

Authentic Falling: Heidegger's Paradox?¹

ETHAN J. LEIB, *Yale University*

ABSTRACT: *The paper addresses the question of whether authenticity is a conceptual possibility for Dasein given Heidegger's insistence in Being and Time that Dasein is necessarily fallen into its mode of everydayness (i.e., "falling" is an existential as opposed to an existentiell) and that fallenness is necessarily inauthentic. By exploring the relationship between Dasein and existentials, I reveal a structure of possibility in all existentials that provides the seeming paradox a resolution. I use the concept of "logical-existentialism" to explore what Heidegger may have meant when he talks of existentials and I look at some passages from The History of the Concept of Time to read propensity (Hang) as the substance of falling. In the process, I address and discard (but incorporate) the only two real attempts in the secondary literature to cope with the paradox: that of Hubert Dreyfus and Rudi Visker.*

RÉSUMÉ: *L'article se penche sur la question de savoir si l'authenticité est une possibilité conceptuelle du Dasein, étant donnée l'insistance de Heidegger dans Être et Temps à l'effet que le Dasein est nécessairement déchu dans ses modes de quotidienneté (c'est-à-dire que la déchéance est un existential par opposition à existentiell), et que la déchéance est nécessairement inauthentique. À travers l'exploration de la relation entre le Dasein et les existantiaux, je révèle une structure de possibilité dans tous les existantiaux qui permet une résolution du paradoxe apparent. J'utilise le concept d'«existentialisme logique» pour explorer ce que Heidegger voulait sans doute dire par les existantiaux, et je considère certains passages des The History of the Concept of Time pour interpréter la propension (Hang) comme substance de la déchéance. Ce faisant, j'aborde et rejette (mais incorpore) les deux seules tentatives de résolution du paradoxe dans la littérature secondaire: celle de Hubert Dreyfus et de Rudi Visker.*

"The merely possible — so far as admissible at all — lies within the actual, so we might say here again, in a different context, that the so-called possible worlds of fiction lie within actual worlds."

Nelson Goodman, *Ways of Worldmaking*, p. 104.

1. The Paradox

In *Being and Time*, Heidegger attempts to allow for the possibility of the authenticity of Dasein while maintaining that part of Dasein's essential

structure is that of fallenness. Because falling is an *existentiale*, an existential or essential structure, and because fallenness is precisely the feature of Dasein which absorbs it in the world (and consequently in its everydayness, its inauthentic mode), Dasein seems to be primordially and essentially inauthentic. And this is at odds with even a potentiality for authenticity. Authenticity, on the Heideggerian paradigm, is Dasein's resolute removing of itself from its everydayness and its banality. But its banality is hard to avoid when that banality, according to Heidegger, is instantiated by Dasein's self-definition taking place through the 'they.' Because Dasein has no choice but to see itself through the lens of the referential totality presented by others, the 'they,' Dasein is trapped in everydayness and inauthenticity.

In *Being and Time*, after characterizing some of the activities of the 'they,' the collective public interpretation of the world, Heidegger embarks upon characterizing some of the essential activities or "definite existential characteristics" of Dasein's existence (BT, 219)². One of these existentials is falling. Heidegger tries to keep falling from being a negative evaluation of Dasein, but it is difficult to see how he prevents this rendering given his description of falling as having "mostly the character of Being-lost in the publicness of the 'they.' Dasein has, in the first instance, fallen away from itself as an authentic potentiality for Being its Self, and has fallen into the 'world'" (BT, 220).

Heidegger presents falling as an absorption in the 'world.' In falling, Dasein absorbs the activities of the 'they;' idle talk (in language), curiosity, and ambiguity. But falling is not to be understood as a fall from a higher state, Heidegger asserts, because it is an existential, which means that Dasein always and essentially falls: "An *existential mode* of Being-in-the-World is documented in the phenomenon of falling" (BT, 221). Once falling receives conceptual priority as part of Dasein's constitution, inauthenticity is then presented as a possible mode or way for Dasein to fall: "Not-Being-its-Self [or inauthenticity] functions as a *positive* possibility of that entity which... is absorbed in a world" (BT, 220).

Inauthenticity, however, appears to be more than a mere mode of possibility, more than simply one way to fall. In Division One, in fact, Heidegger seems to present this modality (of inauthenticity) as an intrinsic structure within falling itself. Heidegger writes that because the way things have been publicly interpreted by the 'they' becomes a temptation to Dasein at the outset, the temptation "holds Dasein fast in its fallenness" (BT, 222). Fallenness is tempting, tranquilizing and alienating: Falling is tempting because it allows Dasein not to hold itself responsible for what it says and does by dissolving itself in a conformism to the norms of the 'they.' Because the 'they' becomes a source of meaning in falling, Dasein is not held accountable. Moreover, falling is tranquilizing because the 'they' convinces

Dasein that it leads a meaningful life and it is therefore disburdened (BT, 165). Because in falling Dasein can absorb itself (and its self) into the world of intelligibility where its words are understood all-too-well, Dasein sees itself as part of that 'they' which is meaningful in its capacity 'as the source of meaning. Last, falling is alienating because it "closes off from Dasein its authenticity" (BT, 222). Heidegger further tightens the paradox by claiming that the alienating facet of falling "forces [Dasein] into its inauthenticity" (BT, 222-3). If Dasein essentially falls, and falling is essentially alienating, this alienation forces Dasein into inauthenticity. Falling seems to be essentially falling away from authenticity.

Yet another direction from which to expose the paradox (which more explicitly foreshadows the efforts at reconciliation attempted here) is the following modal logic: Since " 'one is' what one does," and what one does is necessarily done the way others do it, no one can be individuated in everydayness (BT, 283). And every day, Dasein finds itself in everydayness.

Dasein's structure of falling is Heidegger's explanation of how the 'they' gets integrated into Dasein's activity. Because Dasein is essentially absorbed in the 'world,' it is essentially absorbed by the 'they' because Dasein must do things the way the 'they' does them. Heidegger writes that "everydayness is determinative for Dasein even when it has not chosen the 'they' for its 'hero'" (BT, 422)—Dasein hardly has a choice in the matter. Since authenticity "is not something which floats above falling everydayness" (BT, 224), Dasein's falling places it in the 'they,' and even authenticity cannot extract Dasein from the falling that yields Dasein constitutively inauthentic. Because Dasein's Being is always an issue for it, as predetermined by Heidegger's primordial structure of care, Dasein is always somewhat uncomfortable with itself. To flee its discomfiture, it seeks the comfort of the lostness of the 'they' by way of falling. And because it tries to lose itself therein, it finds itself in a mode of inauthenticity.

Authenticity seems impossible to instantiate if fallenness is taken to be an existential. Although Heidegger wants to maintain that authenticity is an existentiell modification of Dasein's existential of falling, he also seems to consider fallenness itself a falling away from authentic Being³. The essential tension is how Dasein can avoid *conformism* when it cannot make sense of itself without a penetrating level of *conformity*. This seems to yield Division Two's positing of a potentiality for authenticity a futile effort. By Heidegger's own standards, existentials cannot be undone.

2. The Program

I shall look at some ways of resolving the above paradox. I first examine the work of Hubert Dreyfus. In his *Being-in-the-World*, he argues that falling is

not essentially inauthentic as a *psychological* phenomenon even though *structurally* Dasein is always fallen (invoking a tenuous distinction between falling and fallenness). This distinction might help if Heidegger made this dichotomy in his text, but he does not⁴. Moreover, Dreyfus claims that for Heidegger psychological falling is merely a tendency toward absorption in the 'they,' yet Heidegger makes clear that even this tendency renders Dasein inauthentic.

A further effort at reconciliation is made by Rudi Visker in his "Dropping: The 'Subject' of Authenticity; *Being and Time* on Disappearing Existentials and True Friendship with Being." There, Visker suggests that Heidegger never intended for fallenness to be an essential structure of Dasein. Rather, it is a mere structure of possibility which can be overcome by authentic Dasein. Visker doesn't (and can't) deny that Heidegger calls falling an existential; he just claims that it is an existential that can disappear. This reading seems to alter the status of falling from an *existentiale* to an *existentiell*, from an essential feature of Dasein to an inessential one. This interpretation presents problems not only because it is untextual, but also because it has the effect of changing Heidegger's project from what he considered to be both a descriptive and prescriptive task, to a solely normative one. This undermines the project of *Being and Time* because Heidegger makes clear that he is not doing culture criticism, but an existential analytic of Dasein's constitution.

Building upon Irad Kimhi's understanding of what he terms "logical-existentialism,"⁵ I will reveal falling *qua* existential to be a characteristic which is defined by Dasein's *propensity* for falling. Indeed, this approach suggests that the whole catalogue of existentials which Heidegger delineates are, at bottom, strong possibilities. Because Dasein is defined by its activity, and this activity is usually marked by fallenness, it is as if Dasein, as a result of its thrownness into a limited number of possibilities, is commanded to fall. But it is precisely this command which allows Dasein to defy the command. In proper "logical-existential" form, an order opens up two possibilities: Because the order carries with it the normative element of being-executed, the order can be fulfilled by carrying out the relevant action. On the other hand, the order may be defied. Yet, it is the order in the first instance which opened up the possibility for its own being-defied. The analogy with falling and authenticity is striking: Heidegger writes in his *History of the Concept of Time* that "falling as a tendency of being is a priori possible only on the basis of a *propensity for it*" (HCT, 282)⁶. This suggests that all possibilities of Dasein must be grounded, so to speak, on a descriptive propensity, and that description defines a normativity. In simple terms, Dasein usually falls and this falling opens up the possibility of flouting that very propensity. As Heidegger tells us in the beginning of *Being and Time*, "accordingly those characteristics which can be exhibited in [Dasein] are not 'properties' [...]; they are in each

case possible ways for it to be, and no more than that" (BT, 67). So Dreyfus and Visker are on the right track to be looking at what it means to be an existential, but they miss the relation between possibility and necessity, the relation of possibility to existentials. Visker ruins his reading by suggesting that an existential can disappear and Dreyfus ruins his by not focusing on the modal logic and getting muddled in psychology. By exposing this logical relation between possibility and actuality, we may finally resolve the essential tension of the existentiality of falling. If propensity commands us in the actual world, the possibilities created by the command lie within that actual world.

3. The Dreyfus Affair and its Failure

Hubert Dreyfus, in his book *Being-in-the-World*, devotes a full chapter to falling trying to "disentangle a structural from a psychological sense of the term [falling]."⁷ The structural account is a purely formal elaboration of how Dasein is the way it is and the consequences of its living in the particular world it does, while the psychological account charts motivations. While Dreyfus appreciates the gravity of the paradox, his method of treating the issue by distinguishing structural and psychological grounds for falling is not grounded in Heidegger's text. Moreover, his distinctions cannot provide a resolution to the paradox in the only case where it can make a difference. That is, two of the models of falling which Dreyfus presents (as absorption and as language) can be labeled structural and can also be read to allow for the possibility of authenticity. But in the last case (in falling as reflexivity), where Dreyfus seeks psychological motivation, we see that Dreyfus's categories provide no help in precisely the case where the paradox emerges, where the psychological account must be true for the structural account to obtain. And it is in this case also where the possibility for authenticity disappears, so to speak.

The structural account, Dreyfus maintains, demands Dasein's fallenness as a direct result of Dasein's need to use the activity of the 'they' as its source of intelligibility. As the architecture of Heidegger's work places the discussion of fallenness directly after the discussion of the 'they' and its modes of communicating through idle talk, curiosity, and ambiguity, this structural account is faithful to Heidegger. Division One's analytic study indicates that falling is a structure that absorbs Dasein in the 'they' insofar as Dasein needs to be part of the community of intelligibility. Because Dasein needs to make sense of what it uses (as equipment) and what it does through the forms and norms that the 'they' prescribes, in this structural sense, Dasein necessarily falls (into the 'they').

Division Two's treatment of falling occurs when Heidegger broaches anxiety and resoluteness. In this context, Dreyfus argues that Heidegger more directly addresses falling as a psychological phenomenon. And when treated as such, according to Dreyfus, there is a way of getting out of falling into authenticity⁸. Dreyfus seems to relegate the psychological account of falling to existentiell status because authenticity allows us, on this model, to take over falling, that is, to be able, in a manner of speaking (but only speaking), to transcend it. To his credit, however, the structural account of falling, is preserved for Dreyfus as an existential of Dasein. Dreyfus writes that

all other versions of falling that are associated with inauthenticity, and so would not characterize authentic Dasein, cannot qualify as existentials, but are only existentiell possibilities. Heidegger's confusion of an existential and an existentiell sense of falling parallels his confusion in the discussion of the one between *conformity* as the existential and *conformism* as the existentiell source of leveling⁹.

In this way, Dreyfus preserves a type of (structural) falling as an existential and the possibility for authenticity as a way out of the psychological phenomenon of falling. But who is really confused here?

Dreyfus argues that there are three different versions of falling in *Being and Time*: Falling can be traced to absorption in the world, to language, and to reflexivity, and the results of these fallings are Dasein as lost, uprooted, and covered-up, respectively¹⁰. "In falling, Dasein turns away from itself," but Heidegger does not immediately tell us why or how falling leads to a turning away (BT, 230). And Dreyfus argues that this result is brought forth for both structural and psychological reasons.

As absorption in the world, falling leads to Being-lost. Dasein's own existence is somehow closed off by its absorption. Dasein's activity can only be understood by appealing to the interpretations of the 'they,' and in this structural way, Dasein always needs to fall, and to an extent difficult to measure but impossible to ignore, to be lost in everydayness. In this way, absorption is an essential feature of the existential of falling. And this falling does not preclude the possibility for authenticity because "even the authentic self that is in touch with itself 'must forget itself if, lost in the world of equipment, it is to be able 'actually' to go to work and manipulate something.'" ¹¹ Dreyfus explicitly presupposes that Heidegger mistakenly conflates the account of fleeing as a psychological necessity with this

account of absorption as a structural necessity. By separating the two facets of the account (which may be unjustified), Dreyfus tries to allow for Dasein *not* to be essentially inauthentic even though structurally it must always fall.

Dasein's use of language is uprooting as well, and it too is part of Dasein's structural falling. Because Dasein needs to conform to the language use and the idle talk of the 'they,' Dasein is essentially in untruth. By making sense of its self and others, Dasein "must lose its immediate relation to the world and to itself. It may then yield to this structural necessity in order to uproot its understanding of itself and its world."¹² It suffices to say that through language Dasein is in some respect uprooted from the world and from itself. This uprootedness results because Dasein cannot use language except as a convention of the 'they.' Even if it is the case that language is the 'house of being' as Heidegger liked to fashion it, and that there is no conceivable Dasein as such without language, it still must lose itself in the house to join the community. Yet, this should not preclude the possibility for authenticity either: Because Dasein speaks and, in so doing, employs the understanding of the 'they,' Dasein is structurally removed from itself only in a vacuous sense. Authenticity would *not* amount to speaking a unique language unintelligible to all. It would be a way to understand uniquely the words used¹³ and take ultimate responsibility for Dasein's groundlessness effected in depending on the 'they' (because the language of the 'they' is not a true ground: Dasein absolves itself of responsibility by retreating into the 'they' and its modes of intelligibility)¹⁴. Presumably, here too, within language, Dasein has a means of achieving authenticity.

So far so good for our project here even if Dreyfus seems to be at cross-purposes with his stated objectives (*i.e.*, his structural account is looking more and more existentiell). But the third aspect of Dreyfus's structural fallenness reveals how the structural and psychological accounts are necessarily interrelated and how Dreyfus's model is impoverished. Without the psychological account, the third part of the structural account does not obtain: It is for this reason that Heidegger *must* combine (or conflate) the two accounts.

The last facet of structural falling that Dreyfus diagnoses is reflexivity. This feature forces Dasein to absorb its absorption and its use of the language of the 'they' and construct its reflexive self-identity and self-interpretation in terms of those phenomena. And this move of interpretation in the terms of the 'they' "could give rise to the traditional notion of human beings as self-contained, occurrent subjects," which is precisely the type of self-understanding which Heidegger argues against although he realizes that it is nearly a fact of human nature to have this misguided self-interpretation¹⁵. But, for Heidegger, to mistake human beings for subjects is an inauthentic, undifferentiated mode of Being because it is appropriated from the 'they.'

Dasein is essentially self-interpreting because Dasein's Being is always an issue for it (as a function of care).

But how does Dasein make the move to interpret itself as a subject? Why does it absorb the 'they's' depiction? Here is precisely where a motive is necessary. Whereas absorption and language use occur simply by being-in-the-world as a social being (using a hammer to hammer and calling a hammer a 'hammer' are social realities which could never yield Dasein inauthentic), reflexivity requires a more textured causality. And when Heidegger seeks the motive for the distortion of self-understanding through the 'they,' he appeals to his psychological account which even Dreyfus cannot deny. The structural is dependent on the psychological and Dreyfus's attempt to distinguish them (*qua* existentials/existentiells) is an imposition on Heidegger's text. *Heidegger ultimately sees fleeing, Dreyfus's word for an existentiell way of psychological falling, as the ultimate motivation for the existential of falling and, as such, is equiexistential* (if you will allow such a perverse Heideggerian neologism).

The distinction that Dreyfus draws to resolve the paradox turns out to be no help. The structural and psychological accounts are purposefully combined by Heidegger himself and even Dreyfus recognizes that the structural account is somewhat dependent upon the motives in the psychological account. "Dasein turns away from itself in accordance with its ownmost pull of falling" (BT, 229). *And this pull is the psychological reason that Dasein structurally is what it is.* Our dilemma remains.

The psychological account is just as much an existential precisely because it is what makes the full version of the structural account possible. And everyone agrees that the structural account is an existential. Ironically, the first two elements of structural falling do not condemn Dasein to inauthenticity (in any more than a trivial sense). For authenticity to change anything about Dasein, it must be possible to undo only the third aspect of structural fallenness. An analysis of Dreyfus's account of reflexivity reveals an ineluctability, that is, exposes the existential character of the psychological realm. So, Dreyfus is lead down the same paradoxical path Heidegger traverses. Whereas the absorption and language structures within falling are relatively benign, Dreyfus's diagnosis of reflexivity proves to be a radiating tumor from which Dasein cannot be cured. And even though Heidegger encourages "weaning from the conventionalities of the 'they,'" the detoxification process (*Entwöhnung*) can never really occur (BT, 444)¹⁶. As we discover here, the third aspect of fallenness is only structurally true precisely because the psychological account is required. Heidegger does not make the distinction between accounts precisely because he cannot: the accounts are inter-dependent¹⁷.

4. Visker's Attempt and his Failure

We might simply conclude that the paradox stands and agree with Heidegger who agrees with Yorck that "paradoxicality is a mark of truth" (BT, 454)¹⁸. Or we can provide yet another attempt at resolution. Rudi Visker, in the aforementioned article, tries a different means to allow Heidegger "to keep to the promise of [*Being and Time*]'s opening pages where it was suggested that everydayness need not be inauthentic."¹⁹ Visker's approach is a description of falling which retains its status of an existential, precluding its becoming a mere existentiell. But he allows the existential to disappear. Yet, this formulation defies Heidegger's structure of Dasein. Falling is not an existential that is overcome in the future (by way of anticipation of death as it turns out). Even trivially this concept challenges logic: Dasein is always in the present and is always falling. A futural attitude may help Dasein modify its falling, but we cannot suggest that falling stops. But since this is what authenticity requires, this is what Visker wants to maintain. If Dasein can really take over falling and extract itself from it, and in that movement make it disappear, then it could not have been an existential from the outset. Existentials are not primordial conditions from which Dasein may remove itself. Rather, they are essential characteristics which cannot be overcome. This is exactly what distinguishes them from existentiells. And Heidegger's project of describing the constitution of Dasein would be undermined if Visker is right that he is encouraging a fall out of fallenness. The analytic of Dasein may have a normative component, but it is primarily a descriptive task.

Visker's main thesis is that "strictly speaking, the existential character of falling is due to its being a structural *possibility* inherent in Dasein's Being, and not to its being a structure *as such*."²⁰ Visker suggests that the existential is merely the tendency towards falling which then allows for the existentiell possibilities of authenticity if Dasein overcomes the tendency or inauthenticity if Dasein succumbs to the tendency. "In other words, *as opposed to other existentials*, falling and the existentials related with it, ... , are in a way existentials that can disappear."²¹ This explanation certainly would help explain away our paradox because it would preserve Heidegger's terminology of naming falling as an existential and allow for the existentiell modification of authenticity. The fact that Visker seems to have labeled the tendency-towards-falling the existential instead of falling itself notwithstanding, there are other problems with his presentation.

Visker bases his claim for the disappearing act of falling upon an analysis of Heideggerian anxiety. Anxiety reveals "the Being-free *for* one's ownmost potentiality-for-Being, and therewith for the possibility of authenticity and inauthenticity" (BT, 236). Visker claims that a *decision* is to be made by Dasein in anxiety which could determine its mode²². The voice of conscience that

comes about in anxiety appears to be able to pull Dasein away from its falling. "The call must do its calling without any hubbub and unambiguously, leaving no foothold" for falling (BT, 316).

Just as the writer, only by losing his thread, discovers he has one, [...], Dasein might only experience its proper self when it discovers that its steadiness and steadfastness is not what it gains by bringing to a "stop," as Heidegger suggests, the "movement" by which it is thrown, but by joining this movement and becoming aware of its powerlessness to escape its dispersal. This "falling" need not make Dasein fall back into the inauthentic again: to the contrary it is only by way of such "falling" that Dasein can reach a state-of-mind or a mood in which it can be authentic²³.

In Visker's model, falling reveals to Dasein its own self, and consequently, shows it what it needs to do to be authentic. Once it does such revealing and brings Dasein into a state of anxiety, Dasein there can make the choice to be authentic. In so doing, Dasein establishes its authenticity upon its inauthenticity, upon its awareness of its inauthenticity, and makes falling disappear.

But we must reject this conception of falling. It is helpful to stress against Visker's case that "resoluteness," the only concept Heidegger gives us as constitutive of the content of authenticity, "is not a way of escape" (BT, 357). Further, it is not a mental act: for Heidegger, Being-in-the-mind (my formulation) is a mode of existing wherein Dasein flees from its original position of engaged agency. To be in the mind is to be removed in some sense from Being-in-the-world, Dasein's proper activity. And Heidegger certainly would not allow this kind of removal to be the substance of authenticity.

Falling is an essential feature of Dasein *at all times*; it cannot disappear. Even when Heidegger discusses the "temporality" of falling in §68, he never imagines falling as disappearing. Falling remains a "constitutive item in the structure of care" (BT, 397). Although falling is grounded in the present, it is not temporal in the sense that it can be abandoned at some point in the future. Curiosity, which reveals most easily the temporal character of falling, always has a "unity with a corresponding future" (BT, 397). Heidegger reiterates in this section that curiosity (and falling), can be aimed towards the future. But when Dasein does not anticipate its future properly as a possibility as such, "but, in its craving, just desires such a possibility as something that is actual" (BT, 397), it is rendered inauthentic. Falling remains inauthentic when it tries to move away from itself in being futural because it does not treat its

possibilities as true possibilities for itself. Instead, it treats them as actual. Though this explanation is obviously directed towards a proper understanding of Heideggerian death, it does further elucidate why Visker's falling falls into implausibility as an interpretation of Heidegger.

Even though we have rejected Dreyfus's and Visker's misinterpretations, we have uncovered within their positions the seeds of a coherent understanding which may help resolve Heidegger's apparent paradox from another direction, one which takes a "logical-existential" turn.

5. A Logical-Existential Triumph?

Visker focuses our attention upon the structure of possibility in Dasein's existentials. Though his attempt to reconcile this possibility with the necessity of existentials has proven incomplete, we now have the tools with which to approach falling, and existentials more generally, in a way which might get us closer to an understanding of Heidegger, bringing the paradox into harmony with the rest of the work. Though my argument here is meant to be applied to Heidegger's existentials in general (and this is also a place where Visker makes an error—he separates falling as a unique existential, a move which requires a more tenuous misprision than I recommend here), I will concentrate on falling because it is the most problematic and because its problematic brings the need for this understanding to light. Once I redeem the crucial part of Visker's analysis, that even existentials are structures of possibility, I will show how falling is indeed a type of tendency as Dreyfus tries to suggest, but for reasons other than Dreyfus urges. Moreover, the tendency explored here doesn't need the imposition of the structure/psychology dichotomy. Without trying to see the true artichoke by removing all of its leaves, so to speak, will we see that the heart of matter with respect to Dasein's existentiality is the centrality of possibility. Furthermore, in proper Heideggerian style, I will make an argument from primordality. That is, I suggest that possibility and contingency are more essential to Dasein than falling ever can be because their primordality establishes their conceptual priority. Because "Dasein *is* its possibility" (BT, 68), and because Dasein is defined by what it usually does (often given through the 'they'), Heidegger's existential of falling, indeed each existential, has a basis in Dasein's *propensity* for the existential at issue. It is what Dasein usually does which establishes the realm of its possibilities, its thrownness. In logical-existential fashion, the existential always commands Dasein to act a certain way, precisely analogous to the way the 'they' encourages Dasein to come to a self-interpretation through its public modes of discourse. Yet this command also creates, so to speak, the very possibility of flouting such a command. As I disclosed before, Dasein is not accountable or cannot answer for its Being when it is wholly absorbed in the 'they.' Only

once Dasein individualistically appropriates the command to fall (in action, not in the mind) does it define its mode of falling. And herein lays the possibility for authenticity²⁴.

Visker's central point is on the right track. Indeed, "the existential character of falling is due to its being a structural *possibility* inherent in Dasein's Being."²⁵ This thesis rings true and we can see this only in illuminating where Visker goes wrong. Visker writes that "*as opposed to other existentials,*" falling is an existential which may disappear²⁶. But it is falling's status as an existential which defines it as a structural possibility because, at bottom, or from the bottom-up, Dasein is its possibilities. The existential of falling never disappears because existentials do not disappear; they are possibilities into which Dasein is *always* thrown. And the possibilities are not neutral.

Heidegger's account of thrownness demonstrates how this is so. Heidegger writes that "that which we have such competence over is not a 'what,' but Being as existing... Dasein is not something present-at-hand which possesses its competence for something by way of an extra; ... Dasein is in every case what it can be" (BT, 183). Dasein's capacities, its possibilities, are not an addendum to a list of constitutive items of Dasein. They define its constitution. Yet, Heidegger wants to distinguish Dasein's possibilities from mere neutral possibilities, or mere properties. The possibilities that Dasein has are circumscribed, but they are not properties which completely predetermine Dasein's manifestation of those possibilities. "Possibility, as an *existentiale*, does not signify a free-floating potentiality-for-Being in the sense of the 'liberty of indifference.' In every case Dasein...has already got itself into definite possibilities" (BT, 183). Thrownness reveals the structure of Dasein's possibilities and how they are delineated.

Heidegger always speaks of Dasein as essentially thrown into a definite pool of possibilities from which it cannot extract itself (just as he speaks of every existential). Dasein is "surrendered to thrownness" (BT, 184). Its thrownness can be thought of as a mood, a disposition, or a bias, in which Dasein always finds itself; it can never approach its relationship to the world as a subject to an object to be grasped²⁷. Rather, Dasein is always engaged in the world in a way in which it lets the world matter to it. This is explained by the Dasein's essential care-structure. Thrownness amounts to a specification of the norms which are demarcated by the way the 'they' uses equipment (as ready-to-hand). Dasein lives in the throw of the normativity that is set out for it by the standard way things are used. It is in this sense that "possibility" for Heidegger is not mere neutral possibility because every possibility carries with it a normativity. In this way, a strict modal breakdown of the "possibility" of existentials and the "necessity" of existentials belies what is really going on within the structure of Dasein's modes. "In interpreting, we do not, so to speak, throw a 'signification' over some naked thing which is present-at-

hand... the thing in question already has an involvement which is disclosed in our understanding of the world" (BT, 190). But what, more specifically, is the content and structure of Dasein's thrownness?

Dasein is always in the middle of activity. "Giving way, as taking a direction, belongs essentially to Dasein's Being-in-the-world. Dasein is always somehow directed and on its way; standing and waiting are only limiting cases of this directional 'on-its-way'" (BT, 110). Dasein is fundamentally always in the middle of things because it is what it does. This suggests further the element of normativity involved in everything it does because intentionality is a feature of Being-in-the-middle-of-things²⁸. Moreover, falling must be based in thrownness which opens up any possibility whatever. *To be necessary, something must first be possible*. "Possibility as an *existentiale* is the most primordial and ultimate positive way in which Dasein is characterized ontologically" (BT, 183).

Dasein's everyday manifestation of thrownness is being in the middle of appropriating predetermined possibilities defined by the 'they.' But as long as the possibility remains undifferentiated in the 'they,' Dasein does not answer for itself until the moment of appropriation. But what allows the appropriation to occur and what circumscribes infinite possibility to a definite pool of possibilities? The first answer will lead to a short discussion of *projection*, and the second will lead to a discussion of *propensity*.

In order to appropriate, or take on, the possibilities laid out by thrownness, Dasein must press forward into those possibilities. Thrownness is dynamic insofar as it prescribes for Dasein both the element of Being-thrown into the 'they' and the element of Being-thrown into the structure of care which forces its own Being to be an issue for it. Thrownness creates both the possibility for everydayness and the motivation for individuation²⁹. But, there must exist some structure that allows Dasein to act upon preordained possibilities, to take the possibilities of the past and press forward into the present, to move from Being-thrown into active falling in the present. This structure is termed *projection*. The dynamics of projection, which exist with equal primordially as the thrownness, project Dasein's personal being into the Being of the 'they' and simultaneously allow Dasein to absorb the 'they.' "Projecting has nothing to do with comporting oneself towards a plan that has been thought out... On the contrary, any Dasein has, as Dasein, already projected itself; and as long as it is, it is projecting. As long as it is, Dasein has always understood itself and always will understand itself in terms of possibilities" (BT, 185). This vehicle of projection is what allows Dasein to see, grasp, and take on its possibilities. *And this projection is built into thrownness*. It is an elasticity clause of sorts because it allows Dasein to be "constantly 'more' than it factually is, supposing that one might want to make an inventory of it as something-at-hand and list the contents of its Being" (BT, 185). Projection is

what gives Dasein the potentiality to act upon its thrownness and this is explicitly the role Heidegger assigns to falling. Falling is shown to be a 'thrown projective' insofar as it carries with it an intentionality and a directionality whose possibility is only opened by Dasein's limited number of possibilities circumscribed by its thrownness. It is a forward-looking phenomenon defined by a past situatedness. But how are Dasein's possibilities circumscribed, and how does falling become one of these existential possibilities?

Here an investigation of the tendency towards falling needs elucidation. In some ways, falling is merely a tendency thereto, but this does not preclude falling's existential status or necessitate a magic act requiring falling to disappear. Nor does it require any differentiation of a structural account from a psychological account: ontology makes no distinction.

It is only tendency which defines existentials whatsoever. Heidegger's *History of the Concept of Time* explicitly tells us that "falling as a tendency of being is a priori possible only on the basis of a propensity for it" (HCT, 282). Here, a priority is never a priori in a traditional metaphysical sense removed from experience. On the contrary, a priority is defined only on the basis of what Dasein usually does, or what it has a propensity or tendency to do. Because Dasein can only make sense of its activity on the basis of being in the middle of an activity, there is no sense of the a priori other than the disposition of doing activities the way they are usually done. *Exactly because Dasein is constituted by its activity, its usual mode of activity (falling into the 'they' in this case) becomes constitutive for it.* Indeed, falling is an existential because it is what Dasein has a propensity for; and we must say that Dasein has a propensity for falling because we can only define Dasein through what the 'they' does, its norms. "This propensity, to which our analysis of falling keeps referring in a phenomenal way, constitutes a basic structure of Dasein which we call *destiny*" (HCT, 282). But destiny is not about facts; it is a background of meaning. Because Dasein must depend upon the 'they' for its intelligibility, it must fall because the 'they' is fallen by definition. Yet, as we discovered before, this existential has its basis in possibility as delineated in thrownness.

The paradigm which Irad Kimhi uses to explain his position of logical-existentialism will prove useful here. His example is one of an order, say 'Do X.' What this order establishes is not only a logical-existential link between the order and the fulfilment of the order by the interlocutor's actually performing X, but also an (admittedly weaker) link with the defying of the order. In fact, it is the order itself which, in a manner of speaking (and precisely by speaking it), opens up both the possibility of executing the command and of flouting it. Because the order extends itself over the agent who will ultimately choose how to respond (or not respond), the order

establishes a normative link over the possibilities that it creates. It is in this way that Heideggerian existentials extend a normativity over Dasein as such, though each particular Dasein has a choice to make once it is in the throw of its existentials. Existentials are like commands which, established by Dasein's own tendencies as we saw paradigmatically in the case of falling, carry an element of normativity insofar as they are derived from the 'they,' the source of all norms. But it is the norms that define the possibility for a violation thereof. And because in Heidegger's case even the norms are defined by strong possibilities or propensities, and not strict modally neutral necessity, we can begin to see how existentials are all defined by tendencies which are escapable, even though escape is not likely, indeed *impossible*, in everydayness. But we should not talk of escaping existentials, because the existential never disappears. Rather, it looms over Dasein as a tendency which is ready to take it over whenever it falls into its everydayness. Authenticity, on this reading, has room for triumph and falling never loses its foothold.

What I have shown here is how the supposed paradox is no paradox at all. If I am right that the concept of falling as an existential exists as a disposition, or predisposition, of Dasein, then authenticity as a further possibility for Dasein does not remain so logically complicated to maintain³⁰. Because the existential is here revealed as a constitutive disposition of Dasein and not as some definitely necessary property, we can see more easily how Dasein can resolutely accept its own groundlessness in its activities which it absorbs from the 'they.' And in so doing, it can become authentic. But even in its mode of authenticity, the propensity for falling never disappears. Our existential remains intact and falling never loses its foothold.

Notes

- 1 I would like to thank Randall Havas, Irad Kimhi, and Susan James for reading versions of the essay in various stages. Their comments, along with those of an anonymous reader at *Symposium*, helped make this paper far less imperfect than it is.
- 2 BT refers to Martin Heidegger's *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson, San Francisco, Harper Collins Publishers, 1962. Because this is the translation into which I was thrown, I follow this edition in rendering *das Man* as the 'they.'
- 3 But sometimes we get a reverse picture (especially in Heidegger's discussion of authenticity in Division Two). The they-Self, the self absorbed into the 'they,' Heidegger writes, is to be an existentiell modification of the authentic self, presumably an existential itself (BT, 365). So which is primordial? This tension reveals a further difficulty with Heidegger's conception of authenticity. But, whichever way we resolve this conflict of competing claims of primordiality, there is a *prima facie* paradox: authenticity as the primary existential could not allow Dasein to fall into the 'they.' And the suggestion that authenticity is an existentiell modification seems implausible if Dasein is essentially falling in its inauthentic mode.
- 4 Nor, as we will see, does the distinction help that much even supposing Heidegger did make such a dichotomy.
- 5 Irad Kimhi, now at University of Chicago, gave a seminar at Yale entitled "Self-Knowledge and Action" in the Fall Term of 1996. Though his work is unpublished, I base my reading of Heidegger upon what he termed then "logical-existentialism."
- 6 HCT refers to Martin Heidegger's *History of the Concept of Time*, trans. Theodore Kisiel, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1992.
- 7 Hubert Dreyfus, *Being-in-the-World: A Commentary on Heidegger's Being and Time, Division One*, Cambridge, The MIT Press, 1991, 225.
- 8 This is precisely the view of Dreyfus with which I take issue here. The reverse is true: It is in the case of the psychological phenomenon that we are most stuck in falling.
- 9 Dreyfus, 227.
- 10 Dreyfus, 225.
- 11 Dreyfus, 228.
- 12 Dreyfus, 230. Because Heidegger's discussion of language in *Being and Time* is complicated and seems to be anathema to the rest of his phenomenology which abandons treating the world as a present-at-hand object to which Dasein gains access, I shall not treat this at length here (especially since Heidegger recants the *Being and Time* philosophy of

- language in his later work). For a nice discussion of the difference between Heidegger's early and later thoughts on philosophy of language see Richard Rorty's "Wittgenstein, Heidegger, and the Reification of Language" in *The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger*, edited by Charles Guignon, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1993, 337-357.
- 13 I have Emerson's "Self-Reliance" in mind: there, the authentic being does everything it usually does as a father/mother, son/daughter, or husband/wife, but does it in a "new and unprecedented way."
- 14 Heidegger writes that "because the 'they' presents every judgment and decision as its own, it deprives the particular Dasein of its answerability. The 'they'... can be answerable for everything most easily, because it is not someone who needs to vouch for anything. It 'was' always the 'they' who did it, and yet it can be said that it has been 'no one.' In Dasein's everydayness the agency through which most things come about is one of which we must say that 'it was no one'" (Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 165). This has interesting applications for questions of a particular Dasein's agency when that being is absorbed in the activities of the 'they,' but those applications extend beyond the scope of this essay.
- 15 Dreyfus, 232.
- 16 The English translation of *Entwöhnung* as a detoxification process is suggested by Visker.
- 17 A fuller treatment of this subject might suggest that even the first two elements of what we have called 'structural falling' with Dreyfus make little sense without an appreciation of Heidegger's claims about the motivation to partake in absorption and language. It is the fact that Dasein's Being is an issue for it, the primordial care-structure, a fairly psychological account (to use Dreyfus's imposed distinction) that lays behind any of Dasein's structures whatsoever.
- 18 Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 454. This was suggested by a knight of infinite resignation on the Internet, whose domain address and name escape me.
- 19 Rudi Visker, "Dropping: The Subject of Authenticity; *Being and Time* on Disappearing Existentials and True Friendship with Being," *Research in Phenomenology* 24 (Fall 1994): 152.
- 20 Visker, 153-4, my emphasis.
- 21 Visker, 154, my emphasis.
- 22 This already undermines a Heideggerian picture of what it means to be in the mind. Like Anscombe, Heidegger would claim that no package of states of mind (in the common sense sense) or internal motives could ever amount to an intentional action. Because one is what one does, Dasein's authenticity cannot amount to a decision of the conscious mind. As Heidegger writes, "Acts are something non-psychical. Essentially the

person exists only in the performance of intentional acts, and is therefore essentially *not* an object... A person is in any case given as a performer of intentional acts which are bound together by the unity of a meaning. Thus psychical Being has nothing to do with personal Being" (BT, 73).

23 Visker, 155-6.

24 To use an analogy which would horrify Heidegger, an existential is like a genetically predetermined disposition which a human being can flout if he comes to consciousness of his predisposition and supersedes it with diligence, all without ever changing his genetic makeup, his constitutive predetermined propensity.

25 Visker 153-4.

26 Visker, 154, italics added.

27 This argument presupposes a rejection of the Cartesian worldview. I cannot treat Heidegger's argument against the Cartesian subject in this context as I am more concerned with Heidegger's internal consistency than his persuasiveness against other worldviews.

28 A central part of thrownness upon which Heidegger focuses in Division Two is that Dasein is thrown into the possibility of its own death, i.e., Dasein is always in the middle of dying, in the middle of Being-contingent. This possibility, which supports all other possibilities of Dasein because Dasein's death in each case must be its own, suggests that, in the final analysis, contingency is one of the most important and foundational elements of Dasein's constitution. See Rorty's "Wittgenstein, Heidegger, and the Reification of Language," 348.

29 Again here, Being-thrown-towards-death is the primary way that Dasein has the possibility for individuation because death is in each case Dasein's own.

30 If we were to set up the paradox as a conditional, it might look like this: if Dasein is always essentially falling, then it can never be authentic. My method of attack on the paradox is not to try to expose authenticity as being able to overcome anything in particular. Instead, here I have shown why the antecedent of the conditional can be misleading if misunderstood. To say that Dasein is essentially falling for Heidegger means only that it is one of Dasein's most basic possibilities. It does not speak at all to the possibility of being able to flout such a possibility. In fact, it creates the possibility for such flouting.