



# Augustine and Heidegger on Verticality and Everydayness

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## Abstract

The first part of the article examines how Augustine’s notion of the everyday is mediated by his mystical ascensions, which give him the sense of height against which everydayness appears as oriented downward or fallen. These are the coordinates that make up the fundamental verticality of Augustine’s view. Heidegger’s understanding of everydayness was influenced by Augustine, particularly its inherent tendency to fall. In the article’s second part, it is argued that Heidegger explicitly avoids all references to metaphysical or religious heights. For his reason, his notion of falling appears problematic as it both invokes and abandons verticality. Arguably, Heidegger’s turning from verticality to horizontality comes with a cost, as it must renounce the possibility of conceiving the radicality of the fall from a perspective from above. However, as the article’s final part shows, Heidegger and Augustine do not only provide a view of everydayness as falling, but they both share the conviction that there is more to it: Heidegger speaks of the enigmas rooted in everydayness itself, which, however, do not point above, but toward its overlooked sense of Being; Augustine invokes ordinary events as traces of wonder that point from the lowly up to the transcendence of God.

**Keywords** Augustine · Heidegger · everydayness · verticality · falling · mystical

## 1 Introduction

Nietzsche has repeatedly held that by locating the highest values in the beyond, Christianity effectively leads to the draining of every value here below. The fiction of a sublime state above casts dark shadows back on our ordinary world; it stirs disap-

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pointment, even hatred, against everything ordinary and natural. One version of this argument reads:

Once the concept ‘nature’ was taken to mean the opposite of the concept God, the word ‘natural’ had to acquire the meaning of abominable – the whole of that fictitious world take its root in the hatred of nature (– reality! –), it is the expression of profound discomfiture in the presence of reality<sup>1</sup>

With this argument, Augustine becomes a perfect target of what Nietzsche elsewhere calls “Platonism for the people,” with Augustine’s blend of Neo-Platonism and Christianity, his troubled relation to sensual pleasures, along with his suspicion toward ordinary life. As for everydayness, Heidegger much later seems to continue the downgrading of everydayness, as average, indifferent, dominated by conformity, forgetfulness, and inauthenticity, even though his exposition is no longer fed by opposition to the Christian or Platonic sense of the beyond.

There is certainly some truth to such representations of Augustine and Heidegger, and my first ambition is to shed some light on why Augustine and Heidegger come to regard everydayness as inherently fallen. While Heidegger’s analysis of everydayness is far richer than Augustine’s, I contend that the religious orientation of Augustine conveys something missing to Heidegger, namely, what I call its verticality. This verticality is established through Augustine’s mystic experiences in contrast to which the everyday first can appear as fallen<sup>2</sup> But importantly, this is not all there is to everydayness. Both Augustine and Heidegger also have another perspective on everydayness, one in which everydayness can be taken as enigmatic or wonderous. But since Heidegger, I argue, will not allow for anything but a horizontal perspective on everydayness, he cannot redeem the sense in which Augustine takes everydayness to point beyond and above itself from the wonders of the ordinary.

## 2 Augustine’s mysticism

When Heidegger gives his lectures on Augustine in 1921, he shows no interest in the mystical aspects of Augustine’s thinking. This is striking since Heidegger only slightly before this was planning (but never held) a series of lectures on medieval mysticism.<sup>3</sup> Later, Heidegger took an explicit interest in mysticism, especially Meister Eckhart’s notion of *Gelassenheit* (releasement).<sup>4</sup> But from the notes he left us from his early period, it seems that Heidegger quickly came to develop a critical stance toward mysticism and its modern reception, distrusting their appeal to irrationalism, entailing at once a misplaced notion of rationality and making mysticism esoteric (*PRL*, 236, 239).

<sup>1</sup> Nietzsche (2000, p. 18).

<sup>2</sup> I borrow the term «verticality» from Anthony Steinbock’s phenomenological examination of mysticism. Steinbock (2007, p. 13).

<sup>3</sup> Heidegger (2004, pp. 231–41). Hereafter referred to as *PRL* in the text.

<sup>4</sup> Ruin (2019, pp. 1–9).

There are nevertheless reasons to believe that Augustine's mystical raptures are central to how Augustine comes to regard the everyday world – they are indeed even constitutive of it. There are at least two biographical accounts (some claim three), along with a handful of scattered comments on mystical experiences in the *Confessions*; one taking place in Milan before his conversion, the other in Ostia after his conversion. While in Milan, Augustine says he comes across “Platonic books” – Plotinus and other Plotinians probably amongst them – making a great impression on him, especially because they provide a way to think about divinity and evil beyond the quasi-materialism of his own Manicheism he had started to view with suspicion. But no less important is these books' teaching of an inward orientation. As a direct consequence of his reading, Augustine embarks on an inner journey – both an intellectual as well as an experiential journey.<sup>5</sup> In the first account, Augustine reports:

By the Platonic books, I was admonished to return into myself. With you as my guide I entered into my innermost citadel, and was given power to do so because you had become my helper (Ps. 29:11). I entered and with my soul's eye, such as it was, saw above the same eye of my soul the immutable light higher than my mind.<sup>6</sup>

All the accounts found in the *Confessions* roughly follow the three major steps of Plotinus' mystical scheme: starting by turning away from the everyday world announced to our senses, then turning inward toward his innermost soul, and from there ascending to the heights where he finally beholds the light or Being itself – above the mind.<sup>7</sup>

The most famous mystical experience in the *Confessions*, the Ostia event, finds Augustine and his mother Monica jointly ascending to mystical heights. The narrative trajectory is telling here: They are heading back to Africa as Monica falls ill and is approaching death. As to be expected from the context, Augustine and his mother are having an intimate conversation about the life to come and about the nature of eternal life. As they are talking, they turn away from the outer conversation, are led inward into their interior, and climb upward, above the bodily senses and the perceptible world, toward its maker. But unlike the rapture in Milan, Augustine does not speak of encountering light and Being. They glimpse the eternal wisdom in anticipation of the life to come, for “in this wisdom there is no past and future, since it is eternal. For to exist in the past or in the future is no property of the eternal.” (C IX.x.24) Despite their differences, both the Milan and the Ostia events have the function of lifting the mind up toward a divine height but, equally important, they are also shedding a ray of truth back on the low, common, and ordinary life.

The quality of the mystical experiences is such that Augustine cannot but wish for them to last. But they do not. Augustine underlines that each of the ascensions ends abruptly. In his accounts from Milan, Augustine makes it clear that the visions did not last long: “I was caught up to you by your beauty and quickly torn away from

<sup>5</sup> For the subtle relation between the personal and the dialectical according to the genre of the *Confessions*, see Turner (1995, pp 51–54).

<sup>6</sup> Augustine (1992, VII.x.16). Hereafter referred to as C in the text.

<sup>7</sup> McGuinn (1994, p. 233).

you by my weight. With a groan I crashed into inferior things” (C, VII.xvii.23). It is not that he is cast out from the blissful state, but his own “weight” makes him fall down into the things he now sees as inferior. What makes up the weight that prevents him from remaining in the heights? Without further explanation, Augustine refers to his habits, particularly his sexual habits. The Ostia vision also comes to a sudden abortion; Augustine’s and Monica’s mystical conversation “returned to the noise of our human speech,” he writes, even as they wished that it could last and everything inferior withdraw (C, IX.x.24–25).

In a short passage in Book X, Augustine returns to his ascensions and picks up on the link between falling from the heights and the power of habits. Augustine points out that he was occasionally granted the extraordinary “strange sweetness” unlike anything else in this life, but again, the sweetness never becomes permanent due to his habits:

But I fall back into my usual ways under my miserable burdens. I am reabsorbed by my habitual practices. I am held in their grip. I weep profusely, but still I am held. Such is the strength of the burden of habit. Here I have the power to be, but do not wish it. There I wish to be, but lack the power. On both grounds I am in misery. (C, X.xli.66)

The misery of the human existence, as exemplarily instantiated by Augustine himself, stems from being held down by the habitual life and therefore still away from his true longings, only available in short glimpses.

It is in his account of how he struggles to overcome his old life and take on the new life in Christ, that Augustine discusses habits most extensively. Even as Augustine longs for the new life, he is not able to give up his former life as his will is taken hostage by his habitual ways of living. Augustine describes a chain of factors that constitute habits: “The enemy had a grip on my will and so made a chain for me to hold me a prisoner. The consequence of a distorted will is passion. By servitude to passion, habit is formed, and habit to which there is no resistance becomes necessity” (C, VIII.v.10).<sup>8</sup> Through self-reflection, Augustine discerns the mechanism that hardens habits into almost unbreakable necessities: The distorted will gives in to passions, through repeatedly indulging in those passions, habits are formed, and if uncontested, habits become necessities we live by. However, everyday habits most often pass without attention because they are too close to us to notice, and so we unknowingly remain captive, as if sleeping. When Augustine has reached a perspective from above from which he can see this through, he confesses how the old habits still entice him back to sleep. Such sleep is nothing but the self-concealment of sin. Falling into sleep in such a way is not optional but follows from a lawlike necessity imposed by habits. For this reason, Augustine calls habits “the law of sin,” which he specifies as “the violence of habit by which even the unwilling mind is dragged down and held” (C, VIII.v.12). Immersed within its daily recurrence, our uncontested everydayness conceals itself, and make us sleepwalkers moving away from God.

<sup>8</sup> For the habits as resistance to our will and the impact of original sin, see Augustine (2010, 3.18.52).

Even if habits constitute the weight that makes Augustine fall from mystical heights, it is not obvious that those mystical raptures play any important role in what Augustine is trying to convey in the *Confessions*. In fact, read in the context of his self-narration, those mystical experiences appear strangely inconsequential, and as John Peter Kenney argues, should be understood as “unsuccessful mystical experience[s], as a failed attempt[s] at Plotinian Platonism.”<sup>9</sup> While Kenney thinks the ascensions are disappointing to Augustine because they neither can last nor can bring salvation, he nevertheless points to what Augustine learns from them, namely “exhibiting the soul’s state as a contingent and fallen being.”<sup>10</sup> If this is their teaching, it seems hard to regard them as inconsequential given that such a state of the soul is at the heart of the *Confessions*. Indeed, this insight restructures the Augustinian schema of mystical raptures by adding a further step to the Plotinian schema – not only turning away, turning inward, and turning upward, but additionally falling down. While the fourth movement is taken as disappointing and invariably comes with a bitter aftertaste, it becomes essential for Augustine’s disclosure of everydayness, both as a state of enchantment to habits and as a tendency to make us blind to its own fallenness.

Both of Augustine’s extraordinary ascensions reflect back on the ordinary condition and put them in stark relief. Both the upward and downward movements are internally interwoven as they together constitute what I will call the “verticality” of Augustine’s operative outlook. Without verticality, he would be immersed in different degrees of sleepiness, unaware of the heights and depths of human existence. In the same way, Deny Turner has argued that living in the exterior everydayness, means “to be wholly immersed within the mutable, unable to see it *as* mutable.” He concludes that this is how “Augustine has lived until his reading of the *Platonici* rescued him from his blindness,”<sup>11</sup> and, I would add, precisely by the mystical raptures the *Platonici* inspired.

### 3 Heidegger’s everydayness

I will postpone to the next section how Augustine’s verticality can be related to Heidegger’s view of falling and first expand on Augustine’s understanding of the habitual everyday through Heidegger’s more developed notion of everydayness. As already mentioned, Heidegger does not pick up on Augustine’s mysticism, but there are other threads from his lectures that later became woven into *Being and Time*, not least the central notion of care (*curare, Sorge*).<sup>12</sup> Moreover, even as Heidegger does not expound explicitly on the theme of everydayness in the Augustine lectures, it is nevertheless almost omnipresent in his readings. On the one hand, Heidegger repeatedly speaks of the everyday “bustling activity” as a way of deflecting the attention away from the original truth, and on the other, he detects how Augustine’s tempta-

<sup>9</sup> Kenney (2005 p. 57).

<sup>10</sup> Kenney (2005 p. 60).

<sup>11</sup> Turner (1995, p. 67).

<sup>12</sup> Heidegger (2010, p. 191, n. 7); hereafter referred to as BT in the text. The same point is made in Heidegger (1985 p. 302). For further comments, see Kiesel (1993 p. 105); Dahlstrom (2010, p. 381).

tions become integral to the everyday and make it into a field of absorption and forgetfulness. It is in the latter sense that Augustine speaks of “daily decay,” “daily battles,” and “the evils of the day” (C, X.xxxi.43).

One important aspect of Augustine’s temptations is that they invite us to fall back into our habits. Heidegger made at least one elaborate account of habit, *hexis*, as it appears in Aristotle. What this Aristotelian notion shares with Augustine’s notion, is how habits enable us to deal with things unattentively, for better or worse. While Heidegger acknowledges the constitutive role such habits have for the edification of Aristotle’s virtues, he does not fail to point out how *hexis* also turns the being-with-one-another into a common, average understanding.<sup>13</sup> Less attention is given to habits in *Being and Time*, but Heidegger does note how they are inscribed in his basic notion of being-in-the-world. Heidegger interprets the “in” of being-in-the-world to “stem from *innan-*, to live, *habitare*, to dwell. ‘An’ means I am used to, familiar with, I take care of something. It has the sense of *colo* in the sense of *habito* and *diligo*” (BT, 55). While it is through *habito* that the surroundings are made familiar, it is at the same time by habits that we tend to get absorbed and lose ourselves in the world (BT, 169, 111). Tradition and conventions are taken up into habits, so that “factual life has more often than not simply slipped into [life] through habit as opposed to having explicitly appropriated them.”<sup>14</sup> In effect, Heidegger broadens Augustine’s notion of habits in two respects. Heidegger reinforces the sense in which habits tend to lead to a state of falling, but he also goes beyond Augustine in regarding habits as part of a larger temporal and practical orientation of everydayness that makes us familiar with the world. Heidegger’s notion of habits and everydayness is therefore inherently ambiguous, at once opening up Dasein’s being-in-the-world and concealing it.

Closer scrutiny confirms that there is indeed an inherent ambiguity in Heidegger’s notion of everydayness. Even as everydayness frequently occurs in Heidegger’s lectures from 1923 onwards and reaches fruition in *Being and Time*, it remains difficult to delineate its precise contours, especially because it seems to be employed in different ways.<sup>15</sup> In the latter work, it is possible to discern two different ways in which everydayness is used, both as a methodological application, serving as the phenomenological starting point of his analysis, and, in a more substantial way, where he describes the various movements and tendencies that belong to everydayness as it is lived. While the first outlines the disclosing function of the everyday, the latter outlines how it opens as well as obscures Dasein’s primordial self-understanding.<sup>16</sup>

I will postpone the substantial account of everydayness to the next section and start with the methodological application which rests on some fundamental phenomenological principles. In order to describe Dasein’s being, Heidegger must, following

<sup>13</sup> Heidegger (2009, pp. 127–31, 177). Cf. Marshall (2017, pp. 60–61).

<sup>14</sup> Heidegger (2002, p. 116).

<sup>15</sup> The term everydayness seems to be introduced in Heidegger’s lectures in the summer term of 1923. Heidegger (2008, pp. 24–27, 65–70).

<sup>16</sup> Zimmerman makes a similar distinction between everydayness as a “point of departure” and as a “mode of existence.” (1975, p. 110). Duff is one among the few who systematically treats the doubleness of Heidegger’s everydayness, respectively as “disclosedness” and “occlusiveness.” (2015, pp. 64–73).

his own understanding of phenomena, let it show itself from itself according to its own terms (BT, 32). Generally, we cannot start from the extraordinary or exceptional, nor detach us from the world, but must approach phenomena from the most immediate way in which phenomena are given, that is, how they show themselves “initially and for the most part” – which precisely denotes what Heidegger calls their “average everydayness” (BT, 16). Everydayness, therefore, provides the starting point of Heidegger’s philosophical explication by paying heed to the manner in which phenomena appear as they first announce themselves in our nearness and familiarity (“initially”), in the temporal tendency to recur in the same manner (“for the most part”), based in the common, indifferent mode in which we usually encounter them (“average everydayness”). The importance of everydayness for philosophy is pointed out in the lecture on ontology where the notion is introduced. Heidegger writes: “Interpretation begins in the ‘Today’, i.e. in the particular average understanding, out of which philosophy lives and to which it speaks back.”<sup>17</sup> According to this methodological inflection, everydayness is the initial position but not the phenomenological foreground of the study. Rather it here works as the background or horizon for the investigation of Dasein’s being-in-the-world (BT, 49 n.10; 66).

This picture is complicated by Heidegger’s claims that phenomena are not simply there for all to see, since any phenomena entail “something that does *not* show itself initially and for the most part, something that is *concealed* in contrast to that initially and for the most part does show itself” (BT, 33). As the technical phrase “initially and for the most part” clearly refers to everydayness in its temporal being, Heidegger here suggests that there is something about the way everydayness shows itself that at the same time covers itself up.<sup>18</sup> The same thought is picked up as Heidegger discusses everydayness in its ontic inflection: “What is ontically nearest and familiar is ontologically the farthest, unrecognized and constantly overlooked in its ontological significance” (BT, 43). Thus, even as Dasein’s average and indifferent mode of existing in the everyday is at once most familiar and close ontically, it is yet furthest, precisely because its familiarity makes us neglect its ontological significance.

Even as everydayness implies a tendency to cover up, we are unable, at the same time, to dispense with it to get to how the world «really» is; indeed, to pass over the everyday, according to Heidegger, has proved to lead to wrongheaded metaphysical philosophy. By skipping the pre-thematic familiarity with the world, metaphysics tends to postulate theoretical and static notions of beings. Heidegger can exemplify this by the way we have inherited a highly abstract sense of spatial things, with material foundation, oriented in geometrical space, and with superimposed values added to them. But this is not the way space initially and for the most part gives itself. We must start out from the everyday dealings where we encounter a table in a room, perhaps the table where we read at night, meet friends, and occasionally celebrate.<sup>19</sup> Since this is the primary way we encounter things, then Heidegger can argue that everydayness should not be regarded as a lack but a distinctly positive phenomenal characteristic. In fact, Dasein’s self-interpretation depends on it: “Dasein can never

<sup>17</sup> Heidegger (2008, p. 14).

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Zimmerman (1975, pp. 122–23).

<sup>19</sup> Heidegger (2008, pp. 68–69).

escape the everyday way of being interpreted into which Dasein has grown initially” (BT, 163). While everydayness is indispensable in our initial phenomenological access to Dasein’s being, it should be noted that it is only the first approach, not the final. It is both incomplete and preliminary, sketching out the horizon for a genuinely ontological repetition, which Heidegger carries out in Division Two of *Being and Time* (BT, 17, 223).

#### 4 Heidegger on falling

The methodological employment of everydayness sketched out above sheds light on the positive constitutive role of everydayness that Augustine never elaborates on. But as noted, Heidegger also offers a second, more substantial analysis of everydayness where he stays rather close to Augustine’s outline, and it is here Heidegger turns from the methodological sense of everydayness to the manner in which everydayness becomes manifest as a mode of existence. If everydayness initiates us to the world and others, Heidegger needs to account for how it can simultaneously cover them up. In other words, he needs to respond to what he takes as Augustine’s central question: How have I become a problem (*molestia*) to myself (C, X.xxxiii.50; cf. PRL, 181–83)? For Heidegger, such questions are connected to the problem of how Dasein’s fundamental orientation as a whole – its care – can become deflected from its authentic potential.<sup>20</sup>

Everydayness seems to be governed by some structure or movement by which we lose ourselves. In a condensed presentation from 1922, he gives the following account:

What lives within the movement of caring is its *inclination* toward the world, and it takes the form of a *propensity* toward becoming absorbed in the world and letting itself be taken along by the world. This propensity of the anxious concern of life is the expression of a basic factual tendency in life toward *falling away* from itself and, as included in this, *falling into* the world and itself *falling into ruin*... Falling should not be understood as an objective happening as simply “occurring” in life but rather as an intentional how. His propensity is the most profound *fate* that life factually has to endure within itself.<sup>21</sup>

In this passage, Heidegger argues that there are inclinations and propensities that are inscribed in everydayness itself that entail falling. Falling is the ineradicable tendency, indeed our “fate,” to become absorbed in the world, propelled by our anxious concern and attraction toward its relief. It is noteworthy that in the quotation above, Heidegger makes it clear that falling can take different directions. In particular, “falling away” and “falling into” are interesting because they point in opposite directions and yet are interlaced with one another: Factual life falls away and becomes alienated from itself proportionally to the degree that it falls into the world. In addition

<sup>20</sup> Heidegger (1985, p. 80).

<sup>21</sup> Heidegger (2002, p. 117).



to falling away and into the world, Heidegger suggests that we fall into ruin, which echoes the analysis of *Ruinanz*, which Heidegger elsewhere explicates as the complex way that we fall.<sup>22</sup> As Scott M. Campbell has argued, these various modes are unified by the root meaning of falling (*Verfallen an*).<sup>23</sup>

While everydayness makes up Dasein's initial encounter with phenomena in general, the same everydayness also conceals phenomena and alienates Dasein from itself. Yet, despite its concealing powers, Heidegger believes everydayness to be indispensable for our self-understanding. It is indispensable because all "genuine understanding, interpreting and communication, rediscovery and new appropriation come about in it, out of it, and against it." (BT, 163). On the one hand, Dasein's understanding of the world and oneself is positively conditioned by practices, language, patterns, and traditions that we are initiated into. But on the other, these conditions will at the same time tend to lead us away from an authentic way of being in the world. Everydayness therefore implies a strange ambiguity, as it both enables Dasein's world relation and distorts it, which also means, as Heidegger repeatedly reminds us, that proximity of the everyday in terms of ontic presence, remains ontologically still the farthest (BT, 15, 43, 353).

But what is it that makes us fall? Falling is not an objective event, quality, or state, and, as Heidegger underlines, in particular, it is not a theory of falling from grace and into original sin (BT, 173).<sup>24</sup> But there are still dimensions of the falling that retain an Augustinian influence. Heidegger suggests at least three different ways which shed further light on fallenness, one having to do with our basic encounter with the world through dealings (*Besorgen*), a second with the social dimension and its publicness, and a third outlines how our perceptions become fixed by traditions. As for the first, the most famous account is Heidegger's analysis of handiness (*Zuhandenheit*), where he accounts for how the primordial significance of the surrounding world is rooted in dealings and their implied references. However, such dealings absorb Dasein to the point where it loses its attentive stance toward the world and itself (BT, 68–71, 75). For both Heidegger and Augustine, becoming absorbed into the habitual environment poses a threat. For instance, in discussing the happy life which everyone wants, Augustine raises the question of why people do not pursue it. One of his answers reads: "It is because they are more occupied in things." (C, X.xxiii.33). This small remark is emphasized in Heidegger's reading and resonates strongly in Heidegger's understanding of how "bustling activity" at once absorbs people's attention and leads them away from their genuine cares (PRL, 184, 188). Such being led astray is not a matter of untruth, however, but of displacing the truth, investing it elsewhere. Our everyday habits and conventions "become the 'truth' itself, in and with this falling enactment." (PRL, 147).

<sup>22</sup> While the notion of *Ruinanz* is developed in the lectures *Basic Concepts of Aristotelian Philosophy* (1921–1922), the idea is already mentioned in the lectures on Augustine. (Ruin 2012, p. 19).

<sup>23</sup> Campbell (2012, p. 114).

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Heidegger (1985, p. 283). J. Stambaugh translates *Verfallenheit* with "entanglement" and "falling prey." While that may capture the which one becomes absorbed, it misses downward movement and its allusion to the Christian sense of the fall. While Heidegger repeatedly deny the identity of Christian and his own concept, he also indirectly affirms their proximity by repeatedly distinguishing between the theological his ontological employment.

There is also a social aspect of our falling. In this sense, falling into the world means “being absorbed in being-with-one-another as it is guided by idle talk, curiosity, and ambiguity” (BT, 169). Dasein owes its language, habits, and conventions to others, apart from which there is no intelligible world. These social conditions are taken up as anonymous norms of practices and expressions. But this anonymity makes others into the indistinct “they” (*das Man*) which Dasein takes over as the framework for its own identity and self-understanding. Heidegger argues through his analyses of idle talk, curiosity, and ambiguity, that Dasein’s “who” becomes identified with the public they and ends up becoming nobody in particular. In this way, the they come to define everydayness: “The they, which is nothing definite and which all are, though not as a sum, prescribes the kind of being of everydayness” (BT, 123). Dasein thereby forgets its self and flows along how the they live.

There is also a third aspect of falling, namely concerning Dasein’s historicity; for Dasein does not only get lost in its dealings and public life, but is at the same time entangled in a tradition (BT, 20). The way we regard things is always guided by a certain direction, and this direction is shaped by the past which is handed down. The tradition flows into language, habits, and conventions and thus orients our perceptions of things. But since tradition for the most part is taken for granted, it tends not to be reflected upon or radically questioned. Heidegger argues that not even phenomenology’s attention to the way things show themselves from themselves guarantees access to the things themselves: “Their showing-themselves can be an aspect which has become so restricted and fixed through *tradition* that this inauthenticity is no longer able to be recognized, but rather is taken to be what is authentic, the actual things in question.”<sup>25</sup> In this way, the tradition deprives Dasein of its questioning and choosing and thus turns Dasein’s everydayness into a concealed, inauthentic mode. However, unlike the way dealings and publicness, which is intrinsic to Dasein’s being and hence unavoidably tends toward falling, the tradition both can and should be undone.<sup>26</sup> This comes about through Heidegger’s destruction, where the stiffened tradition is dismantled, and the tradition’s original possibilities are made accessible anew. His earlier interest in Aristotle stems from the way Aristotle has been taken up into philosophy and theology and gradually stifled into a metaphysical tradition. This calls for a destruction of that tradition and a repetition of Aristotle’s authentic potential.<sup>27</sup>

Heidegger explains that these three aspects of falling – dealings, publicity, and tradition – give us a deeper understanding of inauthenticity, and since both falling and inauthenticity are taken as ontological structures or existentials, the two most significantly overlap (BT 169). Inauthenticity negatively presupposes that Dasein’s being is inescapably always-being-my-own-being (*Jemeinigkeit*) (BT, 42). But such always-being-mine can essentially be lost from view and not owned up to. In fact, for the most part, it is lost – Dasein exists for the most part as inauthentic. In contrast, authentic Dasein appropriates its existence (as the German *Eigentlichkeit* indicates), makes its self always-my-own. Only from the vantage point of authenticity can we

<sup>25</sup> Heidegger (2008, p. 59).

<sup>26</sup> McNeill (2012, p. 28).

<sup>27</sup> Campbell (2012, 103–104).

regard inauthentic abdication from the self as a fall. Despite such fall, the being-in-the-world does not disappear in inauthenticity, and neither can authenticity be lived outside everydayness. Rather, they are two existentiell modifications of a common ontological structure that sheds further light on the ambiguity of everydayness (BT 130). That Heidegger explains authenticity by beginning from the analysis of inauthenticity follows the methodological priority of everydayness but is also vindicated by their common root: “What *is* ontically in the way of being average can very well be understood ontologically in terms of pregnant structures which are not structurally different from the ontological determinations of an *authentic* being of Dasein” (BT, 43).

## 5 Heidegger’s lack of verticality

It is primarily by the notion of falling that Heidegger can be read as extending Augustine’s everydayness. This is not so much because falling is a secular remainder of original sin but because the everyday for both is beset by propensities and temptations that pull Dasein down into the world. As I have argued, Augustine’s sense of a fallen everydayness gets its significance from the contrast to the heights, and together they constitute the verticality that shapes his view. Heidegger, however, is not only skeptical of mysticism and metaphysical transcendence, but also of any unqualified mixture of philosophy and theology.<sup>28</sup> Heidegger’s repeated insistence that his notion of falling has nothing to do with its theological notion of sin may seem somewhat strained and unhistorical. Still, he makes it perfectly clear that his notion of falling is intended as a secular notion.<sup>29</sup> Falling, in Heidegger’s rendering, comes with no reference to metaphysical heights, it is not a reflex of our being before God or any other superior instance, and hence does not imply the vertical axis so central to Augustine. But if this is so, one may ask why Heidegger holds on to the notion of falling, since it conceptually suggests some sense of verticality.

This question, however, presupposes that Heidegger’s notion of falling actually suggests a downward movement. But upon closer scrutiny, it is not obvious that it does. One thing is that prior to *Being and Time*, Heidegger does not consistently use falling (*Verfallenheit*), but often speaks of decline (*Abfall*), collapse (*Sturz*), and ruinance (*Ruinanz*).<sup>30</sup> Furthermore, the tendency does not always suggest a downward movement, but can capture various movements that belong to the tensions of the self, turning “*in* itself, *as* itself, *for* itself and, in all of this *against* itself.”<sup>31</sup> In a passage quoted earlier, Heidegger also suggests diverse directions: “*falling away* from itself

<sup>28</sup> In 1924, Heidegger tracks the importance of theology as shaping metaphysics, as well as the need for a phenomenological destruction (Heidegger 2002, pp. 124–24). The same year, he draws the distinction between the Christian notion of eternity and the philosophical interrogation of time as such (Heidegger 1992, pp. 1–2, 6). For the most elaborate account of the distinction from 1927, see Heidegger 1998, pp. 41–43.

<sup>29</sup> Dreyfus’ reads Heidegger’s falling as a secular version of Kierkegaard’s religious concepts (1991, p. 315).

<sup>30</sup> Crow (2006, p. 71).

<sup>31</sup> Heidegger (2002, p. 98).

and, as included in this, *falling into* the world and itself *falling into ruin*.<sup>32</sup> In his Augustine lectures, Heidegger prefers the downward decline (*Abfall*), but can also invoke different movements – from being gathered to being dispersed, from self-possession to absorption in the world (PRL, 151–52). In *Being and Time*, he speaks of being drawn outside oneself, going up in activities of the they, fleeing or losing oneself. However, despite the lack of consistent vertical notions, the overall picture remains the same: Regardless of which inflection it takes, there is simultaneously a downward movement at work which he discerns as an inherent “gravity” (PRL, 12). Given the architectonic placement of falling in Heidegger’s main work, it is reasonable to take the various directions as interlaced, belonging to a comprehensive downward whirl, one that in *Being and Time* is adequately summed up as falling.<sup>33</sup>

If this is so, we are led back to the question of why a position that avoids metaphysical or theological notions of heights, along with any sense of falling from a higher state, will cling to falling as its central notion. Is it conceivable to fall without falling from somewhere higher, say from an achieved authenticity? But not even authenticity can be taken as a higher position, as Heidegger denies that authenticity somehow “hovers over entangled everydayness” (BT, 172). Even so, one may assume that Heidegger has some resources in store, by means of which it makes sense to speak of falling without reference to heights. For he can still point below, not in the sense of a metaphysical bedrock, but in the absence of it: “We call this kind of ‘movement’ of Dasein in its own being the *plunge* [*Absturz*]. Dasein plunges out of itself into itself, into the groundlessness and nothingness of inauthentic everydayness.” (BT, 170–71). In fact, the Augustine lectures anticipate this passage with reference to Augustine’s analyses of the temptation of secular ambitions. We seek self-esteem either by being feared and loved by other people, or even praising ourselves for our good qualities as if they were our own achievements, and disregard that they are gifts from God (C X.xxxix.64). Such vanity invests all importance into oneself according to the standard dictated by others’ admiration, and in so doing, Heidegger notes, leads “into the void and into nothingness” (PRL, 178).

Heidegger is here glossing Augustine’s theological outlook that operates within a verticality that makes falling into depths intelligible relative to *summum bonum*. The invocation of depth in *Being and Time*, however, does not invoke notions of the highest good, and thus for Heidegger to fall into the nothingness of inauthentic everydayness does not signify a “‘lower’ degree of being” (BT, 42). And similarly, with allusion to original sin, Heidegger states that falling “‘must not be interpreted as a ‘fall’ from a purer and higher ‘primordial condition’” (BT, 164). But if there is no vertical sense of beneath entailed in the groundlessness, it becomes less and less clear what orientation it is supposed to provide.

While the inconsistencies of Heidegger’s notions make their implications unclear, it indicates that his analyses are meant to be carried out solely within a horizontal axis. This is deeply aligned with the hermeneutic structure of Heidegger’s approach. According to the hermeneutic circle, all interpretation starts with something already familiar, given as a pre-conception that vaguely outlines a meaning, and then later

<sup>32</sup> Heidegger (2002, p. 117).

<sup>33</sup> For a reading of ruinance as comprising different tendencies, see Abergel (2020, pp. 94–100).

returns to the same but now according to a thematic interpretation (BT, 147–48).<sup>34</sup> In other words, the circle starts in the average everydayness of our being-in-the-world, without jumping out of the circle into any beyond or above, and folds back on everydayness in a thematic articulation that brings out its distinct meaning. There are certainly horizontal interpretations of everydayness in Augustine as well, for instance, all the ways in which daily temptations make the self a problem for itself, which Heidegger takes particular interest in. But there is a decisive contrast between Heidegger's and Augustine's horizontality; for Augustine, it is the verticality that puts the horizontality as such into relief and in this sense discloses its being. That our lives in the world appear fallen, as pulled down and away from their upright position, has, for Augustine, no doubt much to do with sin. However, it should be clear by now that Augustine provides an additional account, a phenomenologically more primordial account, derived from an external position of height in contrast to which the everyday reveals itself as fallen (C X.xl.65). Without such an external position, our initial orientation according to everydayness will only provide us with its own resources of self-evaluation. But if everydayness is characterized by the habits, traditions, and public opinion as taken for granted, then it seems that such a horizontality cannot by its own means disclose that everydayness is holding us down and away from the truth. This seems structurally analogous to the theological problem of sin: If sin is radical, it also deprives the sinners from realizing his or her own state. This is not a big problem for theology as it can refer to the external corrective of divine revelation, which is, according to Heidegger, only available in faith and precisely excluded from philosophy.<sup>35</sup>

How can Heidegger arrive at the insight that everydayness is falling in the first place? If we look at the overarching argument of *Being and Time*, such worries are carefully dealt with in terms of the hermeneutic relation between Division One and Two of the book. While Division One is confined to a preparatory exposition of Dasein within the average everydayness and inauthenticity, Division Two delves down to its original source (*Ursprünglichkeit*) and Dasein as a whole (BT, 223–24). The question is how such a transition is possible within a horizontal plane. There must be some form of interruption of the circle, putting us at a certain distance from it without breaking it apart, not initiated from a beyond, but from within the flow of everydayness itself. Heidegger convincingly points out that such interruptions of our habitual familiarity happen in breakdowns, anguish, and particularly death.<sup>36</sup> These interruptions make up what Heidegger can call a “countermotion” to the inauthentic everydayness which possesses the power to disclose. Concerning death, Heidegger writes:

The being of life accessible in facticity is in itself such that it can be made visible and reached only on the path of a *detour* through a motion running counter to the falling of care. As the worry of life about not becoming lost, this coun-

<sup>34</sup> Cf. Heidegger (1985, pp. 146–47).

<sup>35</sup> Heidegger (1998, p. 51).

<sup>36</sup> The phenomenological function of breakdowns and “limit situation” is cited with approval already in Heidegger's comments to Jaspers in 1919/1920. (1998, pp. 9–10).

termotion is the way the possibility of seizing upon the being of life, stirring it, and authenticating it is temporized and unfolded.<sup>37</sup>

This detour through exposing Dasein to its death is what makes discerning our proximate everydayness as falling possible, and, correspondingly, discloses the authentic existence with its futural horizon. Here the reversal of the methodological priority of everydayness takes place as everydayness is now discerned from the position of authenticity. In the analysis of anxiety, Heidegger does therefore not grant methodological priority to inauthentic everydayness, as its being at home in the world rather appear to be an effect of the unhomeliness: “Tranquilized, familiar being-in-the-world is a mode of the uncanniness of Dasein, not the other way around” (BT, 183).

Even granted Heidegger’s countermotion that provides him with a position from which the distinction between authenticity and inauthenticity emerges, he is still moving within the horizontal plane, between the horizontal poles of falling and its countermovement. Comparing the position to Augustine’s, we must ask if such renunciation of verticality comes with a price, precisely with respect to the understanding of our finite being-in-the-world. To illustrate what might be at stake, let me refer to the early Wittgenstein who famously appeals to the mystical – that the world exists – which somehow shows itself. What shows itself is inexpressible, not because it suggests a mystical sphere beyond, but because it becomes nonsense once rendered in words, at least according to the conception of language outlined in *Tractatus*.<sup>38</sup> Leaving aside the discussion about the limits of sense, the point, for now, is simply that Wittgenstein suggests that the mystical is given along with a particular perspective on the world, seeing it *sub specie aeterni*.<sup>39</sup> In a note from 1930, he picks up on the same perspective, writing that “it is as though it [thought] flies above the world and leaves it as it is – observing it from above, in flight.”<sup>40</sup> Even if the perspective *sub specie aeterni* leaves the world as it is, something is gained from it, namely that the world exists as a limited whole.

Through this vision of the world *sub specie aeterni* we are provided with a form of verticality that is not derived from within the circle of everydayness itself. It puts the finitude of everydayness – indeed, the world as a whole – into relief precisely because it is envisaged from above itself. Even if it is nonsense according to *Tractatus*’ restrictive view of language, it still suggests an imaginable position that is possible to share, and such imagination makes all the difference in relation to the evaluation of our lives in the world.<sup>41</sup> We could say that it provides a perspective from which we are not restricted to the horizontal hermeneutics of facticity but can regard everydayness as such, as away from the height, as fallen, and as a finite whole. Heidegger has no access to such a radical perspective and therefore struggles to give

<sup>37</sup> Heidegger (2002, pp. 119–20).

<sup>38</sup> I leave to one side the discussion about non-sense and its implication for the *Tractatus* as a whole. For an account of the difference between the orthodox and the resolute reading of Wittgenstein’s *Tractatus*, see Conant (2004, pp. 186–90).

<sup>39</sup> Wittgenstein (2001, 6.45).

<sup>40</sup> Wittgenstein (1980, p. 5e).

<sup>41</sup> Diamond (2002, pp. 160–61).

a consistent thematization of everydayness and its fallenness. Without a perspective from above, the world becomes a totality without escape, in Levinas' sense, a totality that denies Heidegger the possibility of seeing the world in its radical finitude, as a limited whole. Only from an alternative perspective – external to everydayness and with the power to offer correction – does it make sense to see our absorption in the world as falling. The difference in question is one between what I have called verticality and horizontality, a difference that perhaps harks back to the difference between an essentially Christian outlook and the Greek one. As Hans Ruin observes:

Whereas the Christian ruin obtains its significance from the point of view of a posited infinity, from the point of view of that which is not ruinous, the Greek ruin supposedly signifies differently. It does not depend for its meaning upon that which is not ruinous, but simply characterizes life as it is itself, insufficient, as referred to and related to a world.<sup>42</sup>

## 6 Everydayness beyond falling

Despite the significantly different orientations with regard to verticality and horizontality, Augustine and Heidegger share some fundamental convictions about everydayness. They both see everyday life as exposed to various temptations and containing structures and dynamisms that make us fall. Such depiction is, however, prone to become prey to Nietzsche's criticism announced at the outset: The invention of an illusory state beyond everydayness – whether vertical heights or horizontal authenticity – dialectically molds the perception of the everyday as a pilgrimage away from its true determination. Nevertheless, both Augustine and Heidegger suggest alternative views on the everyday that render Nietzsche's criticism less relevant.

Even though Heidegger contends that the inauthentic everydayness for the most part prevails, there are statements where Heidegger gestures toward the possibility of inhabiting everydayness authentically. Expounding on his characteristics of everydayness as “initially and for the most part,” he writes:

“Initially” means the way in which Dasein is “manifest” in the being-with-one-another of publicness, even if it has “basically” “overcome” everydayness existentially. “For the most part” signifies the way in which Dasein shows itself for everyone “as a rule,” but not always. (BT, 352–53)

There is not much new in this account of “initially” – with the important exception that Heidegger suggests that one still remains attached to others if the everydayness has been “overcome,” that is, in an authentic mode; and similar concerning his reference to “for the most part,” where Heidegger again is hinting at its possible exception where authenticity can let Dasein show itself differently. If everydayness cannot be fled, it means that Heidegger believes it can be lived in both the authentic

<sup>42</sup> Ruin (2012, pp. 19–20).

and the inauthentic mode.<sup>43</sup> While falling is an unavoidable existential that imposes a tendency toward inauthenticity, authenticity must be conceived as a resistance to that tendency, not as a stable position, but as a temporary achievement.<sup>44</sup> For, as Heidegger comments, “existence can also master the everyday, in the Moment, and of course often only ‘for the moment,’ but it can never extinguish it” (BT, 353). The Moment (*Augenblick*) is, as Heidegger says in his lectures on Paul, a relation to the future, not as expectations in objective time, but in the specific sense of existential enactment of *Kairos*, the fullness of time (PRL, 71–72, 106–07). The Moment signifies the transition to authenticity in which Dasein is freed from its fallen state and directs itself toward an authentic future, which Heidegger also finds confirmed by Kierkegaard. With such a temporality, *der Augenblick* – literally, the moment of vision – enables Dasein to encounter the world as if “*for the first time*” (BT, 323).

Seeing everydayness as if for the first time, in another way than it is given initially and for the most part, means recognizing its enigma. The ambiguity of everydayness that runs through *Being and Time* – both opening and covering up, both near and far – reaches its climax when Heidegger’s points to its enigmatic character:

What is *ontically* so familiar in the factual interpretedness of Dasein that we do not even pay any attention to it, hides in itself enigma upon enigma [*Rästel*] existentially and ontologically. The “natural” horizon for starting the existential analytic of Dasein is *only seemingly obvious*. (BT, 353)

No doubt, both the “ontically so familiar” and “natural horizon” refer to the everydayness that we fail to attend to because it is near and obvious and thus taken for granted. But what is this enigma of everydayness? As already stated in the introduction of *Being and Time*, Heidegger asserts that the enigma does not concern something contingently hidden. And inversely, he argues that the fact that we tend to take Being as self-evident only proves its incomprehensibility. Both indicate “that an enigma lies *a priori* in every relation and being toward beings as beings” (BT, 4). This echoes the ontological dimension of the enigma that Heidegger locates in the “obviousness” of the everydayness above, suggesting that the enigma must be sought precisely in its proximity and obviousness. For, according to the quote above, everydayness as the starting point of his analysis, turns out to be “*only seemingly obvious*.” Supporting such a reading, Simon Critchley writes that “the riddle here is that of absolute obviousness, the sheer facticity of what is under our noses, the everyday in all its palpable plainness and banality.”<sup>45</sup> When everydayness is grasped in the Moment, seeing it as if “for the first time,” Dasein does not put everything straight, but rather experiences the familiarity of everydayness as inherently enigmatic.

<sup>43</sup> Zimmerman (1975, p. 119–20).

<sup>44</sup> The fact that Heidegger both seems to portray falling and hence inauthenticity as inescapable, and yet appeals to authenticity has given rise to various discussions. Mulhall, for one, speaks affirmatively of the “profound ambivalence” of fallenness as at once contingent and necessary (2005, p. 52). Rather than reading it as an ambivalence in Heidegger, Carman argues that the achievement of authenticity as a “jump” that is conditioned by the “gravity” of falling. (2000, p. 25).

<sup>45</sup> Critchley (2008, p. 138).



Augustine, too, intimates an alternative view of the habitual and fallen everydayness. In particular, he repeatedly points out how the miracles reported in the Gospels are misunderstood as long as their meaning is taken to reside in their astonishing extraordinariness. Augustine does not deny that the accounts of Jesus' miracles are astonishing, but their significance consists in the way they display the enigma of ordinary life. Augustine invites us to revisit some most unremarkable events:

Take the alternation of day and night, the unvarying order of the heavenly bodies, the annual return of the four seasons, the leaves falling and returning to the trees, the endless vitality of seeds, the beauty of light, colour, sounds, odours, the varieties of flavours. If we could speak to someone who saw and sensed these things for the first time, we should find that he was overwhelmed and dizzy at such miracles.<sup>46</sup>

Although such things do not usually elicit our attention, they could nonetheless be seen as overwhelming miracles. We must get out of our habitual way of regarding the everyday as the continuous repetition of the same, so that we – just as in Heidegger's authentic Moment – can see the ordinary as if “for the first time.” But then Augustine immediately complains: “But we make light of all these things, not because they are easy to understand – for what is more obscure than their causes? – but because we are continually aware of them.”<sup>47</sup>

Interestingly, Augustine makes a similar point with respect to mystical visions. His most systematic treatment of that theme is a philosophical analysis of Paul's ascension to “the third heaven” (2 Cor. 12:1–4). Amidst the treatise, Augustine breaks off his analysis to ask why we are so obsessed with extraordinary visions. Unsurprisingly, he warns against curiosity which only takes interest in exotic, strange, and extraordinary events, and thereby completely neglects the enigmas of daily occurrences. But there are, Augustine points out, visions happening every day and, particularly, every night, in our dreams. Once more, he raises the question of why we should regard such visions as less enigmatic just because we are used to them. He complains that “nobody is concerned, or not very much, to look into that point, as though, forsooth, the nature and source of such vision is less wonderful simply because they happen every day, and a matter of less concern simply because everybody has them.”<sup>48</sup> No doubt, it is the familiarity, repetitiveness, and publicness that prevent us from appreciating the everyday visions, although they are as enigmatic as any mystical visions.

To sum up, both Heidegger and Augustine agree that there is another dimension of everydayness than its fallenness, as enigmatic as it is ordinary. For Augustine, I have claimed, the vertical axis is established by him being taken up to the mystical height – for then to experience the downfall into the everyday. Additionally, he also presents us with the inverse direction; wonders and visions do also take place in the lowliness, right before our eyes, every day, and they lead from the low and upward, as almost unremarkable

<sup>46</sup> Augustine (2006, xvi.34).

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Augustine (2002, XII.xviii.40). Similar arguments are made in Augustine's treatment of wonders and miracles. See Dahl (2018, pp. 96–101).

signs that attest to God the Creator. The ordinary world points us outward and upward in the way Augustine finds Paul to have recognized: “I saw your ‘invisible nature understood through the things which are made’ (Rome 1:20)” (C, VII.xvii.23). For Heidegger’s part, the backdrop of the enigmatic is also the fallen everydayness, albeit a falling without any reference to verticality. Despite the richness of Heidegger’s analysis, his everydayness cannot point upward; its “enigmas upon enigmas” only withdraw from our grasp along a horizontal axis that conceals as much as it reveals. While Heidegger provides a richer phenomenology of everydayness, he has deprived himself of the more radical perspective that Augustine’s verticality can provide. Heidegger cannot regard the fallen everydayness in contrast to a height, but also, with respect to enigmas and wonders, he is unable to discern the way they lead beyond themselves, as signs that exceed everydayness in an upward direction. It is true that later Heidegger speaks of thinking as thanking, but the thanks have no address, particularly not God. For Augustine, in contrast, such verticality orients the central aspirations of his confessions as such. They have the double function of disclosing the lowliness of our lives as well as inspiring praise and thanks to God. Augustine’s confessions, therefore, bring the circle to a close, from above to below, and then upward again in exposing “the great depth from which we have to cry to you” (C, II.iii.5; Ps. 129:1).

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