

# HEIDEGGER'S FUNDAMENTAL ONTOLOGY



click above for definition of key terms

## Falling

For Heidegger, the notion of “falling” (*Verfallen*) relates to predominant patterns of behavior that we “fall” into in our daily lives. Our daily conversations and behaviors are proof of this idea. This idea of “falling” relates to the concepts of the “They” and **idle talk** that Heidegger outlines. In our **everydayness**, we are constantly ignoring our possibilities as Dasein by doing what “They” do. Examples of this include the ways in which people dress alike, the social norms that we adhere to, and the absence of **resoluteness** towards **death**. We go through much of our lives this way, simply doing as “they” do. When we face death in our lives, we treat it as though it will never happen to us. This avoidance of our own most possibility is part of what Heidegger means by “falling.” This can be seen in the very language we use to talk about death, with sayings such as “kick the bucket.” Rather than accepting death as something we will all inherently face, we treat it as though we can somehow avoid it. It is authenticity that we are falling from. Heidegger does not pass judgment on this behavior or state that it is wrong to do so; it is simply the nature of our “being” as Daseins. When faced with death or other possibilities that cause us **anxiety**, we “fall” back into our everydayness and simply behave the way we have been taught is socially acceptable rather than realizing ourselves as possibility. -- Charles Hersman



*Being and Time*, Stambaugh translation, p 176. Here Heidegger argues that falling (*Verfallen*) occurs in Dasein's entanglement or involvement in the tranquilized idle talk and business of *das Man* (the "They").

Having already become a temptation for itself in this way, the way in which things have been publicly interpreted holds fast to Da-sein in its falling prey. Idle talk and ambiguity, having-seen-everything and having-understood-everything, develop the supposition that the disclosedness of Da-sein thus available and prevalent could guarantee to Da-sein the certainty, genuineness, and fullness of all the possibilities of its being. In the self-certainty and decisiveness of the they, it gets spread abroad increasingly that there is no need of authentic, attuned understanding. The supposition of the they that one is leading and sustaining a full and genuine "life" brings a *tranquillization* to Da-sein, for which everything is in "the best order" and for whom all doors are open. Entangled being-in-the-world, tempting itself, is at the same time *tranquillizing*.

This tranquillization in inauthentic being, however, does not seduce one into stagnation and inactivity, but drives one to uninhibited "busyness." Being entangled in the "world" does not somehow come to rest. Tempting tranquillization aggravates entanglement. With special regard to the interpretation of Da-sein, the opinion may now arise that understanding the most foreign cultures and "synthesizing" them with our own may lead to the thorough and first genuine enlightenment of Da-sein about itself. Versatile curiosity and restlessly knowing it all masquerade as a universal understanding of Da-sein. But fundamentally it remains undetermined and unasked *what* is then really to be understood; nor has it been understood that understanding itself is a potentiality for being which must become *free* solely in one's *ownmost* Da-sein. When Da-sein, tranquillized and "understanding" everything, thus compares itself with everything, it drifts toward an alienation in which its ownmost potentiality for being-in-the-world is concealed. Entangled being-in-the-world is not only tempting and tranquillizing, it is at the same time *alienating*.