, as perhaps we

406 The text is both ambiguous and multiple on this account. I think the common retort to the claim that God was speaking about another kind of death than biological is a natural desire to save God from error. The serpent must be the liar of the tale, even though the narrative cannot support that conclusion. The thought goes that if the serpent is telling the truth—and again, God confirms that it is—then God must be incorrect or lying, but otherwise fallible. No such conclusion holds. As we see, the serpent and God can both be correct, especially to the extent that each one speaks out of another side of the truth, from the co-belonging of concealment and unconcealment. Is situating this story within the context of aletheia not the only way to view it, let alone to save it from a number of contradictions that would undermine the substance of its proclamation or do violence to the text itself?

407 Heidegger, Martin, Parmenides, 30.
still may be bereft of true knowledge of death; they are still “innocent” and not yet set apart for Death. They do not understand the cunning of the serpents, either. Is this not indicative of the ignorance, the truly beautiful soul that Adam and Eve possessed before they lost it, and that could in fact not even be observed until after it was lost, retrospectively? This Death was concealed from them because they would have to partake in it, to fall under its reign, in order to understand or see it. The two had to be placed in another relation altogether, with God, with themselves and each other, with the world, with life, with being, etc. God graciously kept this Death from them in the truth of his enunciation, but the humans invited themselves to expose, and therefore experience, this other side of the enunciated. In fact, it is the serpent who renders the hither side of this truth visible for the first time, but only insofar as the alien revelation simultaneously places the man and the woman on that hither side (the hidden or dark side) of God’s alethic enunciation, which previously kept this revelation concealed from them at the same time it kept them free from the revelation’s consequences—the change in being. And this displacement is essential, i.e., it occurs right at the heart of their very nature. Man and woman are, come to be—that is, they find their being—by virtue of this displacement or alienation. The which was by all rights kept in the shadows now bursts open, incarnates itself into the nature of man. In Heidegger’s language, this is when these beings became mortal, i.e., become capable of death as death.

This displacement, this knowledge, this curse of Death—all are wrapped in the promise of the truth of the serpent’s cunning enunciation, the aletheia that pointed toward the hither side of God’s own enunciation. From the former issues the irruption

408 We will come to see this illuminated particularly as we move on to Lacan’s psychoanalysis.
of an altogether different temporality and being than that which is implied by God’s. The serpent already speaks from the place where the man and woman will come to be. The very logic (the logic of pure knowability, as Agamben calls it) he employs is the one both man and woman will come to suffer (and in modernity it becomes a madness) once they have partaken in its temptation and decision. “You won’t die” is “literally” correct, or correct in one sense, as if there were more than one sense of God’s enunciation—and there was, but only after that other sense was enacted, ex nihilo, in doubt (or pride—or even innocence). Right here is where the way of being and thinking that is particularly human (if it can be said to be that even) comes into mytho-poetic existence. Perhaps the serpent was himself inventing a distinction that would come to predominate from Latin grammarians to medieval theology, through literary theory, biblical studies, psychology, and all of the history of metaphysics, for that matter, the difference—among others—between the figurative and the literal meanings, between latent and patent content, the external and internal, the revealed and the gnostic meaning, etc. The serpent relies upon such a distinction long before any of these fields defined it: you will not literally die, or the unspoken addendum—at least not right away. It’s a semiotic slight of hand. It is the word by which the serpent earns his epithet, cunning. In his exclamation to the woman, “You won’t die!” we can even detect scoffing, motivated by the cock-sure delusion of the common sense perspective. “Seriously? God said what? It’s not poison, after all. You’re not going to fall over dead just by eating a piece of fruit. Furthermore, not only will you not die [”yet”—spoken under the serpent’s hiss perhaps], you will see clearly, as God sees, ‘like God, knowing both good and evil.” What comes into existence at this moment is nothing less than the semiotic order itself;
the mystery and decision written at the heart of every metaphysical distinction that would come to reign over Western history and thinking. When the divine Word—and it is important that the Word here was issued as a directive, an order, a prohibition or command—was submitted to interpretation: “You won’t really die! What God really meant…” That is, “You didn’t quite catch the meaning of what God was saying.”

The serpent then inauthentically dehisces, retroactively redetermines, the word, splits it into the enunciation on the one hand, and the content or meaning of the enunciated on the other; what was said and what was meant. To invert Derrida’s infamous case, it is the serpent who invents, or even comes to embody, the “transcendental signified,” not God. We are dealing here with merely an inflection, a hint, a subtle, little difference, the implication made by the serpent, but the result is apparently ontological in nature, according to the traditional view, i.e., the way in which our attunement toward language and being go on to redetermine and attune us. Here our attention is then suddenly drawn to the mysterious difference inherent in an historical Ereignis, the relation between Logos, Mythos, man and World. In the grounding-poetic speaking of Genesis, the serpent could just as easily be said to be this dehiscing within the nature of the human being. Speaking metaphysically, the matter was first in the head, a matter—and a mattering—of mind. The poetic saying of Scripture is articulating the structure of human being and worlding; it speaks of the grounding Ereignis of human being and therefore of history as such. The being of historical humanity is conceived here in its modality, impetus and form in this poetic speaking which we are trying to give over to thought.
In other words, in Heideggerian terms, the serpent here enacts the whole litany of metaphysical splits—between signifier and signified, latent and patent meanings, literal and figurative dimensions—but these splits and oppositions issue forth from the hither side of God’s aletheia that otherwise remains barred from access. Pandora’s box is as useful of a theme for this movement as any other image we could find, but Prometheus is more important as we move from the sin to the curse. The serpent speaks the mediating word, the knowing word, from the other side, beckoning these beings into the deadlock of their own mortality.

God’s words do not take on full meaning until the serpent’s ontological induction of the pair Man and Woman into the supposed gnosis of God. This initial Word otherwise speaks for itself, as Logos, in just the same sense that Heraclitus meant it: “For wisdom, listen not to me but to the Word [Logos]…” The Word in the command needs no definition, no investigation or science into its meaning; it simply stands, by virtue of its Guarantor, and thereby needs only to be obeyed. The serpent’s word introduces “semantic” equivocality which quickly slides into the infinite sliding différence of the signifier-signified relationship, the problem of meaning.

Returning to our passage, God’s perfectly good Word is submitted to the infinite proliferation and slippage within the equivocal speech of mortal beings who doubt their God’s Word and whose will-to-know throws them outside of the befittedness of their own nature. The doubtful questioning (not thoughtful questioning, in the Heideggerian sense) arises in the face of God’s Word and threatens the power of its claim: What does

---

409 Heraclitus, Fragments, 5.
it *mean? What does God mean? The serpent is the one who introduces the *doubt* that leads the Woman and Man to *want* to know, to test it out in order to *see*.

The serpent reveals just what kind of Death God was talking about. The former is the teacher who instructs the beings made by God in their maker’s ways, but as a Mephistopheles might, and at a high cost.

Within this context, let us go back and imagine this *little difference*, and specifically to now situate it within the concept of falling. Let us imagine, contra the theologians, that, as the Scripture says, this Woman was “convinced” by the serpent that the *content* of the fruit was going to miraculously endow her with the knowledge of good and evil, and we might just as much assume with her that this knowledge itself possessed a *positive* content. She is convinced she is going to become like God—and indeed, God confirms this, confirming consequently the truth-telling of the cunning serpent410—and that her mind is going to be flooded with knowledge. Indeed, it is, but I rather think it flooded in this way. When the Man and Woman bit into the fruit,411 what

410 “Then the Lord God said, ‘The people have become as we are, knowing everything, both good and evil’ (Genesis 3:22 (NLT)).

411 I have been speaking about the Woman without the Man for a number of reasons, but I am changing that here to add the Man back into the picture. The narrative is strange, and plenty of Talmudic and Rabbinic and speculative ink has been spilt over the narratival ambiguity at this point. The Woman had been talking with the serpent, and apparently without the Man, who at the very least was not involved in the conversation. The Woman ate the fruit first, then gave it to her husband, “who was with her. Then he at it, too” (3:6f). It always seems to be the beautiful and mysterious silences of Scripture which allow for a fully engaged reading. Some Jewish scholars have speculated about the possibility that the whole discourse with the serpent occurred in Eve’s mind; for otherwise, if Adam had been privy to it, he surely would have intervened. A thought ingrained in sexism, but we can appreciate the reasoning. The line of reasoning is right to situate the fall within the Woman’s *mind*, as a matter of comportment, doubt, pride, but it still leaves the Man with an apparently attenuated responsibility.

If I may give my own speculative reading, it would be something like this. When the Woman suffered her humiliation, she looked over at Adam who was now lost to her. She saw him standing there like a child, gazing now dumbly, uninterested, ignorant and perhaps uninteresting; at the very least, un-deceived. She could not bear to be alone in the site in which her fall had landed her, so she gave him to eat. In the process, she either hid it from him that she was handing him the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, or she told him that she had been enlightened, thereupon he ate and they died. Or
happened? Nothing, nothing happened. Almost nothing. The ever-so-slight difference was the greatest difference that could be made: it was the response to the nothing.

When nothing at all happened, when she neither died nor was infused with the positive content of the knowledge of everything, what took place was the initiation of perhaps what is singularly proper to humans as such, the fall of humiliation.

4.3 Conclusion

The two were initiated into their nature, into the knowledge of good and evil, which was itself a rupture of that nature. The rupture is evidently a traumatic event, for the couple hides, and doubly so: first they are ashamed of their nakedness and fashion fig leaves together around their hips to cover themselves. They hide a second time when the Lord God walking through the garden and they hide in the trees. In the first instance, do we not say that their shame of nakedness came from being naked before one another? Or was it nudity per se that sent them hiding, not before anyone or anything in particular? To hide from the naked animals, naked without nudity?412

Perhaps both knew that their companionship was broken, from both ends, and in an attempt to restore it, to be together, Adam partook as well.

On the other hand, there seems to be a strong textual suggestion that the fall did not occur individually, in one without the other, but that the other was required for the sake of the othering implicated. It was when they both had eaten that “their eyes were opened, and they suddenly felt shame at their nakedness” (3:7). For nudity to occur, there has to be the gaze of the other; and furthermore, not just any gaze, but the gaze that is now inducted into the gnosis of gnosis, the possibility of the knowability expressed in the naked body of the other. Only this latter interpretation lends itself to a fully egalitarian reading. However, I take it as a given, though the narrative does not offer it this way, that if the Man had been the one having the conversation with the serpent, his actions and motivations would have been the same as the Woman’s was.

412 Cf. Derrida, Jacques, The Animal That Therefore I Am, trans. David Wills (Fordham University Press, 2009). Derrida brilliantly picks up on this last thread in his phenomenology of his own shame of nakedness before the gaze of his cat, but that’s outside the scope of the current investigation. He then asks about nudity as being proper to man, and that sometimes hard to think “difference” between the animal and the human.
This fall is the couple’s humiliation; this humiliation is the fall. They return to the ground whence they came, the site upon which they should have maintained this remembrance; they who dwelt upon the earth, under the sky, with one another (possibly even before the fall, in their natures as mortals, also before death as death) and before God, and are set up in a new way.

If I have borne my claim out, the Genesis narrative of the Fall mytho-poetically articulates the Western (but possibly human, depending on how the destiny of the oblivion of being continues to play itself out) metaphysical misrelation to the essence of truth as aletheia. Though the Hebrew notion of truth is on the outside unrelated to the Greek and in fact foreign to it, the deeper resonance bears itself out. But this does not preclude either side from an engagement and lesson with the heart of aletheia. As much as the Greeks, this original couple “were [now] prepared for the fact that what is true stands in an essential alliance with concealment and self-concealing.” The Woman and Adam fall in overstepping the bounds allotted to them within the realm of truth. What is unconcealed is the warning of God (the promise of death) if they eat the fruit. The serpent brings to them the properly human perspective that wants and seeks out an engagement with what remains concealed; and yet what is concealed is somehow given over to presence, here in the guise of the enunciation of the serpent. It was ordained that this aletheic hemisphere – Parmenides’ “well-rounded truth” – remain barred to the pair as the un-spoken of God’s decree, for obviously to know such a thing, to experience it, would mean that they would have to fall into it, and that would mean death, of one sort or another. The obtaining of the knowledge of good and evil, for the two, required that

---

they be implicated in it, to suffer evil, and thereby to know good—however negatively, for the No of sin comes first in this knowledge, and only after that could the good be defined in comparison. Or else good was dwarfed and lost in comparison to the best, the state exemplified in exiled Eden. The true evil, however, was the humiliation they suffered at the hands of their deceiver, that they were deceived, that they fell so hard, i.e., they thought the fruit had a positive content of knowledge to give.

The humiliation they receive was delivered over to them by a deception. This deception has its own structure, phenomenologically and in the narrative itself. When the nothing happened when the two bit into the fruit, they suddenly knew that they could be duped, but only because they had been, made to look and feel like idiots. Part and parcel of this revelation, this humiliation, had to be this: their new knowledge of good and evil, grounded in deception, also provided them with the knowledge of the nature (i.e., bringing truth) of things (materially or ideationally construed). In stepping into the open of aletheia, the pair realized that they had stepped into a risk and a danger—the risk and danger of being thrown amongst beings, the risk of being—which is intimately associated with the vulnerability of their nudity, as well as the humiliation of being duped.

As Agamben argued, their new knowledge was now a need for getting a grip on things, getting grounded in this wily mix of the world, and their apparent atechnia. Perhaps one of the real questions is why God had to banish the two from Eden after the flash of revelation from their fall? Could it be that the garden, bound to God in the knowledge of God, was now unsafe for the two? What might they do next in the fall of their humiliation, a continuing dehumanization, an assault upon things to render them
objects to be used in the war of appearances?\textsuperscript{414} Now all the things of the garden, subtle, pliant, nimble as things are, were literally up for grabs, for the grasp of use.\textsuperscript{415}

Nevertheless, things could be used in the wide sweep of aletheia. They learned this at the same time they learned the danger, what Heraclitus knew: “things keep their secrets.” (They became not only humans—but philosophers!) \textit{Aletheia} opened up its \textit{privative} aspect, the privation of concealment, and its use. \textit{Error} could ensue if one was taken in, if one was inattentive or elevated with pride; if one became arrogant, if one forgot \textit{the other side of things}. This is not a metaphysical statement, but one firmly rooted in the \textit{aletheia} of being.

In other words, on one hand, \textit{on the whole} the two were introduced to the vast of \textit{what was not given to them to know}, what Heidegger calls the mystery, the requisite concealment of the whole from the ek-sistence of human Dasein. Simultaneously they learned their need for a \textit{proper comportment} to that mystery, to every mystery, a proper ek-sistence. This was then, what they also learned of the \textit{good}: piety, the joy and love of letting things be, of the wonder of things, of letting the mystery be… On the other hand, they discovered the \textit{inimitable} power of things; things \textit{bare/bear} the truth. The serpent did not need to copy, mimic or lie but produce the fruit of God’s creation, a good

\textsuperscript{414} It is interesting here to note that old Stoic use of the term appearances within the elaboration of the \textit{sole} power of the human will: the ability to make the right use of appearances.

Now banished from Eden, this will be, along with the protection of God, the humans’ first and last weapon. In \textit{The Animal That Therefore I Am}, Derrida meditates upon the strange fact of when God brought the animals to Adam to be named, rather, to see what he would name them. God watches over \textit{in order to see}. Derrida speculates that it is as if God did not know, or did not want to, and was rather opening himself up for his own surprise, to see his creature create. If we elaborate speculatively, the banishment involves the same specular voyeurism. Now he sets them out \textit{in order to see} what use they will make of appearances, of things which are in a profound, true way, \textit{subject} to the machinations of the humans. This is then the genesis of a long history, one that even we know well.

\textsuperscript{415} Heidegger, Martin, “The Thing,” from \textit{Bremen and Freiburg Lectures}, 180: “In accordance with this ring thinging itself is unpretentious, and each present thing, modestly compliant, fits into its own being”.)
thing that they nevertheless did not need, under the grace of God. They learned that a thing held in one way gave off a certain feature or view, that language could be used to show a thing intended, but hide something else against them; they learned masks, that things can be passed off as something else, that they could be deceived, deluded, misled, etc.\footnote{Heidegger sums up the situation from the Greek-Western angle: “Beings themselves as emergent and appearing are, as such, simultaneously self-concealing and mere appearing. Thus beings themselves play out their appearances ["Schein"] and hide nonbeings within such appearances. In this way beings themselves do not let humans be homely in a direct way, with the result that human beings, as the sole beings that comport themselves toward beings as such, at the same time and at once lend every indulgence to risk; for in the realm of risk all forces and abilities may be awakened and set in motion and brought into play, so as thereby to attain a stand within the site in the midst of beings” (Heidegger, Martin, 
\textit{Holderlin’s Hymn “The Ister,”} 89). The Danger is what the risk develops into as the human ability to take a stand in reified into a global architectonic machinery in the essence of technology. When the comportment to being and beings becomes in-sistence, this danger reaches its fulmination. The thinking involved with the rise of this being—the thing that must think with and out of this being (positionality, enframing—Ge-Stell) is variously called calculative thinking. “Calculation as a kind of madness” (Ibid., 106).}

This knowledge is not evil in itself perhaps, but above all very good, particularly once Adam and Eve leave Eden. This means that part of the knowledge was the lesson of the serpent, the cunning itself. And old Middle English cunne simply meant can. The original sense of the word did not imply deceit, but “possessing erudition or skill.” The can is related to the Old Norse, kunndi, “knowledge,” and kunna, “know.”\footnote{\textit{New American Oxford Dictionary Online}, s.v. “cunning,” accessed April 15, 2015, \url{http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/cunning}.} If this is a mythos, it is a telling of a people. The unfolding of the story of this people bears out the truth revealed in their genetic passage. Being a small people, vastly outnumbered and empirically overpowered by the massive natal-civilizational machinery-assemblages they confronted, they had two resources on their side. The first and highest was their God, but there was cunning, too. When we examine the Scripture of this people, a holy people descended as all were from the parrhesaical tale (to take a lead again from
Foucault), from these most learned first parents, we see that cunning—a practical, skillful knowledge, the praxis of things—is employed to their good, that it kept them alive and delivered them over to the continuance of their living covenant with their God, the God who had separated itself from all other Gods. This God, according to Nietzsche, pulled the most cunning trick of all: he convinced not only Moses but many others that there were no other gods, no other than Him.

This tale speaks of evil, but also—what is not hardly looked at as much—of the good: the two get back up again. Or are rather brought up. Does God “punish” the two? Had they not punished themselves enough by the time God found them, even more than he ever could? Was the loss of a garden anything compared to being so humiliated; and to heap humiliation upon humiliation, to think they could hide from their God? The command was one thing, but God only treated this couple like children when he compassionately played the game of their new economy—the depth of the plummet of humiliation. God sought to spare the wretched couple—dressed up foolishly with/in their shame. If anything it was their shame they clothed themselves in, an unprecedented move that God recognized immediately. God called out, as if he did not know where they were, like a person playing hide-and-seek with a child when the child is too young and is in fact not hidden, but thinks that if he can’t see the hunter then he cannot be seen by the hunter. The adult plays as if he does not see, even though he knows the kid’s location. Why? Another book is required! But, we might speculate that the adult plays the game anyway, as if he does not know where the child is, out of a confrontation with the sublime, therefore, out of love and gratitude: one is lifted to the highest heaven by a being that does not yet know how to hide itself. It is the very thing
that calls forth grace, i.e., someone has to take care of this precious little thing. This seems to be the way God decided to deal with his adult children; this is a noble God which inspires awe, gratitude, respect for what is not given and a desire to let that be what it is. The immensity of our ignorance will never be overcome by our investigation. We are not the measure of things as mortals, falling beings, at the least, as mortals who fall to death. Even if we could get by with never otherwise falling in the ways we have sketched thus far, death would still be the fall for every mortal human being. Thus human nature, for as long as we have been mortals, like all living things, as long as there have been living things, is mortal.

The conclusion of this mythos is that death is the other side of human nature, one that sets its own “henceforth and no further” all through the lives of mortals. Human beings are mortal, that they face death as death, i.e., as that which will not submit itself to human knowledge. It is as if the man and the woman stepped into the concealed where they should not have been, but an even greater Concealed was established before them in the midst of concealment as a result. Death is the Great Concealment for human beings, the shrine of nothing, which may have remained properly nothing if it had not been for the falling of humans into the hither side of what remained concealed from them. Now a greater concealment perhaps takes place, properly as that which is known to not be able to be known. It is one of our latter-day philosopher’s—Donald Rumsfeld’s—“known unknowns.” Nothing, further, however, no book—not the highest Scripture—can tell us what death is. Death is a shroud in the face of mortal nature as far as knowledge is concerned, the concealed par excellence. Death is not given to us to know. As a result, we must check those most presumptuous claims which claim to know. In falling, we
learn what death is for us; in falling, we make the projection of our greatest fears or our greatest indifference.

Adam and Eve are cast out of their only homeland because of their misrelation with the truth of being dictated by the Word of God; they are set out from their first home as wanderers. When we are made homeless, we are cast out from the safeguarding of the home, along with all familiarity and familiality. To be homeless is to be rootless. To be homeless is to no longer derive from the wellspring, the origin. If essence is related to the German *wesen*, nature or essence, derived from *Sein*, we see that essence has everything to do with the continual springing of what has been into the presence. “Origin means here that from where and through which a thing is what it is and how it is…the source of its nature.”

Essence is the unity by which a thing presences itself and absences itself, how it holds sway and even fades away. The essence, the origin, the *Ursprung* is the wellspring, not just a spring from which a thing springs forth and then merely leaves behind, but the ur-spring by which and in which a thing *keeps on springing*, and thus is never left behind. The essence is the provenance, the whence that keeps holding sway in whatever continues to presence, or even to presence an absence (i.e., in the grief of losing a loved one in which the presence of the now absent individual is brought into a starker relief). It is a spring from which something springs, but one that, to the extent the something continues to “spring,” as it were, keeps on springing, keeps on essencing in the presencing. And indeed essence essences in absences as well, as we have seen, in a loved one who is deceased, or in the oblivion of being. The oblivion of being is being presencing in its oblivion, *as* oblivion. It is

---

experienced in the lack of distress and questioning regarding being; experienced in
being as being a foregone conclusion or obvious or commonsensical or merely
grammatical.

The Da-sein of the human being is the “there-taking,” the standing, the taking
up of a space and time of coming into and going out of presence. The old Greek notion
Heidegger derives this experience from is the bringing-forth (Her-\textit{vor-bringen}) of \textit{physis}:
“For what presences by means of physis has the bursting open belonging to bringing-
forth, e.g., the bursting of a blossom into bloom, in itself.”\textsuperscript{419} But when the \textit{sein} of this
Da-sein is no longer taken into question, no longer attended to, no longer seen and
experienced as the essencing well-spring of the human being, the human being loses its
essence as the one who is capable of safeguarding being and falls into homelessness.

“Homelessness is the symptom of oblivion of being...Homelessness is coming to
be the destiny of the world.”\textsuperscript{420} Homelessness is the consequence of the fall, both for
Adam and Eve and for the history of metaphysics.

There is something more horrifying, more uncanny and more unhomely than
homelessness however—it is the absolute homelessness in the oblivion of being. Never
is this possibility starker than in the final pages of the series of essay-lectures entitled
“The Question Concerning Technology.” Nothing Heidegger ever wrote was darker.
Heidegger is meditating upon the “turning.” The Turning is the possibility that may
eventuate itself if the essence of technology (which is nothing technological) finally
harnesses the essence of humanity fully into the ordering and standing reserve of

\textsuperscript{419} Heidegger, Martin, \textit{The Question Concerning Technology}, 10.

Enframing, the very name for Being as it is coming to essence and to presence itself today as the essence of technology. The Danger is of “Being endangering itself in the truth of its essence, remains veiled and disguised.” As we have seen, this is merely the self-preserving of being, the untruth essential to the essence of the truth of being itself. The veil and the disguise at least hold the truth of being itself, in that it is presenced as veiled and as disguised.

Heidegger imagines a different scenario, however, the Danger of Being itself, “the epoch of Being coming to presence [essencing] as Enframing.”\(^{421}\) This “epoch” harkens back to the Greek meaning of the word, self-withholding, what is in German Ansichhalten. If Being accomplishes its turning about, “if entrapping-with-obliteration comes to pass, then oblivion as such turns in and abides. With this turning about of oblivion, Being’s safe-keeping comes to pass. World comes to pass.”\(^{422}\) Disguise, veiling, these will no longer be options or possibilities for Being. The last remnant of Being’s own saving power is to enter full oblivion. Thus the thing will enter full “injurious neglect”, and world will in-flash (Einblitz) into that injuriousness. Things will no longer have any safeguard, they will be truthless. Being itself will be truthless.

Based upon our observations thus far, we can still only slightly imagine such a situation. Every-thing will become an object for use, for standing-reserve, for ordering. World will turn off like a television screen—the whole of the open will light up suddenly, like a lightning strike, and go dead. We will have a flash (blitzen), a glance (blacken), and an insight (Einblick) – into that which is, the title of the series of lectures that “The Turning” concludes. The lightning flash of the truth of Being will leave in an

\(^{421}\) Heidegger, Martin, *The Question Concerning Technology*, 43.

\(^{422}\) Ibid.
instant being truthless. This is the most horrific possible essencing of Being, in which it finally turns into itself and leaves no remainder. Perhaps there will still be humans, but their being will have been transformed, removed to Enframing, truthless Being; they will no longer in any way take up their Being as their concern, become the Da-sein, exist in the freedom of comportment in the open of beings, give voice and correspondence in art and thinking to Being. Language will be only ordering, calculation, command and suppliance, response to ordering.

And then falling comes back into the picture with a character darker than any of the darkest theological imagination:

The ordering belonging to Enframing sets itself above the thing, leaves it, as thing, unsafeguarded, truthless. In this way Enframing disguises the nearness of world that near in the thing. Enframing disguises even this, its disguising, just as the forgetting of something forgets itself and is drawn away in the wake of forgetful oblivion. The coming-to-pass of oblivion not only lets fall from remembrance into concealment; but that falling itself falls simultaneously from remembrance into concealment, which itself also falls away in that falling.

This abysmal falling is unimaginable, the unimaginable par excellence, the nothing. Heidegger calls this the *constellation of Being*, the “insight into that which is,” “the sudden flash of the truth of Being into truthless Being,” “the disclosing that brings into its own, as which the truth of Being relates itself and stands in relation to truthless Being in the essence into that which is…”

This constellation brings thinking back into a relation with the provenance of the gods, a confrontation with the divines—as not presencing. This problematic is addressed through the thinking of the “death of God.”

---

425 Ibid., 47.
424 Ibid., 46.
Chapter 5: Falling at the End of Metaphysics: the Death of God and the Will to Power

5.1 Introduction

How could we successfully investigate and undergo the experience and concept of falling without turning around again and looking into the experience and idea of rising up? Falling, as we have seen, is part of what we would call a being-relation or structure, an Ereignis arising from a comportment, an event of appropriation, in which is drawn together the reciprocal ringing and unfolding of rising up and taking a stand. We have examined this “structure” in the way that Heidegger articulates it in a number of places, e.g., in terms of night and day, time and being, and therefore, in terms of presence and absence. The current work is a conceptual step in the direction that leads Heidegger’s thinking from the landscape of the questioning and “truth of being” into quite another terrain. Our investigations here are not an addition or furthering of Heidegger’s trek but rather a repetition with a difference, to borrow from Deleuze. Or rather, the two realms reveal themselves to be sharing something more fundamental, originary and essential than previously thought. These realms come into relief as the thinking of the truth of being and as what we will call the “waiting upon the divinities.”

Now we set out to understand how in the course of this most rigorous attempt at a thinking that overcomes metaphysics, something like gods, the god, can show themselves quite – naturally. Heidegger’s emphasis upon the divinities is mysterious or contradictory (a reinstatiation of metaphysics, particularly by way of mysticism or
theology) only if we cannot see that the divine’s intervention into the former’s thinking is not a divergence but a consequence, an outcome, of the path of that thinking. One of the most important conclusions that Heidegger’s questioning and thinking of the truth of being obliges upon him along his way is the thinking, and the preparation for a decision, upon the divinities.

One of the few appropriate points of entry into Heidegger’s question of the divinities is by way of the ground we have already covered. In particular, the question of the divinities bears a necessary relation with the issue of presence-absence, both under the auspices of the metaphysical destiny and within the other beginning that Heidegger hoped to inaugurate—especially with regard to the divinities. The metaphysical view skews the experience and thinking of presence-absence as human experiencing of being itself. When being is defined in terms of beings, those beings get privileged and interrogated which can, do or will come to presence before us. When a being takes a stand before us, it is open to sensual investigation. One inevitable outcome of this procedure – one which is not necessarily blameworthy but which brings along its own set of challenges for human beings – is that, very naturally, human beings begin to understand the existence of beings as the same as their presencing or capacity to presence themselves; existence subsumes being. The great crisis and challenge of the Metaphysical World (its falling), then, is to open thought up to all those beings – and with them, a whole dimensionality of being itself – which do not, cannot, or will not present themselves to us in the same manner that a present tree or particle are, therefore, precluded from existence. These beings are not, metaphysically speaking, they are relegated to non-reality, non-actuality, non-possibility, from a strictly philosophical
and even a common sensical view. Yet, from a view that is ideologically determined, prejudiced and uncritical—but what is more, fundamentally thoughtless in the face of the aletheia of being—these non-real beings (this non-real being) are fantasies, delusions, adult cartoons, mind-control, even the product of human madness, neurosis, or evil.  

5.2 Nietzsche's Metaphysics: Death of God and the Will to Power

According to Heidegger, metaphysics is brought to its culmination in more than one way in Nietzsche, and all this is contained, albeit ambiguously and as yet undecidedly, in Nietzsche's little word, “God is dead.” I will elaborate this culmination in two ways, the first explicitly thought by Heidegger, and the second is my own path of thought inspired from the “line of flight” intimated by Heidegger’s concept of falling, which will conclude my investigations here.

---

425 In the terms of admitting this Heideggerian re-turn of the divine once again into a particular realm of metaphysical thought, in order to point toward the necessity of a turn in understanding religious phenomena, Professor Raschke’s work has been decisive for my own understandings of the implications of a “phenomenology of falling.”

In his latest published book, Revolution in Religious Theory, Dr. Raschke demonstrates the continuing need to understand the extent to which “every theorizing is a theologizing.” In that work, Raschke conceptualizes an advancement in religious theory by way of the re-admittance of critical thought to the experience of the Event—an Ereignis—of the religious qua a jarring disruption of the very modes of calculation, moderation and objectivism requisite for traditional academic criticism and theory.

All of this work confirms the extent to which, on the one hand, religious experience maintains not merely some ambivalent relation to the abstracted, de-contextualized symbols of its inception, of which now such experience can only be a cheap artificiality compared to the wealth of the original experience. Rather, as Benjamin theorized at the end of his essential, “On Language as Such and on the Language of Man,” from Reflection, 332: “All higher language is a translation of those lower, until in ultimate clarity the word of God unfolds, which is the unity of this movement made up of language.” And, on the other hand, this work maps out a “step back” required for religious theory, so that it might take a step out of its own pathos of distance, to question its own perceived distance from this unity of gathering-thinking (logos).
The first sense in which Nietzsche concludes metaphysics is as the *last* metaphysical thinker who, for Heidegger, thinks the finality of metaphysics itself.\(^{426}\) Not, however, in the sense that metaphysics *ends* with Nietzsche, but in the sense that he thinks metaphysics into the entire realm of its conclusion, that metaphysics comes completely into its own, indeed becomes *conscious* of itself, in and through the will to power.\(^{427}\) This does not mean that metaphysics has ended but, to the contrary, this thought reveals how, from the long path directed by the first metaphysical decision (beings rather than being), metaphysics has finally opened up into its longest history, announced by Nietzsche. This is the sense in which Heidegger remarks on numerous occasions that, “In essential history the beginning comes last.”\(^{428}\) The “inceptual” nature of thinking, as related to the truth of being, reveals itself in its conclusion. “For the ‘modern age’ is in no way at an end. Rather, it is just entering the beginning of its presumably long drawn-out consummation.”\(^{429}\) On the other hand, in drawing metaphysics to its conclusions (the supersensory is collapsed and will to power is the bare being which remains), Nietzsche’s thinking also opens metaphysics *out*, announces

\(^{426}\) Cf. Heidegger, Martin. “The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking,” from *On Time and Being*, 57:
Nietzsche characterizes his philosophy as reversed Platonism. With the reversal of metaphysics which was already accomplished by Karl Marx, the most extreme possibility of philosophy is attained. It has entered its final stage. To the extent that philosophical thinking is still attempted, it manages only to attain an epigonal renaissance and variations of that renaissance. Is not then the end of philosophy after all a cessation of its way of thinking? To conclude this would be premature.

\(^{427}\) Heidegger, Martin. “Nietzsche’s Word: ‘God is Dead’,” from *Off the Beaten Track*, 173: “This is why the will to power . . . is at the same time the principle of a new dispensation of value—new because it is now achieve for the first time knowingly, in the knowledge of its principle.”


\(^{429}\) Heidegger, Martin, *What is Called Thinking?*, 54.
the site (and therefore circumscribes the boundaries) where it culminates itself: in the will. We will investigate this opening out of metaphysics in the next chapter.

Heidegger locates this first conclusion in Nietzsche’s metaphysics of the will to power, reflected in the recurring pronouncement that “God is dead.” It ought to be remembered here that, according to Heidegger, “All metaphysical thinking is onto-logy [but more precisely, onto-theo-logical, as Heidegger later defines it] or it is nothing at all.” Furthermore, Heidegger is always on the path of preparing for enacting a thinking into the “unthought” matter of metaphysics, the truth of being, in order for “preparatory thinking to clear a free scope within which being itself would again be able to take man with regard to his essence into an initial relationship.”

Therefore, Heidegger insists that:

It must be asked whether Nietzsche, if anything, is not rather expressing here the word that has always been implicitly spoken within the metaphysically determined history of the West . . . Let it again be stressed: Nietzsche’s word [“God is Dead”] gives the destiny of two millennia of Western thinking.

This does not mean that this history has been “atheist” or has culminated in a lack of belief and is therefore now atheist, or that atheism hid all along in germ within this history. The a-theism announced in Nietzsche’s thinking is not simply a lack of belief, a cessation or perishing of Church or institutional religion or the incapacity to hold onto matters of faith. God is indeed the Christian God, but “Christian” understood in a closer

---


431 Ibid., 160.
relationship with Kierkegaard’s Christendom (vs. Christianity). For Christianity stands for the “supersensory world in general.” “God is the name for the realm of ideas and the ideal”; the supersensory is the “true and real world.” Nietzsche sees this in Plato as much as Christianity however, the latter of which he designates as the Platonism for the masses. Thus Heidegger stresses this sense of “God is dead,” as a part of the long history of metaphysics corresponding to Western self-understanding and action:

“God is dead” means: the supersensory world has no effective power. It does not bestow life. Metaphysics, which for Nietzsche is Western philosophy understood as Platonism, is at an end. Nietzsche understands his own philosophy as the countermovement against metaphysics, i.e., for him, against Platonism.

If God is dead, this means that the supersensory world has lost its “effectiveness,” its ability to ordain and structure life. This supersensory has long been a primary token of

432 *Entgötterung* is the process of the “loss of the gods,” or, more literally, “degodization.” Cf. Heidegger, Martin. “The Age of the World Picture,” from *The Question Concerning Technology*, 116-7: This expression does not mean the mere doing away with the gods, gross atheism. The loss of the gods is a twofold process. On the one hand, the world picture is Christianized inasmuch as the cause of the world is posited as infinite, unconditional, absolute. On the other hand, Christendom transforms Christian doctrine into a world view (the Christian world view), and in that way makes itself modern and up to date. The loss of the gods is the situation of indecision regarding God and the gods. Christendom has the greatest share in bringing it about.

433 Ibid., 162.

434 Plato’s Socrates does very little to combat this scene. In *Phaedo*, for example, philosophy is the practice for dying in which the soul takes its most possible leave from the body before death initiating it into the final release from the “evil” body, which “keeps us busy in a thousand ways because of its need for nurture.” “It fills us with wants, desires, fears, all sorts of illusions and much nonsense, so that, as it is said, in truth and in fact no thought of any kind ever comes to us from the body. Only the body and its desires cause war, civil discord and battles, for all wars are due to the desire to acquire wealth, and it is the body and the care of it, to which we are enslaved, which compel us to acquire wealth, and all this makes us too busy to practice philosophy. (Plato. *Phaedo*, from *Plato: Complete Works*, 66.b-df, p. 57.

Also, a point of further investigation would be to examine Heidegger’s view of the Roman as the violent, will-to-power appropriation and transformation of the Greek world and thought. And therefore, what he says of Nietzsche in this regard: “... Nietzsche, at the height of his metaphysical thinking, denies the Greek world in favor of the Roman world” (Heidegger, Martin, *Hölderlin's Hymn "The Ister,* 54).

435 Heidegger, Martin. “Nietzsche’s Word: ‘God is dead’,” from *Off the Beaten Track*, 162.
meta-physical thinking; the binaries within that thinking perhaps all run along the lines of presence and absence, once presence is established in the security of beings nearby, presented before the sensual perspective or the eye of mental representation and calculation. The supersensory, the absent yet most truly “real” always stood above as the measurement of the sensory world, the means to its valuation. If the supersensory was the realm of valuation for the sensory, now that the supersensory is truly absenced, i.e., in no way present, “God is dead” and, as the madman proclaims in his prophecy, the earth has been unchained from its sun.436

This means, further, that all the highest values hitherto are now ungrounded, and thus nihilism, that “eeriest of all guests,” stands at the gates of European civilization: The supersensory ground and as the goal of everything that is real – is dead, if the supersensory world of ideas is bereft of its binding and above all its inspiring and constructive power, then there is nothing left which man can rely on and by which he can orient himself . . . The statement ‘God is dead’ contains the realization that this nothing is spreading. Nothing means here: absence of a supersensory, binding world.”437

Nihilism is a “historical movement,” not just views or doctrines held by some about the meaning or meaninglessness of existence.438 Therefore, nihilism has nothing to do with

---


437 Heidegger, Martin. “Nietzsche’s Word: ‘God is dead’,” from *Off the Beaten Track*, 162-163.

438 Ibid., 163-4. Rather than a set of individualized opinions:

Nihilism moves history in the way of a scarcely recognized fundamental process in the destiny of the Western peoples. . . . Hence nihilism is not just one historical phenomenon among others… Nihilism, thought in its essence, is on the contrary the fundamental movement of the history of the West. Its roots are so deep that its development can entail only world catastrophes. Nihilism is the world-historical movement of the people of the earth who have been drawn into modernity’s arena of power.

The conclusions that Heidegger draws on the historical situation develop from what he would call the “necessity of thought,” as we will continue to see, the engagement of thinking for the sake of an opening by which the truth of being could once again secure human being. Heidegger’s analysis is unique in this regard to the “death of God” as many others conceive it. The death of God is typically seen as a modern development, whereas Heidegger sees it as the conclusion of a much longer trajectory issued from the inception of the Western world. Terry Eagleton,
who believes or who does not believe in God. Nihilism is “already of long duration and its essential ground lies in metaphysics itself,” and it is Nietzsche’s word that God is dead “that thinks about what has already happened with the truth of the supersensory world and with its relation to man’s essence.” As a historical movement began before Christianity but based in the supersensory, Christian faith and all so-called faith could disappear, but “then in no way does that fundamental structure break down in accordance with which the goals set on the scale of the supersensory has dominated the earthly life of the senses.”

Heidegger, as others before and many since, argues that a kind of vacuum was left in the emptying out of the supersensory. The place is still there, only open to be filled. In this way, “the authority of the conscience” and the “authority of reason” have filled into that empty site. The historical progress which determines the “earthly happiness of the greatest number” replaces the hereafter. The “prerogative of the biblical God” becomes the “mark of human activity, whose creative work becomes in the

---

for example, rightly perceives the more recent, modern provenance of this development, yet still confuses the issue as a “matter of faith,” as belief and its relation to the incredulity of the Enlightenment: “A general loss of belief was to follow in the wake of the Enlightenment, but not in the main because of it . . . Modern societies . . . are faithless by their very nature” (Eagleton, Terry, Culture and the Death of God (New Have: Yale University Press, 2014), 7).

Nevertheless, Eagleton is keen on the fact that “the death of God involves the death of Man, along with the birth of a new form of humanity,” and perhaps an interesting way in which Eagleton links Nietzsche’s claim back into metaphysics—employing the philosophical jargon—is to conclude that this shared death is in fact “orthodox Christian doctrine, a fact of which Nietzsche seems not to have been aware” (Ibid., 159). A dubious but interesting claim. Eagleton also credits Nietzsche for revealing that the death of God was as much an issue of exposing the “bad faith of Man, who in an astonishing act of cognitive dissonance had murdered his Maker” (Ibid., 207). An interesting claim that bears the call to more inquiry, but not here. Suffice to say, the death of God is no simple or concluded matter.

---

439 Heidegger, Martin. “Nietzsche’s Word: ‘God is dead’,” from Off the Beaten Track, 166.

440 Ibid., 164.

441 Ibid., 165.
end business transactions.” Yet the “schema of the ordo, the hierarchical order of beings” finds its fundamental structure established “through Plato at the outset of Western metaphysics.” Nevertheless, no place-holder is sufficient within the historical progress initiated within nihilism. Progress, the happiness of the greatest number, culture, civilization—none of these, in the “space of history” called metaphysics, can maintain their “constructive power and [thereby] become void.” This is the Wesenszerfall, translated as “essential ruin,” the échec of the Western world.

Nietzsche asks, in the Will To Power, “What does nihilism mean? That the highest values devaluate themselves. The aim is lacking; ‘why?’ finds no answer.” These highest values were the grounds that determined and supported “all being and human life in particular.” The traditional summation of these values, all of which undergo their own deconstruction under Nietzsche’s metaphysics, are in the ideas of truth (that which truly is), goodness (what everything is everywhere dependent upon) and beauty (the order and unity of beings in their entirety). These values’ devaluation is a double realization: 1) that the “ideal world” and ideas of the supersensory, the highest values, is not now or never will be realized “within the real world.” This realization has become the damnation of these values, particularly after it is experience that truth undermines God in Christian honesty in science, as Nietzsche discovered. 2) The realization of this

---

442 Ibid., 165.

443 Lest the description of this situation be seen as a mere “discontentment at the condition of the world,” a “half-avowed despair,” as “moralistic outrage,” or as “devout and self-righteous superiority,” it must be seen that every investigation that limits itself to the multitude of “phenomena of nihilism” is merely ontic and does not penetrate the “essence of nihilism” itself. A proper view of the situation only derives from a “thinking about a settlement for man’s essence and from experiencing that place in the truth of being” (Ibid., 166). Such a thinking, as we must always remember, proceeds through an affirmation, for Heidegger as much as Nietzsche.

question: “what is the purpose of these highest values if they do not also secure the guarantee for, as well as the ways and means of, realizing the goals they set?”445

The goal here is to see to what extent the movement of falling is tied up with the nihilism (devaluation of the highest values) implicit within the thinking of metaphysics in the oblivion or forgottenness of being. According to Heidegger’s reading of Nietzsche, nihilism is the “intrinsic law of this history,” the “inner logic” of Western history itself.446 The meaning of nihilism is ambiguous, and necessarily so, as it contains a NO and a YES, but this in its turn can be seen in two different ways. The NO-YES can be seen as the reactive principle by which metaphysics merely replicates its own logic in any supposed new attempts at overcoming its tradition, or reversing it, as we have seen. The NO is issued at the previous dispensation of values: “the world grown value-less is inevitably impelled toward a new dispensation of value.” But the YES to this new dispensation (as reversal, as a revaluation of all values, the proposed subtitle to Nietzsche planned master work) means that “a new and exclusively normative dispensation of value” obtains. Thus the ambiguity exists the on one hand, as the “pure devaluation of the former highest values and, on the other, the absolute countermovement to devaluation.”447 This new dispensation tries to assure itself in a new valuation, under a new “principle” in order to “secure the mastery of our historical situation,” but Heidegger argues that this merely exposes metaphysics to its final

---


446 Ibid.

447 Ibid., 168.
conclusion, what Nancy calls dis-enclosure.\textsuperscript{448} This is why, for Heidegger, the only proper response to the death of God is a new openness to the decision on the gods.

In order to secure this new dispensation, Nietzsche discerns the will to power as \textit{the being of beings}, therefore, metaphysically. In this new highest value “is concealed another estimation of life, i.e., of the basis of the determining essence of all living things.”\textsuperscript{449} In this way, Nietzsche’s metaphysics is the “metaphysics of values.”\textsuperscript{450} For Nietzsche, value is a viewpoint, a glance from a stance: “The viewpoint of ‘value’ is the viewpoint of the \textit{conditions for preservation-increase} in regard to the complex structures, relatively enduring, of life in the midst of becoming.”\textsuperscript{451} Heidegger confirms that value is based on viewpoint.\textsuperscript{452}

Value is the viewpoint “posited by a seeing and for a seeing.” This seeing “has seen” in that it re-presents what it has seen to itself as a particular thing that was caught in sight, and thereby posits it.\textsuperscript{453} The viewpoint sets within representation, and keeps the visual field directed always toward what is \textit{valid}.\textsuperscript{454} In the case of life, which is

\textsuperscript{448} Cf. Heidegger, Martin. “Letter on ‘Humanism,’” from \textit{Pathmarks}, 268:
Thinking does not overcome metaphysics by climbing still higher, surmounting it, transcending it somehow or other; thinking overcomes metaphysics by climbing back down into the nearness of the nearest.

\textsuperscript{449} Heidegger, Martin. “Nietzsche’s Word: ‘God is dead,’” from \textit{Off the Beaten Track}, 169.

\textsuperscript{450} Ibid., 170.

\textsuperscript{451} Nietzsche, Friedrich. \textit{Will to Power}, §715, p. 380-381.

\textsuperscript{452} Heidegger, Martin. “Nietzsche’s Word: ‘God is dead,’” from \textit{Off the Beaten Track}, 170:
The essence of value is based on its being a viewpoint. Value means that which one has in mind. Value is the point of sight for a seeing that has its eye on something, or, as we say, that counts on something and thereby has to deal with something else. Value stands in an inner relation to a this-much, to quantity and number. Values are therefore (\textit{The Will to Power}, no. 710, from 1888) related to a “scale of number and measure.

\textsuperscript{453} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{454} Ibid.: “It is valid provided it is posited as what matters.”
equivalent for Nietzsche with will to power, becoming and being, what is valid are the fundamental traits of life in “preservation and increase.”

That which is “relatively enduring” is the hint towards the unstable becoming, “the transition from something to something.”455 Therefore, Heidegger quotes Nietzsche: “‘Value’ is essentially the viewpoint for the gain and loss of these centers of ruling power.”456 Heidegger discerns that the only way in which this principle is “new” is because the principle is finally for the first time spoken knowingly, with knowledge of the will to power as principle. Nietzsche has achieved theoretical consciousness of what has existed at the heart of the metaphysical project from the beginning.

This principle of will to power reveals the “will to be master” in every case. According to Nietzsche, “it is part of willing that something is commanded.”457 Willing requires the subjectivization of a consciousness of power.458 This consciousness is such the preservation and increase of life, that is, the desire of the will to grow stronger and gain more power. Nietzsche again states: “To will at all amounts to the will to

455 Ibid., 172. Cf. Ibid., 172-173:

‘To become’—that, for Nietzsche, is ‘the will to power.’ So the ‘will to power’ is the fundamental trait of ‘life’ . . . Will to power, becoming, life, and being in the broadest sense have the same meaning in Nietzsche’s language . . . Inside of becoming, life, i.e., the living, takes shape as centers of the will to power that are active at particular times. These centers are therefore structures of ruling power . . . values are the conditions, posited by the will to power itself, of the will to power itself . . . becomes true . . . as the reality of all that is real (being) . . . The principle of dispensing values ahs now been discerned. The dispensation of values can be accomplished in the future ‘in principle,’ i.e., on the basis of being as the ground of beings.


457 Nietzsche qtd, in Heidegger, Martin. “Nietzsche’s Word: ‘God is dead’,” from Off the Beaten Track, 174-175.

458 Ibid.: “the commanding master is conscious that he has at his disposal the possibilities of effective action.”
become *stronger*, the will to grow." Heidegger sees in this the “essence of power,” which is that the will to power will to be master of the level attained at any particular time, under the ruling center achieved. Still, power must continually overpower itself and attain new levels. Power overpowers itself for this reason alone: “in order to seize hold of itself in the absolute character of its essence.” This is the self-gathering nature of power.460

While Heidegger goes on to map out this relationship of the will to power with the historical philosophical tradition in detail, we are going to stop right at the Nietzschean insistence that the will to power is the “fundamental trait of all reality,” the “inmost essence of being.” (*Will to Power*, §693). Being here is used in the metaphysical sense as “being in general … the fundamental character of beings.”461

### 5.3 Nietzsche’s Entrenchment of Metaphysics

We see here the site at which Nietzsche’s metaphysics both designates the fundamental grounding principle of metaphysical thinking at the same time as it paradoxically grasps and asserts that same principle in its utmost in the overcoming of that metaphysics. This irruption of will to power out of a consciousness of itself is perhaps the most dangerous moment of metaphysical insight, a consciousness that is

---


460 Heidegger, Martin. “Nietzsche’s Word: ‘God is dead’,” from *Off the Beaten Track*, 176: This self-gathering is the empowering of power. Will exists for itself no more than power for itself. Will and power, therefore, are not subsequently linked by the will to power; rather, will, as the will to will, exists as the will to power in the sense of the empowerment of power. Power, however, has its essence in the fact that it stands in relation to will as the will that is inside the will. The will to power is the essence of power. It indicates the absolute essence of will which wills itself as sheer will.

461 Ibid., 176.
increasingly revealing itself to itself in the will that posits and collects all beings into the ordering and computation of the essence of technology. At the same time that Nietzsche reveals the grounding principle of metaphysics, his greatest danger was not, as Zarathustra thought, pity, but self-restraint, i.e., the impossibility of controlling that will to power that will not limit itself. What remains concealed from this consciousness of power is its own annihilation within its perpetual self-aggrandizement, the will that perpetually unravels everything in its mania. Locating the will to power as the being of beings (life) leaves it as groundless as every other value hitherto—precisely to the extent that it is a value at all. Still, this act of Nietzsche is even greater: it is the Stand of humanity that becomes more assertive than ever.

The turn that Nietzsche could not make was to escape the subjectivism (not a derogatory term but the name for the metaphysical subject-object relationship which grounds being in beings as presence) implicit in metaphysical valuing. God, culture, art, truth—these are not rendered valueless by some external process or force but by the logic of valuation in the first place, which no revaluation or reversal can counteract.

Thus, according to Heidegger, the greatest danger is revealed when we understand the way in which the will to power steps into unconcealment. A blindness is the only thing that can ensue when modern metaphysics raises its highest value to will

462 It is right here that Heidegger’s often-repeated line from Hölderlin finds its perfect place, right at the heart of this great danger, the danger of nihilism: “but where the danger is, grows the saving power.”

463 Heidegger, Martin. “Letter on ‘Humanism,’” from Pathmarks, 265:

Rather, it is important finally to realize that precisely through the characterization of something as “a value” what is so valued is robbed of its worth. That is to say, by the assessment of something as a value what is valued is admitted only as a object for human estimation. But what a thing is in its being is not exhausted by its being an object, particularly when objectivity takes the form of value. Every valuing, even where it values positively, is a subjectivizing. It does not let beings be. Rather, valuing lets beings be valid—solely as the objects of its doing. The bizarre effort to prove the objectivity of values does not know what it is doing. When one proclaims “God” the altogether “highest value,” this is a degradation of God’s essence.
and to the self-knowing-itself requisite for that will to push forth its willing in power-overcoming-itself.\footnote{Cf. Heidegger, Martin. “Nietzsche’s Word: ‘God is dead’,” from \textit{Off the Beaten Track}, 181–3. The being of beings is self-willing, which presupposes a self-knowing-itself. Being as present themselves to themselves in the mode of ego cogito.}
The fascinating and troubling thing is that Nietzsche gathers all of this thinking together right at a most decisive historical juncture within which we still stand today and can observe in its ontic exigencies: the moment when the whole earth comes to be subject to the power, the dominion, of this human being. This human being, however, is as yet undetermined, in Nietzsche’s words, or “erstwhile” in one of the

\footnote{Cf. Heidegger, Martin. “Nietzsche’s Word: ‘God is dead’,” from \textit{Off the Beaten Track}, 181–3. The being of beings is self-willing, which presupposes a self-knowing-itself. Being as present themselves to themselves in the mode of ego cogito.}

This self-presenting, the re-presenting (representation) \textit{[Vorstellung]} is the being of beings qua \textit{subjectum}. Self-knowing-itself become the quintessential subject . . . and all that knowledge can know is gathered \textit{[therein]}...Modern metaphysics, as the metaphysics of subjectivity, thinks the being of beings in the sense will. (182)

This is why \textit{certainty, certitude} becomes the most essential pivot upon which knowledge rests, the necessary Archimedean point from Descartes to Leibniz to Kant for the grounding \textit{security} of its understanding. This correctness not only implies a correspondence of the representation to the matter itself: it

now consists in adjusting all that is to be represented to the standard that is set in the knowledge-claim of the \textit{res cogitans sive mens}...Representation, now, is correct if it does justice to this claim to security. Demonstrates as correct in this way, representation, as made right and at our disposal, is justified. (182)

Justice is making the will to power secure for itself in its essence, establishing its primacy, its preservation and increase. Thus: “The will to power knows itself as that which essentially sets values, that which secures itself in the positing of values, and that which thereby constantly does justice to itself and in such doing is justice” (183). The “lucid self-certainty” of Descartes’ method completes itself in Nietzsche as the “justification by the will to power in accordance with the justice that prevails in the being of beings” (184).

Deleuze’s method of “overcoming” metaphysics is a rage that breaks its stricture in a flooding and machination of endless sense, e.g., war-machines, lines of flight, plane-ology (I credit my comrade Kyle Allbright for this term). Heidegger believes that even Nietzsche way must be left in the leaving-to-be of metaphysics, while Deleuze schizophrenizes that process of will to power, takes up the challenge of right and justice in terms of creating quantities of sense that perdure of their own right, in their strength, and survive against and fight against other assemblages that would oppose it (Cf. Deleuze, Gilles. \textit{Nietzsche and Philosophy}). In the end, Heidegger must part ways with Nietzsche, and rather than think his thought over again, must think what is unthought therein.

Let us finish here by citing the Nietzschean passages that Heidegger gives to support his argument of justice, right, security, as the ultimate metaphysical completion. From a note entitled “The Ways of Freedom,” Nietzsche writes, “\textit{Justice} as the manner of thinking which builds, eliminates, annihilates out of value-estimation; the \textit{highest representative of life itself}.” And a second note, from 1885: “\textit{Justice} as the function of a power that sees far and wide, that see past the narrow perspectives of good and evil, therefore has a wider horizon of \textit{interest}: the intention to preserve something that is \textit{more} that this or that person.” (Nietzsche, Friedrich. Qtd. in Heidegger, Martin. “Nietzsche’s Word: ‘God is dead’,” 184) And lastly, Heidegger identifies the place of \textit{right}, which is a term that many would think would have died with Hegel, particularly in the Right that initiates its own will to power in twentieth-century nationalism. However, Nietzsche is keen on the essence of the will to power, which maintains itself in the just by being in the right, but not in any way that could be traditionally morally conceived: “Right = the will to make a momentary power relation obtain eternally. To be satisfied with that power relation is the pre-condition. Everything venerable is called in to let what is right appear to be eternal.” (Ibid., 184)
translations of Heidegger; the primary metaphysical designation for this being has been the *animal rationale*, which takes on a new dimension in face of Heidegger’s investigations into Nietzsche’s metaphysics, and particularly in the “essence of technology.” 465 “Unexpectedly and above all unprepared, man finds himself placed, on the basis of the being of beings, before the task of undertaking mastery of the earth.” 466

In the face of this world-historical challenge, Nietzsche must posit the being to which “man” merely proves to be the bridge—the overman. 467 Necessarily, this overman’s essence must remain hidden: “That is why, in Nietzsche’s metaphysics, the ground of the essential connection between the will to power and the overman is

---


The revealing that rules in modern technology is a challenging [Herausfordern], which puts to nature the unreasonable demand that it supply energy that can be extracted and stored as such . . . . The earth now reveals itself as the coal mining district, the soil as a mineral deposit. The field that the peasant formerly cultivated and set in order appears differently that it did when to set in order still meant to take care of and to maintain. The work of the peasant does not challenge the soil of the field . . . But meanwhile even the cultivation of the field has come under the grip of another kind of setting-in-order, which sets upon [stellen] nature . . . This setting-upon that challenges forth . . . The challenging happens in that the energy concealed in nature is unlocked, what is unlocked is transformed, what is transformed is stored up, what is stored up is, in turn, distributed, and what is distributed is switched about ever anew . . . . This regulating itself is, for its part, everywhere secured. Regulating and securing even become the chief characteristics of the challenging revealing . . . Everywhere everything is ordered to stand by, to be immediately at hand, indeed to stand there just so that it may be on call for a further ordering . . . We call it the standing-reserve [Bestand] . . . Whatever stands by in the sense of standing-reserve no longer stands over against us as object.”

466 Ibid., 188.

467 Cf. Heidegger, Martin. “Nietzsche’s Word: ‘God is dead',' from Off the Beaten Track, 188:

The name “overman” refers to the essence of the humanity that, as modern humanity, begins to enter into the completion of the essence of its age. “The overman” is the man which man is on the basis of the reality determined by the will to power and for this reality. The man whose essence is the essence that is willing and willed out of the will to power is the overman. The willing of the essence that is willing and willed in this way must correspond to the will to power as the being of beings.”
necessarily obscured.” If Nietzsche’s metaphysically thought word “God is dead” is thought along this context, the conclusion is obvious:

If God and the gods are dead in the sense of the metaphysical experience described above, and if the will to power is consciously willed as the principle behind every setting of conditions on beings, i.e., as the principle of the dispensation of value, then mastery over beings as such in the shape of mastery over the earth passes over to the new human willing, determined by the will to power.

Precisely at this juncture Heidegger reveals the profundity of his own conviction regarding the god and gods, i.e., his piety. That man turns and takes over mastery of the earth (later to be seen as killing) does not mean for Heidegger that mastery over being passes over from God to human beings, or that Nietzsche sets man in the place of God. No. Nothing of the sort can happen.

For Heidegger, something “eerier happens,” something more uncanny. The being of beings becomes subjectity-qua-will to power: “the place for the overman’s will is another realm of another grounding of beings in their other being. This other being of beings has meanwhile . . . become subjectivity.” In arising out of subjectivity,

468 Ibid. This is Heidegger task, to think the un-thought in Nietzsche thought. (cf. Heidegger, Martin, What is Called Thinking? 76)

469 Heidegger, Martin. “Nietzsche’s Word: ‘God is dead,’” from Off the Beaten Track, 190.

470 Ibid.: “Those who take it in that way, however, are not thinking very divinely about the essence of the divinity. Man can never be set in God’s place because the essence of man never attains the essential realm of God.”

471 Ibid., 190-1. The word subjectivity translates from Subjektität in the German edition of Holzwege. No explanation is given by Heidegger or the translator, but it seems to me in context that the nomination indicates the singularity of the metaphysical situation within the context of its coming-to-stand as will to power. Subjectivity is the name for the subject-object reification of the being of beings, but in a primordial, dehumanized form. All life possesses this subjectitized being, characterized as it is in its being as will to power. Everything that is real or what is effective consists in objectifying. “Objectifying delivers up the object to the ego cogito by representing it . . . the ego proves itself to be that which lies at the basis of its own activity . . . The subject is subject for itself . . . All beings, for that reason are either the object of the subject of the subject of the subject. Everywhere the being of beings is based on posing a self before itself
becoming-subject (intoned doubly, if we can hear beyond the strictly metaphysical designation, i.e., becoming-subject qua subjectivity, but also, within the upsurge of that subjectivizing, becoming-subject to what, to whom?) to Mastery – subject-of-mastery – becomes the condition of humanity.\textsuperscript{472}

Every being is submitted to the strength of will, every activity guided by the knowledge of knowing-willing, every situation subject to being submitted and rejected if not able to stand as valuable and durable; but if so, it is secured in “enduring duration” (beständigen Bestand), into regularity and uniformity. “In this manner, value determines all beings in their being….Being has become value. To make the duration of durables endure is a condition that is set by the will to power itself and that is necessary for securing the will to power.”\textsuperscript{473}

Again, the only outcome of such a situation is the continuation of the oblivion of being into its next and likely final epoch. Thus nihilism takes on another meaning with regard to the truth of being; with being and among being, the nihil (the nothing) is; nothing is going on, taking place.\textsuperscript{474} If value does not “let being be being . . . then what was supposed to be the overcoming is but the completion of nihilism.”\textsuperscript{475} Nietzsche himself

\textsuperscript{472} Ibid., 191: Man rises up within the uprising. World becomes object. In this insurgent objectification of all beings . . . earth—moves into the center of human setting and confronting. Earth itself can show itself now only as the object of the attack arranged in the willing of man as absolute objectifying. Because it is will out of the essence of being, nature appears everywhere as the object of technology.

\textsuperscript{473} Ibid., 192.

\textsuperscript{474} Ibid., 198.

\textsuperscript{475} Ibid., 193.
continues to think nihilism nihilistically.\textsuperscript{476} The killing of God – as the madman proclaims “We are all his murderers” – simultaneously means beings and being are “killed,” i.e., lost in the concealment of being’s truth. No being, not God, and not being itself are left to be what they are.\textsuperscript{477} Being “removes itself into its truth,” into its sheltering. Erstwhile man in the meantime solidifies his essence as \textit{animal rationale}. Man is de-ranged \textsuperscript{[Ver-rückt]} into the “killing of the being of beings.”\textsuperscript{478} This, however, is not the burgeoning history of the overman but rather the long drawn-out culmination of metaphysics, the case of the \textit{last man}.\textsuperscript{479}

\textsuperscript{476} Ibid., 197.

\textsuperscript{477} Ibid., 196:

Then, to think in values is to kill radically. It not only strikes down beings as such in their being-in-themselves \textsuperscript{[An-sich-sein]}, but it also puts being entirely aside. Being, when it is still needed, is taken to be value only. The value-thinking of the metaphysics of the will to power is deadly in an extreme sense because it does not permit being itself to come into the dawning, i.e., the vitality, of its essence. To think in accordance with values forestalls being itself from coming to essential presence in its truth.

\textsuperscript{478} Ibid., 199. Cf. Ibid., 195:

This killing identifies the process in which beings as such are not absolutely annihilated, but rather become otherwise in their being. However, in this process, man too, and above all, becomes otherwise. He become the one who eliminates beings in the sense of beings in themselves. The human uprising into subjectivity makes beings into objects. However, what is objective is that which, through representation, has been brought to a stand. The elimination of beings in themselves, the killing of God, is accomplished in the securing of the duration \textsuperscript{[Bestandsicherung]} through which man secures bodily, material, spiritual, and intellectual durables \textsuperscript{[Bestände]}; however, these are secured for the sake of man’s own security, which wills the mastery over beings (as potentially objective), in order to conform to the being of beings, the will to power.

Securement, as the obtaining of security, is grounding in the dispensation of value. Setting, dispensing, values has killed beneath itself all beings in themselves, thereby doing away with them as beings for themselves.

\textsuperscript{479} Cf. Nietzsche, Friedrich. \textit{Thus Spoke Zarathustra}, First Part, from \textit{The Portable Nietzsche}, 128-131:

Let me speak to them of what is most contemptible: but that is the \textit{last man}. . . The time has come for man to set himself a goal. The time has come to plant the seed of his highest hope. His soil is still rich enough. But one day this soil will be poor and domesticated, and no tall tree will be able to grow in it. Alas, the time is coming when man will no longer shoot the arrow of his longing beyond man . . . I say unto you: one must still have chaos in oneself to be able to give birth to a dancing start. I say unto you: you still have chaos in yourselves . . . The earth has become small, and on it hops the last man, who makes everything small. His race is as ineradicable as the flea-beetle; the last man lives longest . . . No shepherd and one herd! Everybody wants the same,
5.4 Nietzsche’s Metaphysics in Relation to Falling

In Nietzsche’s thinking metaphysics then is brought to its twofold conclusion – the end of itself and all its possibilities, the revelation of its endgame, and the logical conclusion of its long historical train of reasoning. The falling of metaphysics is introduced to the conclusion that always already conditioned it by virtue of its inceptual Decision. Again, this conclusion is ambiguous and as yet undecidable. What will happen with metaphysics now that it is entering its final stage, represented in the essence of technology? The engagement with beings and with being is determined by the nature of a stance, a comportment, a bearing, towards things. The stance of metaphysical humanity was already that of overreaching, and overreaching in terms of a misrelation to the unconcealment of being. Within the wide range of freedom that is given by the clearing of aletheia, human ek-sistence falls into in-sistence and thereby falls upon beings. In Being and Time this is a falling against the world and beings, entanglement, turbulence, alienation, temptation, and lostness. As we saw later, Heidegger describes this misrelation in a number of ways—however first and generally always as falling—as the Kingdom of Errancy, as the obliviousness to or forgottenness of being, as the taking place of the nihil. Being and the truth of being are forgotten as human beings try more and more strenuously and ingeniously to secure their hold in existence with beings most readily available. Human being, knowledge and will are always fabricated and executed in terms of objectification, the positing of the object against or before the subject.

everybody is the same: whoever feels different goes voluntarily into a madhouse . . . “We have invented happiness,” says the last men, and they blink . . . 
Essentially, the falling described and performed in Nietzsche’s metaphysics represents the same falling structure as represented earlier, but with a major new difference. In light of the “death of God,” the emptying out of the highest values and the supersensory, Nietzsche’s metaphysics goes further than any previous metaphysics, all of which still had some kind of allegiance to the highest, grounded in the supersensory or divine. Nevertheless, Nietzsche discovered the will served as the undercurrent for all metaphysical thinking, as represented above. Nietzsche aggrandizes to the highest extreme this modality into self-consciousness and nominates it as being as such. The being of beings as will to power is Nietzsche’s answer to the fall of metaphysics, and to its corresponding humiliation. The humiliation has come in nihilism, in which the West has seen the highest values devalue themselves. “The ‘why’ is lacking.” This was, according to Heidegger, the very necessary consequence of valuation as such, particularly in the event that that valuation always already submits all beings and the divine to its valuation. Nothing else could happen but that these values be undermined by themselves, for things and world are, being is, God is (or is not), prior to any stance that a human being can take in which to assign them values, validity, and to subject them to the rule of “enduring duration.” All of these took their being long before humanity – and did not take up their stand as will to power – but humanity sets itself as judge and master over all of them. “Meanwhile man, precisely as the one so threatened, exalts himself to the posture of lord of the earth.”480

This is the long draw-out history of metaphysics, but Nietzsche takes it all one step further. Instead of the humility that can result from humiliation, Nietzsche on the

480 Heidegger, Martin. The Question Concerning Technology, 27.
whole responds with an even more obstinate stance. In realizing the humiliation of metaphysics presented by the uncanniest guest of nihilism at Europe’s door, instead of a proper revaluation rather than a reversal, Nietzsche reactively declaims (a principle he has written himself) the previous dispensation of values in metaphysics as “reactive values,” “priestly caste morality,” weakness, decadence, ressentiment, etc. Rather, Nietzsche’s metaphysics takes that very unthought aspect latent in the entire metaphysical tradition, the silent but burning fuel of the domineering and overreaching nature of metaphysics, and turns that into the highest value in the will to power, makes it the essence of being itself.

Nietzsche’s own metaphysics – what he thought he was an overcoming – stands up from humiliation with a new, world-historical, self-conscious arrogance, with a mandate to will solely the human creation, and in fidelity only to this Being (will-to-power) which sets its own right and justice and values. The metaphysical human places himself/herself as the creator without God. This is the dispensation of a new comportment, but one that will fulfill the mandate of metaphysics: to set upon beings, to resign being to oblivion, to affront the truth of being, to submit all beings to human machinations, to subdue “creation,” to become Power, strength, itself. Nietzsche was not just a philosopher but also a prophet: this is what he saw coming in European nihilism and could understand at times the genetic history and the complicity of willfulness within it. Hence the epigraph at the beginning of this chapter, from a much earlier work: “. . . or else in a terribly mysterious way demands that we surrender our intellect, our
personal will: in order to thereby come to what is essential, that we become something essential.”

5.5 Heidegger’s First Corrective: Affirmation of Being-History

Therefore, thinking, as it is bonded to the truth of being, “does not begin until we have come to know that the reason that has been extolled for centuries is the most stubborn adversary of thinking.” Thinking will have its own conclusions on the matter, which do not serve as a reversal.

The side that being has given over in its history is the name for “being” that has predominated the history of metaphysics: presence. The es gibt comes to be Heidegger’s more appropriate designation for being, one that bridges the metaphysics of being as presence with the overcoming grounded (already) in the “other beginning.” It is the name for what being has given in presencing, as the epoch of Western metaphysics. At the same time as the history of this truth is disclosed as es gibt, It gives, it becomes clear that this history has been subject to a great concealment. This other side of being’s being that does not, cannot, give itself over to the experience dictated by a human comportment has long been decided as the form of metaphysical thinking. Metaphysics is caught in its binaries, caught in the draft of its falling. Yet even in that great

---


482 Heidegger, Martin, “Nietzsche’s Word: ‘God is dead’,” from Off the Beaten Track, 199.

483 Cf. Heidegger, Martin, Parmenides, 1:
We call what thus precedes and determines all history the beginning. Because it does not reside back in a past but lies in advance of what is to come, the beginning again and again turns out to be precisely a gift to an epoch. / In essential history the beginning comes last.
concealment Heidegger discerns that in letting the history of presence that Being is giving itself to presencing in its own form of unconcealment.\footnote{Heidegger, Martin, *On Time and Being*, 5: Being means presencing…letting-presence…Letting shows its character in bringing in into unconcealment. To let presence means: to unconceal, to bring to openness. In unconcealing prevails a giving, the giving that gives presencing, that is, Being, in letting-presence.}

We cannot help going through this historical (being-historical) route in which being is determined by presence.\footnote{Ibid., 7: …this character of Being has long since been decided without our contribution, let alone our merit. Thus we are bound to the characterization of Being as presencing. It derives its binding force from the beginning of the unconcealment of Being as something that can be said, that is, can be thought. Ever since the beginning of Western thinking with the Greeks, all saying of “Being” and “Is” is held in remembrance of the determination of Being as presencing which is binding for thinking. This also holds true for the thinking that directs the most modern technology and industry…}

Heidegger’s method would not be complete however if he did not affirm the same process of these epochs in their very forgetfulness as the unconcealment of being. We can see it clearly in the passage above, when Heidegger acknowledges that not just without his own contribution has the epoch of Western being-historical thinking been decided in terms of being=presence, but “let alone without merit.” I am not sure why all the statements of humility that Heidegger expresses have not been given more attention, but I think it makes it easier to dismiss his intentions when he can be turned into some self-perceived prophet of being, a thinker who has finally “seen the light” and sees himself as correcting that long error in a great show of will and brilliance. Nothing could be further from the truth, and it is the humility that is most striking as it accompanies—and strengthens—the course of his thinking.

Even the history of abandonment and oblivion, even the new turn in metaphysics after Nietzsche—this history is affirmed as the history of being itself, in its
epoch of concealment. This is the self-sheltering of being that takes place. It is often read, however, with any number of negative connotations, of which Heidegger is always conscious and trying to thwart. But the “reality” of the situation nevertheless appears negative (i.e., ontically), and indeed will and already is being’s abandonment. But there are numerous moments in which Heidegger knowingly speaks about this history affirmatively, he says Yes to it,\footnote{Cf. Heidegger, Martin, \textit{Contributions}, §32, p. 48: Truth is sheltering that lights up, sheltering which occurs as removal- unto and charming-moving- unto. These, in their onefold as well as in their overflow, proffer the transposed open for the play of a being, which in the sheltering of its truth become a being as thing, tool, machination, word, deed, sacrifice.} and indeed that is one of the greatest overcomings of his thinking, to be free of revenge against “time and its it was,” in Nietzsche’s phraseology. Heidegger believes that rejection, negation of that tradition—in truth the way that brought us here, you, me, and Heidegger—will be the very active nihilism that presents itself now at the culmination of Western thinking.\footnote{Cf. Heidegger, Martin, “Nietzsche’s Word ‘God is Dead’,” from \textit{Off the Beaten Track}, 162-3: As a mere countermovement, however, it necessarily remains trapped, like everything anti-, in the essence of what it is challenging. Since all it does is turn metaphysics upside down, Nietzsche’s countermovement against metaphysics remains embroiled in it and has no way out… Cf. Heidegger, Martin. \textit{What is Called Thinking?}, 95: “This is why it remains the exclusive privilege of the greatest thinkers to let themselves be influenced. The small thinkers, by contrast, merely suffer from constipated originality, and hence close themselves off against any influx coming from afar.” I think it is telling that both of these statements come about in discussion of Nietzsche’s thinking (metaphysics). As we will come to see in the last chapter, Heidegger’s perhaps greatest insight is to understand to what extent Nietzsche’s thinking indeed reaches beyond itself, overcomes even itself, in its unthought dimension. This dimension is hinted at here, and is once again related to \textit{humility}. To the extent that \textit{Selbstbewusstsein} – both self-consciousness \textit{and} self-assertion (of the will) – lies at the heart of the essence of metaphysics, and culminates with Nietzsche in the will to power, we see the fundamental necessity for a will- lessness spring out in Heidegger’s own thinking. Any anti- as overcoming is stuck with the other factor \textit{side/pole} of its countermovement. Furthermore, it is precisely at the point of “letting oneself be influenced” that the influx of Being can befall the thinker, particularly Nietzsche himself. Nietzsche straddles and bridges the two epochs, the first and the other beginning, precisely in this sense: he diagnoses and simultaneously asserts the will to power as \textit{the} truth of being, for himself and for the overcoming of metaphysics that is called for; at the same time, in his “madness,” Nietzsche becomes the first in the inauguration of the other beginning to overcome willing itself, to cease the countering of metaphysics. Later in Heidegger’s own thinking we will see this conviction grow: “Yet a regard for metaphysics still prevails in the intention to overcome metaphysics. Therefore, our task is to cease all overcoming, and leave metaphysics to itself” \textit{(On Time and Being, 24)}.} In “Americanism,” this
form is the machinating, the gigantic, the history-less, groundlessness of immediate living; for Europe this means the flight of the gods and the oblivion of being from the intimations and hintings of thinking hitherto. Furthermore, any such negation is caught in the very same trap of reactive thinking as it conditions metaphysics.

Following Nietzsche’s insights, Heidegger even considers that our way of “forming ideas,” in that we form ideas is subsumed into that fall of metaphysics which turns into—at the dawn of the history of the epoch’s of metaphysics within which we now step—something altogether different, the fall away transforms itself into the falling upon. Heidegger quotes Nietzsche’s Zarathustra. Heidegger places the spirit of revenge right at the heart of metaphysical history and its modality of “idea-formation.” Once again, that form is to set up a being as an object of representation; the perfection of this modality is brought about in the modern transformation of metaphysics as nihilism, in which the nullity is set loose within beings in that man’s comportment to being and beings has taken on the absolute objectification. Heidegger locates the definition of this revenge, then, at a crucial place, related between all the history of Western thinking and the decision of a thinking that wishes to prepare for the other beginning. Quoting Zarathustra again: “This, yes, this alone is revenge itself: the will’s revulsion against time and its ‘It was.’”

Therefore, Heidegger concludes, the bridge that man is supposed to become in the proclamation of Zarathustra—“man is a bridge between beast and overman…man is to be overcome”—is undermined by Nietzsche’s metaphysics to the extent that

---

488 Nietzsche, Friedrich, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, from *The Portable Nietzsche*, 85: “The spirit of revenge, my friends, has so far been the subject of man’s best reflection; and wherever there was suffering, there punishment was also wanted.”

489 Heidegger, Martin, *What is Called Thinking?*, 93.
Nietzsche carries on and, as it were, perfects, metaphysics into its self-conscious self-willing justice to the being of beings as will to power. Instead of overcoming, falling is, therefore, in its final determination, revenge and nihilism. According to Heidegger, following Nietzsche’s unthought thought, then, overcoming is to be set free from revenge, the will’s revulsion against time and its “it was.” True overcoming must overcome perpetual falling, the falling away from being and the falling of revenge, setting upon, attack, killing, etc. Overcoming comes by way of letting beings be, not by the intensifying of the will to power. Quoting Nietzsche again, “this thinker’s true and one and only thought”: “For that man be delivered from revenge: that is the bridge to the highest hope for me, and a rainbow after long storms.”

But what is this revenge against Time and its “It was”? If revenge determines the thought’s pursuit of ideas, in the construction of ideas, how does this process work?

The idea sets before us that which is. It determines and sets down what may pass as having being. The determination of what is, then, is in a certain way at the command of a way forming ideas which pursues and sets upon everything in order to set it up and maintain it in its own way.

Like the knowledge of good and evil, the past and its “It was” perdures within a special relation to the concealment of the unconcealment of being. Willing and idea-formation take offense, according to Heidegger, at that which cannot be submitted to ideas and will. In Nietzsche’s case, it is the “It was,” which is a metaphysically derived conception

---

490 Ibid. To recollect the overman here is to also fall upon the association of overcoming. We must therefore recall something from earlier on in this investigation: Heidegger’s definition of overcoming is not a severing or leaving behind but a bringing into its own, letting metaphysics stand within its nature, in its place, and rebinding thinking to its truth (oblivion as self-sheltering, the granting of being’s hiddenness and forgottenness). Even from the beginning, affirmation is the proper comportment. Even before this, but explicitly and assertively by the ’50s, this comportment is defined as gratitude, as thinking as thanking.
of temporality along a progressive line. Ergo, what is past is passed, and no longer
given to the presencing of idea and will. In revulsion at this scenario, will is torn,
“captive to the passing” in willing its own passing.

The will takes its revenge not only on the past, however, but upon everything
that comes to pass. Therefore, Heidegger argues, the “and” of “time and its ‘it was’”
means to suggest “and that means” time: “Revenge is the will’s revulsion against time,
and that means, against the passing away and its past.”

This time is construed metaphysically, as it has been for a long time, since
Aristotle, but the content of Nietzsche’s metaphysical thinking nevertheless delivers our
own analysis up to the question of Being and of Time. The familiar concept of time is
that the present is what most is, the past is what is no longer, and the future is yet to come.
The past and the future properly are not because they are not “in being.” “In being”
means: “being present.” Beings are more in being the more present they are, according
to the metaphysical privilege of presence. As it was for Aristotle, the future and the past
lack presence and therefore lack being. The present is an indeterminable fugitive now
that can never be caught and is always only slipping away. Heidegger at one point
claims that “time is torrential,” however, and that the surest way to be “out of time” is to

---

491 Ibid., 92: “This ‘it was’ resists the willing of the will . . . becomes a stumbling block for all willing.”

492 Ibid., 93: “Hence the will is the sphere of representational ideas which basically pursue and set upon
everything that comes and goes and exists, in order to depose, reduce it in its stature and ultimately
decompose it.”

493 Ibid., 96.
“lose essential time” at the expense of this metaphysically derived temporality, clock
time, time as calculative units—a modern invention.\textsuperscript{494}

In Nietzsche’s metaphysics, falling will not be overcome. But Heidegger makes
the distinction between what is thought in Nietzsche’s metaphysics and what is
unthought, just as in the course of metaphysics, it is the oblivion of being and the truth
of being which have not been thought. What is unthought in Nietzsche’s metaphysics?
A view toward this matter will be the possible second revelation of Nietzsche’s thinking:
how he opens up metaphysics to its possible overcoming. We are introduced then to the
ambiguity of Nietzsche’s overcoming of metaphysics. On the one hand, Nietzsche is
decisively metaphysical in his own overcoming of metaphysics. On the other hand,
particularly in what remains un-thought in Nietzsche’s thinking, Nietzsche is the first
thinker of the other beginning in which metaphysics is overcome. As we have also seen,
the keys to the kingdom lie in Nietzsche’s hands: his highest hope, his greatest value,
almost unthought and unspoken, was that “man should be delivered from revenge.” This
unthought matter will be for this investigation the opening onto the possibility of the
other beginning.

\textsuperscript{494} Ibid., 100-101. Cf. Ibid., 103: “The question ‘Being and Time’ points to what is unthought in all
metaphysics.” There is one more point that we do not have time to explore, but that is the straddling of
the metaphysics-non-metaphysical divide of Nietzsche’s other great and only thought: the eternal
recurrence of the same. Like the will to power, the concept is enscconed in metaphysics, but it also bears a
certain relation to the unthought side of metaphysics as the sheltering-concealing of being in its historical
epochs. Heidegger speculates as to whether the eternal recurrence isn’t the very method by which
thinking would be released from its revenge.
Chapter 6

The Humiliation of Metaphysics and The Waiting for a God

“. . . or else in a terribly mysterious way demands that we surrender our intellect, our personal will: in order to thereby come to what is essential, that we become something essential.”

- Nietzsche, 1878 495

“To my friend Georg!

After you had discovered me, it was no trick to find me: the difficulty now is to lose me . . .

The Crucified.”

- Nietzsche (Jan 4, 1889) 496

“Nietzsche knew of these relations of discovery, finding, and losing. All along his way, he must have known of them with ever greater clarity. For only thus can it be understood that at the end of his way he could tell it with an unearthly clarity. What he still had to say in this respect is written on one of those scraps of paper which Nietzsche sent out to his friends about the time when he collapsed in the street (January 4, 1889) and succumbed to madness. These scraps are sometimes called “epistles of delusion.” Understood medically, scientifically, that classification is correct. For the purposes of thinking, it remains inadequate. . . .”

- Heidegger 1951 – 1952 497

495 Nietzsche, Friedrich, Human, All Too Human, 27.

496 Heidegger, What is Called Thinking, 53.
6.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter I examined the “death of God” as the conclusion of Western metaphysics. This conclusion is twofold. The first is the conclusion that leads from the inner logic of metaphysics (what I am naming Western metaphysical “falling”). The second conclusion is the culmination of all of metaphysics’ possibilities—whether this leads to the end of the history or opens up to its longest beginning, or whether it opens up by leading into that other history of the grounding of the truth of being, is undecidable and perhaps will remain so. Nietzsche achieves both conclusions, but the second in a complicated way into which Heidegger leads an investigation.

The first conclusion comes by way of Nietzsche’s rethinking and elaboration of the principle of metaphysics’ history qua nihilism (“it never shows its true face”498). This principle reveals itself as the will to power, the selective power, strength, that establishes the value of things after the death of God and the supersensory no longer do. The strength of will to power derives from its approximation to will to power qua the Being of beings. The will to power must now stand in for the empty place of highest values and secure the so-called “enduring duration,” beginning with the “relatively enduring.” Furthermore, Nietzsche is the thinker who announces how this history is culminating itself, in its second conclusion, as nihilism (“the wasteland grows,” Zarathustra announces). His attempt to overcome this end is to launch a new beginning by way of the Overman and the eternal recurrence, both of which have an ambivalent destiny since

497 Ibid., 52.
498 Heidegger, Martin, Nietzsche: Vols. 3 and 4 (Vol. 3: The Will to Power as Knowledge and as Metaphysics; Vol. 4: Nihilism), 205.
Nietzsche’s thought remains obfuscated, situated and enmeshed (if not derailed) in the logic of metaphysics. In his attempt to overcome it, Nietzsche unlocks the highest value of metaphysical thinking from out of its unconscious, unthought place and mobilizes it as the principle of a new history of values in the “revaluation of all values.”

But, according to Heidegger, the will to power as the being of beings is still itself a metaphysical determination and cannot set thinking free as Nietzsche hopes. Rather the opposite occurs. Thought and “creation,” under the aegis of the realized will to power, serve only one purpose: human capacity is enslaved to submitting beings to valuation, ordering, following the necessity of the will’s overpowering, single-minded willing. Heidegger’s addition to this examination is the following. All of this is brought to its historical achievement in the essence of technology, in which all beings are—i.e., have being—only to the extent that they can be forced to stand in order, to be mobilized and remain in standing reserve for the machinations and plans of humanity. Beings not submitted to this process will increasingly not be able to be, as man more masters the earth, including those whose existence is not decidable or useful for man’s goals.

According to the genealogy of metaphysics, beings have no other being than that which will allow or disallow them to submission to human willing, the final word. Being consequently enters its perhaps final oblivion with regards to humans, who are yet safeguarded with the shepherdng, place-giving and thinking of being within their own being. These humans nevertheless reject the gift and call in favor of setting on a path of
killing instead, the ultimate verification and self-demonstration of strength. Instead, therefore, the Nothing takes place.\textsuperscript{499}

These are the conclusions of Nietzsche’s metaphysics. However, the unthought matter in Nietzsche’s thought may yet open up \textit{out of} metaphysics. This opening is the \textit{freedom of un concealment} explicit in Nietzsche’s thought, but inflected in such a way as to become a reflection upon what is unthought, a reflection that must be conceived in a new relationship to the will to power—with the latter in relation to the truth of being.

The ultimate revolution of this, I argue, may lie precisely hidden in what is called Nietzsche’s “madness.” Following the clues from Nietzsche and Heidegger quoted at the beginning of this chapter, I will lead my conclusions into considering the qualities of such “madness.”\textsuperscript{500} This madness, as unthought, may for thinking indicate a mytho-poetic speaking, or a different thinking, which marks Heidegger’s other beginning.

Madness sheds a new light upon what Heidegger called \textit{Die Gelassenheit}, releasement, which remains the first step into the direction of “overcoming” metaphysics, i.e., as a step back from the metaphysical willfulness of in-sistence exemplified in the will to power. By way of this transition we open up a glimpse to the issue of the divine in Heidegger. This is the reason that Heidegger stages a new confrontation with the

\textsuperscript{499} Nevertheless, this is still in itself an un concealment of the truth of being. Cf. Heidegger, Martin, \textit{Nietzsche Vols. 3 and 4 (Vol. 3: The Will to Power as Knowledge and as Metaphysics; Vol. 4: Nihilism)}, 248: “The epoch of the concealment of Being in the un concealment of the being in the form of the will to power is the age of the accomplished destitution of the being as such.”

\textsuperscript{500} Ibid., 52-53. See the citation at the beginning of this chapter by Heidegger. Furthermore, cf. Jacques Lacan’s “Presentation on Psychical Causality,” from \textit{Écrits}, 144-145: “...madness is the permanent virtuality of a gap opened up his [the subject’s] essence. And far from being an ‘insult’ to freedom, madness is freedom’s most faithful companion, following its every move like a shadow.” Also: “I believe that in relegating the causality of madness to the unsoundable decision of being in which human beings understand or fail to recognize their liberation, in the snare of fate that deceives them about a freedom they have not in the least conquered, I am merely formulating the law of our becoming as it is expressed in Antiquity’s formation.”
divine, those beings which bear our own unique place in being in that they \textit{will not submit to any demand for presencing or otherwise by human beings, but will remain in their own}, in their “godding,” as the final word. Heidegger’s attempt is therefore to restore thinking to the openness of the possibility of a readiness for the return of the divine—or rather to experience the finality of the gods flight, which would indeed signal the final movement of the oblivion of being, in which even the oblivion can no longer be discerned in its truth by thinking, as the truth of being.

All of this once again recurs in the auspices of a theory of falling. The falling of metaphysics is the process and culmination of an age-old history of the West. Nietzsche’s madness—exemplified in his notorious fall—evinces the other possibility of this end: in \textit{falling another way} we may perhaps finally land upon another, firmer ground. Nietzsche’s ultimate fall on one hand leaves him cut off from his world, but on the other opens up the possibility of a thinking and a being of one who has \textit{fallen out} of the dominion of metaphysical falling. In his and Lacan’s madness, falling is exacerbated and \textit{let go} into its full movement and velocity, thereby to give metaphysical man another chance, a new way to fall, and perhaps a new way to stand. In this fall, humiliation does not have to be man’s final words; he doesn’t have to continue to persist in his endless humiliating fall. Rather, humiliation may fall into another consequence of falling: humility.

\textbf{6.2 Nietzsche’s Fall}

In Heidegger’s private attempt to think the truth of being without recourse to beings, we find this note, entitled, “Hölderlin—Kierkegaard—Nietzsche”:
Let no one today be so presumptuous as to take it as mere coincidence that these three, who, each in his own way, in the end suffered profoundly the uprooting to which Western history is being driven and who at the same time intimate their gods most intimately—that these three had to depart from the brightness of their days prematurely.

What is being prepared for?501

Regarding Nietzsche at least, the “departure” of which Heidegger was speaking is one of the great contradictions of our or any age: the “madness,” the fall of Nietzsche. To summarize, it is said that his madness consisted in this. Nietzsche had become a famous German philosopher in his own lifetime, which is no small feat, being the subject of university courses in Copenhagen taught by “Georg,” to whom the little “epistle of delusion” above is addressed. Nietzsche was known personally to be humble and decent, though in his writing he sounds a vitriolic scream.502 One day in 1889, Nietzsche was walking in the streets of Turin. He came upon a man beating a horse that refused to move. Thereupon Nietzsche grabbed the beast’s neck to obstruct the blows with his own body and cried, “Beat me instead!” After that, the voluminous writer hardly penned a thing, hardly spoke a word, and lived another eleven years under the care of his sister and mother. The man virtually went silent, save for the few words he threw to the wind in the “epistles of delusion,” letters to friends abroad. Thus was Nietzsche’s “madness.”

That last year of productivity and “sanity” found Nietzsche at the height of his powers, although some say the evidence of his madness is already everywhere in those latest writings. Based on what we have observed already, however, it would be

501 Heidegger, Martin. Contributions, 142-3.

502 Heidegger’s gloss on this point is, as so often, thoughtful and generous. From What is Called Thinking?, 53:

Learning, then, cannot be brought about by scolding. Even so, a man who teaches must at times grow noisy. In fact, he may have to scream and scream, although the aim is to make his students learn so quiet a thing as thinking. Nietzsche, most quiet and shiest of men, knew of thus necessity. He endured the agony of having to scream.
impossible to misconstrue the following statement from one of those last works as anything but the conclusion of a much longer form of madness (one that tempts to make the latter madness look like sanity?). According to Kaufmann, *The Antichrist* was published as book one of Nietzsche’s proposed four-volume masterwork called, *Revaluation of All Values*. *Der Antichrist* can also be translated as “The Anti-Christian.”

To what extent Nietzsche saw himself as the apocalyptic antichrist of the age of metaphysics, or as the anti-Christian, would have to be decided after a detailed analysis of the work itself, in concert with all of his other works, which far exceeds the scope of this project. However, like the ambiguity that exists everywhere with this thinker, I would say there is something of a both-and situation here, too, a simultaneous play of opening and closure. Nevertheless, in his last days of “sanity,” Nietzsche wrote this, a confirmation and restatement of a long-held sentiment:

> We thirsted for lightning and deeds and were most remote from the happiness of the weakling, “resignation” . . .
> What is good? Everything that heightens the feeling of power in man, the will to power, power itself.
> What is bad? Everything that is born of weakness.
> What is happiness? The feeling that power is growing, that resistance is overcome.\(^{503}\)

The way that man went out is intolerably incommensurate with what he wrote. The one who coined and thought the will to power and overcoming to their utmost, and many other great and mighty things besides, perished of a paralyzing weakness precipitated by a public humiliation; public tears, a grown man—a German no less, and author of the *Overman*—made the ward of his sister and mother. Not only does it substantiate his

---

\(^{503}\) Nietzsche, Friedrich. *The Antichrist*, from *The Portable Nietzsche*, trans. Walter Arnold Kaufmann (New York: Penguin Books, 1976), 570. For a comparison of how this late statement agrees with the earlier Nietzsche, cf. *The Gay Science*, §357, p. 289: “Faith is always coveted most and needed most urgently where will is lacking; for will, as the affect of command, is the decisive sign of sovereignty and strength.”
personal madness, for many, but Nietzsche’s collapse also confirms the madness of philosophy in general, the practice of the weak and impotent who can do nothing but write, and write banal things; a sign of how far the practice has fallen since its glorious Greek inception, perhaps; a sign of the dangers of “abstract thought,” rationality, or conversely, of immoralism and irrationality. Perhaps he was insane all along? Perhaps it was only tertiary stage syphilis? In these and various ways we try to save the man, and precisely from his silence, that is, from himself.

In all the talk of overcoming weakness, the necessity for strength, of the sickly nihilism of the age, of the need for man to stand up into the fullness of his will and establish his own values, his own rule, to secure his own path, heedless of the darkness—in all this, Nietzsche himself never experienced his humiliation, his fall, until that fateful day in the streets of Turin. Nor was it the kind of humiliation that could be hidden, held in secret—it was very public, before the age of televised self-explanatory interviews and the resilient forgiveness (or short-term memory) of public opinion; but it was late enough for electronic and print media to broadcast the humiliation of a fool, so that everyone who needed to might know. Indeed, before the incident, Nietzsche had just tried to explain himself fully in his autobiography, Ecce Homo. Nietzsche had always been trying to explain himself, asking rhetorically in the latter work, “Have I been heard?” Had he heard himself? Not until that day, perhaps, after which he would sign himself “the Crucified.” The thinker of the over-man was brought low.

Why “the Crucified,” after all? Dying is humiliating enough for most, in that Death absolutely overpowers the will. Every overpowering of human will is humiliating for that will, against it and therefore rejected by it. Death slowly or quickly removes
every possibility from our lives, until even the possibility of walking or remembering or holding our own bowels is ripped from our will. No amount of precognition or awareness or illusion can save us the trauma that death brings; in fact, ironically, it often seems that the more aware we are of the situation, of ourselves, the more humiliating it is. This is the common despair and loneliness of the elderly and the terminally ill—the loss of will-power. Yet, employing the image of crucifixion for oneself is an altogether different extreme of humiliation. The crucified is the one who is punished, and this execution mechanism is the simultaneous gathering together and mobilization of pain and humiliation. Execution by a cross is not limited to the inducement of pain, the “pound of flesh” one has to pay for transgressing the law. The horror of Roman punishment is its corresponding technique of humiliation: one is crucified naked, a mixed spectacle of suffering and power displayed before all to see; crucifixion is the denuding of the human to homo sacer, in Agamben’s terms, under the might of sovereign power.

What possible reason could we give for Nietzsche using this image as his signature after his collapse, if it was not to give voice to his humiliation? Why else would he encourage the one who had found him to now lose him? Why would the author of the Overman now wish to be forgotten rather than remembered? Why else did he go silent but because of his fall? Is it an accident that the thinker who’s fall is among the most visible, the most obvious and well-reported—yes, perhaps no thinker or writer ever fell as hard and as resoundingly as Friedrich Nietzsche—is also the one who said in one of
the last things he ever wrote, “Sit as little as possible; give no credence to any thought that was not born outdoors while one moved about freely . . .”?504

None of these questions are meant to serve some “immanent critique,” in order to expose the man or his work to ridicule or to post-mortem psychoanalytic diagnosis, to understand all of his work as a “defense mechanism” against his own impotence, an apologetic to his own narcissism, and correspondingly to understand the Nietzsche revealed after his fall as his “true self,” as the return of the repressed, exposing itself to the world, undermining his imago.505 Without denying that this explanation could be, within its own realm of discourse, correct, this would be not only ungenerous but all too crude and thoughtless—simply because it is the explanation that lies most ready-at-hand and easily graspable for us today. As Heidegger said, it is not adequate for thinking to relegate Nietzsche’s madness to medicalization or “scientific classification.” I wager that something more is at stake, that there is more to be learned, and far more to be said.

What if, instead, Nietzsche’s fall reveals a jointure (the event of appropriation, Ereignis) between what he explicitly thought prior to his fall and what remains unthought in his thinking and its relationship to his unthought after his fall, as Heidegger intimates? What if the fall is rather an Einblick of revelation by which Nietzsche himself learned what he already knew but had only in moments been able to say. May two examples suffice, the first is an aside from his earlier work, quoted at the beginning of this chapter: “. . . or else in a terribly mysterious way demands that we

---


505 Even more cheaply, perhaps we could speculate that his “Beat me!” was Nietzsche’s jouissance screaming, a self-destructive public explosion of sado-masochistic desire.
surrender our intellect, our personal will: in order to thereby come to what is essential, that we become something essential.” The other example comes when Nietzsche is speaking of Jesus in his Antichrist, Nietzsche betrays the secret of what he knows. He knows a form of the will to power that transcends all willing and all power in any traditional or philosophical definition:

This “bringer of glad tidings” died as he had lived, as he had taught—not to “redeem man” but to show how one must live. This practice is his legacy to mankind: his behavior before the judges, before the catchpoles, before the accusers and all kinds of slander and scorn—his behavior on the cross. He does not resist, he does not defend his right, he takes no step which might ward off the worst; on the contrary, he provokes it. And he begs, he suffers, he loves with those, in those, who do him evil. Not to resist, not to be angry, not to hold responsible—but to resist not even the evil one—to love him.\textsuperscript{506}

On the surface of it, there is hardly any word more un-Nietzschean than this one. It is not that Nietzsche ever condemned love, only weakness; rather, he praised love. Furthermore, Nietzsche was well aware of the ways resentment that could pass itself off as love in order to destroy. The examples suffice, however, to raise the question of the unthought content of Nietzsche’s thinking. His silence and signature after his fall reach back and give retrospective significance and insight into such examples and hopes of non-willing, or perhaps a higher willing than had previously been considered. Heidegger speculates elsewhere that Nietzsche thought the fact that the path of metaphysical thinking would lead to “planetary domination.” But what if, Heidegger speculates in the same passage, Nietzsche did not fail at a full philosophy of this world-

\textsuperscript{506} Nietzsche, Friedrich. The Antichrist, from The Portable Nietzsche, 608-609.
historical situation and conclusion? “Perhaps, however, he did not collapse, but went as far as his thinking was able to go.”

Heidegger hints here and elsewhere that it is not Nietzsche’s incapacitation or madness that stops him along his track but that he ran the very track of metaphysical thinking to its conclusion, as argued above. This does not, however, necessitate that Nietzsche’s thinking ended or floundered in metaphysics itself. Instead, it holds out the possibility that Nietzsche thought beyond metaphysics and, for that matter, this thinking only came into its own after and as a result of Nietzsche’s falling. Therefore, the metaphysics of the will to power was not as far as Nietzsche’s thought was able to go; in truth, he had yet to go so far. In the Ereignis of his fall, his signature and silence and request to be forgotten are precisely the signs that the metaphysics of the will to power was overcome. The only answer to the will to power, in the end, to its infinitizing will, to the aggrandizement of power, to the endless command and all the violence that issues from it, to the perennial falling away from being and being falling into oblivion—the only answer to this is either exhaustion or humiliation, or both. Coupled with the Event of Nietzsche’s collapse and ensuing weakness, his signature as “the Crucified” potentially says more than his entire oeuvre in a stroke—if that entire work had not itself been the path necessary to bring him to his humiliation. “The Crucified” is the one who has experienced a very extreme form of humiliation, the utter insignificance and impotence and erasure of one’s own will, even the efficacy of one’s testimony, once the hammer has fallen. The crucified’s body and soul bare the inscription of another’s signature, the signature of the sovereign.

---

If this is the case, if Nietzsche thus fell, this means that his signature and his silence and his writing of the *other willing,* of a will to will-lessness, composes a new testament, a final unthought insight into the destiny of metaphysics and the exponential velocity of its falling hitherto. In his humiliation – his coming back to where he stands, as a mortal upon the earth – Nietzsche provides a wholly different kind of answer to the problem of metaphysics. If we were inclined to hope, Nietzsche’s signature of “the Crucified” would suggest that metaphysics’ total and ownmost humiliation befell this man, *homo metaphysicus,* that it even crucified its shining son. Perhaps metaphysics sacrifices its man for the sake of its continuance, for its nihilism, as penance for the infraction that this *homo metaphysicus* incurs in the rampage of its “madness” . . . or perchance Nietzsche was himself the sacrifice to set us all free from its dominion, so that we could know and see?

Ecce Homo.

### 6.3 Heidegger and the Question of God

Heidegger takes up this unthought matter in his thinking of the God and the gods in relation to the truth of being. The problematic of the will to power and metaphysics described/practiced by Nietzsche receives its answer in the secret of Nietzsche the madman, the de-ranged. In sum, the theme of metaphysics itself in the will to power meets its conclusion in the death of God. This would be the key to the insight of “overcoming” metaphysics, although even the concept of overcoming would

---

*We have no term to ascribe to this possibility for now. Gelassenheit will be our provisional signpost into the direction of this experience, but Jesus would be an even more appropriate one, as this name expresses the human comportment itself that master this *other willing,* maybe even regardless of one’s view as to his divinity or lack thereof.*
no longer appear valid as such.\footnote{Heidegger, Martin. \textit{On Time and Being}, 24: “Yet a regard for metaphysics still prevails in the intention to overcome metaphysics. Therefore, our task is to cease all overcoming, and thereby leave metaphysics to itself.”} Still, the need would persist to think the unthought essence of metaphysics.\footnote{Heidegger, Martin. “Nietzsche’s Word ‘God is Dead,’” in \textit{Off the Beaten Track}, 198: Metaphysics, as the history of the truth of beings as such, would be what came to be out of the destiny of being itself. In its essence metaphysics would be the unthought—because withheld—mystery of being itself. . . . Metaphysics is \textit{the} epoch of the history of being itself. In its essence, however, metaphysics is nihilism.}

Nietzsche “experienced something of nihilism but without being able to think its essence.”\footnote{Ibid.} Yet he played on “another note” that sounds toward the divine, that of which none of the many perspectives (sociological, technological, scientific, metaphysics or religious) possess enough insight to think what is happening in this time. Strangely enough, however, we might be looking at the issue awry if we just think we need to think deeper into a hidden meaning. Maybe, Heidegger chances, we need to attend to what lies nearest, but because we have passed by it continuously without ever having noticed it, we have all along been complicit in the “killing of the being of beings.”\footnote{Ibid., 198-199: What there is for thinking to think is not some deeply hidden deeper meaning, but rather something lying close by: something that is lying most closely, which we, because that is all it is, have therefore continually already passed over. By passing it over we continually accomplish (without attending to it) that killing of the being of beings.}

By attending to that which we have so easily and naturally passed by, Heidegger wonders if we should not return to that oft-quoted passage of the madman in which he “cried out ceaselessly: I’m looking for God! I’m looking for God!”\footnote{Ibid., 199.} Heidegger then asks in what way this man was mad? He was de-ranged, \textit{Ver-rückt}:
He is moved out \[ ausgerückt \] of the level of erstwhile man on which the ideals, now grown unreal, of the supersensory world are passed off as real while the opposite ideals are being realized. This de-ranged man is moved out \[ hinausgerückt \] beyond erstwhile man . . . The man de-ranged in this way has, then, nothing in common with the sort of men standing about in public, “who do not believe in God.” For these are not unbelievers because for them God, as God, has become unworthy of belief, but because they themselves have abandoned the possibility of faith since they are no longer able to seek God. They can no longer seek because they can no longer think . . . It is clear from the first sentences and even clearer for those who can hear from the last sentences of the passage that the madman, in contrast, is seeking God by crying out after God. Perhaps a thinking man has here really cried out de profundis? And the ear of our thinking? Does it not still hear the cry? It will not hear the cry so long as it does not begin to think. Thinking does not begin until we have come to know that the reason that has been extolled for centuries is the most stubborn adversary of thinking.\textsuperscript{514}

Those who can no longer think can no longer seek; seeking is related intimately to thinking. One is led to seek for. We are driven to seek for what we do not have, or do not think or know we have. We have lost God, and ourselves.\textsuperscript{515} It is a “thinking man” who has cried out, looking for God. Those who cannot think—and we are of course using thinking in the Heideggerian sense of thinking along “a more primal way,”\textsuperscript{516} as the attending-remembering-gathering of meditative thinking, \textit{Gelassenheit}—can neither seek God nor hear the cry for God. That thinking that is reason is deaf and blind in the din of its willing, its seeking of its ends, in securing itself among immediate beings, in the swoosh of falling. Thinking—particularly a thinking that has been brought back to the earth—however, looks out, seeks and listens—even cries out—for God. Regardless,

\textsuperscript{514} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{515} Cf. Ibid., 157:
But by so disparaging its antithesis, the sensory denies its own essence. The dismissal of the supersensory also eliminates the purely sensory and with it the difference between the two . . . It ends in the senseless. However, it remains the unthinking and insuperable assumption behind blind attempts to evade the senseless through a sheer fiat of sense.

\textsuperscript{516} Heidegger, Martin. “The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking,” from \textit{On Time and Being}, 55.
Nietzsche after his fall casts a retrospective light upon what this madman was really up to. At the very least, this seeking opens up the question of the God and the divine, and at the same time puts a death nail into the announcement of the true madness of metaphysics.

6.4 Falling—“Only a God Can Save Us.”

We fall in our particular way because of the way we take a stand. It is no more or less simple and no more or less complicated than the way the little word is—being—our most common substantive word in a number of languages (in fact in every language a response to being is issued)—is ubiquitous, essential, present in only the strangest of ways as oblivion. It is never interrogated in any way other than as the copula in a proposition, i.e., logically, or as a negativity, i.e., the nothing that is the generativity of the dialectic, reason, or the nothing of a mere abstraction, a self-evident universal, or as the Highest being. All of this will have proved so, but not the retreat necessary into the simplicity and scope of the truth of being. Being remains univocal and endlessly polyvocal.

Falling encompasses a wide swath, therefore: from the metaphysical engagement with the truth of being, to the insistence of human beings to outstrip their reach, for the mind to reach beyond its reach, to its capacity for full self-assertion. The dominant theme of the historizing of metaphysics is exemplified in the final summation of this history in the words “will to power” and “death of God.” All of this is represented thereby in the term of fall and falling. Falling is thus far the special mode that results from the way in which the human stand is taken, i.e., in and as insistence. The continued
threat for this being is to persist in its insistence; nevertheless, this is demanded of the will—even to willing nothing, as Nietzsche said the will wills nothing before it stops willing." This is the falling that opens up into what is beginning to dawn upon many human beings today, something long expected: an abyss, groundlessness. That is, the course, duration, and scope of falling have opened up the possibility of reaching the point of never being able to take a stand again. The Danger at the heart of what Heidegger nominates as the essence of technology—which is nothing technological—is that this insistence will not cease until nothing is left, that the Nothing precisely will take place. What this means is as yet indeterminable. This nothing is undecidable and indeterminate, but it nevertheless always bears its own relation to being, and to those who are capable of considering it.

There develop therefore praxes in response to this possibility. Everyone under the sway of this falling believes something is wrong, it is just that no one can agree on what that is. Not only are people getting wealthy and famous for their own inflections or specialized opinions about the outcome of the dance with nothing. Others are expending all of their resources—monetary, health, temporal—with their own response. Television documents one response as “prepping,” for those preparing for the arrival of nothing—economic collapse, famine, war, anarchy, and end, any ending possible, even the end itself. Baudrillard, Agamben, Virilio, Naomi Klein, Kristeva (abjection), Zizek, and numerous others have more recently updated this concept to a complete and total, never-ending, state of emergency. The continuing renewal of the Patriot Act in this country is merely one symptom thereof, the constant state of emergency that requires

---

the constant execution or possible execution of the power of sovereignty within the state of exception that the state of emergency necessitates. Schmidt feared that this could become the continuing Western reality. This turn to the normalization of terror is just as much the subject of the Marxist apocalypse, by which “metropolitan life becomes so sad that we might as well sell it for money.”

Every number of cultural artifact now attests to the entirety of this “reality”—this worlding: from our projected nightmares of totalitarianism to economic or ecological collapse, to being overwhelmed by the alien (literal or figurative, the latter as the alien human, the immigrant) and subjected to such a rule; even to the zombification/vampirization of a number or all, i.e., an imagination of the possible replacement of the essence of the human with that of another, monstrous “reality.” In the ever-renewing and heightening of this imaginary now unfolds the possibility, fascination and horror of the Singularity: A.I. and the bionic, post-humanism, the “science-fiction” of the blending of the organic and technic, the human and the machine, which with the imagination of one life of flight depicts the total overthrow of the human by the machine.

Focusing on what might be considered as cartoonish narratives, however, miss a whole other set of imaginaries. The threat of Evil looms for others, a very human evil.

518 Berardi, Franco “Bifo.” The Soul At Work, 83. Also consider the Marxist apocalyptic involving the complete alienation of labor that extends to the “work of the soul,” as Bifo names it. This spread leaches into the soul with Bifo’s interesting nomination, the “Prozac-economy,” (Ibid., 98). Also see, for example, Virilio’s The Futurism of the Instant: Stop-Eject, 12-13: “every time the speed of movement increases, monitoring and traceability increases in step. A bit further down the track and identity will give way to the traceability of the private citizen, of any distinct person.”

519 Houellebecq is a fascinating example of this. Cf. The Elementary Particles and The Possibility of an Island, both of which explore the human existential relation to the singularity of post-humanism. Cf. Baudrillard, Jean. The Intelligence of Evil: or the Lucidity Pact, trans. Chris Turner (New York: BERG, 2005), 89: “To what in the virtual universe can one feel an obligation?”
Nazism is always threatening to return with a vengeance (two recent films place these Nazis as the heart of human reality itself, signified in nature. In another, Nazis have been hiding on the dark side of the moon since WWII; in another, at the center of the earth). There is the imagining (which may be as much a reasoning) of the “barbarian” at the gates: the religious fundamentalist/extremist threat, taking the Bible “too literally” and not “symbolically,” or a sura of the Qur’an, or a story in the Bhagavad Gita. There is the threat met ideational immanence, materialism in which we lose our ability to discern that precious lesson, the knowledge of good and evil modernly understood: that undecidable difference between the metaphoric/symbolic and literal, the sensory and the suprasensory. For many, consequently, the greatest danger lies in the inability to discern the difference between reality and “reality.” Some that we have to stabilize, normalize, normativize that distinction so everyone might “get on the same page,” as it were, we have to hone our skills and master nature and ourselves in technology and science and rationality (singular or multiple) in order to establish the standard of “reality.” Perhaps subatomic investigations will settle the debate? Others even say that the only thing left to do is nothing, or to think the truth of being. Others insist that there is no way to know what we need to know and therefore we must begin to ask again . . .

As a result of our civilizational neurosis we must not only imagine every possible eventuality by which the nothing could take place, but we must also prepare for every

---

520 For one modern, yet religious plural and open perspective, we count Carl Jung. The Undiscovered Self: With Symbols and the Interpretation of Dreams, trans. R.F.C. Hull and Sonu Shamdasani (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), 22: “Is it not time that the Christian mythology, instead of being wiped out, was understood symbolically for once?”

254
possible eventuality of the nothing taking place.\textsuperscript{521} Nevertheless, whatever the response is, it is a response to being. Every response to being sets itself up. But does each response

\textsuperscript{521} One of the more recent, “non-philosophical” ways of saying this, which strikes with a certain unacknowledged Heideggerian influence, puts it this way. Eugene Thacker. \textit{In the Dust of This Planet: Horror of Philosophy Vol. 1} (UK: Zero Books, 2011), 8-9:

I would propose that horror be understood not as dealing with human fear in a human world (the world-for-us), but that horror be understood as being about the limits of the human as it confronts a world that is not just a World, and not just an Earth, but also a Planet (the world-without-us). . . . Horror is about the paradoxical thought of the unthinkable . . . is a non-philosophical attempt to think about the world-without-us philosophically.”

Like Thacker, many are speculating now about the non-human and attempting to think non-humanly. Thus in the end, Thacker poses a mysticism-without-mysticism. Historical mysticism is about the loss of division of self and world and self and God, but mysticism today would have to devolved upon the radical disjunction and indifference of self and world . . . after the death of God - would be about the impossibility of experience, it would be about that which in shadow withdraws from any possible experience, and yet still makes its presence felt, through the periodic upheavals of weather, land, and matter . . . a kind of mysticism that can only be expressed in the dust of this planet” (Ibid., 158).

These are, strangely enough, the conclusions that lead from an investigation into the \textit{imagination}, in the form of the horror genre of entertainment and culture, the eerie decadence of the mind in the face of what Lacan calls the indecomposable Real. This genre, situated in the context of what is sometimes referred to as “speculative realism,” joins a whole litany of works further summarized under the context of \textit{geophilosophy}, inspired by the work of Deleuze and Guattari, from \textit{What is Philosophy?} and \textit{A Thousand Plateaus} in which is illuminated with the same forces in terms of a thinking that replicates geo-physical processes in a way of fulfilling Zarathustra’s cry to “come back to the earth,” e.g., forces of stratification, sedimentation, de-/re-/territorializations, etc.

Not, however, as if there is somehow a fundamental agreement between these theorists and philosophers on the matter of the approaching nothing, and nor are their conclusion discernable from the most popular movie and mass entertainment narratives. Deleuze and Guattari, as well as more popularly and recently Zizek, all fall in line with this new and meaningful trend of pop-philosophizing (perhaps Sartre and Barthè’s were early pioneers), but Deleuze and Guattari offer their command: “\textit{RHIZOMATICS=POP ANALYSIS}, even if the people have other things to do besides read it . . .” (\textit{A Thousand Plateaus}, 26). For while one experiences planetarity as a requisite for consolidation of a non-human thought and being, another argues for a rethinking of the earth in terms of ecologism in an attempt to shirk all images of the earth as a “dead body and mute cradle that we set out to destroy with digging machines, massive energy weapons, and total ecological collapse” (Woodard, Ben, \textit{On an Ungrounded Earth: Towards a New Geophilosophy} (New York: punctum books, 2013), 6). These description comes about after Woodard’s refusal of Husserlian “ark-ization” and the “over-romanticized ground (\textit{Boden}), or of what Heidegger would call \textit{Offenheit}, or openness . . .” (Ibid.). No reference is made to the genealogical relationship that Woodard’s description of our attack upon earth is already elaborated in Heidegger’s Die Ge-stell (or in Marcel’s \textit{Man Against Mass Society} for that matter), the setting-upon, ordering and standing-reserve of all beings in the essence of technological (which is nothing technological).

Furthermore, many of these thinkers are struck by the same engagement with the nothing, just as another rising star in this form of theorizing argues that, “Everything is dead already,” in the cross-wired temporality of the solar apocalypse in four-and-a-half billion years (Brassier, Roy. \textit{Nihil Unbound: Enlightenment and Extinction} (New York: Palgrave Macmillian, 2007), 223). Brassier, employing Deleuze’s reference, argues that the extinction of space-time has already arrived, that the correlation has already been extinguished, “retroactively terminated . . . between the double pincers of a future that has \textit{always already been}, and a past that is \textit{perpetually yet to be}” (Ibid., 230). Again, the Deleuzian smacks hard here: “establish a logic of AND, overthrow ontology, do away with foundations, nullify endings and beginning”
thereby have to set itself up for a fall? Humans take a stand in their own way. They fall in their own ways. The question changes, then, to “Is there anything that does not take a fall which also takes a stand?” And also, does the question then not become one about falling well, were that possible? What kind of fall is it, for that matter, that could be titled the “discontentment of civilization,” nominated by Freud—the fall of the discontents? Will attempts to arise even at this question: we must cease discontentment, fill every need, every desire, wall up and forget about the world, open up to a universal community, etc. But willing would already be jumping ahead of itself, as is its nature.

Are there no answers to be given, or as Annie Dillard asks, are we merely hurdling our cries into blind darkness and indifference? We cannot decide. It is either this or that or some combination, addition or subtraction (calculation) of this’s and that’s. Or—it just does not matter. We are only rational animals after all, with a desire to survive, a will to it, and we must pursue that.

(A Thousand Plateaus, 28). Indeed, this is schizo-analysis of capitalism, and ontology in such a context is always meant as a scholastic adherence to the oneness or univocity of Being, in which Heidegger is preeminently implicated by the new thinkers of “speculative realism” and “non-philosophy.” Cf. Kolozova, Katerina. The Cut of the Real: Subjectivity in Poststructuralist Philosophy (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014). Kolozova summarizes the Laruellian project of non-philosophy as an answer to the post-Kantian so-called anti-realism or “correlationism”: “that thought can only ‘think itself,’ that the real is inaccessible to knowledge and human subjectivity, and that there is nothing but discursive constructs that fully determine thinking . . .” (2). Cf. Laruelle, Francois, Philosophies of Difference: a Critical Introduction to Non-Philosophy, trans. Rocco Gangle (London: Continuum, 2010).

For what I think is a far more impressive and seriously philosophical (non-de-humanized, or non-non-philosophical) approach, we have Jean Améry, who meditates upon his life as an “intellectual” in the “Real” of Auschwitz in At the Mind’s Limits: Contemplations by a Survivor of Auschwitz and its Realities, trans. Sidney Rosenfeld and Stella R. Rosenfeld (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1980) and Kolakowski’s metaphysical horror. Add to this the brutality of E.M. Cioran’s engagement with the beauty and Real of the saints, in Tears and Saints, trans. Ilanica Zarifopol-Johnston (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2004), 53: “For us moderns, the accident of this world is nothing more than a psychological error” (53). On this, also see Professor Frank Seeburger, God, Prayer, Suicide, and Philosophy: “But it is in our dreams that what truly is can speak to us. It is in our art that the truth of what is sets itself into work. It is in our imaginations that we really live” (16).

Within this context it is impossible to imagine someone like a philosopher say something like Heidegger did, and furthermore, *knowing full well* the wedge he would drive by saying what he did. At the very least, a philosopher to whom, saying what he did, many would respond with various questions, interpretations, degrees of outrage or intrigue—and he full aware of the possible responses, as he had himself considered them over the course of a great look at history’s many explanations and ways of asking questions. Still, Heidegger said it, in Europe, in the 60s (he added it to his first directive: we have to ask some *questions* that come from and lead to a *step back*, i.e., questioning is the piety of thinking): “Only a god can save.”

Only a god can save us. The only possibility available to us is that by thinking and poetizing we prepare a readiness for the appearance of a god, or for the absence of a god in our decline, insofar as in view of the absent god we are in a state of decline.523

Perhaps the real question on everyone’s mind, for those who have considered the situation, if they are led to, is, “Was Heidegger not talking about himself as much as all others?

With Heidegger, with Nietzsche—is it not time to think about *humiliation* again, in a way that keeps to the lines we have drawn out in investigating the falling of metaphysics? In the course of this work, we have not only undergone an investigation of Heidegger and falling, we have been inquiring into a way of asking: “Is falling not the only possibility of humiliation? Do these two not belong together in a unique way?” That is, *without falling, could we become humble*, i.e., brought for once to the place where we already are, as mortals, upon the earth, before the gods? The gods remain the

---

523 Heidegger, Martin. “Only a God can Save Us’: The *Spiegel* Interview (1966)."
question, however. But it is the question raised before every humiliation, every falling resulting in the *upsurge of willing, of insistence*, that which brings us *back to where we already are*. This is Heidegger’s step back, and what remains unthought is how the falling plays into this step back, and therefore the elucidation of the relationship to humiliation. Humiliation is not only the *echéc* of Améry, the absolute *ruination* of a life that sometimes culminates in suicide (as it did for Améry himself, thirty years after “surviving” Auschwitz); it is as much the response to the falling, *to have found oneself starting all over again, like a child*, perhaps, but with a crisp and longer memory, and a will to be saved from oneself. Falling, humiliation, the return to the ground—e.g., Zarathustra’s call to return to the earth. This ground is the not being as a ground, but closer to the *aletheia* of being, and what lies still and forever, necessarily, by choice, or appropriately, in concealment.

Heidegger criticizes Nietzsche’s “revelation of all values” to the extent that it wished “to turn metaphysics on its head.” There was a deeper conflict and misunderstanding in this terrible mixing of metaphors. As we have seen, reacting is the same kind of falling, stuck in a dialectic as Nietzsche’s “priestly morality,” which is forced in its weakness to define what it is *not* before being able to define itself and

---

524 Heidegger, Martin. “Nietzsche’s Word: ‘God is Dead’,“ from *Off the Beaten Track*, 173: “Nietzsche takes this reversal as the overcoming of metaphysics. However, every reversal of this kind will only be a self-blinding entanglement in what is the same though become unrecognizable.” Also cf. Ibid., 162-3: “God is dead” means: the supersensory world has no effective power. It does not bestow life. Metaphysics, which for Nietzsche is Western philosophy understood as Platonism, is at an end. Nietzsche understands his own philosophy as the countermovement against metaphysics, i.e., for him, against Platonism. As a mere countermovement, however, it necessarily remains trapped, like everything anti-, in the essence of what it is challenging. Since all it does is turn metaphysics upside down, Nietzsche’s countermovement against metaphysics remains embroiled in it and has no way out; in fact it is embroiled in it to such a degree that it is sealed off from its essence and, as metaphysics, is unable ever to think its own essence. This is the reason that, for and through metaphysics, there remains hidden what actually happens in and as metaphysics itself.”
choose its own good, a No preceding a Yes.\textsuperscript{525} Any revaluation requires a re-evaluation, yes, but that does not necessitate a dialectical reversal of the terms (from the privilege of knowing over doing to doing over knowing, from spirit over body, to body over spirit…) or the complete abnegation of all previous values.

\textbf{6.5 Conclusion}

Only within the context of thinking through falling in its nature, linked in its essence with \textit{taking a stand} and \textit{humiliation}, the return to the earth whence we spring (essence as \textit{ursprüng}), can Heidegger’s turn to the gods make sense. But we must take this further. Falling and its essence are related, as we have already stated, to the “good things.” In this way we can make sense of the necessity of seeing the relationship of \textit{thinking as thanking}. In terms of other thinkers, Jean-Luc Nancy takes his cues on the spontaneous response to the crumbling of all metaphysical exteriority in the purely incommensurable as \textit{adoration}!\textsuperscript{526} We can add to this a number of others, particularly Simone Weil’s singular work, \textit{Gravity and Grace}: “Two forces rule the universe: light and gravity.”\textsuperscript{527}

\textit{Thinking is thanking.}

What is thought-provoking, so understood, need in no way be what causes us worry or even perturbs us. Joyful things, too, and beautiful and mysterious and gracious things give us food for thought. These things may even be more thought-provoking than all the rest which we

\textsuperscript{525} Nietzsche, Friedrich, \textit{Beyond Good and Evil}, from \textit{Basic Writings}, 210.


otherwise, and usually without much thought, call “thought-provoking.” These things will give us food for thought, if only we do not reject the gift by regarding everything that is joyful, beautiful, and gracious as the kind of thing which should be left to feeling and experience, and kept out of the winds of thought. Only after we have let ourselves become involved with the mysterious and gracious things can we take thought also of how we should regard the malice of evil.  

Heidegger was charged, at least on one hand, with the long and laborious translation of a Word that he had heard spoken to him. This word was “being”: “Man is the being who is in that he points toward ‘Being,’ and who can be himself only as he always and everywhere refers himself to what is.” At least in 1966, he locates [Logos] as co-belonging to being, that is, “the contraries correspond to one another, in that they let one another reciprocally come forth…” and “All thinking is ‘for the sake of being,’…” He calls it thinking in the Four Seminars, but we know from his other work that Logos is, of course, also Speaking, telling, or Saying [Sage]. We must risk saying it ourselves, so that what can and wishes to speak (being, perhaps, or even some God) will, for those with ears to hear. Like many great thinkers and others before him, Heidegger heard this Word spoken from Being, just as every human being (and who knows who or what else?) may and indeed does; he heard the Speaking of being, the Word of being. He heard this Word spoken in many differing ways and places – though nowhere more than from his beloved and destinal Greece – but always found that the Same—being—was Saying its Word in them all. Being was ξυνον παντων, “that wherein everything

---

528 Heidegger, Martin, What is Called Thinking?, 31.
529 Ibid., 149.
530 Heidegger, Martin, Four Seminars, 5; 6.
He was taken by his hearing, and never gave up trying to respond to what he long perceived to be *the call*. The Call issues forth in the Speaking, inviting a response; it is the Call of being beckoning man to his abode; that abode is thought in the “house of being,” in language. This corresponding to the call, the summons, *is thinking* and *thanking* (also poetizing, and experienced possibly in so many other arenas, for those thus turned). This summons issued in the call, for some, for the “few and the rare” and “the ones to come,” for the human being that takes up its destiny, Dasein, being—this leads to a turn around, a turning, a leap.

-----

531 Ibid., 5.
532 Ibid., 165: “…we must submit, deliver ourselves specifically to the calling that calls on us to think after the manner of the [logos]. As long as we ourselves do not set out from where we are, that is, as long as we do not open ourselves to the call and, with this question, get underway toward the call—just so long we shall remain blind to the mission and destiny of our nature.”
533 Heidegger, Martin, *Contributions*, §248, p. 277: “But thinking is only one way in which the few venture the leap into be-ing.”
534 Heidegger, Martin, “Letter on ‘Humanism’,” from *Pathmarks*, 239: To accomplish means to unfold something into the fullness of its essence, to lead it forth into this fullness—*producer*. Therefore only what already is can really be accomplished. But what “is” above all is being. Thinking accomplishes the relation of being to the essence of the human being. It does not make or cause the relation. Thinking brings this relation to being solely as something handed over to thought itself from being. Such offering consists in the fact that in thinking being comes to language. Language is the house of being. In its home human beings dwell. Those who think and those who create with words are the guardians of this home.
536 Ibid., 277: “—those strangers of like mind who are equally decided for the gifting and refusing that has been allotted to them. Mace bearers of the truth of be-ing . . . The stillest witness to the stillest stillness, in which an imperceptible tug turns the truth back, out of the confusion of all calculated correctness into what is ownmost: keeping sheltered what is most sheltered, the enquivering of the passing of the decision of gods, the essential swaying of be-ing . . . the lingering and long-hearing founders of this essential sway of truth. Those who withstand the thrust of be-ing . . . These ones to come need to be prepared for. Inceptual thinking serves this preparation as silent reticence of enowning. But thinking is only one way in which the few venture the leap into be-ing.”
537 Cf. “The question of being is *the* leap into be-ing which man as seeker of be-ing enacts, insofar as he is one who creates in *thinking*” (Ibid., §4., p. 9); Ibid., §122, p. 169: “The leap is the enactment of projecting-
Thinking, obedient to the voice of being, seeks from being the word through which the truth of being comes to language. Only when the language of historical human beings springs from the word does it ring true. Yet if it does ring true, then it is beckoned by the testimony granted it from the silent voice of hidden sources. The thinking of being protects the word, and in such protectiveness fulfills its vocation. It is a care for our use of language. The saying of the thinker comes from a long-protected speechlessness and from the careful clarifying of the realm thus clear...The thinker says being. The poet names the holy. And yet the manner in which – thought from out of the essence of being – poetizing, thanking, and thinking are directed toward one another and are at the same time different, must be left open here. Presumably thanking and poetizing each in their own way spring from originary thinking, which they need, yet without themselves being able to be a thinking.538

Thinking is the response to the Call of being, that which is co-belonging to it, that in which everything agrees, or is en-owned \([\text{Ereignet}]\) over to it in a way Heidegger was always trying to illuminate. As thinker, Heidegger had always to speak the Same, too, to think it.539 The Sacrifice is the “human essence expending itself – in a way removed from all compulsion, because it arises from the abyss of freedom – for the preservation of the truth of being for beings.”540 In the Sacrifice occurs \([\text{ereignet sich}]\) the “concealed open the truth of be-ing in the sens of shifting into the open, such that the thrower of the projecting-open experiences itself as thrown—i.e., as en-owned by be-ing.”

538 Heidegger, Martin, “Postscript to “What is Metaphysics?” from Pathmarks, 237.

539 Heidegger, Martin, What is Called Thinking?, 50:
Every thinker thinks one only thought. The researcher needs constantly new discoveries and inspirations, else science will bog down and fall into error. The thinker needs one thought only. And for the thinker the difficulty is to hold fast to this one only thought as the one and only thing that he must think; to think this One as the Same; and to tell of the Same in the fitting manner. But we speak of the Same in the manner that befits it only if we always say the same about it, in such a way that we ourselves are claimed by the Self-Same. The limitlessness of the Same is the sharpest limit set to thinking.”

540 Heidegger, Martin, “Postscript to “What is Metaphysics?” from Pathmarks, 236.
thanks that alone pays homage to the grace that being has bestowed upon the human essence in thinking.”

This is surprising: to thank being for thinking? Would we not rather thank being for being, after all, if at all? Isn’t that more logical? Furthermore, don’t we only thank beings, and how do we thank being if it “is” not a being? Have we ever even considered it, the question of thinking’s provenance in being? It’s an old question; we don’t recollect it well. What does thinking have to do with being, if such a statement has any meaning at all? It is perhaps our common view and common experience of “thinking” that leaves us forgetful to thank being for it. Thinking is, after all, from and of being. Accordingly, Parmenides wrote that the same thing, Being, that can be thought is that which enables thinking.

So why not thank being for thinking? We find it hard to think this today; for us, thinking at best is rather seen in a few other ways, particularly not in ways that might tempt us to thank for it. Thinking is conceived by many as a purely negative thing. Today it is common to hear in a moment of exasperation, when a person has been endlessly enumerating a list of responsibilities and troubles and anxieties, the person will throw up one’s hand, finally – perhaps at nothing, perhaps at God, perhaps a pitiful interlocutor called “friend” – and exclaim: “Maybe I’m just thinking too much!”

Furthermore, why is it that the quickest way to get a busy interlocutor to stop speaking

541 Ibid.

542 Heidegger, Martin, “Letter on ‘Humanism’,” from Pathmarks, 255 “At the same time ‘it gives’ is used preliminarily to avoid the locution ‘being is’; for ‘is’ is commonly said of some thing that is. We call such a thing a being. But being ‘is’ precisely not ‘a being’. . . Perhaps ‘is’ can be said only of being in an appropriate way, so that no individual being ever properly ‘is.’”

to say, “You’re thinking too much.” Let us not, however, conflate “thinking” with *worrying*, which would be as far from *thanking* as anything.

In the same way, it is admitted by the masses by now, from children and teenagers to the oldest among us, that we find it difficult, painful, lonely, to think. Many openly confess to the absolute inability, incapacity to “be left alone with my thoughts.” If this is our definition of “thinking,” or at least our most reported immediate connotation of this word, then it would not be surprising at all that our first inclination would be surprise when we found someone admonishing us all together to be thankful for being for thinking. We would rather curse our heads and be done with it . . .

Another metaphysical connotation arises for “thinking,” one that may only for a few be a meaning for the word and experience that could possibly be associated with gratitude, and then with a difficult remove. These are those who prize thinking as rationality (irrationality being its contrary), mathematics, objective discovery, and/or scientific and technical industry. To whom or what should we be grateful for this rational necessity that *compels* our sense of honesty and decency, and our sense of contradiction (logic) and symmetry, to admit its correctness? Does this have any absolute value, after all, other than an ideal one? Is it supremely consequential that a being came upon numbers and counting, especially if, say, that being were to cease to exist as a whole? Perhaps we don’t in this case *feel free to thank*. But perhaps we find an absolute value, after all, and can admit that rationality, mathematics, and our gazing eye of observation, are divine gifts.

Perhaps others would still find it difficult to be grateful that our mind and life are determined by a form of thinking, a cold, surviving, killer’s rationality that has
allowed our species to outwit every other creature that could compete for resources, such that we survive through our (now conscious and consciously articulated—the real “blessing” of thinking) exploitation of evolutionary laws which only promote the “strongest” to continued survival. Perhaps there are those who could muster gratitude for this situation, if pressed, but to whom or to what would they show their gratitude? Nature? Being?

_Do we feel free to thank?_ Perhaps all of us, in the end, could find a way to muster some _thanks for thinking_, but _to being_? How do we even begin to understand this claim? How, again, to give thanks to something which “is” precisely _not_ a being? After all, have we not rather _wrested thinking from being_, devised it as a mechanism, a procedure, or at most, been genetically granted it by an unusually astute forebears; is thinking not won as a calculative evolutionary prize, or taught to us by a teacher? Is thinking a gift, in the end?

If thinking is a response to the call of being, however, a giving ear and word to the Word we hear calling and embracing us in being as our abode; if we are given language as a gift to return to the giver, _es gibt_, “there is/it gives”;}^{545} if thinking is the response to the gift of being—then yes, thinking is a gift of being, and thinking _is_ to celebrate its intimacy and betrothing, its _Ereignis_, to its origin and essence in being.

This is the call of being. For Heidegger, as for the Greeks, Aletheia is the provenance, 

---

544 Cf. Heidegger, Martin, “Plato’s Doctrine of Truth,” from _Pathmarks_, 171, “Truth [note b, 1942: In the [Greek] sense of that which is true.] originally means what has been wrested from hiddenness”).

545 Heidegger, Martin, _On Time and Being_, 6:
To think Being explicitly requires us to relinquish Being as the ground of beings in favor of the giving which prevails conceals in unconcealment, that is, in favor of the It gives. As the gift of this It gives, Being belongs to giving. As a gift, Being is not expelled from giving…As allowing-to-presence, it belongs to unconcealing; as the gift of unconcealing it is retained in the giving. Being _is not_. There is, It gives Being as the unconcealing; as the gift of the unconcealing it is retained in the giving. Being _is not_. There is, It gives Being as the unconcealing of presencing.
the region and node of being whereby being and thinking greet one another, it is the shared *point d’capiton* – to borrow from Lacan – of the essence of man and the essence of the truth being. This knitting together of being and human essence lends itself to the next stage of my investigation, as Lacan’s theory of the subject will always be in relation to the *aletheia* of being that the subject is revealing, and through which the subject is revealed in his relation to being.

---

546 Heidegger, Martin, *Contributions*, §44, p. 66: “The truth of be-ing is the be-ing of truth...” His reversal is only a fleeting and external sign of the turning that sways in be-ing itself and throws light on what might be meant here with decision.” For an essential note related to this “decision,” see also Ibid., §44, p. 63: “All of these decisions, which seem to be many and varied, are gathered into one thing only: whether be-ing definitively withdraws, or whether this withdrawal as refusal becomes the first truth and the other beginning of history.”
Chapter 7: The Lacanian Fall: Psychoanalysis as Metaphysical Diagnosis

The gods belong to the field of the real
- Lacan

7.1 Introduction

From its beginning psychoanalysis filled a paradoxical space: it is at once a scientific attempt to evince and analyze a phenomenon—the unconscious—that is by definition unknowable, invisible, unrepresentable, hidden and secret. The matter of the unconscious is by definition precluded from straightforward conscious examination; it only communicates indirectly, as it were, for it speaks like a language. The unconscious is the hidden yet determinative landscape of each individual psyche; at the same time it is somehow tied into a larger-scale process, a civilizational or “collective unconscious,” the analysis of which Freud in his later work called metapsychology.

These two general characterizations of psychoanalysis— the unconscious and the civilizational— already land us squarely within the theme of my preceding investigation of falling. The nature of the unconscious and its civilizational effects make it perfect as an analysis of being, as Lacan will show us. First, to the extent that the unconscious is something that is eminently functioning within every human life but does not present itself as a directly observable empirical phenomenon, this draws us into the
philosophical problematic of truth as aletheia, which is the truth of that which does not reveal itself (i.e., in the case of psychoanalysis, the unconscious; in the case of the divine, the gods or the Godhead) as much as it is the truth which nevertheless in its peculiar ways reveals itself before the presencing of human perception. Psychoanalysis—construed particularly along Freudian and Lacanian dimensions—paradoxically investigates a subject matter that is irrevocably hidden, veiled, invisible, unattainable, at the same time this hidden matter is intransigently constitutive of each human life. Second, in its metapsychological dimensions, the psyche-organization of individuals are transposed upon the very structure of civilization, the latter being the collective historical mechanism that effects a compromise, a constructive yet costly tension between the individual psyche and its place in the greater society. After all, civilization is the construction of human beings, and the psychic functioning of those human beings is the singular subject matter elucidated by psychoanalysis.

This paradox of psychoanalysis—this paradox that psychoanalysis is—places it squarely within the dimensions of this investigation, and adds profoundly to its exposition. The paradox that psychoanalysis offers is the very paradox of metaphysics itself as seen thus far: the dilemma of the privilege of presence, the precluding of the invisible and the hither side of the alethic round. Psychoanalysis investigates the nature of this hidden matter at the same time that it investigates the dire predicament that its exclusion from thinking, from life, represents qua the “return of the repressed.” In the course of the remaining analysis, I demonstrate the correspondence of the psychoanalytic diagnosis of human subjectivity with the Heideggerian critique of
Western metaphysical falling. The central lynchpin in this correspondence is illuminated by the shared phenomenology of falling.

7.2 Freud and the Original Fall in Psychoanalysis

Freud intimated on a number of occasions that the “fall” is a running generating motor of the condition of civilization itself, but only to the extent that it is also the condition of human subjectivity. Western humanity is conditioned by its civilization and co-conditioning of it, and therefore is conditioned under the rubric of our analysis hitherto as falling.

Historians and thinkers document a number of shifts in human behavior and social organization that create the conditions for the possibility of civilization, e.g., agriculture and its concomitant sedentism, the establishment of firm symbolic social hierarchies, etc. Freud, for his part, posits along with these conditions a mighty repression of drives and ego narcissism. He concludes, as in Civilization and its Discontents, that civilization is posited upon a construction, a hypocrisy in fact, and civilization would

be forced to deal with profound changes if people began to live in a psychologically truthful way. So there are disproportionately more individuals hypocritically simulating civilization than there are truly civilized people . . .

In the beginning of this essay, Freud writes about the proper dis-illusionment with man that Europe has undergone in the first Great War, particularly in the way that humans could treat their fellow humans.

But for the purposes of these last chapters, Freud talks in this context specifically about falling. The engine of civilization is in fact this “susceptibility to civilization,” which is a “grounding hypocrisy”; furthermore, the stronger impulses, drives (the worst), have to be repressed. Freud here is speaking about falling, but as one must always do in considering the phenomenological structure of falling, Freud is also specifically addressing the kind of stand that reciprocally conditions the nature of the fall. Right along the phenomenological lines I have delineated, for Freud, too, the fall was not so far—only because the rise was not so high. That is, it was the pretense of civilization, enacted, bolstered, supported, funded, etc., by a de facto uncivilized people. The security and pretense to civilization were illusions; therefore, for Freud, at the heart of the fundamental structure of civilization functions an illusion from which we must be delivered.

When we speak of the “little difference” that Eve suffered in her own falling, the difference of humiliation, we are speaking of the same psychical structure Freud introduces here, and what he says can be applied to civilization is easily compared to the mytho-poetry of the fall narrative of Genesis. The Woman and Man fell, but the fall was not so far because the pair had not risen as far as they had thought. Their stand, much like civilization’s, was a stand-taking in illusion, delusion; and their fall was an ever-so-slight, yet an ever-so-essential, fall. In other words, the Woman and Man’s fall was the fall of humiliation. The same structure is evinced in Freud’s theory of civilization.

---

548 Freud, Sigmund. “Timely Reflections on War and Death,” from On Murder, Mourning and Melancholia, 179:

We may draw one conclusion from our reflections so far: that our injury and painful disillusion at the uncivilized behavior of our fellow citizens of the world in this war were unjustified. They were based upon an illusion to which we had yielded. Those citizens, in fact, have not fallen as far as we feared, because they had not risen nearly so far as we imagined.
Accordingly for psychoanalysis, an *illusion can do nothing but fall*. For the psychoanalytic subject, an illusion is a constitutive virtuality by which the subject knits together his or her world, memory of his/her own experience, and the (event of) appropriation of those experiences into the present reality. However, the consistency of this subjective knitting is disrupted by a symptom, first evinced in the neurotic, particularly the one who visits the analyst. One’s present subjective constitution is grounded upon a fundamental repression of drives impulses, or rather, the trauma instituted by the failure of drive fulfillment. As Freud and Lacan both say, this repression is the impossible appropriation of a traumatic event. For Lacan, this is so even of childbirth and the prematurity of childbirth. Thus we find trauma qua repression at the existential level, at the familial level—represented in the Oedipal complex—but also, according to Freud and Lacan, at the level of Western civilization, in metaphysics.

Psychoanalysis thereby reveals the subjective and civilizational condition of what I have already called, following Heidegger, the fall of metaphysics. The structure of psychoanalysis follows the same path that my investigation has ventured, the fall of metaphysics as the form of thinking and being of Western humanity, yet with an altogether different and essential nuance delivered from its specialization with the unconscious. My unique entry into this relation attempts to draw out Lacan’s emphasis on the truth of being of/for the subject and how those terms are situated within a Heideggerian frame. I will follow closely upon the structures I have illuminated so far in Heidegger’s thinking: the question of being, *aletheia*, ek-sistence and freedom, and falling.
Within this context, Lacan creatively opens up Heidegger’s thinking into unexpected possibilities, namely as providing a uniquely non-metaphysical understanding of subjectivity. Lacan furthers the overcoming of metaphysics by understanding the aletheia of the subject as essentially non-metaphysical while at the same time he reveals the subjectivity that is strictly metaphysically construed. In his theory of subjectivity, Lacan situates the drama of the human psyche (the experience of psychoanalysis) within its own inestimable space, and elaborates how that psyche is conditioned only by its own self-delimitation in its response to Truth. Lacan describes an essentially Heideggerian subjectivity in his barred subject, the subject of the fall.

7.3 The Broader Heideggerian Context of Lacan’s Theory

Despite Lacan’s consistent reservations with philosophy, a close analysis of the structure of his theory reveals remarkable correspondence with Heideggerian thinking. On the whole, Lacan is passionate in separating his work from philosophy...
at large. When, for example, Lacan was interviewed in 1974 for a publication recently translated under the title, *The Triumph of Religion*, the interviewer made the unfortunate mistake of starting off a question with, “In your philosophy…” Lacan sharply cuts the interviewer off: “I am not a philosopher, not in the least.” Lacan rejects that his work is “ontological,” and “not even remotely Kantian.” Lacan goes further by saying, “I am not developing any sort of philosophy—I even mistrust philosophizing like the plague.” Yet, as Matteo Bonazzi notes, Lacan betrays an enduring concern with metaphysics and being. Indeed, it is difficult to square Lacan’s anti-philosophical difference, in which Kurki argues that a node of incommensurability lies between the two thinkers based on their differing qualifications of science. On the other hand, while Badiou insists that any “comparison” of Lacan and Heidegger would be “meaningless”—remaining ever consistent with his dismissal of Heidegger’s “poetizing of being” first glimpsed in *Manifesto of Philosophy*—Badiou does go on and marks a few of the important contributions Heidegger makes to Lacan theorizing, but only within the limited sphere of the former’s instruction on the return to the pre-Socratics, namely, the importance of the concepts of truth and forgetting, of Logos, and of being-toward-death. (Cf., Alain Badiou. “Lacan and the Pre-Socratics,” from *Lacan: the Silent Partners*, ed. Slavoj Žižek [London: Verso, 2006], 7-14). Elsewhere, Badiou once again dismisses the relation as a fascination, and later as a personal fixation of Lacan’s to be “recognized” by Heidegger. Here, too, Badiou emphasizes that the irremediable gap between the two thinkers is Lacan’s embracing of science and “formal objectivity,” and Heidegger’s rejection of such in favor of a “phenomenological and ontological orientation, asserting that ‘science does not think’” (Cf. Alain Badiou and Élisabeth Roudinesco, *Jacques Lacan Past and Present: a Dialogue*, trans. Jason E. Smith [New York: Columbia University Press, 2014], 11).


Perhaps the best review thus far is François Balmès’ work, *Ce que Lacan dit de l’être: 1953-1960*. Regardless of how the nature of the relationship has been approached between Heidegger and Lacan, there is no evidence whatsoever that the main features through which that investigation has proceeded have been those through which I am going to peer.

---


551 Ibid., 84.

disavowals with a number of his contradictory assertions, such as, dramatically, “The *Trieb* can in no way be limited to a psychological notion. It is an absolutely fundamental ontological notion.”553

Before moving forward, it would be helpful to demarcate two levels or registers of agreement between the thought of Heidegger and Lacan. The first is a categorical level. From this level – one of Lacan’s self-attestation, no less – we can easily situate Lacan’s thought within a Heideggerian context. Over the course of the next two chapters, I will construct the second level from what qualifies as the deeper resonance between Lacan’s and Heidegger’s thinking from the indications given by the first register.

Lacan reveals this first register of consonance in his continual use of unmistakable, categorical philosophical terms, particularly as they develop out of a Heideggerian context. Specifically, we see this consonance in terms of the phenomenological and the ontological. Above all, as we have seen, Lacan attests to the “absolutely fundamental ontological” value of psychoanalytic concepts, such as the above reference to drives. Elsewhere, Lacan announces that he is working toward a “phenomenology of madness.”554

It remains unclear how Lacan can justify his disavowals with his otherwise blatantly philosophical musings. In part, this can be understand simply by accepting Lacan’s reservations: just as he is not philosophical, and there is nothing philosophical about his work, so he is most certainly not philosophically systematic, rigorous, or even

---


consistent in his reflections. Nevertheless, for our purposes we are freed from a systematic or rigorous reconciliation of this predicament, particularly with regard to Lacan’s relation to Heidegger, because where the greatest intersections between Heidegger and Lacan lie, of his own estimation Heidegger himself is no longer philosophizing but rather thinking. Heidegger’s delimitations in no way demand that Lacan philosophize or otherwise conflate or bridge the “domains of inquiry” of psychoanalysis and philosophy. 555 In other words, Lacan and Heidegger meet outside—or along the overcoming—of metaphysics.

The categorical registers of agreement that I have examined so far could also be determined historically as Lacan’s relation to the “early Heidegger,” which actually squares more perfectly with the tenor of early French reception of Heidegger from the 1940s through the mid-1960s. Simply put, part of the demarcation between early and late (though mid- must also be in the chronology somewhere!) Heidegger is that he begins dropping his reliance upon traditional philosophical nomenclature in the midst of his Kehre, and this as the result of his conviction that philosophy’s (self-)understanding is foreclosed by its uncritical embeddedness within metaphysics, i.e., what I have argued is best named as falling. The falling of metaphysics is addressed first by the Destruction of its falling vocabulary and self-understanding. Thus the first register is essential qua its categorical nature in situating Lacanian theory safely and comfortably within the same neighborhood—and indeed upon the same street!—as Heideggerian thinking.

555 Cf. “It is enough if we dwell on what lies close and mediate on what is closest; upon that which concerns us, each one of us, here and now; here, on this patch of home ground; now, in the present hour of history” (“Memorial Address,” Discourse on Thinking, 47.) Nothing, for that matter, is closer to us than our ego attachments that form us as subjects, the invisible thread of which Lacan is always pulling at, as it leaves the trace of itself outside the invisible and unsoundable unconscious.
Lacan’s rather extensive, complex, and prolonged emphasis on key terms such as phenomenology, ontology, being, aletheia, Logos, etc., accomplishes just that.

Moreover, Lacan’s reluctance to philosophize and suspicion of philosophizing is precisely the point at which we can understand a Kehre (along with its non-metaphysical implications) in Lacan’s thought as well. This is precisely the link between Lacan and Heidegger’s turnings, and what introduces us to the deeper conversation that Lacan is having with Heidegger. For, in spite of scholarly opinion insisting upon the derivative nature of Lacan’s Heideggerian appropriation, in the deeper register of agreement with Heideggerian thinking Lacan reveals himself to be an adept reader of Heidegger and to have perfectly pivoted upon the crux of Heidegger’s essential question of overcoming metaphysics. But explicating that appropriation is beyond the scope of this project.

7.4 Lacan’s Phenomenological Analysis

Lacan’s “experience” is phenomenological in that, à la Husserlian and Heideggerian definitions, it is his experience bracketed within the psychoanalytic context (treatment), and more specifically, the experience of the analyst with the revelations of the subject. In other words, the phenomenological reduction is enacted in that the analytic subject matter is first and foremost given within the context of analytic treatment. This is “our experience” which Lacan speaks of most often in the teaching seminars, an experiencing given to the analyst and analysand, provided by the shared analytic experience.

However, what phenomenologically presents itself within this experience is unique and, if anything, as Lacan recognized, because of the nature of its subject matter,
psychoanalysis is always a *science of an absence*. The psychoanalyst is, in her experience, always facing an uncanny situation: the movements of the subject within the context of the world and in analysis, always only reveals a subject constituted and constituting itself around a fundamental *absence*, which at one point Lacan will call the “thick absence called desire.”556 “It is here that the presence of the psycho-analyst as witness of this loss is irreducible.”557 We cannot quickly and naively pass over the words from this chapter, “Presence of the Analyst,” which juxtaposes the *presence* of another for the sake of *bearing witness* to what is *lost* in the other, in and for—and *as*—the subject. The unconscious presents itself as the presence of that which is lost, that which is now absent.

### 7.5 Lacanian Subjectivity

In formulating his expansive investigation *and* response to this constitutional lack that the unconscious is (the being of the unconscious), Lacan’s most sustained contribution not only to psychoanalysis but to the philosophical investigation of our subjective ontology, as it is with Heidegger, is to have concentrated upon the problem of language, but more specifically even, upon speech, i.e., the subject’s speech.

...one should see in the unconscious the effects of speech on the subject—in so far as these effects are so radically primary that they are properly what determine the status of the subject as subject. . . . The unconscious is the sum of the effects of speech on a subject, at the level at which the subject constitutes himself out of the effects of the signifier. 558


The unconscious is the invisible landscape which continually presents itself in the medium of the subject’s speech.\(^{559}\) Strictly speaking, the unconscious is the layer of psychic reality that will never present itself consciously.\(^{560}\) For Lacan, the most elementary observations of psychoanalytic experience reveal that the nature of the unconscious is such that it cannot be consciously realized.\(^{561}\)

Subjectivity qua the unconscious is never in any way metaphysically present within Lacanian theoretics. Its presence is constituted by absence, and Lacan delineates this topography of the ego as subjectivity, that is, in the subject’s complex constitution in and reaction to the imaginary, the symbolic and the real.

Lacan’s contributions are ubiquitous, but he insists that what may seem like his own singular innovations are rather a firm fidelity to the revelations of Freud’s original discovery of the unconscious and its dimension. Lacan is convinced that Freud’s discovery is equivalent to a Copernican revolution, just as Freud had claimed, “that what was at stake was once again the place man assigns himself at the center of the universe.”\(^{562}\) Lacan redubs the field encompassed in the uncharted territory and opened up by psychoanalysis as the “Freudian universe,” which implicates not only a decentered but also a *dethroned* self-conception of the human being.

\(^{559}\) Cf. the distinction between speech and discourse. For Lacan, Discourse is often the monolithic or frozen language deriving from the place of the Thing, or the frozen semblable, the statue of the imago upon which the subject thrusts its primordial desire—frustrations and alienations of its desire. (For a discussion on discourses of the real, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*, 129-133). Also, speech and discourse are separated by the relation of the subject to truth—be it as “truth speech” in the desire for recognition of one’s desire, or the “knowledge of the real [*réel*]” in them, while the latter [*true discourse*] is constituted by knowledge of reality, insofar as the subject targets reality in objects” (“Variations on Standard Treatment,” from *Écrits*, 291).


Lacan is therefore associating two world-historical transformations in the self-understanding of human beings. However, the nature of this “understanding” from the beginning is challenged by the central discovery of this revolution. Like the Copernican, which nevertheless on the surface proved extraordinarily useful, the Freudian revolution involves a fundamental de-centering of the human at its most fundamental level. Although we have been displaced from our central position from a cosmological vantage point, from the psychic register we nevertheless remain the center of the universe. Yet this centrality, still a very real thing for myself and others, is founded upon nothing, or rather, something which is not there.

In other words, that which is supposed to secure myself, our-selves, into the real (Lacan’s réel, or Real) ends up being the least sure of all in securing such a relation.663 In the Heideggerian vernacular as well as the Lacanian, we have thought that we could place our-selves—at least—within the secure place of presence or within, as Derrida calls it, auto-presence. But the one thing which registers most clearly within analytic experience is that the subject is constituted not by a presence, whether substantial or metaphysical, but by what, or whom, is not there/here. This is what we can call the subjective relation of/in truth, truth as we have confirmed as aletheia. Lacan experiences this truth as the truth of the subject, a subjective constitution that we can only spy because we can understand truth as the revelation of what is not there. Lacan confirms falling in that that which does not, will not, cannot presence itself will be met with the self-

---

663 Lacan, Jacques. “Introduction to the Names-Of-The-Father,” from On the Names-Of-The-Father, trans. Bruce Fink (Malden: Polity Press, 2013), 59: “We have, of course, long since left behind every conception that would make the subject into a pure function of intelligences correlated with the intelligible [world].”
posing human stance, or not letting beings be. Lacan articulates the (inter)subjective nature of this revelation. We will come to see that the subject is this revelation.

So what is the nature of this subjectivity, which is constituted by an absence? First, the Heideggerian tenor of this absence must be emphasize over against alternatives, and thereby we begin to see in relief the nature of the subject constituted by absence. For example, the most immediate philosophical alternative that presents itself is that, if the subject is constituted by an absence, then such an absence must be qualified as nothingness. This Sartrean interpretation, however, is still lodged within the metaphysics that the Lacanian and Heideggerian projects challenge, to which Lacan clearly attests when he characterizes the new trend that attempts to ally psychoanalysis to “the existential negativity whose reality is so rigorously proclaimed by the contemporary philosophy of being and nothingness [i.e., Sartre].” While we will come to see more of the nothingness Lacan otherwise has mind in a short while, Lacan is working here to demarcate yet again his experience from any philosophical (i.e., metaphysical) rendering, in particular to disavow association with the contemporary French philosophical scene dominated by Sartrean existential ontology. With truly Heideggerian undertones, Lacan goes on to emphasize the remaining metaphysical presuppositions at work within such philosophizing.

Lacan here reveals himself to be pulling on the same thread as Heidegger, but from within the psychoanalytic framework. Lacan actually clarifies quite nicely from his

---

565 Ibid., 80:

Unfortunately, this philosophy grasps that negativity only within the limits of a self-sufficiency of consciousness, which, being on of its premises, ties the illusion of autonomy in which it puts its faith to the ego’s constitutive misrecognitions.
own vantage point the Heideggerian problem with philosophy and any theory of the subject. The reification of the subject involves the misplaced, presumptuous emphasis on 1) its substantive quality, 2) its power of self-will, and 3) its metaphysically isolated and reductive position. As we have seen, Heidegger’s problem with psychoanalysis was its uncritical metaphysical presumption of the Subject which the discipline inherited from the long trajectory of Western metaphysics (falling). Yet Heidegger is suspicious of psychoanalysis only inasmuch as he destructs the broader context within which the discipline arose, a context which betrays an a priori stance of metaphysics conditioned by falling. This falling is represented contemporarily in the Existentialist philosophy that reifies not simply the self-consciousness of the subject alone, but the “illusion of autonomy” that is presupposed within the self-positing of this self-consciousness, which culminates in the Nietzschean will to power, i.e., in the ultimate humiliation of this project of misrecognition, in presuming to order, to control, to possess, to attack, to use beings. Therefore, Heidegger and Lacan will both go on to elaborate their critiques of contemporary philosophical thinking, along with its deeper metaphysical genealogy, opposing the dual metaphysical presumption of self-knowing and its intertwining with self-willing.

While laying waste to the substantive conception of subjectivity, Lacan also masters the inter-subjective nature of this fall. In other words, Lacan theoretically maps out the domain within which a subject constitutes itself in its attempt to enact its metaphysical will to power (to posit, to know, to will) against itself and against other human beings, i.e., within the imaginary. Whereas Heidegger, in his later philosophy, is

---

566 Cf. on the instances of intersubjectivity as the most essential designation of the nature of the subject.
interested in situating the human Dasein within the great scope of the truth of being, and therefore the truth of our being in its relation to beings as such and as a whole, Lacan has mastered this very attempt within the sphere of thinking qua other beings like my own, those Heidegger in *Being and Time* calls *Mit-Dasein*, or *Dasein-with*.\(^{567}\) Lacan takes Heidegger’s being for whom being becomes an issue (Dasein), radically confirms the being-for- and with-others of this Dasein, and rigorously delineates the method and structure of the subject’s Dasein-relation to all the beings like itself.

Related to this, it is important to notice the neologism that Lacan creates in order to characterize the subject in his self-certainty and its “illusion of autonomy” (elsewhere called the illusion of “self-mastery”) that is represented by the existentialists such as Sartre. In his translation of *Écrits*, Fink’s endnote for this word he translates as “self-sufficiency” states: “Lacan’s creation here, *self-suffisance*, also suggests a note of self-complacency, self-conceit, and smugness.”\(^{568}\) Lacan’s critique of Existentialism with this neologism is striking indeed. Its subjectivity is mired in the arrogance and delusion of self-sufficiency, and this includes all the ignoble conceits (smugness) that attend to a philosophy of that subjectivity. As always, Lacan is cognizant of the consonance of the psychoanalytic registers of falling, as exemplified here in his response to French existentialist thought; his characterization of the *self-suffisance* of consciousness places his own thinking in sharp contrast. Against any delusion of assurance, constancy, and self-sufficiency, against any false pride and arrogance of independence, Lacan instead posits the “function of misrecognition” as a primary character of the self.


Without explicitly articulating it but with the structure fully in place, Lacan is continuously drawing attention to the continuing hegemony of the metaphysical self-positing that we have already examined in terms of Nietzsche’s metaphysics and the errancy of human falling. Explicitly here, however, Lacan is situating even the contemporary, supposed post-metaphysical philosophical scene within the same horizon as the modern metaphysics of Descartes that characterizes the first step of establishing the ground of certainty within the assurance of the *cogito*, the “I think, therefore”

Lacan’s disavowals of philosophy condition his own profound *Kehre* out of metaphysical thinking itself, marked as the latter is by philosophy. It would be far too aggressive to associate Lacan already with a faithful form of Heideggerian thinking at this point, but at the very least, so far we see that Lacan consistently displaces the nature of his work beyond the scope of every traditional metaphysics. If my assertion holds true, therefore, we will continue to see Lacan elicit a unique train of thought that will nevertheless bear witness to the nexus of falling’s features, namely, truth is structured as *aletheia* and being, stand, pride/untruth, falling and its subsequent humiliations—all of which characterize the thinking inherent in the psychoanalytic understanding of subjectivity qua neurosis.

### 7.6 The Truth of the Subject is the Truth of Metaphysics

“Man believes he recognizes the core of his unity in the guise of self-mastery by which he is necessarily duped.”569 This passage perfectly situates Lacan’s theoretics within the critique of metaphysics. We already recognize it to be the epitome of

---

metaphysical wisdom in numerous ways. Man has been deluded by the semblance of his self-enclosed unity; he is necessarily duped by assuming that it is self-mastery that coheres him, makes him. By this sense (belief) of self-mastery, nevertheless, he submits to himself the world that he creates. This is the self-sufficiency of the metaphysical subject, constituted by and re-constituting metaphysics.

For Lacan, the Subject of existentialism has only a limited consonance with the subject of psychoanalysis. Since Lacan’s subject is displaced from the metaphysical, it means that his conception of this subject might help us think metaphysics itself more closely. If we can continue to elaborate the distance between the Lacanian and metaphysical subject, the former’s theory of the subject will betray its fundamental relationship to the falling of metaphysics itself. His subject, in its passing and passion, will reveal the sin of metaphysics in the self-limiting (privilege of presence) scope of its thinking. In other words, the subject of metaphysics is in so many ways subject to metaphysics, and psychoanalysis is the science of this sin.

Lacan is consistently discussing truth in the deepest, most self-consciously Heideggerian sense as aletheia. We find ourselves therefore before this paradox in relation to truth, subjectivity, and metaphysics, stated explicitly: the truth of the subject is the truth of metaphysics; the truth of metaphysics is the truth of the subject. That is, the truth of the subject is simultaneously the aletheia of falling: “Man’s language, the instrument of his lies, is thoroughly ridden with the problem of truth.”

We touched upon this earlier: the Freudian revolution is the Copernican shift, the decentering of the human cosmos out of it-self; the truth of metaphysics—and its subject—is that it is constituted

---

by *that which* (or whom) *is not there*, otherwise known as the Lacanian absent center of desire. Indeed, in short, the subject itself is not even there. Just how will truth disclose itself as such? I will follow the Lacanian notion of truth-as-*aletheia*, which thoroughly grounds his theory of the subject.

Lacan asserts that “truth is involved in the structure of madness,” as with the symptoms and speech of the subject.571 But here Lacan is referring to “truth” as it is from Plato to the “radical ambiguity that Heidegger points out insofar as the truth signifies revelation.”572 Lacan demonstrates this claim immediately by insisting that “a word is not a sign but a nodal point [*noeud*] of signification.”573 Lacan instructively chooses the word *rideau*, curtain, to explore the irreducible metonymy that this *knot [*noeud*] of signification elicits. Yet, this *noeud*, in French resonates also homophonically as *knot* at the same time it sounds like the English *not*, as Fink points out in his translation. Hence Lacan concludes his lengthy list of metonymical meanings of the word “curtain”—or *différance*, as we might call it—of this knot of signification by illuminating the very Heideggerian point of truth as *aletheia*: “It is [*the word “curtain”*], finally, an image of meaning *qua* meaning, which must be unveiled if it is to reveal itself.”574 Lacan further elaborates an *aletheic* understanding of truth by a strange assertion, that truth is “being’s attitudes [*that are*] justified and exposed in

---

571 Ibid., 133.
572 Ibid., 136.
573 Ibid.
574 Ibid.
language…” From the infamous “Seminar on the Purloined Letter” we find again the alethic nature of truth:

Thus, when we are open to hearing the way in which Martin Heidegger uncovers for us in the word alethes the play of truth, we merely rediscover a secret to which truth has always initiated her lovers, and through which they have learned that it is in hiding that she offers herself to them most truly.

Just as we have seen in Heidegger’s thought, truth is not, therefore, reality, nor the Real, nor the knowledge of it, for Lacan; so, once again Lacan is situating his subject within the overcoming of metaphysics to the extent that the truth of his subject articulates the contours of metaphysics in its relationship to its subject. Opposed to traditional metaphysical notions of truth, Lacan posits truth as the space of revelation, closure and disclosure, absencing and presencing, within which the subject appears and hides, dissembles and denudes itself. Yet, instead of language’s relation to truth being one of unmitigated disclosure or the traditional adequatio or correspondence, to the analyst it mostly “articulates the lack of being in man…” Language reveals the situation of the subject within the play of aletheia; we cannot begin to consider Lacan’s subject, therefore, without seeing the great invisible open—the truth—in which it stands and within which it situates itself. In other words, the truth reveals itself in the

---

575 Ibid., 137. In truth, a lot more attention ought to be paid to this simple yet fateful statement.


Let’s be categorical: in psychoanalytic anamnesis, what is at stake is not reality, but truth, because the effect of full speech is to reorder past contingencies by conferring on them the sense of necessities to come, such as they are constituted by the scant freedom through which the subject makes them present.

symbolic, serving as symbols of the subject’s comportment within the imaginary space, and in relation to the irreconcilable rupture of the Real.

It is in this knot/not of truth that we find the being of man,\(^{579}\) but seen as such not as a clear revelation of a substantive reality but as “the want-to-be whose mark he bears.”\(^ {580}\) Indeed, “the state of Not is the state of emergency in life.”\(^{581}\) The subject is always thereby constituted as and around an absence. As the subject of language, Lacan analyzes this absence that reveals us in its multitude of form: the absent object of desire, the absence of the signifier,\(^ {582}\) the alienation of misrecognition,\(^ {583}\) the absence of the das Ding,\(^ {584}\) etc. However, from a more primordial perspective, truth is first reckoned in its spatial dimension and the space of the subject’s gapped grounding (intersubjectivity, alienation, misrecognition), as the “imago’s unquantifiable distance.”\(^ {585}\) and second, in the next chapter, as we will see, truth is reckoned in the freedom that I reveal in my relation and constitution around and with these multiform absences. For now, let us examine truth’s spatial and constitutional dimension in its relation to aletheia. The proceedings of this first aletheic dimension lead us to consider another relation to Heidegger: that the aletheia originary to Lacan’s subject is the essence of freedom. We must continually remind ourselves that all of these investigations follow along Lacan’s

---

\(^{579}\) Let us recall here the untruth as the essence of truth that Heidegger introduces us to (cf. 92–97).

\(^{580}\) Ibid., 31.


\(^{584}\) Ibid., 40; Lacan, Jacques, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*, 63.

phenomenology of madness, as stated earlier. This phenomenology of madness will reveal the contours of the truth of the metaphysical subject.\textsuperscript{586}

7.7 The Habitus of the Subject

As Lacan reminds his audiences often, the “unconscious itself has in the end no other structure than the structure of language.”\textsuperscript{587} Yet to the extent that truth is the issue with language and the human being, it is once again a matter of how the human comports him/herself within this aletheic dimension, which Lacan identifies with the “category of space” within which the psychoanalytic praxis obtains, provided that the vastest of all such space is that of the imaginary space.\textsuperscript{588}

It is this privileged spatial notion of truth represented in the “imaginary space” that draws us firmly back to the concept of aletheia. The truth is, just as we saw, in “man’s relationship to the world and to truth that is specific to man, a relationship he inhabits.”\textsuperscript{589} This imaginary space of habitation (marking the twofold meaning of 1) habitat, habitus, and 2) the habit that Heidegger emphasizes), in its symbolic revelation, is in the last resort, the only world by which the analyst has access to the subject qua ego.

\textsuperscript{586} While this is paradoxical, it is the truth that psychoanalysis always has to offer from its initial formulations with Freud: the study of the neurotic subject reveals the most about the state of “normal” subjectivity: “…the study of neuroses, to which, after all, we owe the most valuable pointers to an understanding of what is normal . . .” (Freud, Sigmund, \textit{Civilization and its Discontents}, trans. by James Strachey (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2010), 71).

\textsuperscript{587} Ibid., 32.


\textsuperscript{589} Lacan, Jacques, \textit{The Ethics of Psychoanalysis}, 130. Again, it is no small thing that, within a meditation upon truth as aletheia, Lacan hits upon the same words—which are anything but random or merely metaphorical—that Heidegger employs in habitation, dwelling, habitus, etc. This habitus relates to the Latin for “habit,” but also to the habeo, for “to have; maintain.”
It is “the inside of a stadium in which his ego contains his imaginary exploits.”590 We must catch on to the Heideggerian indication in this inhabiting. The human psyche finds itself inhabiting the space of its truth, its imaginary universe, and its comportment within that space. Following the Heideggerian indication, the habitation of the human psyche is marked not only by the vast space of the imaginary, but also by the habitual nature that justifies the subject’s attachments and exacerbates his/her relations and neurosis.

The Lacanian subject is a plenitude of imaginary space in which the subject struggles and inhabits, and it is therefore a space populated by the imagoes of others with whom the subject struggles and co-habitates. Those with whom the subject struggles, however, are always already not there, thus establishing our human subjectivity within the strange place of a truly reified absence that we ourselves are—i.e., that is, to some extent, our being. Without diving too deeply into the structure of Lacan’s reading of the Oedipal complex, it is that structure’s intersubjectivity which is “normally constituting the sense of reality.”591 From as early as Lacan’s Mirror Stage, imagoes are instantiated within which the subject is forever, constitutively, entangled. Spoken otherwise, within the subjective space, desire is always mediated through the


Thus, if man comes to think about the symbolic order, it is because he is first caught in it in his being. The illusion that he has formed this order through his consciousness stems from the fact that it is through the pathway of a specific gap in his imaginary relationship with his semblable that he has been able to enter into this order as a subject. But he has only been able to make this entrance by passing through the radical defile of speech, a genetic moment of which we have seen in a child’s game [the fort/da], but which, in its complete form, is reproduced each time the subject addresses the Other as absolute, that is, as the Other who can annul him himself, just as he can act accordingly with the Other, that is, by making himself into an object in order to deceive the Other. This dialectic of intersubjectivity...”

289
other as the “subject’s alienation”: “It is in the other that the subject first identifies himself and even experiences himself.” But the subject’s experience is populated by the innumerable others that he contends with.

To use early Heideggerian terms, the pre-ontological—i.e., before the bringing-to-awareness of the symbols and language evinced by the unconscious—psychoanalysis discovers the equiprimordiality of the other (the Mit-Dasein) within the nature of the subject’s Dasein. Already we see the expansive onto-graphy of this Da-sein, the subject’s being-here/there. Yet we are going to continue to follow Lacan as he defines the contours of this subjective Dasein, its mode of being. The more we move forward, the more we discover the extent to which is Lacan is diagnosing the Western metaphysical subject, uncovering the truth of the constitution of metaphysical man as falling.

In this section I have introduced three themes that I will continue to unpack throughout. First, the truth of the subject is the truth of metaphysics, and the truth of metaphysics is the truth of the subject. As yet a rather mysterious indication, I propose to continue to show that the subject that Lacan articulates and confronts within “experience” is the subject of metaphysics, and that this subject simultaneously reveals the truth of metaphysics itself, indeed, that this subject is the truth of this metaphysics. Second, that the subject always inhabits truth as the imaginary space, which I will come to call worlding, the revelation of a kind of comportment to which the subject is always involved. This aletheia further reveals the space in which the subject maneuvers, indeed,

---

592 Ibid., 148.
593 Ibid., 149: “The new image makes a world of persons ‘flocculate’ in the subject, insofar as they represent centers of autonomy, that completely change the structure of reality for him.”
594 Why not point out again here that is only a Heideggerian understanding that can truly situate Lacan’s thinking within a greater nexus of metaphysics and the thinking possibility of overcoming metaphysics?
the maneuvers that the subject is. This is the dual habitation of the subject qua dwelling and habituation. This space reveals the truth of the subject. Third, the subjectivity of the subject is always an inter-subjectivity, as in Heidegger’s *Mit-Dasein*.

According to Lacan’s phenomenological experience, the subject is the revelation of metaphysics. Insofar as the subject is the truth of metaphysics and the truth of metaphysics is the subject, this metaphysical subject described by Lacan is the subject caught in the plunge of falling at the same time he recapitulates the falling structure of metaphysics. The subjectivity thus constructed is complex in ways that defy classical formulations of subjectivity as rational, substantive or coherent, and thus require another form of analysis. The subject is not there at all, and thus belies objectivist paradigms. Furthermore, this subject’s justifications, evasions and aggressions are in no way traditional or common sensical. For example, the subject’s reactions to individuals in its life are not pure reactions to those others as they are but incorporated or projected from internal struggles with phantoms. Lacan’s subject—in will, in thinking, etc.—elaborates subjectively every existential characteristic of falling we have examined thus far. Regarding the second point above, Lacan outlines the full scope of what this subject is capable of: its imaginary world is incalculable space, and the world comes out of that space, just as it came from the metaphysical world. So the condition of the world and the subject will correspond and inform each other. Our dwelling and habitation will correspond to our neurotic constitution, our falling. To the third point, Lacan makes sense of the strange intersubjective webs of the condition of falling.
7.8 The Aletheia of the Subject

The others that “flocculate” in the subject are the innumerable imagoes of those with whom the subject has identified, yet every such identification is founded upon an original identification deriving from the experience of the infant in the infamous Mirror Stage.595

The Mirror Stage is the first splitting of the subject (the barred subject, $). Due to this event (and why wouldn’t this represent a new inflection of the event of appropriation constitutive of a metaphysical Dasein?), the resulting subject will always experience, through his own I, “his discordance with his own reality.”596 Furthermore, this stage represents the “ontological structure of the human world.”597 The mirror stage is represented in the commencement of the unique human ability, at six months and on, for an infant to recognize itself in its own mirror image. This recognition is paradoxically a recognition of the duplication of the reality of the infant, of itself and of those objects and people—a mother, for example—surrounding it at the time of capture, the capture of the statuary, but within a virtuality. Elsewhere, Lacan says that this image is only given to him as being “ravished from him.”598 At once the splitting of the psychic world has occurred in not only the recognition of an alienated world, the space of the

---

595 Lacan, Jacques. “The Mirror Stage as Formative of the I Function,” from Écrits, 76: [A]n identification. . . namely, the transformation that takes place in the subject when he assumes an image—an image that is seemingly predestined to have effect at this phase, as witnessed by the use in analytic theory of antiquity’s term, “imago.”

596 Ibid.

597 Ibid.

imaginary, but the infant’s identification with itself is further “frozen” into the “statue” of this virtuality, in the ideal-I, in a “mirage.”

This mirror stage passage can help us unpack this multifarious situation in its truth. The “discordance” of the subject with his reality is marked then by the subject’s split or barred nature, in multiple ways: 1) in the “correspondences that unite the I with the [frozen] statue onto which man projects himself”; 2) the “phantoms that dominate him”; and 3) in “the automation with which the world of his own making tends to achieve fruition in an ambiguous relation.”

There can actually be no temporal distinction between any of these moments that ground the gestalt of the subject, and this makes it difficult to decide a chronological order in which to tackle them. For example, the subject in its Mirror Stage fracturing becomes the other itself that it will continue to reckon with; yet, as such, the subject is born from intersubjectivity in that all of its relations with others will be the fulfillment of that first alienation-qua-imago. With the help of our guideline passage, I will lay out an outline that will continue to be filled in with more specific Lacanian content thereafter. This content will further establish Lacan’s theory of the metaphysical, i.e., the falling, subject.

1. The first moment: the splitting of the mirrored self

The mirror stage establishes the originary specular and split structure of the subject’s psyche, an experience which will determine every subsequent relation/identification.

---

Lacan, Jacques. “The Mirror Stage as Formative of the I Function,” from Écrits, 76-77: This gestalt symbolizes the I’s mental permanence, at the same time as it prefigures its alienating destination. This gestalt is also replete with the correspondences that unite the I with the statue onto which man projects himself, the phantoms that dominate him, and the automation with which the world of his own making tends to achieve fruition in an ambiguous relation.
Again, this founding stage represents the “ontological structure of the human world,” and the gap between the “virtual complex and the reality it duplicates—namely, the child’s own body, and the persons and even things around him.” According to Lacan, “An enormous series of subjective phenomena revolve around this image.” For one, the infant attempts to capture and control its image by mimicking and trying to catch its imago reflection. The fact that the infant is attempting to control the image is no small detail to be passed over, particularly as this behavior will predominate his future relations with himself, in terms of self-mastery, and the control of others vis-à-vis the reactions we will see soon, which the analyst ends up facing so nakedly in the course of treatment. From then on, Lacan will say, “Man believes he recognizes the core of his unity in the guise of self-mastery, by which he is necessarily duped.”

On top of this, the vision of the mirror-self advances the splitting of the subject. It constitutes the irreducible phenomenon of the “subject’s alienation.” This first movement is, simultaneously, the establishment of the statuary ego-ideal that is

---


601 Ibid., 75.


603 Ibid: “the triumphant assumption of the image with jubilatory mimicry that accompanies it and the playful indulgence in controlling the specular identification…” (Emphasis added). Cf., Ibid., 151: What I have called the triumphant assumption of the image with the jubilatory mimicry that accompanies it and the playful indulgence in controlling the specular identification, after the briefest experimental verification of the nonexistence of the image behind the mirror, in contrast with the opposite phenomena in the monkey—these seemed to me to manifest one of the fact of identificatory capture by the imago that I was seeking to isolate. It was very directly related to the image of the human being that I had already encountered in the earliest organization of human knowledge.


605 Ibid., 148: “It is in the other that the subject first identifies himself and even experiences himself.”
presented to the subject in his/her mirror image. These relations with the external imago irremediably unite I with the frozen statue upon which the human being projects itself. This is the origin of the fragmented body, which haunts the dreams and hallucinations of the subject, particularly when he reaches the stage of the “aggressive disintegration of the individual” in analysis. The subject will evermore be constituted by that incommensurable gap between its I and its I-ideal, given to it in the specular image. In its alienation, the subject will continuously come up to the truth of itself and its radical limitations. Not only this, but the subject will always recognize a necessity to live up to or undermine the imago that it knows it possesses as alienated. Life itself is consumed by the function of the self-alienated imago: we must always care for the presence of our imago that persists and lives outside of ourselves, not least in the forms of duty, reputation, face, presentation, vitality, success, etc.

But why would a desire for self-mastery come to bear from the mirror stage?

The infant’s specular capture of its own mirror image is essentially combined with the

---


The Ur-Ich thus attempts to realize an impossible coincidence with the ideal image reflected by the mirror: given such an impossibility, this relationship ends up in a permanent rivalry of the subject with himself, with the narcissistic image of himself that the lure of the mirror creates. Such a rivalry is already evident at the level of the dialectic between the subject’s perception of his fragmented body and his parallel vision of the completeness of the specular body…”


When I began to set out the fundamental function of the mirror stage in the general institution of the field of the object, I moved through several phases. First of all, there is the plane of the first identification with the specular image, the original misrecognition of the subject in his totality. Next, there is the transitivist reference that is established in his relation with the imaginary other, his semblable. This means that his identity is always poorly disentangled from the other party’s identity. Hence the introduction of mediation by means of a common object, an object of competition, whose status will be derived from the notion of belonging—it’s yours or its [sic] mine.

prior ontological awareness of the *mediation* of its needs and desires. I say, in a Heideggerian way, “ontological awareness” in relation to something that is in no way a cognitive or conscious awareness, but rather a deeper and more primordial awareness that the human being experiences—essentially. This awareness invariably *marks* the subjectivity of humans, and it will determine their self-knowledge in every way. Even as a rabid anti-essentialist, Lacan insists upon a double originary mark upon the essence of the psyche of each human individual: “man’s prematurity at birth” and his related, earliest experience to *death*. Lacan calls this the “existential meaning of the mirror phase.” Lacan says that the human experience with death begins with the *trauma of childbirth, the prematurity of birth, and the trauma of weaning*.

Aside from the trauma of birth itself, Lacan cannot dismiss what he sees as the profundity of the fact that humans are essentially born *premature*. That is, while most mammal newborns *rise up* and start walking within hours of birth, we humans are born long before we are prepared to, from the standpoint of motility. We are born, and remain for some time, helpless. All of our needs and desires must be answered by another.610

---

608 Lacan, Jacques, “Presentation on Psychical Causality,” from *Écrits*, 148: Man’s very desire is constituted, [Hegel] tells us, under the sign of mediation: it is the desire to have one’s desire recognized. Its object is a desire, that of other people, in the sense that man has no object that is constituted for his desire without some mediation. This is clear from his earliest needs, in that, for example, his very food must be prepared . . .

609 In fact, Lacan understands prematurity to be the root cause of the mirror stage itself. Cf. “The Freudian Thing,” from *Écrits*, trans. Bruce Fink (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2006), 355: This is a point I believe I myself have helped elucidate by conceptualizing the so-called dynamics of the ‘mirror stages’ as the consequences of man’s generic prematurity at birth, leading at the age indicated to the jubilant identification of the individual who is still an infant with the total form in which this reflection of the nose is integrated—namely, with the image of his body.

610 Lacan, Jacques, “Presentation on Psychical Causality,” from *Écrits*, 148: the desire to have one’s desire recognized [is the cause of desire, desire itself] . . . man has no object that is constituted for his desire without some mediation. This is clear from his earliest
The human “incompleteness and ‘delay’ in the development of the central nervous system during the first six months of life,” the “lack of motor coordination and balance” nevertheless contribute to an “early maturation of visual perception” and a privileging of the visual field that forms the initial capture of the infant’s mirror image. Though we will come to see more of aggressiveness, it comes up presently as the response to “the impotence proper to the prematurity of birth.”

Fracture and splitting is the only way the newborn subject can experience the antinomy between the “unified whole” of the mirror capture and the fragmentation of his own impotent motility and prolonged experience of death. This “phase of misery” needs, in that, for example, his food must be prepared for him; and we find this anew in the whole development of his satisfaction, beginning with the conflict between master and slave, through the entire dialectic of labor . . . . This dialectic, which is that of man’s very being . . .

Ibid., 152.


The notion of aggressiveness corresponds . . . to the rending of the subject from himself, a rending whose primordial moment comes when the sight of the other’s image, apprehended by him as a unified whole, anticipates his sense that he lacks motor coordination in images of fragmentation . . . . It is thus at the heart of experiences of bearing and intimidation during the first years of his life that the individual is introduced to the mirage of mastery of his functions, in which subjectivity will remain split, and whose imaginary functions . . . manifest instead the condition that introduces him to the alienating master/slave dialectic. But if these experiences . . . . in fact open onto this signification in order to durably structure the human subject, it is because they receive this signification from the tension stemming from the impotence proper to the prematurity of birth, by which naturalists characterize the specificity of man’s anatomical development—a fact that helps us grasp the dehiscence from natural harmony, required by Hegel to serve as a fruitful illness, life’s happy fault, in which man, distinguishing himself from his essence, discovers his existence.

One of the most significant lines of investigation that is going to continue to open up is the fact that signification itself derives from and recodifies this biological event. The human specificity of anatonic development derives its own signification, the first, and that Lacan identifies here as insecurity. Every neurotic attachment and outburst, every subjective conflict, will involve this primordial signification, this initial splitting of the subject that is irrevocable, this desire that is ravished from the subject by the subject in his necessary yet delusional image of himself, etc.

If I was going to pursue this line of inquiry, I would very quickly make the distinction that Lacan himself would appreciate: that is signification that is born here, not language itself, which implies a structure that only Heidegger adequately interpreted outside of metaphysical delimitations. Metaphysics itself, to some extent, instigated this gap in the formation of its own self-understanding. Lacan explains signification, but he does leave language alone, even at one point saying that language came about, and
is given an exemplary instance in the mirror stage. The rending of the subject from himself occurs when comparing his physical impotence with the imaginary unity he perceives in capturing the sight of himself in the mirror. He may feel whole, but all of his vital needs are mediated, as will be his greatest desires henceforth. The subject does not have within itself the resources that it needs to fulfill its desires or its needs. Furthermore, the subject is smacked with the revelation that he/she cannot appropriate this image, that it is always outstanding. This is the lesson of her prematurity.

It is death as “absolute master” that presents itself to human beings long before they can consciously recognize it as such; if, that is, humans can ever consciously recognize death as such.614 For, long before we realize we will die and think about death—to the extent such a thing is possible at all—we experience it in this early stage of misery found in the threefold trauma of birth, prematurity and weaning.615 Man receives “this touch of death whose mark he receives at birth.”616 Death is also the ground of the subject and of its limit. I will return to death in the next chapter, in order to draw out the explicit link Lacan makes with Heidegger regarding death, and to segue that into the Lacan’s conversation on the truth of freedom.

One conclusion is clear and preeminently important for the concept of falling and its implications for the human subject. The desire and the attempt at self-mastery which first appears in the mirror stage can only arise from a prior “realization” of the

that is all we can say about its origins—considering that we ourselves are the product of that origin, according to both Lacan and Heidegger.

614 Cf. Lacan, Jacques, “Variations on the Standard Treatment,” from Écrits, 289: “…for the subject, the reality of his own death is in no wise an object that can be imagined…”


298
need for self-mastery. The response to need, based on the nature of the mediation of need’s fulfillment from the first, is a reaction against the revelation that one is not in control, not in control of oneself or anything else. The infant’s first revelation, therefore, implies that it is impotent, helpless, absolutely dependent, powerless. The question is, how does the human subject, necessarily, respond to this condition? What are the stages and movements of the response to this absolute and originary helplessness? One stage is that of the infant’s response; another stage is entered as the subject begins to understand, in analysis or perhaps elsewhere, that this reaction has predominated and complicated all of his relations and experiences, qua the alienation of his desire. Judging from Lacan’s analysis, following from the analysis of falling thus far, it is not with acceptance that the subject reacts to the blooming awareness of this situation.

2. The second movement: the split self and others

Corresponding to the first movement of the capture of the imago and the splitting of the subject—and with it, the consequent revelation of powerlessness—we find the “phantoms that dominate” the subject. Lacan’s infamous axiom—“the unconscious is the Other’s discourse”—finds its place here; and along with it, “the notion of the inmixing of subjects.” The subject’s desire is always already alienated in the other’s desire, as much in the other that the subject himself is as the desire of the others like the subject (the Mit-Dasein, the invisible personae); this includes the desire of the other’s recognition.

---


Which is to say that we shift here from the field of accuracy to the register of truth . . . situated somewhere else altogether: at the very foundation of intersubjectivity. It is situated where the subject can grasp nothing but the very subjectivity that constitutes an Other as an absolute.
Nevertheless, in that the subject is always already alienated, along with its desire, the subject is constantly frustrated by its inability to meet up with its jouissance. As a result, the subject’s discourse, evincing “illnesses that speak,” is littered with the aggressive reaction to this situation, from the initial splitting of the mirror image to all the interlocutions and struggles with personae, imaginary and real, which scand the subject’s history. Lacan marks the ways in plenitude, as he does in this passage from “The Mirror Stage”:

…in the demanding tone that sometimes permeates his whole discourse, in his pauses, hesitations, inflections, and slips of the tongue, in the inaccuracies of his narrative, irregularities in his application of the fundamental rule, late arrivals at session, calculated absences, and often in his recriminations, reproaches, fantasmatic fears, angry emotional reactions, and displays designed to intimidate . . . intentional aggressiveness gnaws away, undermines, and disintegrates; castrates; it leads to death.

Of course, all of this aggressiveness is the concentrated reaction the analyst provokes in his experience, but it is grounded in the first stages of the birth of subjectivity. This

619 Cf. Lacan, Jacques, “The Function and Field of Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis,” from Écrits, trans. Bruce Fink (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2006), 208: “This ego, whose strength our theorists now define by its capacity to bear frustration, is frustration in its very essence.” (Emphasis added) I will return to the nature of this frustration soon, a frustration that the subject is.


Subjective experience must be fully accredited if we are to recognize the central knot of ambivalent aggressiveness, which at the present stage of our culture is given to us in the dominant form of resentment, including even its most archaic aspects in the child. Thus, Saint Augustine . . . foreshadowed psychoanalysis by giving us an exemplary image of such behavior in the following terms: . . . “I myself have seen and known an infant to be jealous even though it could not speak. It became pale, and cast bitter looks on its foster-brother” . . . Thus Augustine forever ties the situation of spectacular absorption (the child observed), the emotional reaction (pale), and the reactivation of images of primordial frustration (with an envenomed look)—which are the psychical and somatic coordinates of the earliest aggressiveness—to the infant (preverbal) stage of early childhood.
frustration cripples the subject due to the fact that he is automatically repeating this behavior in his relations with others and in the personae that flocculate his psyche. In experience, these affects present themselves under the general category of transference in which the analysts

\[\text{efface ourselves, we leave the field in which the interest, sympathy, and reactions a speaker seeks to find in his interlocutor's face might be seen, we avoid all manifestations of our personal traits, we conceal whatever might betray them, we depersonalize ourselves and strives to represent to the other the ideal of impassability.}\] 623

The analyst plays the role of tabula rasa (or a Levinasian face, perhaps) upon which the analysand will paint his/her own inner world, Innenwelt, and thereby represent by traces his/her worlding (the return of a Heideggerian term I will soon elaborate). The analyst is the praxis of the absence itself that the subject always spins around, evades itself with, wars against, dissembles before, etc. The subject covers and attempts to provoke the blank-slate analyst with which the imago identifies. 624 In all these evasions and aggressions the subject reveals the image with which he has replaced the analyst. In the process, he divulges his suffering, his failures, designs, judges himself and his relation with others. 625

623 Ibid., 87.

624 Lacan, Jacques, “Variations on Standard Treatment,” from Écrits, 287: …the condition of the analyst occupy, in the session, a place that makes him invisible to the subject. For this allows the narcissistic image to be produced all the more purely and the regressive proteanism of its seductions to have freer ranges…

625 Lacan, Jacques, “Beyond the Reality Principle,” from Écrits, trans. Bruce Fink (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2006), 67: [he] communicates to the analyst the outline of this image through his imploring, imprecations, insinuations, provocations, and ruses, through the fluctuations of the intention that he directs at the analyst and that the latter motionlessly but not impassively take not of… In this discourse, he formulates what he suffers from and what he wants to overcome through analysis, he confides his secret failures and his successful designs, he judges his own character and his relations with other people.
It is important to remember, however, that corresponding to the absence the analyst puts into practice, the healing meant to be brought about by treatment—to unalienate, Lacan says, the subject from him- or herself—will be impossible if that analyst believes that the subject’s ego is identical with the presence that he/she is speaking.\textsuperscript{626}

While this drama is represented within the controlled conditions of analysis, it is this madness projected into the world of the subject that brings him/her to treatment in the first place. Within the opening of the subject’s ever-expanding “vital dehiscence”\textsuperscript{627} this subject is always already engaged with a plethora of “imaginary personae,” which, following Heidegger, I called Mit-Dasein in order to drive home that every other is constituted subjectively in the same ways as myself. It is right at this point of the intersubjective constitution of the subject—the invisible world made manifest with the subject’s wrestling with the absent personae as much as its own alienated self and the powerlessness that it conceives therein—that we find the continuing delusion, and disillusion, of the human, in what Lacan terms misrecognition.

Early on in psychic development, from the time of around the mirror stage, the boundaries between self and other maintain a significant permeability. For example, an uncanny experience ensues when a child will “share in a friend’s tumble or attribute to him, without lying, the punch he himself has given his friend.”\textsuperscript{628} Lacan summarizes this mirroring “in the sense that the subject identifies, in his feeling of Self, with the other’s


\textsuperscript{627} Ibid., “Aggressiveness in Psychoanalysis,” from Écrits, 94.

image and that the other’s image captivates this feeling in him.” Even when the subject starts to reify its boundaries within the imaginary, any totality as such will be precluded in the Real.

All the while, it is the *imago* at work within the imaginary space which hound the subject in his self-defensive self-constitution, the continuing frustration of which results in the subject’s *aggressiveness*, a situation that is further exacerbated by development and the increased complexity of the subject’s symbolic relations. Aggressiveness is, ontically speaking and from its own self-understanding, an *attack upon the world*, whereas ontologically, it is the subject attacking itself, striking out at itself in the form of the inner *personae* which alienate, possess, and hold the object of the subject’s desire. Ontologically, the subject attacks itself: “Thus the two moments, when the subject negates himself and when he accuses the other, become indistinguishable…” This aggressiveness Lacan which calls “suicidal aggression,” is the lashing out at the world and its disorder that originates actually from the subject’s *Innenwelt*. For Lacan, the aggressiveness is that in which “the ego essentially engenders deadly negations that freeze it in its formalism . . . casting out onto the world the disorder that constitutes his being.” (Later Lacan situates aggressiveness within a triad that conditions the subject’s discourse in *frustration, aggressiveness, regression*).

The aggressiveness represented here (along with frustration and regression) is, in the end, the function of *misrecognition*: at a fundamental level, due to the initial

---

629 Ibid.

630 Ibid., “Aggressiveness in Psychoanalysis,” from Écrits, 93.

631 Ibid.

alienation instantiated by the mirror stage, the subject misrecognizes himself in the other and the other in himself, and this misrecognition composes the “dialectic of his being.” This is a dialectic that never resolves itself in a synthesis or Aufhebung, as in Hegelian philosophy.

The madman projects the disorder, or “havoc,” of his own being onto the world: the world is in fact the space in which he battles his own phantom and flocculate personalities that populate his imaginary, in which he wars for the recognition of his desire, that is, to win the other’s desire. However—and this is essential—this madness is not unique to the individual who seeks treatment with an analyst or is locked in a mental institution. It is at the same time the madness that fills the world and is otherwise called normal. The fact that madness is the “constitutive condition of man” is an essential point that I will return to when we reach the level of the question of freedom and of the metapsychology of metaphysics, but its first implication will be seen soon in the worlding of the subject.

This aggressiveness results from the subject’s desire being alienated and captured with the other as much as it is with the alien ideal—I brought to bear in the

---

This misrecognition can be seen in the revolt through which the madman seeks to impose the law of his heart onto what seems to him to be the havoc [désordre] of the world. This is an “insane” enterprise . . . in that the subject does not recognize in this havoc the very manifestation of his actual being, or that what he experiences as the law of his heart is but the inverted and virtual image of that same being. He thus doubly misrecognizes it, precisely so as to split its actuality from its virtuality. Now, he can escape this actuality only via this virtuality. His being is thus caught in a circle, unless he breaks it through some form of violence by which, in lashing out at what he takes to be the havoc, he ends up harming himself because of the social repercussions of his actions.


635 Lacan, Jacques, “The Mirror Stage,” from Écrits, 80: “the kind found within the asylum walls as well as the kind that deafens the world with its sound and fury.”
initial mirroring. Analysis is the method by which this frustration finds its articulation in speech. Lacan argues, however, that this aggressiveness is not that of an animal who strikes out at not having its desire met, but rather—due to the fact that his desire is always *mediated*—the “aggressiveness of a slave who responds to being frustrated in his labor with a death wish.” Allow me to cite a long but terribly important passage at this point to illustrate the nature of the “forced labor,” the *work* [*œuvre*], of the subject that is, for Lacan, his being:

Doesn’t the subject become involved here in an ever greater *dispossession of himself as a being*, concerning which—by dint of *sincere portraits* which leave the idea of his being no less incoherent, of *rectifications* that do not succeed in isolating his essence, of *stays and defenses* that do not prevent his statue from tottering, of *narcissistic embraces* that become like a puff of air in animating it—he ends up recognizing that this *being has never been anything more than his own construction* [*œuvre*] in the imaginary and that this construction undercuts all *certainty in him*? For in the work he does to reconstruct if for another, he encounters anew the fundamental alienation that made him construct it *like another*, and that has always destined it to be *taken away from him by another*.

This ego, whose strength our theorists now define by its capacity to bear frustration, is frustration in its very essence. Not frustration of one of the subject’s desires, but frustration of an object in which his desire is alienated; and the more developed this object becomes, the more profoundly the subject becomes alienated from his jouissance. It is thus a frustration at one remove, a frustration that the subject . . . could not be satisfied with, since even if he achieved the most perfect resemblance to that image, it would still be the other’s jouissance that he would have gotten recognized there. Which is why there is no adequate response to this discourse . . .

---

637 Ibid., “The Function and Field of Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis,” from *Écrits*, 208.
638 Ibid., 207-208. (Bolded emphasis added.)
The first paragraph here, from Lacan’s presentation, “The Function and Field of Speech…” characterizes the subject’s “ever greater dispossessment of himself as a being.” But importantly, in the course of analysis—that is, in representing his being for another—he finds that this dispossessment has always been his great labor, his work, his construction. Lacan is emphatic: the subject’s being has been this immense, exhausting, dispossessing labor, the work of a “fundamental alienation.” It is in this triangulatory praxis that the subject comes to realize the extent of his/her labor—that he/she himself/herself is that very labor, that his/her being has always already been mortgaged to another, for another, and therefore, that his/her being was always-already capable of being taken away by another.

3. The third moment: the split subject’s world

Thirdly and lastly, the subject makes a world. But it would be better to borrow from later Heidegger and say that the subject worlds. By way of this, we have already touched upon Lacan’s inhabiting and habitation in its twofold meaning of habitus/dwelling, and habit. In the truth of its being, the subject worlds (particularly in terms of a “repetition automism”\(^{639}\)). The question is, what kind of worlding is occurring with the subject, particularly within the realm of metaphysics? How and what does the subject world?

\(^{639}\) Cf. Ibid., “Seminar on the ‘Purloined Letter,’” from Écrits, 34:
If Kierkegaard admirably discerns in that opposition the difference between Antiquity’s conception of man and the modern conception of man, it appears that Freud makes the latter take its decisive step by ravishing the necessity included in this repetition from the human agent identified with consciousness. Since this repetition is symbolic repetition, it turns out that the symbol’s order can no longer be conceived of there as constituted by man but must rather be conceived of as constituting him.
We have been laying out the contours of such worlding, and will come to see more of its implications in the next chapter.

The answer lies in the kind of worlding in which Lacan catches the subject. If the subject worlds, then according to Lacan, this worlding follows along the clearly discernable contours opened up from phenomenological experience (treatment). We are talking here of the subject’s dwelling and habits, and the relation between them, i.e., of habitation, of worlding. As we have seen, and what the other movements attest to, however, is that this habitation is not the peaceful Heideggerian dream of building, dwelling and thinking, and therefore neither is the worlding that Lacan interprets in any way construed as peaceful, but rather the opposite. The “world of his own making” that achieves “fruition in an ambiguous relation” is the harried spinning and barring of the subject that represents itself in the presentation of neurosis, through “illnesses that speak,” yet also through the “automation” implied in the notion of habituation. This world is grounded in the alienation of the subject’s desire, and that desire will always be the desire of the other.640

As the reification of aggressiveness against oneself and the other, this worlding bears the ineluctable mark of violence, symbolic and otherwise. Lacan refers to this as a “formal stagnation” inherent in man’s identifications, which has the effect of “indefinitely extending his world and his power, by giving his objects their instrumental polyvalence and symbolic polyphony, as well as their potential as weaponry.”641

640 Cf. Lacan, Jacques, “Presentation on Psychical Causality,” from Écrits, 148: the first effect of the imago is “subject’s alienation”: “It is in the other that the subject first identifies himself and even experiences himself.” However, as we will come to see more of, there must be some reason that Lacan, like Freud, describes the condition of the “modern man,” as he does in the note above.

This worlding will always bear the mark of the unconscious, precisely to the extent that “What is forgotten is recalled in acts.”

7.9 Conclusion

In conclusion, I summarize the themes introduced in this chapter, recall how these fit within the Heideggerian framework of falling, and indicate how they will inform the next chapter.

Lacan’s theoretics, grounded in his psychoanalytic experience, exhibits striking and profound resonances with Heidegger’s thinking. Lacanian psychoanalysis therefore reveals pertinent elaborations upon the question of falling. Lacan, in his return to Freud, takes up the problem of modern subjectivity uncovered by psychoanalysis. These resonances can be understood in two registers, one categorical and the other more substantial, the latter rooted within the pathways of thinking Heidegger uniquely opened up. Though he squarely renounces the academic discipline of philosophy as he sees it, from the categorical vantage point Lacan is quick to deploy a panoply of philosophical terms generally, but those that situate him incontestably within the neighborhood of a Heideggerian vocabulary and conception. For example, Lacan dubs his investigations phenomenological and ontological, and often quotes Heidegger and borrows from his terminology, including employing—most significantly—Heidegger’s rejuvenation of the ancient Greek concept for being and truth, i.e., *aletheia*. The consistent use of these two terms (even his own refurbishing of the Greek sense of *imago*), particularly that of *aletheia* (and, as we will see, being-towards-death),

---


308
interweaving it closely to the range of Lacanian phenomenological terms, leads Lacan right into the center of the Heideggerian thematic.

The very Heideggerian experience of falling is evinced throughout Lacan’s notion of truth as un/concealment and the many revelations of Lacan’s subjectivity. By locating this aletheia in relation to falling, we can see how the truth of the subject is the truth of metaphysics, and that the truth of metaphysics is the truth of the subject. What followed bore this out.

The first of these points shows that the subject is always constituted around and as an absence, that is, that which does not, cannot, will not reveal itself to conscious presencing (the unconscious), except by way of a trace or the breakdown of the subject’s well-worn dissembling discourse. Another of the primary ways I looked at was in terms of the open that the psyche reveals in the “unquantifiable” space of the imaginary, the grand landscape in which the subject is provided to populate with others, to maneuver, to hide or reveal itself. Another, second major aspect of Lacanian resonance with the Heideggerian truth is the way the latter grounds the subject in freedom, a topic I leave to explore in the next chapter. Each of these elements of the concept of truth-as-

---

643 In the unconscious we have a fascinating indication of a phenomenon that presents itself otherwise to human awareness, if it can be said to present itself at all. The existence of the thing is not in question, and in various ways it comes to show itself, but it can never be said to be made present, nor does it follow the same rules requisite for the establishment of concrete or empirical knowledge per se. The enigma of the unconscious implies the usurpation of the metaphysical reign, understood with the Lacanian inflection. This is why Lacan can claim a kind of scientificity, but nevertheless insist that “There is no such thing as a science of man,” and further distinguish man’s engagement with truth from his pursuit of knowledge:

It is quite simply to be found in the fact that an inscription does not etch into the same side of the parchment when it comes from the printing-plate of truth and when it comes from that of knowledge. (Lacan, Jacques, “Science and Truth,” from Écrits, trans. Bruce Fink (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2006), 729; 734)

Furthermore, while the goal of science is to understand the human via the pathway of knowledge, the goals of psychoanalysis is to free him, to introduce him to his freedom that has always-already been given away from him. By way of this, and somewhat mysteriously, “science turns out to be defined by the deadlocked endeavor to suture the subject” (Ibid., 731).
unconcealment further situates Lacan firmly *outside* the predominant metaphysical structures both he and Heidegger seek to expose and overcome. For Lacan, this means to, in the end, free the subject, to subvert the subject’s infinite—or, rather, to let it do so itself—self-destructive yet repetitious machinations, rapacious machinations formed around a constitutive self-revelation of his/her *powerlessness*. As with Nietzsche, so with Lacan: the response to the multiple enslavements of metaphysical falling is a wild act of freedom that is not reactionary or will-full, but to give in and give up the struggle against oneself and others and the war of ideas and views inherent therein.

The form and structure by which we can further explore these notions of the *aletheia* of the subject (of metaphysics), including the constitutive revelation of its powerlessness and its absence, was to analyze Lacan’s infamous mirror stage by following the path of an indicating statement. This statement demonstrated concisely three moments of the subject’s formation exposed by the mirror stage. These moments exhibit the power and the chains of the subject, and offer an insight into the potential for freedom.

Lacan isolates the first moment as the splitting of the *I*, the birth of subjectivity (barred subject) as such, in an infant recognizing itself in the mirror. This recognition requires a splitting in which the subject will now recognize itself in the alienated image that will always remain other. “The subject is, as it were, internally excluded from its object.”

In turn, the infant attempts to *capture*, *to wrest hold of*, this image in self-mastery, yet unsuccessfully, sparking off a life-long campaign of the same exercise, a conflict with *I* and *I-Ideal*. This conflict is compounded by the sense of unity the infant

---

644 Lacan, Jacques, “Science and Truth,” 731. The science of psychoanalysis hunts down the elusive trace of that object *a* in which the subject’s desire is located outside himself.
perceives in its other as opposed to the abject helplessness that it knows, a traumatic, ontological “revelation” that all of its needs and desires exist under the reign of mediation, represented in the threefold traumas of birth, prematurity at birth, and weaning. The mediation of its need and desire substantiates the awareness of its alienation in an-other, that his/her desire will always be the desire of the other. This is the habitation and habit—the inhabiting—of the subject. Lacan consistently describes this truth as the truth of the subject’s very being, the phenomenology of the imago; the structure of madness that is the being of man.

Conforming necessarily to this structure, the subject’s self-splitting function is replicated in the second moment, simultaneously represented in the capture of the mirror image—the subject’s life with others, and within the imaginary dimension within which the subject inhabits. The being of subjectivity is inter-subjectivity, or Mit-Dasein, as I used to insist the nature of my subjectivity the character of which is shared by every being like myself. Our being is being-with-others and as-others, first and foremost in the dimension of falling. The subject is always tied into others in real and imaginary ways, answering to the other/Other qua the symbolic. Imagos “flocculate” the imaginary; the whole range of the subject’s identifications and reactions unconceals itself in the controlled context of analysis, in which the analyst maintains a rigid silence and non-presencing that allow the subject, through transference, to articulate every other he/she strives or identifies with (as if the two could be separated); the analyst thereby forms an intervention so that the subject can realize that, indeed, his/her discourse has always been an immense, self-imposed labor of self-alienation. The subject further reveals the nature of his/her attachments by aggressiveness and misrecognition, by
which the subject lashes out at the variable *personae* which fill his world; furthermore, in these processes the subject reveals its “beautiful soul,” that it has projected its own chaos onto the image of the world and to the extent that he/she lashes out is the extent to which he/she is attacking him/her-self in suicidal aggression and self-negation. This dialectic that is his being does not resolve but incurs the habit of endless repetition. Most incisively, Lacan characterizes the subject’s being as a slave labor, producing a death wish, throughout the course of his work employing Hegel’s master-slave dialectic which binds freedom and necessity together.

Lastly, the third moment posits the *worlding* of the subject, the outcome of his exhaustive labor. This world is further grounded in the automatic repetition of this subject in relation to its lost desire: the story will always be the same, the intersubjects will always be determinative; the subject will obsessively combat its imagos and reciprocally itself in trying to regain its lost object of desire. In the following movements of our passage we will see more in detail what this means, and when we approach the metapsychology of metaphysics, we will see the greater scope of man’s metaphysical worlding, the civilizational falling of the subject. It suffices to say now that this world is the world of the subject’s *making* in the same way that Heidegger and Nietzsche articulate the positing of the will to power, precisely in that the subject is responding to his *powerlessness*. The subject creates a world, grounded upon an absence—on what is not there/here, even itself—and seeks ever to control its dimensions, its actors/others, it-self and its imago, and projects its own chaos out into
that world of its making. “It is the very delusion of the misanthropic beautiful soul, casting out onto the world the disorder that constitutes its being.”

645 Ibid., 93; Cf. Lacan, Jacques, “The Function and Field of Speech . . .” from Écrits, 233: “The me [moi] of modern man . . . has taken on its form in the dialectical impasse of the beautiful soul who does not recognize his very reason for being in the disorder he denounces in the world.”
Chapter 8: Antiphony of Death: The Freedom and the Work of the Metaphysical Subject

It is by touching, however lightly, on man’s relation to the signifier—in this case, by changing the procedures of exegesis—that one changes the course of his history by modifying the moorings of his being.646

When I speak of Heidegger, or rather when I translate him, I strive to preserve the sovereign signifierness of the speech he proffers. (Ibid.)647

Near and Hard to grasp, the god. Yet where danger lies, Grows that which saves. Eagles dwell In darkness, and without fear The sons of the Alps span the abyss On lightly built bridges. Since the peaks of Time lie Heaped around us and those we love Live near, languishing On separate mountains, Give us innocent waters O give us wings so that, faithful-minded, We might cross over and back.

- Hölderlin648

---


647 “…If I speak of the letter and being, if I distinguish the other from the Other, it is because Freud suggests them to me as the terms to which resistance and transference effects refer . . .”
8.1 Introduction

Lacan confirms Heidegger’s claim that the human being is as such located in truth; the human’s being is such that it gives the place (Da-sein) of unconcealing and concealing, offers the pivot for this movement from one to the other to occur at all. The human being takes its stand within the open region of truth, and is thereby a “domain of relatedness” by which truth arrives. The question in my work has been what is the nature of that stand? How do humans take their stand in truth’s open regioning? What does the truth reveal about our being? How does our being come to unconcealment, and what relation does it maintain to the other side of truth—to concealment, to that which remains hidden, absent, invisible, unknowable. What results from our kind of comportment to this relationship?

The truth of our being remains ambiguously caught up with untruth and error. That is, what is unconcealed about our being reveals a decisive relationship that we have taken up to what remains undisclosed, what is not given to presence itself, whether for our understanding, our senses, our thinking or our will to power. This is the situation that reveals itself in the human being. The human response is a response to this matter, and Lacan situates the response within the unconscious, its undisclosed self, the determination of its personality. How do humans thus respond?

I have been formulating the answers to these questions in terms and in the structure of falling, following Heidegger’s indication and path. The existential structure of human Dasein is ineradicably marked by falling. In short, “An existential mode of

---

Being-in-the-world is documented in the phenomenon of falling.\footnote{\textcite{heidegger, \textit{Being and Time}, H176.}} Aletheia is the clearing into which the human being is “thrown,” as we have seen, yet the comportment to this open region is in some degree decidable. How will humans “wrest” that which is into the truth, or will they seek another way? Each case has revealed and shed new light upon the phenomenological structure of falling as the historical mode of human being and thinking.

Heidegger defines further how the existential mode of man’s being is codetermining for the thinking and being of Western history as metaphysics. The existential character of human beings very naturally conditions the world that those human beings construct; and that world in turn recreates those beings and that being.

The nature of the fall is conditioned structurally by the nature of the stand-taking. The metaphysical stand predominates in errancy, as overreaching, presumptuousness, attack, hubris, etc. According to Heidegger, metaphysics always thinks beings and has never arrived at thinking of being. Metaphysics positions Self or man over and against beings in his stand, always making use of beings, positing beings, until the final historical moment is reached when metaphysics reveals itself as the will to power and the essence of technology.

In the mytho-poetical image of Adam and Eve we saw an example of this kind of falling. The “little difference” we spied was that of the awareness of a side of the round of truth otherwise undisclosed; that glimpse displaced the nature of the pair into destitution and death.
In Nietzsche we saw that the will to power was the underwriting principle of metaphysics. Nietzsche, as the philosopher of the end of metaphysics that remained caught in its trap, first articulated this center of power that is at the root of historical falling. Nietzsche’s “madness,” as I read it, is the final and successful act of rebellion against this unperceived entropy and the tyranny of metaphysics’ reactionism, the hubris, exhaustion and terror involved in the will’s absolute willing.

What Nietzsche brings out more starkly than any other thinker is the humiliation that necessarily derives from metaphysical stand-taking. Humiliation is the continuing result of this fall, summing up the panoply of terms Heidegger uses to describe the phenomenon: groundlessness, dispersal, fascination, tranquilizing, alienating, closure in inauthenticity, entanglement, downward plunge, fleeing (in the face of the death), dispersal into the They, homelessness . . .

While Nietzsche shows an unforeseen potential for overcoming metaphysics in the form of madness, Heidegger maintains a certain amount of composure yet is no less passionate in the desire for overcoming. Rather than remaining trapped within reactionism, believing he will merely “turn metaphysics on its head” as Nietzsche does, or replacing one Master with another, as Lacan summed up the student movement of 1968, Heidegger greets metaphysics through submitting it to Destruktion, through a process of healing that is implied in meditative thinking. The falling of metaphysics has always included the human over-reach, his falling upon being and world in the form of attack. In falling, man has not let beings be. But in meditative thinking, human beings take into their concern the question and truth of being and the being of truth and seeks a new autochthonous ground.
Now I want to draw to a close these investigations by understanding how Lacan and his subject further fit within this story of the history of metaphysics. We can follow Lacan’s track in innumerable ways, but I have located a few as guideposts—powerlessness and death, metapsychology and, finally, freedom—but let us first situate what we know from Lacan on this matter already.

Any uncritical appropriation of Lacan for a wholesale Heideggerianism would be a hermeneutic violence against both thinkers. Nevertheless, on a fundamental level Lacan himself highlights the Heideggerian provenance of some of his most essential concepts, including the subject’s experience with truth, of the phenomenological nature of psychoanalysis’ method and discoveries, and of the emphasis upon the constitutive qualities of the subject’s being and the articulation of the being of the subject.

If all of these themes were not enough, we would still be left with the degree to which Lacan articulates his subjectivity and theory uniquely within the boundaries of a critique of metaphysics. His theory of the subject is precisely the reflection of his intense engagement with the subject of Western metaphysics, and so in his subject we find a profound engagement with the vicissitudes and dimensions of metaphysics itself.

Moreover, Lacan balances on the razor’s edge: his subject reveals the contours of Western metaphysics as these imprint and form the subject at the same time that he spies how all these mechanisms and that whole structure fatally crashes and fractures against this still incommensurable subject. Metaphysics, in the guise of civilization, has not yet incorporated the subject, at the same time it has made the subject but cannot subject the human totally to its machinations, nor can it fully comprehend the subject. The fact that Lacan cites and refers to Freud’s Civilization and its Discontents so often is
further evidence that Lacan conceives of the servitude of the subject as simultaneously and mysteriously linked to its potential for liberation. In this chapter, I analyze the reality of the remainder, the indomitability represented in the subject’s freedom.

I wager that it is Lacan’s consistent and rigorous phenomenologism—a dogged insistence to fearlessly face what he inevitably experiences within the psychoanalytic experience—that continually lands him so squarely within the landscape Heidegger first enlightens. He is captured by the same undertow of thinking, the thinking of the truth of being that Heidegger is pulled by. Both fearlessly attend to the force of that call, and even formulate it in radically similar ways. Never is this similarity more striking than when Lacan is describing the structure I have elaborated as the truth of human being as falling. But what is more, Lacan offers an immense contribution of his own to this point.

Lacan blends Freud and Heidegger as he writes the narrative of the development of Western Dasein on an individual and civilizational basis. That is, his subject describes the peculiar Western biography of the Being of the Western (i.e., metaphysical) human being. Heidegger most brilliantly analyzes the root of the grand collusion of Western Dasein; Lacan offers the narrative structure of this pact qua language and subjectivity, the perpetuation of which grounds the formation of a truly Western subject. Psychoanalysis itself is the product of the Western metaphysical tradition, an investigation and treatment of its own unique heritage—the subject—and subjective, cultural and civilizational (including mytho-poetic) symptomatology. Such an analysis and treatment also must turn critical. The subject itself is, to a large degree, this symptom in its very being. This is why the truth of the subject is the truth of metaphysics and the truth of metaphysics is the truth of the subject.
The always tense dance Lacan must make is present everywhere. How do we provide language to describe a subject who is constituted by discourses that in turn alienate the subject at its outset? It is the same problem Heidegger faces: How do you use the language of falling at the same time as try to offer a critique of that language in order to enact an overcoming therefrom? Befitting the challenge, Lacan is never a simple or vulgar materialist in his seemingly materialist claims. His breakdown of language as the uniquely formed world is an example of this. The subject has been introduced into the symbolic (the symbol being “a pact, signifiers of the pact . . . objects of symbolic exchange”650 within a general economy into which the subject is born and already determined). Man is overwhelmingly subjected to an onto-genesis within strict civilizational codifications; though the discourse of the other qua unconscious is the ground for the possibility of the subject. Lacan still confounds any materialist reduction from these lines. Lacan still maintains the deeper meaning of being as the originary substratum and univocal dimension wherein this theatre of human construction can take place. Being is always to be deferred to, as we have seen, and in terms of language this truth holds:

It was certainly the Word that was in the beginning, and we live in its creation, but it is our mental [esprit] action that continues this creation by constantly renewing it.651

This indication removes Lacan from that endless goose chase of metaphysics: hunting down the path of the increasingly elusive “ground of being,” the infinite chain, as Derrida calls it, of sufficient reason.

---


651 Ibid.
What makes Lacan unique and uniquely Heideggerin in this is that, instead of insisting upon this hunt, Lacan merely stops when he is forced to. Lacan rejects the categorical imperative, and along with it that holy sacrament of sufficient reason and metaphysics (to explain *so as to* . . .). He realizes the trap they offer to thinking and every subject: the trap of subjectivity is the never-ending imperative to capture, to control, to struggle, to search, to reject, to explain/prove, to escape, to defend. These are the symptoms of the madness of Western Dasein that Lacan discovers in his “experience.”

This imperative is, of course, the first one, the first response to self-alienation and the “absolute master” that death is for the subject, as Lacan diagnoses it. This is the unfortunate but necessary consequence of the subject’s dual institution and alienation. The imperative, however, paradoxically issued out of the reaction to the subject’s founding, is one of the delusion of power and self-mastery that knits together the subject’s unity in reaction to its powerlessness, the fact that every desire and every need is mediated by an-other.652 The pattern is set early on, truly bio-logical in the deepest sense. Indeed, it is through the intersubjective compact (the symbolic and imaginary) that the subject is born in his alienation, and the same nurses him and drives him over hill and dale throughout his life in the quest to recapture that object *a* that can never be regained.653 Every neurosis, every distraught relationship to person or object of desire, real or imagined, mirrors this self-same structure.

Yet it is the *groundlessness* of this enterprise that Lacan refuses to look away from, and this is what places him in the camp of the potential overcomers of

---

652 Ibid., 222: “man’s desire finds its meaning in the other’s desire . . . because his first object(ive) is to be recognized by the other.”

metaphysics, because freedom is dialectically connected to this problem. Indeed, freedom and necessity, Lacan contends, are born together.

Returning to the freedom of the subject and the “nothingness” that attends it, against every inclination to reify the subject in one way or another, Lacan always insists rather on the mere absence at the center of the subject as much as at the center of the language that founds the subject. The absence by definition remains ambiguous, precisely to the extent that Lacan won’t fill it in with anything, not even with concepts such as “nothingness” (existentially defined) or nonbeing:

> When man, seeking to empty himself of all thoughts, advances, in the shadowless gleams of imaginary space, abstaining from even awaiting what will emerge from it, a dull mirror shows him a surface in which nothing is reflected.\(^{654}\)

If nothing is reflected when thoughts and advances are foregone (though it is unclear whether this is merely a thought experiment—though at the least it is—or a real possibility); if the light passing through the imaginary space of the “unquantifiable distance” catches no real object and therefore casts no shadow—then the subject is nothing at all besides those thoughts, those advances, the expectation of emergence, and the interrelation of the personae within which its desire forevermore remains estranged.

It is the singular Logos that bears forth this truth of the subject, inaugurating and sustaining it. It is the open range of aletheia itself that provides the ground of possibility for every derivative linguistic force in human worlding, including the symbolic compact, the alienated object a, discourse of the others, empty speech, etc. Every dissimulation, lie, provocation, hallucination, myth—all of this is derivative from

---

the singular and autonomous source of *Logos*. While emptiness is paradoxically the first thing to present itself in the experience of psychoanalysis, embodied in the “empty speech” of the subject’s “response to the failure of his silence, when forced with the perceived echo of his own nothingness,” it is this revelation itself that issues from a more primordial call, an *appel*. For Lacan, what is *not* spoken is what must be first heard therein.

Yet *Logos* and truth⁶⁵⁵ are intimately related, the former as man’s link to the latter, and the latter being far more than mere *adequatio* or correspondence, or something that man achieves or invents. Rather, truth is that in which the subject comes to stand, the *aletheia* of the givenness of (human) being. For, whatever the action of the subject to dissemble, even when it is merely an automatic repetition of the other’s discourse, speech is still, at its core, an appeal to truth.⁶⁵⁶ The subject is an ambiguous gap in all its brokenness; nevertheless this call issued forth, recalling that in the knot/not of truth, “being’s attitudes are justified in language.”⁶⁵⁷ *Logos* and truth, “insofar as truth signifies revelation,” are related a priori.⁶⁵⁸ The totalizing preeminence of the Word, recognized in the symbolic, is above all not missed by Lacan. The symbolic

---


⁶⁵⁶ Lacan, Jacques, “The Function and Field of Speech . . .” from *Écrits*, 206: Speech is “an appeal to truth at its very core . . . first and from the outset it was the *call of emptiness* itself in the ambiguous gap of an attempted seduction of the other by means of which he stakes the monument of his narcissism.”

⁶⁵⁷ Ibid., 137.

⁶⁵⁸ Even if it communicates nothing, discourse represents the existence of communication; even if it denies the obvious, it affirms that speech constitutes truth; even if it is destined to deceive, it relies on faith in testimony (Ibid., “The Function of Field and Speech . . .” from *Écrits*, 209)
envelops the entire human world that is as complete as the human body. The individual is always a subject to language.\(^{659}\)

As Heidegger formulated, truth is in things, brought forth in the opening of Dasein. If we recall one of the essential features of metaphysics, and now this includes the subject, we remember that the human being has turned his/her relation to truth on its head when the human pretends to be the center of things and the judge of truth. The subject does this in the world of its own dominion and the endless forced labor of attempting to maintain the charade of his/her self-mastery—all of this in the face, in response to, its own emptiness, the absence the subject is.

For Lacan, “man’s relationship to the world and to truth that is specific to man, a relationship that he inhabits,”\(^{660}\) and that emptiness is given to call out from the mouth of the subject. Furthermore, language derives from this absence. The absence of the subject and the absence of language coincide, are in some manner one, as Lacan articulates in his infamous “The Function and Field of Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis.”

As we have seen, man gives voice to the truth of his being; as a neurotic subject, his symptom gives indication of this “illness that speaks.” The ground of this “illness” lies in the reaction—the compensatory subject formation, the splitting of the subject

---

\(^{659}\) Ibid., 231:
Symbols in fact envelop the life of man with a network so total that they join together those who are going to engender him “by bone and flesh” before he comes into the world; so total that they bring to his birth, along with the gifts of the stars, if not with the gifts of the fairies, the shape of his destiny; so total that they provide the words that will make him faithful or renegade, the law of the acts that will follow him right to the very place where he is not yet and beyond his very death; and so total that through them his end finds its meaning in the last judgment, where the Word absolves his being or condemns it—unless he reaches the subjective realization of being-toward-death.

\(^{660}\) Ibid., “Presentation on Psychical Causality,” from *Écrits*, 130.
evinced in the mirror stage—against the awareness of his incompleteness and powerlessness resulting from his specific prematurity. “Freud’s discovery” was that the relation of man to the symbolic order, therefore, was that of the field of effects, in man’s nature, of his relations to the symbolic order and the fact that their meaning goes all the way back to the most radical instances of symbolization in being.  

The symbol, however, only becomes a matter of language—“making language out of it”—by virtue of its “vanishing being.” “Language’s world of meaning” is born through the “articulated couple of presence and absence.” The word itself is “already a presence made of absence,” and “through the word . . . absence itself comes to be named in an original moment whose perpetual recreation Freud’s genius detected in the child’s game.” In other words, as Lacan says elsewhere, “The fact that the symbolic is located outside of man is the very notion of the unconscious.”

We are brought here to face the fact that the symbolic order is “constitutive of the subject . . . the major determination the subject receives from the itinerary of the signifier.” At the same time, we see that the location of this symbolic is pivoted eternally upon the equivocation of the most primordial pair of presence and absence. Doubly we are immersed in the boundless and dark regions opened up by more illusive aspects of that Heideggerian recoupment of *aletheia* as truth. First, the location of the subject’s constitution, once again, is placed in an absence, i.e., in a place that is not given

---

662 Ibid., 228.
to metaphysical presence, though its effects are not just ubiquitous but foundational. Therefore, we are ever dealing with that which in no wise will presence itself, that is, submit itself to appearance or any of the human appearance-making procedures (perceptual, investigative, standing reserve, etc.). The psychic space is vast, and what is there is not here.

In other words, mirroring Heidegger—the essence of man is in his existence, and his existence is qualified by once again by ek-sistence, the very word Lacan uses to name “the eccentric place . . . in which we must necessarily locate the subject of the unconscious.”665 This is the most fascinating turn in Lacan’s Heideggerism, for it establishes the barred, displaced subject more within the full dimension of aletheia where the subject’s essence is articulated in terms of ek-stasis, being-toward-death, and freedom. This is the nature of the subject, proffered by the truth of being.

Lacan’s ontological inferences are rife precisely along these lines, of the intricate intersection of presence-absence and the ek-stasis of subjectivity. Around the nothing, around the emptiness, the subject spins the strange intersubjective reality of objects and personae that we have discussed. In more general terms, however, the difference that undergirds these is the prior difference of presence and absence, exemplified in their relation to the subject which does not resemble that established by metaphysics.

Taken with the lessons of the “Seminar on the ‘Purloined Letter’,” the “vanishing being” of the word, the signifier being the “itinerary” of the subject as well, we can only conclude that not only is the unconscious structured like a language—the discourse of

---

the other—but that the subject’s being thereby is the dual confession of its own equivocal ontological status, balancing back and forth between presence and absence.

At the heart of analysis is the hearing of the summons and recollection of the subject’s question, a question that, in his signifierness (Lacan’s word), issues from the subject. The discovery of this question bears from the moment the subject seeks and enters analysis. Language and speech “proposes itself as a disjunction . . . with the answer” precisely because the same speech and language in which the subject dwells and has lost itself is the same that has constituted him/her. This answer is revealed, necessarily and structurally, in the locus of the Other.

8.2 Death—Man’s Absolute Master

The named absence, the issuance of the signifier, the split of the subject, the question posed—all of these “traces of nothingness” are resolved in the question of death. As we saw in the previous chapter, the human being is initiated into death by its threefold trauma of early and everyday life. The subject is its manifold and constitutive reactions to this condition.

---

666 Cf. 247.

The effect of language is to introduce the cause into the subject [which can never be it-self]. Through this effect, he is not the cause of himself; he bears within himself the worm of the cause that splits him. For his cause is the signifier, without which there would be no subject in the real. But this subject is what the signifier represents . . .

One therefore does not speak to the subject. It [the signifier] speaks of him, and this is how he apprehends himself; he does so all the more necessarily in that, before he disappears as a subject beneath the signifier he becomes, due to the simple fact that it addresses him, he is absolutely nothing. But this nothing is sustained by his advent, now produced by the appeal made in the Other to the second signifier.
Death is the “absolute master” of mortal human beings. But the being of Western Dasein necessarily bears its own peculiar being-toward-death, a human being’s last and final fall, conditioned by the way that it takes it stand.

To the extent that the subject follows after the signifier, is represented by the flight or vacillation between absence and presence of the signifier and its purloined delivery to the other, the signifier – the split itself that is the subject – “materializes the instance of death.”

Death comes to represent itself to the subject, within the subject, in innumerable ways. Death is the first visitor to the subject, but paradoxically as the founding of the subject (the loss of the first object of desire, the mother, is of course the signal of the subject’s powerlessness). The human subject first feels the cold breath of death at birth. This chill teaches the first lesson to the subject, which it receives as an evil portent of its own being, indeed as the kakon of his being: “You are nothing in yourself, only that which is knit togheter around an absence.” The substantive memorial of this fact remains in what the subject will only experience as its miserable dependence juxtaposed with the advanced visual expectation of a wholeness (qua imago) that it will never be yet will always-already chase. With the signifier the being of the subject is thrown ahead of it. Powerlessness, impotence, absolute dependency—the mirror stage poses the decisive moment for an other image than this reality to entice, to harry and to entrap this subject forever.

---


For the very form of these experiences of impotence and the reaction against them is the form the ego takes on itself.\textsuperscript{670} In other words, death is the motive of the subject’s constitutive machinations, the pretense of power within the imaginary and symbolic:

Here it is death that one must stave off \textsuperscript{tromper} using a thousand ruses, and the other who is the subject’s ego enters into the game as a prop for the challenge of the thousand feats which alone assure him of the success of his ruses.\textsuperscript{671}

Lacan takes the features of primary narcissism to be indeed the double articulation for the phenomenon of life in a great Empodoclean duality of \textit{Eros} and \textit{Neikos}.\textsuperscript{672}

It would be one thing if the subject stopped here, but by its nature it is already primed in its reaction toward death to identify itself with and as an other through the structure of the unconscious. To some degree, then, the unconscious must be understood as the \textit{voice of death} itself, for the subject’s constitutive reactions not only announce his own being-towards-death, but also the unique aspect of its \textit{ek-stasis}, ensuring that the subject \textit{visits death to others} in its intersubjectivity at the same time it is always thus visited.

In one aspect of this being-towards-death, the subject is always attempting to submit others to its reactionary omnipotence.\textsuperscript{673} This is the misrecognition and

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{670} Ibid.
\end{flushleft}

\begin{flushleft}
\end{flushleft}

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{672} Cf. As Freud concluded in his \textit{Civilization and its Discontents}, these two forces are the opposing yet co-determining forces that “explain the phenomena of life.” Lacan agrees in a number of places, including: “life and death come together in a relation of polar opposites at the very heart of phenomena that people associate with life” (“The Function and Field of Speech . . .” from Écrits, 261).
\end{flushleft}

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{673} Freud, Sigmund, \textit{Civilization and its Discontents}, 57.
\end{flushleft}
aggression by which the subject interpolates his own chaos into the world, projecting his being upon others. The nature of this ecstasis, however, the truth of being itself, is the reciprocality of the subject’s Mit-Dasein. Falling Dasein’s aggression is turned back upon itself. The subject lashes out at him/herself in that the outwardness of its force of aggression is launched at the other in whom resides the subject’s alienated desire (object a).\(^{674}\)

Lacan provides one particular example that reveals this ecstasis perfectly in its relation to death. The example comes once again in the context of analysis, and reveals the temporal ek-stasis exhibited by the subject’s narcissistic aggression/suicidal aggression. Lacan somewhat subtly introduces this example by stating that “the unconscious needs time to reveal itself.” These are highly Heideggerian remarks.

Within the dialectical situation of treatment, the analyst serves as the “master of the truth” for the subject, such is the latter’s projection. Yet within this dialectic the slave awaits in expectation the master’s death.\(^{675}\) In realizing the mortality shared by master and slave, the slave decides he can continue to serve the master and forsake his jouissance until the master dies.\(^{676}\)

Meanwhile, all his work is governed by this intention and thus becomes doubly alienating. For not only is the subject’s creation [œuvre] taken away from him by another—the constitutive relation of all labor—but the subject’s recognition of his own essence in his creation, in which this labor finds its justification, eludes him no less, for he himself “is not in it.” He is in the anticipated moment of the master’s death, at which time he


\(^{675}\) Ibid., “The Function and Field of Speech . . .” from Écrits, 258.

\(^{676}\) Ibid., 259.
will begin to live; but in the meantime he identifies with the master as
dead and is thus already dead himself.\textsuperscript{677}

Like Heidegger’s thinking that draws him and his fellow thinkers near to the
Heidelberg bridge, the relation of the unconscious—which Lacan himself identifies as a
form of thinking, having its being in the truth of being and Word/Logos—places the
subject already in the place of death, “thus already dead himself.” The ekstasis of the
subject is such that it brings that subject always-already not merely to a representation
or imagining of its death but into the place of death itself.

Just as with Freud’s discovery of Eros and Neikos, we are dealing here with
primordial relations. As in Logos and aletheia, so with life and death, unifying love and
divisive strife. Mirroring Lao Tzu’s “life and death are born together,” Lacan insists that
“life and death come together in a relation of polar opposites at the very heart of
phenomena that people associate with life.”\textsuperscript{678}

Lacan’s phenomenology further confirms, within the context of analytic
experience, Heidegger’s own discoveries. Lacan would never entertain these ancient and
deply philosophical categories if they had not been thus confirmed. What is further
confirmed for Lacan is that death frames not only the subject’s every experience but
grounds the possibility of all human experience as such from the moment life begins.
This antiphony of death begins even before that, to the extent that the subject is
grounded before birth and beyond death in the worlding of human language, itself
delivering the letter of death in the signifier’s cut.

\textsuperscript{677} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{678} Ibid., 261.
That the subject can and indeed already is “in death” blurs every metaphysical line that demarcates the subject and reality, or objective and subjective reality. The unconscious precludes human reality from the artificial ideational closure of those demarcations. The subject is not a neat shell situated in a body. The reality of the human psychic world in fact takes the human being constantly and from the beginning beyond bodily, atomic, and substantial relations, including all those relying upon theories of energetics and forces and power.

From the beginning, a human being is confronted with what is brought to him/her in the unconscious, the exposure to nothing, the emptiness, to death—none of which can allow the human to be metaphysically locked into definition. We by definition are what cannot be said, what cannot be known, what cannot be seen or touched, etc. The unconscious presents us with this experience in all its life-defining force. Yet, from the beginning of its existence, psychoanalysis has profiled the subject that forms vis-à-vis a series of reactions to this most fundamental human reality. Psychoanalysis traces the reified response in the subject’s ego and within society and civilization.

Lacan’s special contribution lies in the fact that he follows Freud’s path further and incorporates the “signifierness” of Heidegger’s discourse. Through this path, Lacan hunts man’s every elusive “relation to the signifier” in order to “touch” it and to “change the course of his history by modifying the moorings of his being,” as the line that opens this chapter indicates.679 Lacan’s “translation” of Heidegger is in service to this end, and for us, therefore, we receive an elaboration of the falling that we are on the trail of.

8.3 Death: the Word of Man’s Freedom

Lacan brings this process full circle, touching our relation to the signifier, and therefore our being, by driving the “sovereign signifierness” of Heidegger’s speech (not, be it noted, discourse) to its furthest limit. Lacan finds this limit at the most troubling, constitutive fact of human subjectivity—in death. But, true to the implications of the round of aletheia, facing the portent of death and its elemental codetermination in life, it is right in death itself where the potential for help arrives. Lacan himself could find no better summation of this than Heidegger’s borrowing of Hölderlin’s “but where the danger lies grows what saves.” Just as it is for Heidegger, death is bound to necessity, but also to the possibility of freedom.

Within the aletheia of truth, self-mastery is the subject’s compensatory reaction against the presentation of death. Still, in the face of death there can be another response, which is the hope of psychoanalysis. All reaction freezes the subject within the claws of the powerlessness he seeks to abjure; he grows ever more powerless, ever more labored, ever more alienated the more aggressively he reacts to the force of death. The necessary mediation of existence proffers the subject an opportunity: any hindrance of its desires, any limits upon its power and will, the shear and necessary dependency—all of this is only grounded in another possibility. One can continue to insist upon self-mastery, obstinacy, violence against self and other, or one can take up the call issued forth from death, one can take up one’s being-towards-death.

880 Hölderlin, Freidrich, “Patmos,” from Hymns and Fragments, 89.
Lacan claims that at the point of interpreting Freud’s “death instinct,” we must regard the “poetics of Freud’s work.” Lacan states that psychoanalysis has rediscovered the imperative in man of “the Word as the law that has shaped him in its image.” This is perhaps one of the strangest things Lacan ever wrote in Écrits of all the strange things there. But this word’s relation to a piety that Heidegger elucidates is undeniable and profoundly important for the interpretation of the rest of Lacan’s work.

This gift of speech is one that can order the action and knowledge of the analyst, but it also calls forth the devotion—submission, Lacan calls it just after this. Lacan goes on to cite a story from the Upanishads. The novitiates of Prajapati, the god of thunder, beg him to “speak to us.” Three times he proclaims Da, and each time asks the followers if they have heard him. The first time they respond, “Thou hast said to us: Dāmyata, master yourselves,” which Lacan translates to say “that the powers above are governed by the law of speech.” To the second inquiry they respond, “Thou has said to us: Datta, give.” Lacan confirms that the “sacred text” means that “men recognize each other by the gift of speech.” The third time the novitiates respond, “Thou hast said to us: Dayadhvam, be merciful,” which Lacan translates as, “the powers below resound [ˈʁeːsɔ̃nɛ̃] to the invocation of speech.” “Submission, gift, grace.” This is the conclusion,

---


682 Ibid., 265:
Psychoanalytic experience has rediscovered in man the imperative of the Word as the law that has shaped him in its image. It exploits the poetic function of language to give his desire its symbolic mediation. May this experience finally enable you to understand that the whole reality of its effects lies in the gift of speech; for it is through this gift that all reality has come to man and through its ongoing action that he sustains reality. If the domain defined by this gift of speech must be sufficient for both your action and your knowledge, it will also be sufficient for your devotion. For it offers the latter a privileged field.
and to the novitiates Prajapati replies, “You have heard me.” This is the mysterious yet profound way Lacan ends his infamous lecture, “The Function and Field of Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis.”

Lacan is articulating a theory of language here that is so strikingly similar to Heidegger’s, though he couches it in psychoanalytic terms. The analyst is called by the ringing of language itself as it speaks from the subject. The hollowness of the subject provides the space in which this silence can sound. All the analyst needs is to listen, to attend, to devote him/herself to this gift of speech, indeed, to the worlding it conditions in the uniqueness of Dasein.

From the sounding of the subject in his discourse—from which speech must be delivered—Lacan is called to bear witness to the pitiful state this subject is in, particularly in neuroses. Behind all the masks the subject wears and finds Lacan spies that “absolute master,” death. Death has mastered man, and the splitting of the subject by virtue of the signifier has irremediably marked the subject. The subject’s delusional reactions to this situation further enslaves him/her. As Heidegger discovers, every reaction is still dominated by that against which it reacts in binary opposition, in opposing by will to power. This is indeed the Deleuzian model for combat and the struggle of ideas in philosophy, but it is a far cry from the Lacanian and Heideggerian discourses. Lacan discovers this same truth in the subject.

In Heideggerian terms, the poetic power of language is what grounds human being. The same is true for Lacan. The only power of the analyst is to, on the one hand,

---

684 Ibid., 223.
“exploit” this “poetic function” and, on the other hand, to diminish his own illusions and resistances “in order to accede to ‘being-towards-death’.”\textsuperscript{686} Indeed, no other knowledge, whether immediate or constructed, can be preferred by him to be made a power of . . . Thus he can now respond to the subject from the place he wants to respond from, but he no longer wants anything that determines this place.\textsuperscript{687}

Somehow these two are profoundly related, but we must, as always, knit together the issue in Lacan’s work. Our guiding principle ought to resound out of Lacan’s word—\textit{the gift of speech, submission, gift, grace}. By these Lacan aims to touch man’s relation to the signifier, and therefore his being.

Death is the co-principle of life, it therefore bounds life as the “limit” of existence and every individual and collective history. The “limit is death,” Lacan goes on, quoting Heidegger, “but as Heidegger puts it, as ‘the possibility which is the subject’s ownmost, which is unconditional, unsurpassable, certain, and as such indeterminable’—the subject being understood as defined by historicity.”\textsuperscript{688} Lacan finds his own thought so resonant with Heidegger’s that not only does he borrow the singular dimension of man’s existence in freedom as being-towards-death, but Lacan further sees fit in this “Heidegger quotation” to entirely substitute his \textit{subject} for Heidegger’s “Dasein,” a term to designate the human being Heidegger never uses in the affirmative sense in \textit{Being and Time} or thereafter. This is the deepest sense in which Lacan avows the Heideggerian, even going so far as to replace Heidegger’s grounding human terms as the site of Being and being’s \textit{alethic} revelation with his own subject, which doubtlessly by now fills the

\textsuperscript{686} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{687} Ibid.
same role—only as a specific interlocutor of a kind of Da-sein, i.e., the Western metaphysical.

In the repetition automism of its condition, the subject in its historic ekstasis has inserted the dead person [*le mort*] (death personified?) into the primordial triad of *Philia*, love, and *Neikos*, strife, as Lacan calls it.689 At this juncture, this historizing involves the repetitive incorporations of the incommensurable. The subject tries to shore up its limit, expand its omnipotent territory by including what is “finished in [*its*] history . . . the past in its real form . . . which manifests itself in an inverted form in repetition.”690 The subject learned this behavior in its very first act of “killing the thing,” in its *Fort/Da!* game of presencing and absencing, in its imaginary omnipotence effectuating the appearance and disappearance of an object.691

689 Ibid.

690 Ibid.

691 Cf. Ibid.: These are occultation games which Freud, in a flash of genius, presented to us so that we might see in them that the moment at which desire is humanized is also that at which the child is born into language.

We can now see that the subject here does not simply master his deprivation by assuming it—he raises his desire to a second power. For his action destroys the object that it causes to appear and disappear by *bringing about* its absence and presence in advance. His action thus negativizes the force field of desire in order to become its own object to itself. And this object, being immediately embodied in the symbolic pair of two elementary exclamations, announces the subject’s diachronic integration of the dichotomy of phonemes, whose synchronic structure the existing language offers up for him to assimilate; the child thus begins to become engaged in the system of the concrete discourse of those around him by reproducing more or less approximately in his *Fort! and Da!* the terms he receives from them.

*Fort! Da!* It is already when quite alone that the desire of the human child becomes the desire of another, of an alter ego who dominates him and whose object of desire is henceforth his own affliction.

Should the child now address an imaginary or real partner, he will see that this partner too obeys the negativity of his discourse, and since his call has the effect of making the partner slip away, he will seek to bring about the reversal that brings the partner back to his desire through a banishing summons.

Thus the symbol first manifests itself as the killing of the thing, and this death results in the endless perpetuation of the subject’s desire.”

The first symbol of man's impotence, the evidence of his loss in the struggle for power, will to power, perpetual endurance, is simultaneously and paradoxically his most enduring symbolic act. Lacan specifically brings up human burial as the preeminent and longest lasting symbolization. This is the life that “endures and is true,” of which Empedocles also memorializes “by throwing himself into Mount Etna, leaves forever present in the memory of men the symbolic act of his being-toward-death.”

Hence it is not in the delusion of self-mastery but in the freedom inherent in submission to the highest power that we do know—not in any way given over to man in his will to power, but to which man is always-already given over: the gift of speech. A devotion to this power is precisely the means with which the subject resolves the knot/not of his subjectivity, directly in “the subjectification of his [own] death.”

Notice, earlier I cited Lacan to the effect that the symbol is the “shape of man’s destiny, so total . . . that the Word absolves his being or condemns it—unless he reaches the subjective realization of being-toward-death.” This unless is crucial. It belies man’s “negative freedom . . . of a kind of speech that has given up trying to gain recognition . . .” The compassionate resolve and devotion of the analyst has a threefold effect upon all the subject’s laborious struggle: his exegesis resolves, his invocation dissolves, and

---

692 Cf. Ibid., 263: “The first symbol in which we recognize humanity in its vestiges is the burial, and death as a means can be recognized in every relation in which man is born into the life of his history.”

693 Ibid.


696 Ibid.
his dialectic absolves. The “hermetic” sealing of the subject in the terror and solitude of its alienation meet with compassion and the breaking of the silence of true or full speech.

The identification and misrecognition are conditioned by the continuous subjective falling, concretely, i.e., ontically, in every case of Lacan’s Dasein; ontologically speaking, from the aspect of truth, there is no such misrecognition, identification or freezing of the ideal-I without a primary and more originary freedom (be it a freedom to associate, appropriate, identify, etc.). Like the old adage, only that which was first found can be lost.

This identification, the unmediated and “infatuated” nature of which I tried to convey a moment ago, turns out to be the relation of being to the very best in it, since this ideal represents that being’s freedom.

Madness in particular is always Lacan’s example of this freedom, being the “permanent virtuality of a gap opened up in his essence.”

---

697 Ibid., 232: Hieroglyphics of hysteria, blazons of phobia, and labyrinths of Zwangsneurose [obsessive neurosis]; charms of impotence, enigmas of inhibition, and oracles of anxiety; talking arms of character, seals of self-punishment, and disguises of perversion: these are the hermetic elements that our exegesis resolves, the equivocations that our invocation dissolves, and the artifices that our dialectic absolves, by delivering the imprisoned meaning in ways that run the gamut from revealing the palimpsest to providing the solution of the mystery and to pardoning speech.

698 Ibid., 232-233: This subject has a particularly hard time due to the metapsychological reality of this struggle, which is Lacan’s third paradox of language’s relation to speech: that of the subject who loses his meaning in the objectifications of discourse. However metaphysical its definition may seem, we cannot ignore its presence in the foreground of our experience. For this is the most profound alienation of the subject in our scientific civilization, and it is this alienation that we encounter first when the subject begins to talk to us about himself. In order to eliminate it entirely, analysis should thus be conducted until it has reached the endpoint of wisdom.

The striking thing that I am trying to unpack here is the extent to which Lacan’s discourse relies upon ancient resources of wisdom, which derive from an entirely different provenance than that of knowledge. In an earlier note I discussed Foucault’s profound contribution to this distinction in a radically modern/post-modern context in his final lectures called The Courage of Truth.

And far from being an ‘insult’ to freedom, madness is freedom’s most faithful companion, following its every move like a shadow . . . . I believe that in relegating the causality of madness to the unsoundable decision of being in which human beings understand or fail to recognize their liberation, in the snare of fate that deceives them about a freedom they have not in the least conquered, I am merely formulating the law of our becoming as it is expressed in Antiquity’s formation.\textsuperscript{701}

Lacan’s formulation, again, resonates with Antiquity, and Heidegger’s recovery of the ancient \textit{aletheia} of being. This gap is the subject’s relation to truth and freedom, the latter of which is located in truth—as the ek-sistasis of the subject, the freedom to comport itself within the midst of beings and in relation to being. The fall of Lacan’s Dasein is conditioned, but not indeterminably so, for this falling determination is essentially historical, that is, metaphysical.

Freedom’s “minute blade” balances upon this possibility of madness, the opening of the ontology of the subject. It is this minute blade because within the play of truth there lies the danger to further exacerbate what is harrying the subject. The freedom of the subject is such that it can be lost or it can be found: “While nothing can guarantee that we will not get lost in a free movement toward truth, a little nudge will suffice to ensure that we change truth into madness.”\textsuperscript{702} Lacan understands the new era dawning on mass civilization to be the arena in which this minute blade gets decided.\textsuperscript{703}

\textsuperscript{700} Ibid., 144.
\textsuperscript{701} Ibid., 145.
\textsuperscript{702} Ibid., 156.
\textsuperscript{703} Ibid., 156–157: the art of the imago will soon be able to play off the values of the imago, and some day we will see serial orders of “ideals” that withstand criticism: that is when the label of “true guarantee” will take on its full meaning . . . . The aspects of the imago—which are more invisible to our eyes (made, as they are, for the signs of the money changer) than what the desert hunter knows how
The entire metapsychological scope comes into play with this slight word in which Lacan relegates the “aspects of the imago” as “made . . . for the signs of the money changer.” As I touched on in the discussion on the essence of technology, civilization and metaphysics are rooted together in their treatment of the individual as a “mass man,” to borrow from Marcel. Here we see the implication that the “aspects of the imago” are produced for the moneychanger. The subject’s every identification is primed for the commodification of capitalism. Zizek, Badiou—these and countless others have identified this problem, and articulated it in creative ways.

The subject returns to itself from the struggle and endless forced labor in articulating itself in terms of discourse, which in turn articulates the subject’s desire as another, only to be taken away by another (this is what the money-changer knows). The subject does not even know the falling it has been subject to as the ringing of emptiness. Death has resounded in its being. It has always fought against its death, represented in its powerlessness and dependence. Born into this symbolic, it has unwittingly recapitulated and suffered it, visiting its suffering ever more upon itself and others in misrecognition and aggression.

to see the imperceptible trace of, namely, the gazelle’s footprint on the rock—will someday be revealed to us.

We know what it leads to: to the ever more intentional undertakings of a technocracy; to the psychological standardization of subjects who are seeking jobs; and to acceptance of the established boundaries of society as it currently exists, head bent forward under the [weighty] standard [étalon] of the psychologist. I say that the meaning of Freud’s discover is radically opposed to that.

For Lacan, the individual is necessarily grounded in the meta-psychological, Cf. Ibid.:
Freud brought to the question of the source of morality the invaluable significance implied in the phrase Civilization and Its Discontents or, in other words, the breakdown by means of which a certain psychic function, the superego, seems to find in itself its own exacerbation, as the result of a kind of malfunctioning of the brakes which should limit its proper authority.
The invocation of the psychoanalyst’s silence, of his perceive mastery of knowledge and the subject’s truth, bears witness to the spinning out of this tale. The subject can only end in suicide or exhaustion. But the analyst, in his devotion to the gift of speech, allows the resounding of silence to offer the space for the subject to meet itself for the first time, precisely within its death, its powerlessness, its dependence. The subject has always already fallen because its stand has always been delusionary, illusory. Dis-illusion is the proper conclusion, i.e., humiliation. The portée of the subject has always-already landed him/her in falling. It hated that which constituted it; it therefore despised its very being, which is always an impossible place to stand.

Lacan articulates the structure of the fall of the subject of metaphysics, just as we have seen in Heidegger and the exemplary case of Nietzsche, along with the mythopoetic Man and Woman of Genesis. Like the conclusion of Heidegger and Nietzsche, the hope is not to rekindle or reinvigorate the struggle or the exhausted subject. If Lacan posits any response, any possibility, it is that of a principle of non-will, even non-will as opposed to the good will of the beautiful soul. Furthermore, Lacan sees that great devouring that occurs today, exemplified for him in an interview in the fact that TV is consuming us. However, once we tire of being eaten up, “we will stop and turn our attention to the true things—namely, what I call religion.” This mysterious phrase rings every Heideggerian bell, resonating with the piety involved in facing what cannot in any way be submitted to human willing.

We have seen a number of indications that the human being’s being is constituted by his relation to being and beings. This points to the contingency of what

---


706 Ibid., 79.
Lacan sees as the human condition, the changes of relation to being the subject can undergo. One of these most profound changes that Lacan realizes and hopes to enact again is the human being’s relation to being—that is, his/her relation to language.

Heidegger sums it up best for Lacan, as I have shown earlier:

It is language that tells us about the nature of a thing, provided that we respect language’s own nature. . . language remains the master of man. Perhaps it is before all else man’s subversion of this relation of dominance that drives his nature into alienation. That we retain a concern for care in speaking is all to the good, but it is of no help to us as long as language still serves us even then only as a means of expression. Among all the appeals that we human beings, on our part, can help to be voiced, language is the highest and everywhere the first.

The destiny of being and being of beings, especially that of the human, has been increasingly veiled as the human being has been further and further driven, delivered, into the “forced labor,” into the exchange of the imago. Human being in this condition is increasingly calculative, as both Lacan and Heidegger in their own ways contend.

Every reaction of the subject is counting, measuring, calculating within this same starvation economy. Language itself is subjected to the ends and means of acquiring and channeling and capitalizing from desire, power. The object of such an endless good chase is always already vanished, but that will not keep the poor subject from noticing and chasing. Craving, impulsive, slave to the desire of desire, when will we see, Lacan asks with Heidegger, rather that Language remains the master of man,

---

It is the onto [in ontogenesis] that serves here as a smokescreen, for it is not the individual as an entity but rather the subject’s relation to being, assuming this relation is based on discourse. The past of the concrete discourse of the human line can be refound therein, inasmuch as in the course of man’s history things have happened to him that have changed the subject’s relation to being.

that we are suppliants, hearers and speakers, novices and recipients of the divinization of the Word.
Conclusion

This work is an analysis into the piety of thinking, which Heidegger argued in various ways. This primal thinking cannot leap to conclusions, and cannot leap into its way unguided or unbidden, and without at the same time unlearning much of the presuppositions that guide metaphysical thinking. Thus it must intimately come to know those paths that have brought it here. My work is only a little step in a long path to such a recovery and such a thinking. Why another restatement, albeit one situated uniquely within the context of falling? Because the work never seems completed when the matter is to recall errant thinking back into its provenance, such is the style of Western falling: unless it is recalled, the path of mortal thinking and willing tends toward falling in the kingdom of errancy.

Therefore I have been elaborating the theme of falling and what belongs to it—taking a stand, humiliation—in order finally to situate these within the necessary complex of the comportment to the aletheia of being, and to insist upon a special necessity therein for humility. Falling is within the metaphysical situation the existential and civilizational pathway of Western Dasein—and likely human Dasein—into what Heideggerian thinking establishes as the proper comportment to the aletheia of being.

An immediate leap out of metaphysical thinking is not only undesirable but impossible. It is our native tongue, philosophically and commonly. Metaphysics is the innermost relationship between common sense and the highest philosophy, what they
both share in common, an accounting of their presuppositions. Metaphysics is the thinking that predominates Western thought, the genealogy of our heritage as scholars, theists or atheists, materialists or spiritualists . . . every such opposition derives from this modality of thinking. It is functional, productive and beneficial in innumerable ways for humans. The very conditions for the possibility of our lives and continuing existence somehow appear to demand this form of thinking. But if it moves along without its partner, meditative thinking, it is bankrupt and proceeds only nihilistically into the nothing. Humans will only proceed with this line of thinking at the greatest detriment and cost to themselves and many other beings besides. A step back is required, and for many reasons more than just survival. When all is said and done, thinking that is persisting within the realm of the aletheia and questioning of being is a constant attunement of human comportment that recalls some of the simplest and oldest necessities of human beings, summed up for us in the word *piety*—questioning-humility, thankfulness, hoping, sacrificing, not mistaking the “absence” of anything that has not given its own account of its absence.

Yet in our situation this is not what we find. The trend of leading theorists and philosophers and those who study them is now to conceive of the *horror of the Real*. What is “out there” on the “other side” may be conceived as the universe’s darkness or the unknown and unknowable material substrate that underlies human consciousness (falsely called “being” or “non-being”), but it is almost always perceived as the properly black nothing, the horror of the non-human. We recounted above the numerous responses to this horrifying real. Philosophical thinking, modern Western thinking is now in the grips of a *fascination* in what Kolokowski calls “metaphysical horror.” It
either finds abject desolation (post-humanism, the grotesque monstrations of the bare real, the unassimilable, the unconscious, etc.) or the rejuvenated call to voracious human will and auto-determination—which all ends in the same, as the poet-thinker’s Nietzsche’s thinking of the metaphysical madness attests.

In this work I have staged a leap out of all this metaphysical despair by attempting to free thinking from the domination of metaphysical falling. To be thus free we have to understand how we got here, and what is said about us. Each of the popular solutions now attempted (despair/nothing and more willing and self-determination) are already projected into the continuation of metaphysical falling, and even exacerbate the plunge.

Thought has yet to grow primal enough, to step back decisively enough, if it continues to project human horrors onto being, which is no different a procedure than projecting human successes and pride onto it. We rethink our principle, start from the Real or material existence or – God forbid – from religious convictions, but any meaningful step back that delivers us over to reservedness, let alone silence, gratitude, stillness, humility – *piety* – is unthinkable, out of the question! Especially when God is dead, and everybody knows it.

Falling, on the other hand, is not a projection or invention but a discovery, the recovery of something long known. No doubt, it is described and decried everywhere today in its ontic multiplicities, but not in its relationship to the truth of being. The *phenomenology* of falling, however, illuminates its structure in *stance* and *humiliations.* Falling bears an intimate relation therefore to death, as announced in the biblical account, in Nietzsche’s last signature (the epitaph of metaphysics), and in Lacan’s
neurotic/normal constitution of the Western metaphysical subject. Many assume today that falling will continue ontically into death of the species, until falling can no longer fall. Perhaps this is so; in fact, perhaps death, as falling’s final cessation and rest, is the only hope for falling. However, this investigation points the way toward another possibility from out of the situation, explicitly articulated in Heidegger’s insistence on piety.

What I hope will proceed from this groundwork is another kind of engagement with aletheia in its dual relation of concealment and unconcealment. The adventure truly only begins with the sort of remarks made here. I have prepared the ground, in taking the lead from falling, into a thinking engagement into the possible stance of getting back up again, or restanding. The question of how to stand again is much like that which physical rehab patient asks—“How do I learn to walk again?” We are now prepared to stretch this investigation beyond the boundaries of metaphysically conceived presence and absence into uncharted territory of envisaging a wholly different kind of human relation to presence and absence, and in particular in two ways.

Mytho-poetically, the sayings of Jesus justify him as the founder of such a relation. Furthermore, it is within this context that I would like to rethink our metaphysical comportment in terms of what is non-presencing. In his latest work, in 1973, Heidegger calls it a “phenomenology of the inapparent.” Let us imagine Jesus as the Teacher of this way, and to consider some his words that his followers wrote down and passed on to the future. Let us imagine that a word is speaking, and not just any word, but one that calls for response, properly, Language, and in a special kind of word in particular: “You have heard that the law of Moses says . . . but I say that if you even
look upon a woman with lust in your heart, you are already an adulterer.”

Words like this intimate that the Teacher did not hold a metaphysical view of the world. In the most profound sense possible, words such as this hint at this: what one does with one’s mind is what one does with oneself. Thinking takes on a presence that no metaphysical ratiocination can account for. What neuroplasticity is saying about the mind today—that what we do with it and what is done to it forms the very pathways of its thinking—receives a strange conversation partner in Jesus, who radicalizes this relation. We have a lead in this regard to connecting the thought with Heidegger’s own thinking. What Jesus is recorded to have said finds a correlation with Heidegger’s strange claims about the Heidelberg bridge and what he says about his presence in the lecture hall: “From this spot here, we are there at the bridge . . . may even be nearer to that bridge and to what it makes room for than someone who uses it daily as an indifferent river crossing.”

And regarding the lecture hall door:

When I go toward the door of the lecture hall, I am already there . . . I am there. I am never here only, as this encapsulated body; rather, I am there, that is, I already pervade the room, and only thus can I go through it.

The question arises as to how Heidegger’s statements are any different from Jesus’—“Do not be afraid. I am always with you, even to the end of the age”?

To this extent, we may come to see Jesus as a poet-thinker of the highest order.

---

Matthew 5:27-30 (NIV).


Ibid., 155.

Matthew 28:20 (NIV)
The second indication leading from these present investigations is from one of Heidegger’s primordial thinkers, Heraclitus, in a remaining fragment in which this mysterious word is delivered: “Even a soul submerged in sleep is hard at work and helps make something of the world.”713 It is held that thinking cannot approach “the nothing,” the other side. Metaphysically, if thought is representation and is limited by “reality,” this is true. But, following Heidegger, if we risk a confrontation with this word’s truth in the open disclosure of being—even to face that which remains undisclosed—and there await and seek. Perhaps we would think into death as what is not nothing but is the “shelter of being,” and reach further into mortal nature as those who take up death as death, as the appearance and disclosing of what conceals itself. Then we would follow after Heraclitus’ word and question who or what are these souls submerged in sleep, and who or what are we in the face of death? Is there a way in which we could begin to understand a Socrates—a Jesus—as one of those submerged in sleep, hard at work, and what it is and how it is that they are helping making something of the world? We have our metaphysical ways of answering these questions: these “souls” are memories, representations, their thoughts are conveyed in the words ascribed to them, and with or against them the living can and do take allegiance. Indeed, even this answer would be the arrow whose shot would clear new ground into the possibility of a non-metaphysical appropriation to the aletheia of being, by way of an openness characteristic solely of the piety of thinking.

---

713 Heraclitus, Fragments, 57.
Bibliography


———. *Nietzsche: Vols. 3 and 4 (Vol. 3: The Will to Power as Knowledge and as Metaphysics*;


