

The End of Authentic Selfhood in the Postmodern Age?

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In the late nineteenth century, Marxists complained that industrialism was dehumanizing, because it alienated laborers from essential aspects of their being. Some contemporary social critics are concerned with a form of dehumanization that affects not industrial laborers, but rather affluent people for whom goods and services intertwine with the electronic technology of the workplace in ways that blur the line between home and office, private and public, personal and professional. Many people find themselves confronted with captivating, seductive, and expansive options that allow people readily to exchange one identity for another, such as Internet chat rooms. That people relish the freedom to explore new technologically-generated options and alternative personal identities is evidenced by the vast sums of money being spent on them. Yet, despite all the excitement, some people report feeling disintegrated, superficial, even dehumanized. If selfhood were transformed into a kaleidoscope of transient social roles to which one lacks serious commitment, this development would mean the end of “authenticity,” as early Heidegger defined it. In my view, elements of the phenomenon of authenticity remain valid, even though later Heidegger not only developed a rather different concept of authenticity, but also contributed to postmodern hype about the end of humanism and the erasure of the subject.

In this essay, I will explore some of the complex relationships among decentered selfhood, modern technology, and the possibility of authenticity, as articulated in recent work by Hubert Dreyfus and Charles Spinoza (henceforth, Dreyfus/Spinoza). In connection with postmodern selfhood, social psychologist Kenneth Gergen has raised two questions: How can one practice being a “self” at a time in which constant change, vastly increased possibilities for relationship, transitory commitments, and social fragmentation displace the rational sincerity, integrity, and continuity idealized by the modern self? What

does it mean to be a “self” at a time in which appearances, shifting perspectives, and the infinitely expanding horizontal network of the Web supplant the passionate depths of the romantic self? Although in the digitally-dominated postmodern age, the once-venerated romantic and modern ideals of authentic selfhood are being displaced by the “saturated self,” Gergen argues that postmodern, decentered, relational selfhood has positive traits worth encouraging.¹

Agreeing with aspects of Gergen’s contention that human selfhood is dramatically changing in the technological era, Dreyfus/Spinoza also seek constructively to deal with the potentially dehumanizing consequences of those changes. Unlike Gergen, however, Dreyfus/Spinoza interpret the emergence of modern technology in accordance with Heidegger’s view that the West’s productionist metaphysics inevitably ends in the era of technological nihilism, when the human subject and its object alike are transformed into flexible raw material for the technological system. Drawing on Heidegger’s notion of the “gathering of the fourfold” (earth and sky, gods and mortals), Dreyfus/Spinoza suggest how contemporary people may achieve a level of integration that avoids dehumanizing dispersal into countless and often unrelated social practices. The trick is to engage in practices made possible by modern technology, without thereby being dehumanized in the sense of being transformed into flexible raw material.² For Dreyfus/Spinoza, again following Heidegger, such “integration” seems to be all that “authenticity” can mean in the postmodern age.

Dreyfus/Spinoza’s account of how to cope with modern technology assumes the validity of Heidegger’s claim that in the technological age, both subject and object have vanished. Arguably, however, early Heidegger’s concept of authentic selfhood as anxious being-towards-death retains considerable force today, when millions of technologically-advanced people report being plagued by anxiety, panic attacks, and other “disorders” linked to perceived threats to egoic subjectivity. The ideal of authenticity, defined by early Heidegger as owning one’s finitude so as to choose one possibility, retains importance,

despite talk of “morphing” or identity-shifting. Postmodernists criticize the modern egoic subject for overstating the possibility (and desirability) of unity of self, but the totally heterogeneous, splintered postmodern self overstates the possibility of differentiation of self.

After suggesting that Dreyfus/Spinoza’s account of postmodern “dwelling” in the fourfold would be strengthened by discussing the need for personal narratives to make sense of the numerous possibilities confronting a person, I examine how Ken Wilber’s metanarrative of the progressive development of human consciousness provides not only a warning about the personal and socially regressive possibilities involved in the postmodernism’s surrender of the achievement of personal integrity, but also an account of authentic post-egoic selfhood as transpersonal existence, which is related in some ways to Heidegger’s early view of authenticity. Sustaining a transpersonal mode of existence requires that a person succeed first in being an integrated person, something like the modernist self described by Gergen. Transpersonal existence also discloses that romantics were right in seeking to recover the self’s depths, which were eclipsed by modern rationalism. For Wilber, however, these depths are constituted not by inchoate feelings and passions, but rather by spirituality, which both includes and transcends the planes of material body and rational mind.

Dreyfus and Spinoza on Personal Identity in the Technological Age

Dreyfus/Spinoza’s essay, “Highway Bridges and Feasts: Heidegger and [Albert] Borgmann on How to Affirm Technology” seeks to address the problem of existing in the technological age without being reduced to flexible raw material. Dreyfus/Spinoza argue that new technologies make possible new practices and identities. Unlike those who believe that modern technology results from unpredictable cultural differentiation, Dreyfus/Spinoza follow Heidegger in arguing that modern technology is the inevitable outcome of the historical process by which the Being of entities has hidden itself. Dreyfus/Spinoza examine Heidegger’s account of an affirmative relation to modern technology without once

mentioning Gelassenheit (“releasement”), an overworked term that has yielded few insights about what Heidegger meant by “letting technology be.” Dreyfus/Spinoza remind us that later Heidegger envisioned modern technology not in anthropocentric-instrumental terms, but rather as a process of “endless disaggregation, redistribution, and reaggregation for its own sake,” as best exemplified by computer technology, which reduces all phenomena to digital code.³ Just as this process annihilates the object once dominated by the modern subject, it supposedly also vaporizes the human subject itself. For Heidegger, the simultaneous elimination of subject and object defines the peculiar mode of human existence that characterizes the technological age, which for the purposes of this essay is more or less equivalent with postmodernity.

Dreyfus/Spinoza maintain that the extraordinary interconnectivity of the Internet best exemplifies the radical transformation of the traditional fixed subject position, which has been displaced by rapidly growing possibilities of identity-shifting and has been transformed by technologically assisted multi-perspectivalism. Sherry Turkle describes such identity-shifting as “morphing” in connection with her discussion an Internet social phenomenon known as MUDs, multi-user dungeons, a term taken from “Dungeons and Dragons,” the role-playing game popular with adolescents. Dreyfus/Spinoza quote Turkle as saying that “In MUDs you can write and revise your character’s self-description whenever you wish. On some MUDs you can even create a character that ‘morphs’ into another with the command ‘@morph’.”⁴ Seemingly enthusiastic about the “age of the Net,” Dreyfus/Spinoza write that “we shall have many different skills for identity construction, and we shall move around virtual spaces and real spaces seeking ways to exercise these skills, powers, and passions as best as we can.” Net-surfers will assume an identity “for as long as the identity and activity are exhilarating and then mov[e] on to new identities and activities. Such people would thrive on having no home community and no home sense of self.” As opposed to what Gergen calls the modern’s quest for sincerity and integrity, and the romantic’s quest for depth and commitment, the Net-surfer’s society

will be governed by a style that “would be one of intense, but short, involvements, and everything would be done to maintain and develop the flexible disaggregation and reaggregation of various skills and faculties. Desires and their satisfaction would give way to having the thrill of the moment.”⁵

Faced with today’s technological revolution, one can understand Heidegger’s concern that postmodern humanity is being reduced to flexible standing reserve, without enduring essence or identity. As standing reserve, human behavior would become totally coordinated with whatever technological devices happen to be available in a given situation. In other words, instead of using this or that device in accordance with a plan developed by oneself as an autonomous subject, the post-subject human would almost immediately begin engaging in whatever (more or less) skillful practice is elicited and required by the technological device that presents itself. Humans as self-conscious agents would virtually vanish into an ever more tightly coupled relationship with the electronic technology involved in the planetary-wide processes of production and consumption. Despite being concerned that humans are on the verge of becoming dehumanized raw material, Dreyfus/Spinoza argue that, if we take Heidegger seriously, people can adopt attitudes toward modern technology that avoid dehumanization. In the Heideggerian context, “dehumanization” means for people to lose their understanding of human Dasein’s world-disclosive capacity and thus to become nothing but clever animals, that is, particularly flexible raw material useful for increasing the power of the self-sustaining technological system. According to Dreyfus/Spinoza, successful coping with the new technological opportunities and requirements would involve learning how to be attuned to oneself as a flexible resource, while not understanding oneself as such a resource at all times and places.

Drawing on Heidegger’s notion of “things” that gather together, focus, or appropriate earth and sky, gods and mortals, Dreyfus/Spinoza describe how such adaptation might occur. At first, in view of Heidegger’s allegedly retro-romantic attitude toward the lifestyle of the German peasant, one might suppose that he would deny that modern

technological devices could serve as “things” that can focus, gather, or appropriate the fourfold. Dreyfus/Spinoza point out, however, that in addition to speaking of how the jug and the stone bridge gather the fourfold in local practices, Heidegger once suggested that even a modern highway bridge could gather together the fourfold in a way that enables a driver both to appreciate the freedom of zooming across the bridge, and to acknowledge that such freedom is not infinite for mortals. In the fourfold gathered together by the highway bridge, the gods have been pushed aside, the sky has been reduced to the manifestation of multiple technological possibilities or options, and the earth refers to the fact that such possibilities somehow still matter. Regarding the fourth ingredient of the fourfold, mortals, Dreyfus/Spinoza write:

By recalling that one is mortal, one understands one’s identity as fragile and temporary and requiring one’s active engagement. In the case of the highway bridge, it means that, even while getting in tune with being a flexible resource, one does not understand oneself as being a resource all the time and everywhere. [...] Rather, as one speeds along the overpass, one senses one’s mortality, namely that one has other skills for bringing out other sorts of things, and therefore one is never wholly a resource. [Such alternative skills enable one] to relate to the highway bridge not just as a transparent device but in its specificity as a way of bringing the technological ordering out in its ownmost. But that is to say that the highway bridge can be affirmed as a possible kind of focal thing that calls to us as mortals, only if there are other focal things around that preserve styles in which things can thing.⁶ (My emphasis.)

Only insofar as the technological understanding of Being has not achieved complete domination can the bridge play the role of a “thing” that gathers the fourfold. Were such domination complete, there would be no alternative ways of disclosing things other than as flexible raw material. Hence, there could be no recognition, however dim, of

the fact that human Dasein contributes in some way to the disclosure process. According to Dreyfus/Spinoza, local styles and practices--those that have not yet been co-opted by the technological disclosure of entities--remind us that we are disclosive beings, precisely because things show up differently in accordance with differing practices and styles. Learning to bring into harmony a host of such practices, skills, roles, and styles is what provides “disclosers with a sense of integrity or centeredness.”⁷ Hence, although contemporary technological things typically distribute people into disaggregated skills with a style of flexible dispersion, nevertheless such things can gather “the skills for treating ourselves as disaggregated skills and the world as a series of open possibilities are what are drawn together so that various dispersed skillful performances become possible.”⁸

According to Dreyfus/Spinoza, in the electronically published version of their essay, the differentiating, interconnecting, and dynamic character of current technological practices will not satisfy the desire for single-authorship or centered selfhood, but such practices can open up possibilities “for new ways of being ourselves.”⁹ Further, “The point of technological skills is not to satisfy our desires transparently but rather to stimulate us to reaggregate our tastes, interests, skills, and so forth so that we can transform ourselves and thereby our desires.”¹⁰ The “saving power” of technology, then, involves freeing ourselves from a “total fixed identity so that we may experience ourselves as multiple identities disclosing multiple worlds...”¹¹

As Dreyfus/Spinoza rightly point out, engaging in the meta-practice of partaking in multiple local practices would seem to pose obstacles to the ideal of achieving that measure of centeredness or integrity presumably required for a “crisp” performance of various practices, whether local or technological. Dreyfus/Spinoza ask how can we overcome such obstacles. First, they tell us, one could try to control the sequence or constellation of practices, so as to maximize their number, but doing so would encourage constant anticipation of the next move (or simultaneous ones), rather than full engagement in the local focal practice now before one. Without such engagement, crisp performance is not

possible, as anyone knows who is thinking about the next step while supposedly attempting to accomplish the previous step. Moreover, as Dreyfus/Spinoza observe, this control-orientation is characteristic of the desiring egoic subject whose era is waning, rather than of the postmodern, post-subjective “self” whose era is apparently waxing.

Second, one could become completely absorbed in each particular local focal practice and move sequentially from one practice to the next as opportunities presented themselves, or one could engage in multiple local practices simultaneously. Insofar as such practices may be totally unrelated to one another, and insofar as a person may simply have responded semi-automatically to the availability of the practice, this approach gives rise not to a “gathering” or a sense of coherence, but instead to the experiences of fragmentation, dispersion, incoherence, and lack of autonomy which are symptomatic of people on the verge of becoming nothing but nodes in the totally interconnected network. Losing any sense of coherent identity, “one will exist either as a collection of unrelated selves or as no self at all, drifting in a disoriented way among worlds.”¹² Avoiding such unwelcome outcomes requires a life in which one practice flows coherently from one to the next, thereby giving one “a sort of poly-identity that is neither the identity of an arbitrary desiring subject nor the rudderless adaptability of a resource.”¹³ Dreyfus/Spinoza conclude that “as mortal disclosers of worlds in the plural, the only integrity we can hope to achieve is our openness to dwelling in many worlds and the capacity to move among them.”¹⁴ Clearly, however, as Dreyfus/Spinoza imply, to achieve such relative integrity, one must limit oneself to inhabiting a determinate number of worlds, rather than immersing oneself in one unrelated world after the next.

Albert Borgmann, whose reflections on Heidegger’s philosophy of technology inspired the Dreyfus/Spinoza essay, would be sympathetic to Dreyfus/Spinoza’s effort to salvage something worthwhile from the options made possible by contemporary technological innovations. He believes that postmoderns are mature enough to tolerate and even to welcome many different communities and to develop a life of coherently flowing

alternative practices. Such openness to and celebration of alterity and plurality, so Borgmann hopes, may eventually give rise to a “community of communities, a “hidden center” that might unite the manifold local practices in “communal celebration, namely religion. People feel a deep desire for comprehensive and comprehending orientation.”¹⁵ Through much of his career, Heidegger’s own yearning for a comprehensive understanding is reflected in his notion that each historical epoch is governed by a single, all-pervasive understanding of the Being of entities.

Dreyfus/Spinoza maintain, however, that toward the end of his life, Heidegger abandoned the notion of such a unifying understanding, just as he gave up privileging the ancient Greeks as the one true “origin” of the Western understanding of Being. He also concluded that the gathering of local world by thing cannot adequately be understood in terms of the “ontological difference” between Being and entities. Instead, he emphasized the importance of local understandings and practices, which retain their capacity for gathering only insofar as they retain their own coherence. Noting that for Heidegger local practices are always at risk of being eclipsed by the dominant practice, Dreyfus/Spinoza argue that the dominant practice itself needs local practices in order to be able to disclose entities most effectively in its own particular way. In other words, full appreciation of the possibilities of technological disclosure of entities requires alternative disclosures that contrast with it. At the same time, without local practices, however marginal, there would be no way for people to notice that the technological disclosure of entities is not eternal and universal, but historical and particular.

Taking into account the late turn in Heidegger’s thought, Dreyfus/Spinoza suggest that a positive relationship to technology is possible because the technological understanding of Being is not and could never be fully monolithic in the first place, since there is no univocal “history of Being” shaping Western history. While intriguing, this approach leaves open the question of why and whether people should concern themselves with Heidegger’s concerns about modern technology’s dehumanizing potential. In view of

Heidegger's late shift, can one even speak of the technological era? Were dehumanization to occur, would it merely be an ontical matter, that is, would technological devices simply outstrip human cognitive and behavioral capacities to such an extent that a dystopian future would emerge, in which humans would be enslaved by the ancestors of devices that previous humans had once created? In other words, how does Heidegger's very late shift beyond both the history of Being and ontological difference enable us to make sense of his previous admonitions and reflections about modern technology? Answers to such questions will have to be postponed for another occasion.

Contributions to a Dialogue on Postmodern Selfhood

Dreyfus/Spinoza have made an ingenious effort to show that Heidegger's thought can provide a constructive account of how to take advantage of the opportunities afforded by the (allegedly) post-subjective technological era, without in the process becoming reduced to flexible raw material. Their essay forms part of a broader effort to provide a contemporary interpretation of what Heidegger meant by the "gods." In effect, Dreyfus/Spinoza are seeking to understand the cultural implications of widely reported sightings of angels and other phenomena that are irreconcilable with the materialist ontology of modern technology. In what follows, I hope to their constructive exploration of issues that have such important implications for human existence. Here, I should also like to acknowledge Hubert Dreyfus for his pioneering and highly influential attempt to interpret Heidegger's view of the "understanding of Being" in terms of the practices that embody such understanding. Although not fully sharing that interpretation, I can now scarcely imagine approaching Heidegger's complex writings without the benefit of it.¹⁶

In their analysis of Heidegger, Dreyfus/Spinoza suggest that local practices can somehow provide resistance to the totalizing technological understanding of Being. If all non-"high tech" social practices, styles, and modes of understanding were eliminated, humankind would lose its essence as world-discloser in Heidegger's sense. In such a case, authenticity would be impossible, if authenticity (Eigentlichkeit) meant "owning" one's

mortal openness for the being of entities. Although later Heidegger redefined authenticity to mean being appropriated (*vereignet*) by the fourfold, he retained a profound concern for human mortality. Moreover, I would argue that his early views on authenticity retain considerable validity today, despite Heidegger-inspired talk of the disappearance of the subject. In effect, Dreyfus/Spinoza may either be overstating the case for the alleged disintegration of the modern subject, or may be interpreting the transformation of subjectivity in terms of problematic conceptual categories. Before turning to these issues, however, let us consider Dreyfus/Spinoza's contention that the highway bridge may appropriate the fourfold in a way that gives rise to a saving sense that there are alternative practices to those generated by the technological understanding of Being.

In regard to the fourfold, how are we to understand the driver's sense of good fortune in having access to the flexibility and excitement of the all-encompassing interstate highway system? Does this correspond to the spontaneous sense of grace shared by friends gathered together by the wine with which they give toasts at a meal? Heidegger himself suggests that the highway bridge can "gather," but in a way that is attenuated at best. Conceding that the elements of the fourfold gathered by the bridge are feeble in comparison with Heidegger's accounts of the fourfold appropriated by more traditional "things," such as the wine-filled goblet, or for that matter a wooden bridge of a bygone era, Dreyfus/Spinoza suggest that the sense of "good fortune" is a vestige of being blessed by a god.¹⁷

Having spent considerable time in the San Francisco Bay area, where Dreyfus and Spinoza are fortunate enough to reside, I myself have felt an undeniable sense of good fortune when driving across either the Bay Bridge or the Golden Gate Bridge, with the San Francisco skyline, the hills of Marin County, or the Berkeley hills lying ahead, and with the sparkling waters of San Francisco Bay lying on either side. These bridges, magnificent technological achievements built during the 1930s when Heidegger was focusing on the problem of modern technology, still "gather" in a way not usually associated with modern

technological phenomena. Hurling along a typical interstate highway in the middle of California or Iowa, however, a driver is often obliviousness to bridges, many of which are virtually identical and thus call little attention to their work of gathering. Recalling that one is mortal, according to Drefyus/Spinoza, can bring a person back from such oblivion and can trigger off the mood that lets the bridge do its gathering work. Understanding one's mortality, we are told, involves understanding not only how fragile and temporary are the world and one's own identity in that world, but also how limited are one's capacities for taking advantage of endlessly proliferating possibilities.

Further questions arise here, however. For openers, how and why should mortality even arise as issues for a post-subjective morpher lacking an integrated sense of identity? In what way can driving across an interstate highway bridge elicit a sense of mortality sufficient to counter technological culture's drive to attain immortality, either by dominating the forces of nature (thus continuing modernity's project by using ever more powerful digital technology), or else by "downloading" human consciousness into virtually indestructible silicon chips? Contemporary cyberpunk fiction, such as Neuromancer, describe how futuristic morphers refer to the organic body as "the meat" to be left behind as they "jack in" to the extraordinary flexible and infinite vastness of silicon-based cyberspace. Plugged in to the infinite interconnectivity of the wired world, a morpher would presumably experience a kind of ersatz immortality that would scarcely invite reflection about finitude and mortality.

For a postmodern morpher, would recognition of finitude amount to anything more than acknowledging that space, time, and energy constrain the number of practices that he or she can adopt? In other words, just as a desktop computer's CPU can only process so much information at any time, so too at any given moment a contemporary morpher may be able to adopt only so many temporary identities and engage in only so many unrelated practices. If human brains are complex parallel processors (as some people suggest), in other words, the issue for postmodern morphing culture becomes how to deal with the

inherent limits of the brain's processing capacity. If one regards the human capacity for engaging in intelligible practices as a function of the computational brain, one could begin to devise ways dramatically to increase the brain's flexibility and power by linking brains to computers, in ways envisioned both in current science fiction as well as in science research. If efforts to create human-technological "cyborgs" are successful, and steps have already been taken in this direction, would not humankind be well on its way to becoming nothing more than flexible raw material in a system whose aims are no longer commensurate with merely "human" affairs?

To be sure, someone driving on the interstate is not inhabiting the "consensual hallucination" of cyberspace, although she may be simultaneously watching traffic on the road, receiving a fax, talking on her cell phone, listening to a talk show, keeping an eye on her two year old in the back seat, glancing at roadside advertising, and taking in a sunset whose brilliant colors result from a toxic brew of petrochemicals. It is possible that at this very moment, she would recognize that not everything is possible and that her best efforts are finite. However poignant this moment of reflection might be, and there is reason to believe that such moments do occur, it seems removed from the extraordinary decisional epiphany involved in resolute being-towards-death as described in Sein und Zeit.

Early Heidegger has an explanation for the unexpected onset of mortality-awareness, or Angst. Dasein's ontological structure, care, cares for a Dasein lost in the routine practices and tempting distractions of everyday life by generating the mood of Angst. This ontologically self-corrective intervention reveals in a dramatic, transformational manner that Dasein is not a thing, but rather finite/mortal openness for Being. Nothing so wrenching, however, seems to be required of the postmodernist driving across a six lane bridge connecting two river banks in a city that can scarcely be differentiated from any other postmodern urban center. Supposedly, even though bombarded with distractions and opportunities undreamed of in the 1920s, today's driver must simply recall that no matter how accessible opportunities become, one cannot take advantage of all of them. "So many

options,” she might muse to herself, “so little time.” Awareness of such limits, according to Dreyfus/Spinoza, invites the driver to remind herself that she has other skills and practices for disclosing things, skills and practices that do not involve optimizing one’s technologically-oriented possibilities in the ways made possible by highway bridges and the Internet. Here, she might appreciate her capacity for moving skillfully between and within rather different worlds, but it is by no means obvious that such appreciative insight would be triggered off by the mood of Angst.

Let us dwell for a moment on early Heidegger’s notion of the relation between Angst, mortality, and authenticity.¹⁸ Even though he later concluded that Sein und Zeit’s account of human existence was tainted with a residual subjectivism, later Heidegger remained concerned with human mortality and finitude, which he described in very different ways than do Dreyfus/Spinoza in their account of the driver zooming across the highway bridge. Commenting on Rilke’s observation that we live in destitute times, for example, later Heidegger wrote:

The time remains destitute not only because God is dead [and the gods have fled--MZ], but because mortals are hardly aware and capable even of their own mortality. Mortals have not yet come into ownership of their own nature. Death withdraws into the enigmatic. The mystery of pain remains veiled. Love has not been learned.¹⁹

In his essay, “The Thing,” in which he discusses the fourfold in detail, Heidegger describes mortals in the following way:

The mortals are human beings. They are called mortals because they can die. To die means to be capable of death as death. Only man dies. The animal perishes. It has death neither ahead of itself nor behind it. Death is the shrine of Nothing, 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.²⁰

In envisioning the post-subjective Dasein capable of singing the song of the coming gods, Heidegger contemplated someone capable not only of experiencing mortality, but also of understanding the profound relationship between mortality and the nothingness that makes world-disclosure possible. For Heidegger, death refers not to an approaching event, but rather to the mortal nothingness that always already enables human Dasein to encounter entities as entities. This conception of mortality would seem to differ rather significantly from that of ascribed to the postmodern morpher.

Up to this point, I have been intentionally emphasizing problematic aspects of postmodern morphing of which Dreyfus/Spinoza themselves are critical. As a result, my account of the driver does not offer a sufficiently charitable view of a point they are trying to make. If a driver returning home from a week-long hike into the Sierra Nevada were to have an epiphany regarding the finitude (and thus the impermanence) of worlds, she might experience a startling contrast between the world of camping in relatively uncivilized nature, on the one hand, and the world of driving in advanced cars on interstate highways, on the other. She might appreciate both the efficiency of freeway driving (if not snarled in traffic) and the skills needed to make a week long hiking trip enjoyable. The driver can encounter the technological in its extraordinary character (including its threatening as well as beneficial dimensions) only in contrast with other world that she has recently left behind or to which she is heading. Even in an age dominated by ostensibly death-defying technological achievements, then, some “things” and “practices” may be able to reveal the difference between and thus the finitude of worlds. In crossing the interstate bridge, then, the driver might for a moment experience the residue of the gathering of the fourfold, in the form of the blessing of high-speed travel networks, even as she recognizes how different networks are from footpaths in the mountains.

In speaking of the fourfold of earth and sky, gods and mortals, rather than the twofold of Dasein and Being, later Heidegger was trying to move beyond the problematic dualism involved in the duality of the ontological difference between beings and Being. Though later Heidegger spoke of as the event of appropriation (Ereignis), whereby mortal Dasein is appropriated (vereignet) as one of the interdependent elements in the fourfold, early Heidegger spoke of authenticity quite differently. In Sein und Zeit, he defined authenticity in terms of individual Dasein's resolve to own (eignen) its own mortal openness. For the most part, Dasein is absorbed in they-self's inauthentic and/or everyday understanding of Being. I say "and/or" because there are at least two aspects to the they-self, the everyday aspect and the inauthentic aspect, between which Heidegger himself never adequately distinguishes.²¹ The everyday aspect involves a culture's taken-for-granted way of understanding humanity, nature, society, and the meaning of life, as well as the practices that both manifest and help to shape such understanding. In heeding the call of conscience, Dasein surrenders to its radical finitude and to the world-collapsing experience of Angst. Although authentic Dasein becomes profoundly aware of the limits of such practices and modes of understanding, authenticity cannot involve total abandonment of them, but instead renewed and deepened appropriation of them. This becomes clear in the chapters on historicity and destiny, in which Heidegger asserts that authentic Dasein does not make arbitrary choices, but rather chooses to reappropriate (wiederholen) the possibilities of its own heritage, understood as the destiny that establishes from the very beginning the possibilities for the future.

For modern Dasein, one of these practices includes interpreting oneself as an egoic personality to be distinguished sharply from others, precisely because there is so little difference among individuals. Heidegger suggests that most cultural practices serve to guarantee survival, not only by making possible the production and distribution of material goods, but also by making possible a façade that conceals the truth about each Dasein's mortality. Hence, Dasein says to itself, "one" (das Man) dies, not I myself. In referring to

Leo Tolstoy's short story, "The Death of Ivan Ilych," however, Heidegger meant to underline the experiential, not-to-be-outstripped, individual dimension of mortality.²² When the mood of Angst arises, it offers Dasein the opportunity to experience its mortal openness in a way unimpeded by the seductive attitudes of "the they." Surrendering to Angst involves undergoing a virtual death experience, involving the annihilation of one's possibilities as well as the ordinary egoic self to whom such possibilities seem to belong. Temporarily obliterating egoic subjectivity, Angst reveals that Dasein cannot be reduced to the status of thing, rational animal, or person, but instead exists as what I will call the transpersonal clearing in which entities can be manifest. In the clarity afforded by such transpersonal experience, Dasein can choose the possibilities that matter most, rather than allowing itself to be ensnared by distractions, including the postmodern kind which seem to be high tech variants of the distractions that Kierkegaard described in The Present Age (a work to which Sein und Zeit is profoundly indebted).

Criticizing Kierkegaard and Rilke because their talk of cultivating "inwardness" was linked to metaphysical subjectivism, Heidegger nevertheless appreciated the phenomenon toward which "inwardness" was pointing. The phenomenon involves that which is of ultimate worth, namely, the finite clearing or openness in which things can manifest themselves and thus "be." The loss of this clearing would be greater--according to Heidegger--than the destruction of the planet by nuclear war. Dim remnants of this extraordinary phenomenon are discernible in the driver's insight into the difference between worlds while driving across the interstate bridge. Instead of a startling epiphany that reveals the extent to which one's mortal openness has been dispersed in the multiple affairs of das Man, however, the driver recognizes that not every technological option can be pursued, and that each world is finite, despite its pretensions to the contrary. For resolute Dasein, in contrast, disclosure of mortality reveals an essential truth about human existence, a truth that alters one's experience, even if not its specific contents. Resolute Dasein affirms its own

mortal openness, takes a stand upon its own nothingness, thereby requiring Dasein to choose one possibility rather than another.

For the driver on the interstate highway, recognition of limits may lead her to appreciate the importance and fragility of local practices, although no insight about human existence necessarily follows from this. In the technological age, the gods have departed, the sky has been effaced, the earth has been exposed to ruin, and the mortals have forgotten who they are; in short, the world has become an un-world. In such an age, perhaps even the slightest recollection of mortality is to be acknowledged and encouraged, especially insofar as it helps to reveal that the hegemonic technological disclosure of entities is not the only possible disclosure. Moreover, in such a world, perhaps authenticity could amount to little more the integrity needed successfully to make transitions from one world to the next, especially in worlds that involve overlapping practices. If this is what “authenticity” amounts to in the postmodern age, however, it is a faded image of early Heidegger’s robust conception of authenticity, and Kierkegaard’s notion that “purity of heart” meant choosing one thing. Indeed, one could argue that some versions of postmodern poly-identity resemble the “rotation method” used by the aesthete in Kierkegaard’s pseudonymous work, Either/Or, to avoid being a specific individual and thus to evade the overarching question of the meaning of his mortal existence.

In one of the widely circulated samizdat versions of the text that he later published as Being-in-the-World, Dreyfus pointed out that Kierkegaard would have looked askance at someone pursuing a multitude of practices such as Zen, yoga, martial arts, Christian silent prayer, Hindu meditation, and so on. For Kierkegaard, as well as for Dreyfus several years ago, such a “person” would be dispersing himself or herself in ways that would have made authentic existence impossible. Likewise, early Heidegger would probably have said that someone existing as a poly-identity was falling into inauthenticity, seized by ambiguity and curiosity which conceal the individual finitude and mortality. In contrast, authentic Dasein resolves upon, i.e., becomes attuned to the limited possibilities of, its own situation.

To be sure, later Heidegger distanced himself from his earlier account of authenticity, in part because of its voluntarism and subjectivism. Indeed, critics have sometimes argued that Sein und Zeit's account of subjectivity and its attendant anxiety described bourgeois, individualistic subjectivity. I would interpret the matter rather differently. As an "unpolitical" (that is, anti-liberal) German, early Heidegger was already a critic of bourgeois subjectivity. Nevertheless, he implicitly recognized that death-anxiety can assume its characteristic force only because each Dasein is capable of recognizing that it cannot be totally reduced to being a member of the family or cultural herd. Everyday life practices have the disburdening and soothing effect of covering up the unwelcome awareness of personal separateness, the fact of which reminds individuals of their mortality. The role played by Angst is to remove the concealments that prevent one from seeing not that one is an ego-subject (for "everyone" already knows that oneself is an ego!), but rather from seeing that one is this particular, finite, mortal openness that includes but transcends the ego-subject. In other words, were one not always already something like an ego-subject, an individual, a rational agent, a competent adult, death anxiety could not occur in a way that could make possible the choice for authenticity. One must first be an ordinary egoic subject before existing authentically as the transpersonal clearing, within which something like "personhood" can manifest itself. In other words, before one can become "no one," one must first be "some one." Recognizing the constructed nature of the egoic subject is possible only insofar such a subject has been constructed in the first place.

Sein und Zeit's depiction of authentic Dasein combines certain elements of Gergen's modernist and romantic sense of selfhood. Authentic Dasein seeks to recover the forgotten dimension of human existence as the clearing, but also seeks to become integrated (whole, owned) by standing within and existing as the truth of its own mortal openness, rather than allowing itself either to be dispersed endlessly into the distracting affairs of everyday life. Although authenticity involves self-integration characterized by choosing one possibility while forsaking others, the integrity of authenticity transcends the integrity

achieved by the normal bourgeois individual, whose sense of personhood is largely defined by taken-for-granted cultural assumptions. Early Heidegger's concept of authenticity may be best understood as transpersonal existence, that is, a mode of openness that includes but goes beyond the limits of personal existence. As we shall see, the phenomenon of transpersonal existence may shed light on contemporary changes in human existence.

Dreyfus/Spinoza, however, turn to later Heidegger for help in understanding what authenticity/integrity might be like for a postmodern human who ostensibly no longer identifies with any particular metaphysical foundation, nation state, religion, ethnicity, or personal attributes, but instead inhabits a number of competing and even contradictory positions, while recognizing some value in each. In contrast with some celebrants of postmodern poly-identities, however, Dreyfus/Spinoza recognize the drawbacks involved in efforts to engage in virtually infinite self-morphing. Struggling with the issues posed by the "death of the subject," Dreyfus/Spinoza rightly recognize that some measure of integrity, coherence, or congruity is necessary on the part of individuals engaged in a multitude of diverse roles and practices. In my opinion, however, the gathering accomplished by "things" is insufficient to provide such congruity. Even in the ancient Greek world, encounters with gods were experienced in terms of complex narratives that explained the origins of, relations among, capacities/personalities of, and human duties to the gods. Such narratives, in other words, enabled a person to situate himself and others within the cosmos and to interpret in a relatively coherent manner all sorts of experiences and events. The meanings of events, in other words, were made explicit through narratives with cosmological import. It seems doubtful to me that Heidegger's narrative of the fourfold can orient people in today's increasingly complex world.

In The Self After Postmodernity, which addresses some of the same issues of disintegration of self that are discussed by Gergen and Dreyfus/Spinoza, Calvin Schrag offers some useful suggestions for understanding how narrative can help to provide coherence, orientation, and relative integration for the contemporary "self." Instead of the

metaphor of practices preferred by Dreyfus/Spinoza, however, Schrag uses metaphors of discourse, narrative, and language games. Anticipating postmodernist concerns that talk of presence or integrity indicates onto-logo-egocentrism, Schrag insists that the “who” of discourse is not a thing, zero point, ghost in the machine, or foundational substratum, but instead

[...] an achievement, an accomplishment, a performance, whose presence to itself is admittedly fragile, subject to forgetfulness and semantic ambiguities. But in all this there is still a unity and a species of self-identity, secured not by an abiding substratum but rather by an achieved self-identity, acquired through a transversal extending over and lying across the multiple forms of speech and language games without coincidence with any one of them. This transversal dynamics, effecting a convergence without coincidence, defines the unity, presence, and identity of the self. And they are a unity, presence, and identity that are concretely manifest in narration, in the telling of the story by the who of discourse, emplotting the multiple and changing episodes of her or his communicative endeavors.²³

Schrag maintains that there is a narrational agency is needed to make sense of the manifold practices in which one is engaged. Making sense involves, at least in part, assigning priorities both to one’s daily affairs and to long-term plans. A person can navigate in and between many different worlds, in part because she has already made some important decisions about her “identity,” even if such decisions are not fixed. For example, even an allegedly postmodern morpher will presumably assign special importance to practices associated with earning a living. Noted authors who proclaim the end of the subject do not hesitate to affix their names to their own writings, nor do they decline to accept royalty checks made out to the person named as the author of those writings. Even someone thoroughly conversant with modern technological practices and opportunities may

identify himself primarily as a father, as a corporate leader, as a lover, or as an artist, even while taking on identities in worlds that may overlap very little with the world in which the primary identification is found. One does not have to conceive of oneself exclusively as playing a role or as having a particular identity, but without some provisional identifications and without narratives that can provide orientation while moving between and through various worlds, people would either not be able to function very well socially, would report feeling confused or pointless, or would regress to a pre-egoic state with its attendant problems.

Arguably, those who effectively and satisfyingly inhabit different worlds have developed a workable narrative of personal connectivity made possible by their having already developed a relatively stable and integrated egoic subjectivity concerned with sincerity, truthfulness, and integrity. Such a narrative would need to transform the modern egoic ideal of integrity in a way that recognizes new opportunities for individual achievement and social contribution made possible by technologies that enable one to inhabit more subject positions than possible in the past. Though perhaps now recognizing the limitations of terms such as integrity, truthfulness, and sincerity, and thus resorting to locutions like “virtual” integrity, the competent postmodern would recognize the value--and perhaps even the necessity--of having been raised with the ideal of attempting to be truthful and sincere, before subsequently moving on to a more ironic mode of existence, characterized by inhabiting perspectives that are not always reconcilable with one another.

Here, I wish to observe that leaving behind egoic subjectivity can involve moving in one of two very different directions. On the one hand, a person may regress to the level of pre-egoic subjectivity, in which case he or she may become completely opportunistic, scheming, pathologically lying, always seeking to maximize possibilities for satisfying desire, at the expense of others. Some postmodern morphers may well be prone to such regression. Moreover, the malaise reported by some people exploring multiple worlds may have something to do with a perceived loss of ordinary integrity, truthfulness, and personal

reality. On the other hand, a person may progress to the level of transpersonal existence, which involves incorporating the constructive achievements of personal subjectivity, including integrity and sincerity, while transcending its limitations, including being overly identified with one's personality, possessions, race, gender, national origins, and so on. Expanding that with which one identifies, an expansion made possible by acknowledging that one is mortal openness or nothingness, usually brings with it an increase in compassion and thus a growing concern to participate in improving social conditions of one's various communities.

Using the term the "pre/trans fallacy," Ken Wilber has very usefully described the difference between regressing to prepersonal existence, on the one hand, and progressing to transpersonal existence, on the other.²⁴ Calling on the work of a number of developmental and social psychologists, Wilber argues that the emergence of something akin to egoic subjectivity (not necessarily of the Anglo-American variety, to be sure) is the culminating point of normal adulthood in recent societies.²⁵ He goes on to argue, however, that there are higher, more integrated, transpersonal modes of awareness that lie beyond the stage of egoic personhood. Sustained practice of these stages is difficult, just as attaining and sustaining responsible adulthood proves to be difficult for adolescents. In Wilber's view, increasing numbers of people are exploring transpersonal awareness that both builds on and transcends the achievements of egoic selfhood, but new information technologies and multiple cultural options--in and of themselves--cannot generate transpersonal of this kind. Engaging in many different practices is not evidence for transpersonal existence, either in Wilber's sense or in the relatively "integrated" mode of selfhood described by Dreyfus/Spinoza. As Scott Bukatman and Claudia Springer have noted, even postmodern writers and filmmakers find it difficult to describe the "virtual subject" or "morpher" without referring to the gendered, egoic personality structure.²⁶ On the other hand, far from generating a more inclusive, robust, and satisfying way of life, contemporary exaggeration about post-egoic subjectivity, the end of authenticity, and personality morphing, may

encourage some people to regress to pre-egoic personality states, and may prevent others from ever attaining an adequate egoic personality in the first place (in the case of children and adolescents growing up in a world in which integrity, sincerity, and self-consistency are not fostered). How could such half-baked egos avoid becoming flexible raw material, precisely in the way warned against by Heidegger? Could they really be expected to make the far-seeing differentiation between “serious” local practices and the more all-encompassing technological practices of (post)modern morphing? Dreyfus/Spinoza are aware of the seriousness of such questions.

In addition to integrative personal narratives that orient a person attempting to navigate through different worlds, I am convinced that people need cultural narratives that attempt to make sense of humanity’s origins and destiny. In my view, however, cultural narrative drawing on Heidegger’s talk of the fourfold and the return of the gods is adequate to the contemporary situation. For one thing, he was such a staunch adversary of modernity that he could not appreciate its positive political achievements, many aspects of which deserve to be defended even as changes in human practices and modes of awareness arise in postmodernity. Moreover, I am concerned about the political implications of the notion that a polytheistic world, like that of the ancient Greeks, would simply be different from that of the modern world, not inferior to it. I am more sympathetic toward Wilber’s developmental narrative, according to which modernity’s ideal of rational autonomy is an important achievement, despite its several unfortunate consequences, including ecological crisis, marginalization of difference, denial of “interior depth” or “subjectivity,” overreliance on scientific modes of truth, and so on.

Wilber emphasizes the difficulties facing those who try practicing a genuinely multicultural, “aperspectival“ mode of awareness, i.e., those who adopt various identities while recognizing the limitations of each of them.²⁷ Not everyone is prepared to undertake successfully such a practice, which requires suspension of the notion of a substantial ego. Existentialists reported experiencing Angst and nihilism when confronted both with their

own mortality, and with the meaninglessness of any particular cultural position, including their native one. Anxiety remains a widely reported phenomenon, perhaps especially among those coping with proliferating possibilities of moving among personal identities. Although asserting that anxiety cannot be avoided, indeed, must be embraced, Wilber maintains that nihilism can be averted through a developmental narrative. According to this narrative, the post-subjective, aperspectival, transpersonal mode of awareness does not render null and void egoic consciousness and its supporting institutions, but rather represents a further stage in the development of humankind, a stage that builds on and presupposes the achievements of the prior stage, i.e., egoic subjectivity.

Wilber's narrative, then, unlike a number of alternative accounts of postmodernity, emphasizes the dignity of modernity.²⁸ He notes that only by taking seriously the claims of modernity, namely, that all persons are of equal worth, can once-oppressed peoples today assert their own validity and worth, both as individual persons and as members of once-despised peoples. Moreover, only by taking seriously the claims of modernity did First World intellectuals finally listen to Third World peoples and engage in a searching examination of the extent to which colonialism represented oppression of others in the name of their liberation. Postmodernity, then, must include the practical truth of "universal worth of the individual person," even while questioning both the foundationalism on which such universality is "grounded," and the nature of personhood itself.

Following Weber, Habermas, and others, Wilber argues that one of modernity's crucial achievements was the separation of the spheres of morality, science, and art in a way that made possible such achievements as democratic politics and free scientific inquiry. Just as modernity went too far by dissociating rationality from the body/emotions rather than differentiating between them, however, modernity went too far by dissociating spirit from the cosmos rather than by differentiating among the levels of matter-energy, rational consciousness, and spirit. Most postmodernists have declined to acknowledge spirit, much less reintegrate it into the cosmos, even though they affirm the importance of reintegrating

other domains that have been marginalized and/or dissociated by modernists, including the body, females, emotions, peoples of non-European descent, and even nature itself.

Dreyfus/Spinoza, however, at least mention that the quiet interior of a church can “solicits meditateness,” thereby enabling us to “manifest and become centered in whatever reverential practices remain in our post-Christian way of life.”²⁹ Moreover, Dreyfus/Spinoza’s spiritual interests are discernible in their effort to make contemporary sense of Heidegger’s notion of blessings, grace, and gods. They are concerned, however, that Albert Borgmann’s interest in religion involves a problematic yearning for unifying diverse perspectives and local practices. Clearly, then, Dreyfus/Spinoza would have reservations about Wilber’s grand narrative, which attempts to provide a coherent narrative of much of humane existence, past and future.

There is not time here to explain in detail Wilber’s effort to describe Spirit not only as the cosmic and social evolutionary processes through which Spirit comes to self-awareness, but also as the all pervasive, non-dual, infinite context in which can occur both the process of constructing metaphysical foundations and the process of deconstructing them. The evolutionary conception of Spirit makes sense of and endorses a progressive account of human history, while simultaneously making possible a criticism of the totalizing claims of such accounts. Hence, deconstructionists are right in saying that they have discovered a larger context which undermines the foundational claims of Enlightenment modernity, but according to Wilber, Spirit constitutes the infinite context beyond which no deconstructive scheme can get. Whether Hegel would be right in describing this as a “bad infinity” is a question well worth examining, but not in this essay. Wilber’s point, however successfully he can defend it, is that postmodernism does not have to lead to despair and nihilism, but instead can affirm that the death of the metaphysical God makes way for recognition of Spirit as groundless ground, as the infinite context in which the play of all phenomena occurs. According to Buddhism, recognition that all phenomena are empty of self or substance, i.e., realization that all phenomena are totally interdependent and arise

simultaneously in an infinite context, leads to compassion for all beings, rather than to despair and nihilism.

Whether or not one adopts Wilber's narrative, analogous narratives are needed to help people integrate their personal lives, and to interpret human history and destiny.³⁰ Wilber helps to make sense of what Gergen describes as "serious play," that is, engaging in practices that today have been "outcontextualized." Cultural practices and narratives that foster responsible, sincere, passionate people aware of spiritual depth are "serious" not because those practices and narratives are "true" or "ultimate," but rather because without them people cannot move on to a transpersonal mode of being-in-the-world. Encouraging relatively individuating, truth-telling, depth-conscious practices and narratives on the part of young people enables them a) to develop an egoic self that can be sublated when a more comprehensive, transpersonal mode of awareness arises, and b) to avoid regression when faced with multiple options in multiple worlds.

Arguably, then, there is an end--a goal, a purpose--to authenticity even in the postmodern age, even though many postmodernists proclaim the end--the termination, the vacuity--of such authenticity. The experience of mortal openness made possible by surrender to anxiety characterizes genuine transpersonal awareness, as opposed to aimless postmodern morphing. Achieving and consolidating such transpersonal awareness are difficult matters, as is evidenced by those who engage in a performative contradiction by using multiculturalism as a club with which to beat those who don't share the multicultural perspective! People should be encouraged to aspire to post-egoic, postmodern, multicultural, aperspectival awareness, but only with the proviso that they first master the difficult task of being responsible agents and egoic subjects, for whom their is something like "truth," something like "sincerity," something like "subjective depth," something like "integrity, something like "Spirit," something like "Nature." If postmodern morphing occurs on a wide scale outside of contexts in which sincerity, subjective depth, and authenticity are encouraged and achieved, I believe there is reason to be concerned about

the outcome for individuals and society. People may indeed become nothing but flexible raw material drawn into the interconnective matrix of all-consuming technological systems, the perimeters of which are scarcely even imaginable.³¹

¹ Kenneth Gergen, The Saturated Self (New York: Basic Books, 1992). An earlier version of this essay included a more detailed discussion of this important book.

² “Flexible raw material” is a free rendering of Heidegger’s word, Bestand, often translated as “standing reserve.” Heidegger views the noun Bestand as being related to the verb stellen, to place or posit. In his account of modern technology he frequently uses verbs with the stellen stem to describe the tendency of modern technology to shift things about, to order and reorganize them, to make them available, and so on. For Heidegger, modern technology discloses things are virtually interchangeable (thus flexible) phenomenon whose sole value lies in their use (raw material) for human projects. Here, one may think of the contemporary push for total digitization of all phenomena as a continuing instance of this process.

³ Hubert Dreyfus and Charles Spinosa, “Highway Bridges and Feasts: Heidegger and Borgmann on How to Affirm Technology,” Man and World, 30 (1997), 159-177; citation is from 163.

⁴ Sherry Turkle, Life on the Screen: Identity in the Age of the Internet (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1995), as cited by Hubert Dreyfus and Charles Spinosa in “Highway Bridges and Feasts,” 165.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid., 171.

⁷ Ibid., 171-172.

⁸ Ibid., 172.

⁹ This passage is found in the electronic version of “Highway Bridges and Feasts,” which includes at least one paragraph omitted in the version published in Man and World. The electronic version (found at <http://www.focusing.org/postmod.htm>) was published in

connection with the “After Postmodernism” conference held at the University of Chicago, November 14-16, 1997.

¹⁰ This passage is also found in the electronic version.

¹¹ Dreyfus and Spinoza, “Highway Bridges and Feasts,” Man and World, 173.

¹² Ibid., 173.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid., 175.

¹⁵ Albert Borgmann, Crossing the Postmodern Divide (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), 145, as cited by Dreyfus and Spinoza, “Highway Bridges and Feasts,” 174.

¹⁶ In my view, Dreyfus sometimes reads Heidegger so much in line with Wittgensteinian and pragmatist views of practices, that he overlooks the transcendental neo-Kantian and Aristotelian dimensions of Heidegger’s thought, dimensions that cannot readily be understood in terms of practices. Discussion of this is an issue must be postponed for another essay, however.

¹⁷ Spinoza, personal communication, February 16, 1998.

¹⁸ For Dreyfus’s own analysis of the Angst phenomenon’s relation to authenticity, see his essay (co-authored with Jane Rubin), “You Can’t Get Something for Nothing: Kierkegaard and Heidegger on How Not To Overcome Nihilism,” Inquiry, 30, 33-75.

¹⁹ Martin Heidegger, “What Are Poets For?” trans. Albert Hofstadter in Poetry, Language, Thought (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), 96.

²⁰ Heidegger, “The Thing,” in Poetry, Language, Thought, 178-179.

²¹ On this issue, see Hubert Dreyfus, Being-in-the-World (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991), and Michael E. Zimmerman, Eclipse of the Self (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1986).

²² Heidegger writes: “In his story ‘The Death of Ivan Ilyitch,’ Leo [L.N.] Tolstoi has presented the phenomenon of the disruption and breakdown of having ‘someone die’.”

Martin Heidegger, Being and Time, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), 495; Sein und Zeit, 11th ed. (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1967), 254.

²³ Calvin Shrag, The Self After Postmodernity (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 33.

²⁴ See Ken Wilber, “The Pre/Trans Fallacy,” in Eye to Eye: The Quest for the New Paradigm (Boston: Shambhala, 1996 [originally published 1983]), 198-243.

²⁵ Among a number of other books by Ken Wilber, see Up From Eden: A Transpersonal View of Human Evolution (Boston: Shambhala, 1981); Wilber, Eye to Eye (Garden City, New York: Anchor Books, 1983); Wilber, Sex, Ecology, Spirituality (Boston: Shambhala, 1995).

²⁶ Scott Bukatman, Terminal Identity: The Virtual Subject in Postmodern Science Fiction (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1993), and Claudia Springer, Electronic Eros: Bodies and Desire in the Postindustrial Age (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1996).

²⁷ The term “aperspectival” refers to people who no longer strongly identify with the perspective that they formerly took to be the Truth about self and world, and who knowingly adopt several different perspectives.

²⁸ See his latest book, The Marriage of the Senses and the Soul (New York: Random House, 1998).

²⁹ Dreyfus and Spinoza, “Highway Bridges and Feasts,” 168.

³⁰ See for example, Brian Swimme and Thomas Berry, The Universe Story (Harper San Francisco, 1994).

³¹ My thanks to Charles Spinoza for his very helpful criticism that allowed me to improve this essay. Any shortcomings remain exclusively my responsibility, however.