

Traversing the Digital World:
Questing for the Socio-Political Realities of a Digital Age

by

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Bachelor of Arts (Honours), MacEwan University, 2018

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We acknowledge with respect the Lekwungen peoples on whose traditional territory the university stands and the Songhees, Esquimalt and WSÁNEĆ peoples whose historical relationships with the land continue to this day.

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Traversing the Digital World:
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Abstract

Beginning with the assumption that the/a world exists and is in-itself a real thing; I will endeavour to define such reality as it appears. A hermeneutic exploration of Heidegger and Gadamer's understanding of the world will allow me to develop a definition of what a world is and subsequently how a digital world ought to be understood. Taking this route towards understanding a digital world will shed light on the idea that the world is a digital-nondigital blending rather than worlds that exist in disjoint domains. The world is, in reality, what Gadamer calls a fusion of horizons. From there we can understand how people have become what Sherry Turkle calls the "tale of two aesthetics." Our selves *appear* to exist in two aesthetic domains—one self here and one self over there. With the help of Turkle, Donna Haraway, Walker Percy, and Kafka's *Metamorphosis* (as a fictional representation of reality) this antiquated discursive world ideal will be shown to be both ineffective and incorrect. Our nondigital world self is, in reality, blended with our digital world self, i.e. they are actually one thing: existence as such. The purpose of doing this is to understand the socio-political reality of a digital-nondigital world. *Digital self-existence*, synonymous with *self-existence* in-itself, will inevitably be approached as an ersatz existence that has real implications on existence in and of itself. Our discursive realities allow governments, corporations and our own-selves to undermine and take advantage of our existence as ersatz totalities. This is brought to light in contrast to *authentic existence* which implies a Nietzschean-William James understanding of *purity-in-being* as an act of resistance to the will of technology in the form of language and digital media. This can only be done through an exegetical-dialectic involving a breadth of thinkers throughout time, while simultaneously bridging methodological frameworks in order to overcome the discursive divides of being.

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Introduction Laying-Bare the Question¹

When writing an introduction it is customary to *put-forth* one's objectives and goals.² That is, one ought to tell the reader why they are reading this work, or better yet, why the author thinks the reader is reading this particular work. The author seeks to give a purpose to the study, or quest, that will be found within the work so that the reader may understand its importance in light of the author's position at the time of writing.³ In this sense, the author is giving importance to the question(s) and the subsequent answer(s) the reader will discover within the work. The author is seeking to portray some worldview as being a legitimate view from which understanding can be achieved.⁴ The author's ultimate goal is to *lay-bare* the world as they know it in a communicable fashion; thus, allowing the reader to understand the world, not as a particular and distinct thought, but as the world as such.⁵ Or, at the very least, the author is looking to make their worldview commensurable with the worldview of the reader.⁶ In *laying-*

¹ While it is not customary to compound a verb and an adjective, I am doing so here to indicate an Aristotelean-Heideggerian custom in order to compound the complexity of saying: that which is laid bare (laid-bare). The purpose of doing this is to envelop this work in a larger historical context of compounding "simple" words to convey complex ideas. This for me, and Joe Sachs, follows the Aristotelean tradition of making a work more "approachable" and to, more importantly, remove the work from complex terms with both historical baggage and varying degrees of definition; Joe Sachs, "Note on Aristotle's Central Vocabulary," in *Aristotle's Physics: A Guided Study*, 31-33, trans. Joe Sachs, (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2011), 31-33.

² Put-forth is being given here as a compound term in order to distinguish it from other terms—such as *present* and *project*—that are used later in the thesis to convey specific ideas. To *put-forth* works in conjunction with to *lay-bare*, as the thing must first be put into place in order for it to be stripped down to its bare essentials.

³ G.W.F Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A.V. Miller, (London, UK: Oxford University Press, 1977), 1.

⁴ Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 46; Walter Benjamin, "The Storyteller: Reflections on the Works Nikolai Leskov," trans. Harry Zohn, in *The Novel: An Anthology of Criticism and Theory 1900-2000*, 362-378, ed. Dorothy J. Hale, (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 365-366.

⁵ Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 46-47.

⁶ Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature, Thirtieth-Anniversary Edition*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009), 4. Here Rorty is discussing *grounding*. For him, while focusing on philosophers—but the notion can be extended to all theorists and researchers—authors attempt to *ground* the reader within their frame of mind. To make the reader's worldly understanding commensurable with the thinker's in order to present something understandable. Or take Margaret Kovach who notes a similarity between indigenous methodological understandings and that of Heidegger, and the idea of the world through worlding. Which is not to say they are the same, rather it is to establish that seemingly incommensurable worldviews can be brought into the same world as

bare the world the author makes a discursive attempt to show their worldview is not a distinct thing existing in some other worldly realm; rather, their worldview exists near (so near that they touch and press into each other) or, ideally, it exists within the same realm as the other (the reader).

The convention of *laying-bare* dictates that *putting-forth* be a detailed explanation of how the author went about discovering the information that is found within and how they will present their interpretation of the information being *put-forth*.⁷ This conventional praxis is ultimately meant to make one's work communicable and academically rigorous in the hopes of methodological reproducibility.⁸ Reproducibility is not necessarily meant as cloning, rather it is meant to reproduce the phenomenon within their mind as a legitimate phenomenon for themselves and others.⁹ The author *puts-forth* an explanation of how the world ought to be understood in order to situate the reader within the reality of the information being presented. Ultimately, the author's aim within an introduction is to bring the reader within their horizon of understanding in hopes of allowing the reader to make sense of that which is being presented.¹⁰ The author in this sense is providing an explanation of the quest they went on in order to discover that which they were seeking.

The word quest was chosen due to the interesting and apt analogy regarding the act of questioning and the subsequent research derived from a question concerning a 'thing.' A quest is

commensurable yet still distinct. It is not up to the author of a work to make the world known as the world as such: the final world totality. Rather, it is up to the author to bring the reader to a point where they can, at the very least, interact with the world being presented; Margaret Kovach, *Indigenous Methodologies: Characteristics, Conversations, and Contexts*, (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 30.

⁷ John W. Creswell, Cheryl N. Poth, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches, Fourth Edition*, (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications Inc., 2018), 65.

⁸ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall, (London, UK: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013), xx-xxi.

⁹ Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 104-105.

¹⁰ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, xxiv.

a “leading of the way” towards a goal that is predetermined prior to embarking on the quest. Given the existence of the route word *quest* in questioning, one can see that questioning is the act of questing through language.¹¹ Therefore, one already knows the answer to their question when one asks it—the goal, or answer is predetermined (it exists, explicitly or implicitly in the question itself). In this sense, the answer is not that interesting. Like any quest, it is the journey that is interesting. Achieving the goal is simply a pleasing reward for one’s trials and tribulations. Our particular quest concerns *being-in-the-world-as-digital*,¹² to which we would pose: what does it mean for a human existence that engages in both a digital and nondigital world? Since I posited that answers are already known¹³ at the occasion of questioning; the answer to this question is quite simple: human existence will be a simultaneous being-digital-nondigital existence—the contemporary condition is fused with the digital.¹⁴ While that in and of itself is not profound, again, the answer is not the interesting aspect of a study. How one goes about arriving at the answer is what one ought to concern themselves with.

Since our quest is one concerning communication (or language) questing, we must employ a praxis that allows one to move through a world of communication—that praxis will be hermeneutics. Hermeneutics (from *hermeneutik*; *Hermes*: god of communication, and *nautikos*:

¹¹ Martin Heidegger, “The Question Concerning Technology,” in *The Question Concerning Technology and other Essays*, 3-35, trans. William Lovitt, (New York, NY: Harper Perennial Modern Thought, 2013), 3. The term *quest* as my chosen term was derived from this work.

¹² “As-digital” is being added to the translation of Heidegger’s compound term “being-in-the-world;” Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John MacQuarrie and Edward Robinson, (New York, NY: Harper Perennial Modern Thought, 2008), 78. The purpose of doing this is portray the idea of Dasein (being-there) as implicit within understanding the state of being within the world. That is, Heidegger portrayed being-in-the-world as a “unitary phenomenon.”

¹³ In this sense, I mean it is implicit in the question itself. The simplest answer is always known. The complex answer will be brought out through the quest itself. I.e. the interesting bits are in the body of the work. Then on the other side of the same coin, a writer has already performed all the necessary research for the project before they start writing. Thus, the writer already knows the answer once pen is put to paper, or key to haptic pad.

¹⁴ Sherry Turkle, *Life on the Screen: Identity in the Age of the Internet*, (New York, NY: Simon and Schuster Paperbacks, 1995), 30-31.

navigation) is, simply speaking, the act of navigating communication.¹⁵ It begins with an assumption that humans express understanding through language, and as a result any art of understanding must be an art of understanding communication.¹⁶ Furthermore, any understanding will be bound within a communicated reality.¹⁷ Gadamerian hermeneutic praxis assumes that communication is a horizon that people come up against; thinkers, readers, speakers, people navigate towards and through a communicated horizon in order to make any sense of the world. In this sense, hermeneutics is a process of transcending horizons in order to fuse with them.¹⁸ One horizon being the understanding of the questioner and the other horizon(s) is (are) the understanding(s) they are coming up against. It is from this fusion that knowledge is produced.¹⁹ Therefore, I will be engaging with texts, and cases (in the form of news articles, published clinical studies, and fictional representations of human understandings) in order to navigate communicated understandings of the world towards a rounded, interdisciplinary, and complete (yet always incomplete) methodological becoming. These communicated understandings will be placed in conversation with one another to simulate communicated knowledge: an exegetical-dialogue of thought.²⁰

¹⁵ Hermeneutics can also be considered as derived from the Greek words *hermeneuo*: translate or interpret, and *hermeneus*: translator or interpreter. The hermeneutician acts as an interpreter of language of the communicated world around them. They translate that which they seek to understand into phenomena for others to understand as a means of developing knowledge. It follows from the Aristotelean practice of interpreting the world around him by starting with what is said about the issue at hand; Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 540; Hans-Georg Gadamer, *The idea of the Good in Platonic-Aristotelean Philosophy*, trans. P. Christopher Smith, (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1986), 127, and Nietzschean exegetical praxis; Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals and Ecce Homo*, trans. Walter Kaufmann, (New York, NY: Vintage Books Edition, 1989), 98-99.

¹⁶ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, xx-xxi.

¹⁷ Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, 165-167. Here Rorty begins his explanation of how philosophers failed to separate communicated understanding from understanding itself. That is, understanding is always bound to language representations. Therefore, understanding is always framed within an anthropocentric-language horizon of sight.

¹⁸ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 316-317.

¹⁹ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 317.

²⁰ Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals and Ecce Homo*, trans. Walter Kaufmann, (New York, NY: Vintage Books Edition, 1989), 98-99. Here Nietzsche explains that exegetical discovery is both interpretive and dialectic in nature. One seeks, through interpretation, to understand the thesis of the presented thought in order to bring out the antithesis to ensure truth. If truth fails, the antithesis is used to draw one closer to truth. That is, the exegetical quest

Since the digital world is a seemingly a new phenomenon, one might assume that hermeneutics is insufficient at discovering its truth. That is, why look to what has been said about the world prior to this newness? To this end we ought to consider the Krokers who posited: “as we find ourselves jettisoned from the electronic media into digital reality, we are not left without guides.”²¹ The important aspects of this quote are twofold. First, there are writers, thinkers, artists, and people in general that we can turn to, to help guide us through understanding our “new” reality. Furthermore, moving into the digital age is not a choice, rather it is forced upon those who engage with a digital world. Neil Postman—writing in 1992—posited that there will come a time when we will be forced to leave behind our technocratic society for a technopole society.²² For him, a technocrat possesses a historically dialectic technological prowess creating a life wherein they are equal to their own technology, i.e. their life is defined by a reciprocal relationship between human and technology: they care for the

is meant to flesh out error in assumptions. Following this idea in true Platonic-Aristotelean-Gadamerian hermeneutics as a communication, we place the exegesis within a dialogue to simulate communication in its more natural mode. Thus creating a quasi-*Platonic Dialectic* within the modern ethos of critique through treatise; Plato, *Republic of Plato*, trans. Allan Bloom, (US: Basic Books, 1991), 214; Foucault, “What Is Enlightenment,” in *The Foucault Reader* 32-50, Paul Rabinow ed., trans. Catherine Porter, (New York, NY: Pantheon Books, 1984), 43-45.

²¹ Arthur and Marilouise Kroker, “Introduction,” in *Critical Digital Studies: A Reader, Second Edition*, 3-38, Arthur Kroker ed. and Marilouise Kroker ed., (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 2013), 8. This quote is also important because it captures the very reason I am drawn to this particular quest. That being said, I have been drawn to this study for some time now. In fact, I was thinking about the idea of this project prior to any engagement with the Krokers. I chose this particular quote because it is the only quote I’ve found (to this date) that encapsulates my current understanding of the world. A world derived from Heidegger and the idea of having been *thrown* into the world, into the age of the now. The only issue, is that Heidegger is not discussing the separate digital age that has become. I should note that Heidegger does discuss the age of the world picture, but that discussion does not quite capture the essence of the forceful nature of the digital era. Furthermore, the Krokers are directly discussing electronic media in a specific fashion that is more useful here. Second, this quote portrays the idea that we are not merely producing knowledge bereft of past understandings. Prior to now, understanding has been expressed, and what appears as new, is not always entirely new. Rather, newness is, or can be another representation of something old. With that in mind, understanding newness can always be informed by what has already been communicated. This second aspect encapsulates Gadamerian hermeneutics (and Heideggerian and Hegelian thought), that there is no originality because we have fused with what has already been communicated. The essence of this quote truly represents how I mean to fuse Heidegger and Gadamer with current understandings in a way that I have yet to find. That is to say, the fusion has already been done, as it is always already in a process of being done. However, the already must be brought out, it must be revealed.

²² Neil Postman, *Technopoly: The Surrender of Culture to Technology*, (New York, NY: First Vintage Books Edition, 1993), 40-42. first published in 1992.

technology as much as it cares for them. The Technopole, in contrast to the technocrat, is dominated by their technology.²³ A technopole is dependent on their technology resulting in a society, that due to their lack of technological knowledge, cannot function without technology—technology becomes a given. This ties into the Krokors' idea of digital reality. The technopole does not chose to be dominated by technology. It is a happenstance of their reality and their history. They have come to a point where it is unavoidable. The technopole is *jettisoned* into the technologically dominated age.

Returning to the quest itself, as discussed, I will not be engaging purely in communicated theories regarding the world. I will hermeneutically explore cases. The reason my study of cases will be and can be a hermeneutic exploration is that any discussion regarding something is represented through some form of communication—communication as the limit of some experience,²⁴ it is always in reference to something.²⁵ That is, communication is always in reference to something that has already been experienced and is then conveyed to some other. It is from this communication of that which was experienced that we come to understand some phenomenon that is out-there in the world.²⁶ Some subject comes upon some object that they then experience and it is from that experience that phenomenon comes to be, i.e. it is that which has the possibility of being commonly experienced.²⁷ From this idea of common experience we

²³ Postman, *Technopoly*, 40.

²⁴ Benjamin, "The Storyteller," 365.

²⁵ Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, 18.

²⁶ Edmund Husserl, "Essential Distinction," trans. N.J. Findlay, in *The Hermeneutic Reader: Texts of the German Tradition from the Enlightenment to the Present*, 166-176, Kurt Mueller-Vollmer, ed., (New York, NY: Continuum Publishing Company, 1985), 176. Out-there is compounded here and elsewhere in the paper to signify the unity of that which is external to the thing. I.e. the *out-there* is the fused world that exists outside the anthropocentric Archimedean point of reference. This implies that the human creates it frame of knowledge from its own standpoint in order to distinguish itself from the world, yet the world is being looked at as a singularity, regardless of its reducibility. Clarity will be brought-forth as the paragraph progresses.

²⁷ Husserl, "Essential Distinction," 176; Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, 384; William James, "Does 'Consciousness' Exist?" in *Essays in Radical Empiricism*, 29-90, ed. Ralph Barton Perry, (eBook: Project Gutenberg eBook, 2010), 40-41.

come to understand that subjective understanding can be an *inter-subjective* understanding. Subjective experiences can be interrelated into an overarching sharing of similar experiences.²⁸ However, if experience is given by way of communication, it is not an act of subjectivity, rather it is an act of hermeneutic (re)production—it is being produced both in the moment and from previous experience (experiences that extend beyond the subjectivity of the thing experiencing, e.g. the history of language and history of thought). The interpretation of that which was experienced is not of the object itself as having come up against some subjective, rather it is the presentation of what was most likely to have been experienced and from that which was interpreted as what must have been experienced. In this sense, phenomenon is not from objects or subjects because that would turn them into products of language that cannot be out-there in the world bereft of humans. Rather, phenomenon is a product of language's revealing properties.²⁹ This approach to epistemics applies a very phenomenological-anthropocentric understanding of all things as distinct in-themselves. Anything out-there-in-the-world is revealed through language as distinct, yet is always in relation to how it is understood.³⁰ Which builds on the idea of guides already being “out-there.” Therefore, any quest towards some answer is always already a process of revealing through language.³¹ The challenge that one comes up against is attempting to separate the thing of language from the thing itself and vice versa—a, if not the, core project of this thesis.

While language may reveal, we must know the thing that we are attempting to reveal through language: the digital. Digital is a product of computers, which are technological things.

²⁸ Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, 384.

²⁹ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 305.

³⁰ Martin Heidegger, “The Thing.” in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, 163-180, trans. Albert Hofstadter, (New York, NY: Harper Perennial Modern Thought, 2013), 179-180.

³¹ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 601.

If we consider the Krokers once more, we will come to understand that computers have the simulating capacity to “[generate] ‘reality’ itself.”³² That reality as we know it—the nondigital world—may come from the digital world in some capacity. That the real world is not just out there in nature, it is also brought forward from the digital. In this sense we create the real world through simulation, through data, and through digital representation.

The capacity for creation is a product of the fundamental nature of technology. When considering technology, one would be forgiven for immediately considering it as an instrumental thing. However, it is not instrumental. It is not something that we master for our means.³³ Rather, technology only appears to be mastered, i.e. it only appears as though people cause something to happen when they use technologies.³⁴ While it is true that some technological thing does indeed appear to cause some action to occur after someone uses it, this action is not necessarily instrumental; it is not exactly what is intended by the user. Consider what it means to perform an action, to act: to do something that is meant to show.³⁵ When one acts, they are not causing something to happen, they are showing something about that which they mean to show: they are revealing through doing. Performing an action in this sense is a process of revealing, meaning that technology as a thing that causes action is a thing that reveals.³⁶ Technology as a thing that reveals, means that technology has the capacity to reveal the world to us. Technology as digital has the ability to reveal the world by digitally simulating the world.³⁷ The digital creates the world by revealing it—by digitally inscribing it out into the world. In this sense, language is a

³² Arthur and Marilouise Kroker, “Introduction,” 11.

³³ Martin Heidegger, “The Question Concerning Technology,” 5.

³⁴ Heidegger, “The Question Concerning Technology,” 7.

³⁵ Heidegger, “The Question Concerning Technology,” 13; Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 80.

³⁶ Heidegger, “The Question Concerning Technology,” 13.

³⁷ Turkle, *Life on the Screen*, 47.

technology:³⁸ it inscribes or communicates the world out into the world. Therefore, one may use language (a technology) to explore other technologies.

The idea of exploring with language *puts-forth* the idea that it creates a space or place in which one may travel or interact with. That is, it is a potential world in and of itself.³⁹ When considering a world, for Postman, we immediately realize its horizons, which therefore means that the world generated by language (or technology) has a horizon of its own.⁴⁰ Which stands to reason that a digital world, as a product of technology, will have its own world and horizon which people can interact with and within. In this sense the digital is a place wherein one may *project themselves*.⁴¹ This is to say that a world is a place wherein one is *thrown*, i.e. they find themselves in the world not by having always been-there in the world. Rather, there was an initial moment of coming into the world.⁴² This coming into the world is not merely a subtle placing, it is an active doing: a force of becoming from having not been-there. Which returns us to the idea of being *jettisoned*—one is *jettisoned* into where they find themselves.

³⁸ Postman, *Technopoly*, 3-4.

³⁹ *In and of itself* is used in contrast to *in-itself* throughout this thesis. Something *in-itself* is something that only exists in language, whereas something *in and of itself* is something that exists as distinct—beyond language.

⁴⁰ Postman, *Technopoly*, 72. Here Postman is discussing the idea of a “broken defence.” That the horizon of the technopole has lost itself to the horizon of technology. That is, technology has fully enveloped the technopole because their horizon, their wall, their defense broke down; Heidegger, “The Thing,” 168. Here Heidegger is discussing the idea that anything with a horizon worlds its own world, or that worlds are worlded through having come up against something. Horizons become as a product of human understanding through language; James, “Does ‘Consciousness’ Exist,” 51. Here James is discussing and rejecting, for the most part, the conscious language representation of the world as the true world, that rather things in the world are distinct in and of themselves. That things in the world are not gathered up into the mind of the human as some fusion of things coming together, that things are out there and have their own existence separate from humans. Which when extended to technological understandings, the area in which one can exist is a distinct place separated from the mind’s portrayal of it. Therefore, the technological horizon is not merely in speech, it is its own fundamental thing as truly out-there.

⁴¹ Sherry Turkle, *Life on the Screen*, 9; Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 175. The idea of self-projection as an act people do is taken from both Turkle and Heidegger, though it is more an extension of Heidegger and the idea of being ‘thrown.’

⁴² Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 174. Been-there is derived from being-there (Dasein) to imply action or change rather than stasis.

When it comes to the digital it would *appear* that one is not merely *thrown*.⁴³ Rather one *throws* themselves into the digital, i.e. in contrast with Postman they appear to make the choice to enter into it. The digital world requires an initial moment of effort in order to enter into it. Furthermore, the digital is a place of aesthetic representation,⁴⁴ meaning one *projects themselves* rather than getting *thrown*.⁴⁵ The reason it is an aesthetic representation is that the digital and all that is found within the digital is always being presented (seemingly artistically) to us through some technological means, a screen, sound, touch, etcetera.⁴⁶ This raises issues concerning how that which is being represented digitally, and how the digital representation relates to the nondigital thing and how a thing projects (or performs) itself digitally as being a representation of itself. Therefore, in the first chapter: “Problematizing Methodology in a Digital Age,” I will focus on the problem concerning methodology when we are presented with a digital horizon to cross in order to discover meaning. I will focus on the issue concerning the communicated representation of horizons between worlds, while dealing with the reality that one always appears to seamlessly cross worldly horizons as though they were never there in the first place—digital to nondigital, language to nonlanguage, etcetera.

Issues concerning representation begin from an issue regarding communication. When we consider things through a specific phenomenology, we are always considering communicable experiences—as discussed earlier: a phenomenon, for Heidegger, Husserl and Gadamer, is that which is a communicated (re)presentation of some experience. In this sense, what that thing is as not a language thing raises issues concerning definition. For Rebekah Sheldon this language

⁴³ I appeal to appearance here as a means to imply that it may not be this way. I.e. to follow the Platonic history that what appears is not always true.

⁴⁴ Turkle, *Life on the Screen*, 31.

⁴⁵ *Projection* can be described as putting-forth an image: an aesthetic thing.

⁴⁶ While this is obvious, it is important to note that one engages with the digital in more than one way. However, for simplicity and as a means of focus, I will be engaging the digital from the point of view of humans and screens.

issue stems from object-oriented-ontology (OOO). For her, OOO is a product of an anthropocentric frame of mind in which the world is inscribed meaning through communication.⁴⁷ That is, people have a concept based view of the world. This idea is derived from Platonic thought: there is an eternal form (the concept) that exists in the realm of being (eternal realm of true things—that which is defined as such) that are then represented out in the world (realm of becoming—world of change) through our communication.⁴⁸ Which causes a need to explain how a thing relates to the object being experienced by the experiencer.⁴⁹ Furthermore, when the world is divided amongst language representations of things that are meant to exist out in the world it “separates the world into ontological disjoint domains of worlds and things, leaving [us] with the dilemma of their linkages” as points of interest where knowledge can be discovered.⁵⁰ Between an object or thing, and its representation as a phenomenon there is a space wherein knowledge of things exist. That is, there is a representation gap which separates the object, thing, phenomenon, and experience into distinct things in-themselves making knowledge of some individual a pure abstraction of some relation that must exist in-between.

When one dematerializes the world into these abstract related-representations, they ensure that things can never be material things. For Karen Barad this means that no subject can

⁴⁷ Rebekah Sheldon, “Form/Matter/Chora: Object-Oriented Ontology and Feminist New Materialism,” in *The Nonhuman Turn*, 193-222, Richard Grusin, ed., (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2015), 194-106. Rebekah Sheldon engages with the problem concerning representation from a literary standpoint.

⁴⁸ Sheldon, “Form/Matter/Chora,” 211; Plato, *The Republic of Plato*, 279; Judith Butler, “Bodies that Matter,” in *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of “Sex,”* 21-50, (New York, NY: Routledge, 1993), 44.

⁴⁹ William James, “A World of Pure Experience,” in *Essays in Radical Empiricism*, 90-174. Ralph Barton Perry, ed., (eBook: Project Gutenberg eBook, 2010), 103; Sheldon, “Form/Matter/Chora,” 209-211.

⁵⁰ Quote is from Karen Barad, “Posthumanist Performativity: Toward an Understanding of How Matter Comes to Matter,” *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 28 no. 3 (2003), 811; Sheldon, “Form/Matter/Chora,” 209-211. Sheldon is referenced here because she takes on this idea that representations have a fundamental issue. This issue, for her and Barad, is an issue concerning a “representation gap.” The representation of a thing is disconnected in some sense from that which it represents. As a result, we require some way of getting away from representation. Which, for Sheldon, is a relational understanding through the chora and for Barad it is a movement towards performative understandings.

be its body.⁵¹ Furthermore, for theorists such as William James, this raises issues concerning empirical understandings: a thing as an abstract thing of language is fundamentally separated from its empirical truth and becomes a “metaphysical fiction.”⁵² A material thing becomes its immaterial language representation as it is performed through communicating with others or oneself. Representing the empirical as a phenomenon can create an imagined truth that only exists in one’s mind or in a shared communicated representation, rather than existing in reality itself.⁵³ For theorists such as Judith Butler, Barad, and Sheldon the performance of representing the thing as a thing derived from language becomes the thing itself, rather than having been the thing prior to being spoken of—things, following this logic, do not contain a priori content.⁵⁴ This is to say that the process of thingification through language is a process of delegitimizing the self-representation of things as themselves—Plato’s issue of being and becoming remains an ever present issue. The body cannot perform itself as itself once it is inscribed into being. Which then leads some, such as Barad and Donna Haraway, to posit a change in semiotics (which will be discussed at length in the first chapter). For them, in order to overcome issues concerning language one must turn towards a complete change in how that language is structured in order to allow body as body, or thing as thing.⁵⁵ Which in turn, for Haraway, Michà Cardenas, and Sherry Turkle, translates itself online. In the digital world (or a technological existence for Haraway) the body is alienated from its digital representation.⁵⁶ That is, the representation problem of language

⁵¹ Barad, “Posthumanist Performativity,” 811.

⁵² James, “A World of Pure Experience,” 103.

⁵³ James, “A World of Pure Experience,” 103-104.

⁵⁴ Butler, “Bodies that Matter,” 44; Sheldon, “Form/Matter/Chora,” 213, Karen Barad, “Posthumanist Performativity,” 802.

⁵⁵ Karen Barad, “Posthumanist Performativity,” 829; Donna Haraway, “The Promises of Monsters: A Regenerative Politics for Inappropriate/d Others,” in *The Donna Haraway Reader*, 63-124, (New York, NY: Routledge, 2004), 77-78. For Haraway this is not merely an issue concerning language, this is also an issue concerning technological understanding, which, along with language, requires a semiotic shift.

⁵⁶ Haraway, “The Promises of Monsters,” 64-65; Sherry Turkle, “Inner History,” in *The Inner History of Devices*, 2-31, (Bogart, GA: Graphic Composition, INC., 2008), 2-3; Micha Cárdenas, “Becoming Dragon: A Transversal

(a technology) based methodological understandings do not merely exist in the nondigital world, they permeate into the digital, thereby fusing the two together into a horizonless world. Once we move towards the possibility of worlds bereft of horizons, we begin to move towards the fundamental problem of representation, i.e. the mere consideration of worlds pre-empts the possibility of worlds; thereby creating the necessary conditions to confirm the existence of horizons (as limits) at the occasion of worldly considerations.

The representation issue is exacerbated by a digital representation issue which stems from the problem concerning how things are being simultaneously represented in the world through discourse, art, and digital technology, the latter of which tends to be artistically bound—as it is representable through the arts of sound, touch and light (for vision).⁵⁷ Furthermore, as discussed in regards to the nondigital and to build upon that discussion, there is a relation problem that stems from a capacity to relate digital and nondigital representations as one. This comes from what seems to have been a self-internalization⁵⁸ of digital realities and their relation to the nondigital.⁵⁹ This apparent internalization should make any boundary between the digital and the nondigital essentially nonexistent. One is becoming the thing by bringing it into itself, however one only relates to it—it is never fully it. Relations are only partial internalizations, something to be discussed at length in the following chapter. Finally, there is a problem of projection or performance which stems from our desire to control representations and relationships by

Technology Study,” in *Critical Digital Studies: A Reader, Second Edition*, 373-392, Arthur Kroker ed. and Marilouise Kroker ed., (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 2013), 373-375.

⁵⁷ Sherry Turkle, *Life on the Screen*, 10.

⁵⁸ Throughout the thesis, self is compounded with other words in order to illustrate how it fuses (or blends) with everything it interacts with.

⁵⁹ Turkle, ed. *The Inner History of Devices*. Bogart, GA: Graphic Composition, INC., 2008. Turkle begins her edited volume of psychological interviews, field studies and memoirs by introducing the idea that technology imbeds itself within not only our world, but us as we are. We lose the ability to differentiate from technology and ourselves. The technology we use is as much ourselves as not ourselves; Sherry Turkle, *Life on the Screen*, 10. “Eroding boundaries between the real and the virtual, the animate and the inanimate, the unitary and the multiple self.”

performing them in the world and to an online audience (our digital society).⁶⁰ We attempt to take command of the world around us in an attempt to ensure that we are recognized as our desired self-representation.⁶¹ Our digital actions become nondigital aesthetic representations that are then inscribed into the nondigital world through our digital performances, ultimately inscribing a separation between the digital and the nondigital as relatable, but always distinct. These problems deliver us down many paths. By concerning ourselves with the semiotic problem of language, representation, relation, and performance both in the digital and the nondigital world, I will be able to lay the foundations for a digital *logos of method* properly suited to develop understandings regarding a digital-nondigital reality.⁶²

While hermeneutically exploring methodology in light of digital-technological existence we will inevitably find ourselves coming up against some other world—the world of the digital. It is inevitable because it was already assumed within the quest, and my use of language will define and bind it to its own worldly representation as distinct from other worlds. In other words, I will demonstrate how horizons come into being. However, the world, as stated earlier, is not truly distinct *in and of itself*, as it is a language thing, an ontic-thing:⁶³ a thing *in-itself*, rather than being *in and of itself*. The fundamental being (the *in and of itselfness*) of this particular world will necessitate an ontic-ontological (ontology of things) exploration of its world

⁶⁰ Turkle, *Life on the Screen*, 10. “We are dwellers on the threshold between the real and virtual, unsure of our footing, inventing ourselves as we go along.”

⁶¹ Frantz Fanon, “The Negro and Recognition,” in *Black Skin, White Masks*, 163-173, trans. Charles Lam Markmann, (London, UK: Pluto Press, 1986), 165.

⁶² Here I used a hyphen to, once again, show fusion. The digital and nondigital will be shown to be a fusion into a whole. This idea will be juxtaposed against the digital/nondigital. The slash will be used at points to imply the idea that horizons are seen to exist. That is, the slash represents a horizon and the dash represents fusion.

⁶³ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 31. Ontic, for Heidegger, concerns entities. Thus, ontic-thing represents the thingification of entities. This is necessary because Heidegger does his best to distinguish between entities and things. However, it is always implied that we turn entities into things through language. This is further argued in the following chapter while discussing the representation problem in light of Judith Butler’s study on choratic interpretation.

existence, given the foundations that will be set in the first chapter. That is, we must seek to answer the question: how is it that the digital world can be understood to be a distinct world if it part of the world? The ontic essence of the digital world as a world must be explored in order for us to understand the ontology of the digital world as a world wherein action may take place. That is, no ontology can be fully developed without an ontic understanding.⁶⁴ However, the ontic nature of a thing is inadequate if we are seeking to understand something as not a thing that exists separated from its material being. Therefore, an understanding of the digital world must involve an understanding of that which is actually experienced regarding the digital as something that exists beyond language. A world thing does not merely exist in speech, it is also out there as existing beyond language—the phenomenon must come from somewhere.⁶⁵ Merely because phenomenon is explained through language, does not mean that something experienced is actually a product of language: things expressed in language are outside of language prior to being pulled into language's world. This issue concerning what a digital world is will be explored within the second chapter: "The Question(s) Concerning the World,"⁶⁶ which will employ and expand the methodological understandings explored in the first chapter.

We will move towards the idea of a digital world by exploring the nature of a world in and of itself through the world in-itself in order to better understand the way in which things in the world interact. Furthermore, we will explore how worlds that appear as distinct in-themselves are still capable of being within and apart of the whole, i.e. horizons will be questioned and mostly dismantled in order to reveal their discursive impairment on epistemics.

⁶⁴ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 31.

⁶⁵ James, "Does 'Consciousness' Exist?" 80-81; Heidegger, "The Thing," 180.

⁶⁶ The title of this chapter is a nod to Heidegger and his use of "The Question Concerning..." for essay titles.

Worlds as worlds distinct in-themselves are developed beginning with the idea of a world as being worlded through language.⁶⁷ Worlding as a concept, for Heidegger, means that one has revealed the world through language.⁶⁸ That is, the world is *brought-forth* by communicating it through language. Yet, as discussed earlier, language is a technology. Which therefore, it stands to reason that technology worlds the (or a) world⁶⁹ (technology worlds a technological world, meaning digital worlds a digital world).⁷⁰ Following this line of logic, we are presented with an issue concerning a world that was either furcated into distinct worlds that interact with each other and are possibly always already fused as a single world (they only exist as distinct in-themselves),⁷¹ or these worlds are truly distinct in and of themselves.⁷² That is, some (or all) worlds may not actually be related to one another. This latter notion is developed from William

⁶⁷ World is employed as a verb in order to capture the nuance of Heidegger's ontology. It is also employed to, once again, keep this quest situated within a larger Bildung. I.e. the knowledge presented here is cultivated from a larger history of knowledge that cannot be ignored. World is not the only noun used as a verb. Self will be employed as a verb to build off of this idea. This is done to convey the idea that things create themselves once they are described into existence. Which is to establish the Voegelian idea that the consideration of a thing pre-empts itself. Thus, I, and Heidegger, are not saying that things create themselves, rather things appear to already exist at the occasion of consideration. Which means that to think of a thing is also to create a thing. Thus, Heidegger comes to the conclusion that worlds create themselves—worlds world. When I employ a noun in this manner, selves self, thoughts though, worlds world and things thing, I am invoking Heidegger and the ontic-epistemic framework he developed.

⁶⁸ Heidegger, "The Thing," 179-180

⁶⁹ Heidegger, "The Question Concerning Technology," 12. Here Heidegger is discussing the idea of technology revealing another realm—the realm of technological truth as being seemingly distinct from that of a nontechnological world; Heidegger, "The Age of the World Picture," in *The Question Concerning Technology and other Essays*, 115-154, trans. William Lovitt (New York, NY: Harper Perennial Modern Thought, 2013), 116-117. Here Heidegger is discussing the idea of how technology moved our view of the world outside of the world. That the world has become an aesthetic thing in which we ourselves exist inside, yet our understanding of it is not from within it, rather we are always viewing into it. Hannah Arendt calls this the externalization of the human Archimedean point of reference; Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 2-8. Arendt is fundamental in understanding the technological shift of western human understanding.

⁷⁰ Turkle, *Life on the Screen*, 31. Here Turkle discusses the idea that the digital world appears as an extension of ourselves. However, while it may appear as such, and in terms of the beginning days of the internet it very may well have been, our continual engagement with it showed that there was an actual distinct world there for people to project-themselves and exist within as a separate existence from themselves. We can also look to the Krockers and the notion of the electronic world, or to Heidegger and the picture world, Neil Postman and the Technopole world, Walker Percy and the self-world, etcetera.

⁷¹ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 317.

⁷² Lynn Hershman Leeson, "Romancing the Anti-Body: Lust and Longing in (Cyber)space," in *Critical Digital Studies: A Reader, Second Edition*, 85-98, Arthur Kroker and Marilouise Kroker eds., (Toronto, ON: Toronto University Press, 2013), 85-86.

James when he discussed the idea of the phenomenon of an imagined room. Merely because a room exists in my mind does not mean that the room exists in the “real” world. A rendition of that room may have existed, or “room” as an idea exists, but the room in my mind is not representative of rooms as such. The world one worlds in their mind does not have to engage with the world outside one’s mind.⁷³ This follows from worlding the world through language. Keeping in mind that our thoughts are communication based (or aesthetic, which may already be or becomes communication), which stands to reason that our minds through language world some world, yet that world does not have to be in the *whole* world. However, these worlds are not necessarily unbound. Worlds interact as they press upon and against each other.⁷⁴ This interaction is what is most interesting and important to discover if we are to do anything meaningful with an understanding of our world’s existence in an age of digital existence.

Through discovering how worlds collide and interact (becoming one) we can discover what it means to be a self that exists within these worlds that are seemingly distinct yet connected. Once the digital world is understood I will be able to move onto understanding the self in light of understanding developed from exploring contemporary digital reality. This will be done in the third chapter simply titled: “The Self.”

The self for our purposes (in light of our quest) exists as a conscious entity which, for Allan Bloom and William James, is a consequence that resulted from humanity’s failure to certify the existence of the soul.⁷⁵ This notion of the self as being the replacement for a thing that is undiscoverable, was developed, for Bloom, from an understanding following a Nietzschean

⁷³ James, “Does ‘Consciousness’ Exist?” 43-44.

⁷⁴ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 317; James, “Does ‘Consciousness’ Exist?” 45-46. James is not saying that worlds of experience are actually bound together or truly interact in any meaningful way. What he does explain is that worlds of consciousness (if they exist) would have influence upon other worlds of consciousness.

⁷⁵ Allan Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind*, (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster Paperbacks, 2012), 173; William James, “Does ‘Consciousness’ Exist?” 10.

question: “how could it happen that we should ever find ourselves?”⁷⁶ Which is to ask: after all our reductive philosophic quests, what have we been left with?⁷⁷ For theorists such as Walker Percy, Nietzsche, Rorty, Bloom, William James and others, the self is not a thing that truly exists out in the world, rather it exists in language, in our minds: it is a conscious creation.⁷⁸ It like the world was revealed through language. That is, just as worlds world, selves self.

The process of *bringing-forth* the self as the self through language (the language self), *lays-bare* other issues concerning the self. Beginning with the true existence of the self: is the idea of the self merely a nostalgia for something that never was, or something that was lost through the processes of western philosophic traditions?⁷⁹ While exploring the idea of the self in-itself and the idea of digital creations of reality in reference to self-projection,⁸⁰ I will explore how it is we bring the self into being. This exploration will necessitate some exploration of how the self interacts with itself as both language and seemingly nonlanguage. That is, as Percy puts it, the self is always in a process of furcating itself through interacting with others and then those new selves interact with the supposed original self.⁸¹ Furthermore, as the self creates other selves from itself it seeks to lose those selves. This is what Percy calls the *Amnesic Self*. All selves forget the selves it creates because the self does not need to keep each self-furcation within its

⁷⁶ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals and Ecce Homo*, 15. We can also look to Rorty who explains the invention of the mind as a replacement for a soul and then the idea of self was a replacement for the mind as we began to quantify selfness. That as our *self* became less totalized, mind and soul became eternally inadequate; Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, 17-19, 70-72.

⁷⁷ Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals and Ecce Homo*, 16; Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind*, 173; Walker Percy, *Lost in the Cosmos: The Last Self-Help Book*, (New York, NY: Picador, 1983), 5-6.

⁷⁸ Percy, *Lost in the Cosmos*, 6-8; James, “Does ‘Consciousness’ Exist?” 62-63; Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind*, 174-175; Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, 17, 68-69. For Rorty, building upon past American philosophic notions derived from William James, the mind (or self-conscious) is a mere hallucination.
⁷⁹ James, “Does ‘Consciousness’ Exist?” 57; Percy, *Lost in the Cosmos*, 17. Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, 17. Rorty points out that the idea of the mind (or self-conscious) is a product of Cartesian thought, which was only exacerbated by the Anglo-Saxon tradition of empiricism and western sciences relentless search of the most reducible phenomenon.

⁸⁰ Compounding self this way builds off the idea that the self not only gathers everything it interacts with, it gathers (or fuses) with its action. Thus, the compound the self with its action is to show that the self is a dialectic of itself.

⁸¹ Percy, *Lost in the Cosmos*, 17-18.

repertoire of its self-knowledge when each instance of the self is not the self in and of itself.⁸² This lends itself online. The online-self⁸³ is a self that the self created as a digital self representation of itself. Which, as discussed earlier, a representation of something means there is some sort of relation of it to some original concept of something. Which, for Turkle, is the main problem with the self. For her, the self is an attempt to totalize all the representations of the self as one single representation of self.⁸⁴ Which for her and Percy is a failure of our epistemic traditions of reducing towards totalized representations. However, since the self has an amnesic relation with its selves and the self is always already in a process of reduction towards a self, the furcated selves are forgotten as being a part of the original self-conception. All furcated selves (which would include the digital-self) are related to the self while also being distinct and alienated from the self. Therefore, the digital-self becomes a self that is as distinct as the original nondigital-self. Which stands to reason that the digital self-influences the self no different than any other non-self.⁸⁵ This idea of self-influence *brings-forth* questions concerning the influential capacity of the digital-self, which will be a fundamental issue explored throughout the thesis.

These notions *brought-forth* thus far in this introductory chapter stems from a number of issues concerning the world that are not yet properly understood. The first issue is that

⁸² Percy, *Lost in the Cosmos*, 17-18. This is to imply that the self may exist beyond language. I do this to avoid assuming it away in the first instance. If I were to assume that there is no self beyond language in the introduction, I would not be doing this quest justice. I need to explore the idea, which will be left to a later chapter.

⁸³ Throughout the quest, self is attached (by hyphen) to a world in order to imply the self's fusion with the world it exists within. Nondigital-self, digital-self, data-self, and, in this instance, the online-self. Which is to build off of Walker Percy's theory that the psychology of self is a reducible framework wherein the self exists in relation to how it is being discussed. Therefore, when we discuss the self in relation to a world, it only exists due to that relation. When discussing the self this way, it is never the digital self, because that implies a self that exists independent from the digital, yet interacts with the digital. For our purposes, since the self furcates itself and that furcation only exists due to it relation or performance in the occasion of being, its representation is fused to that occasion. The occasion of the digital world and self action fuses the self to the digital world—the digital-self.

⁸⁴ Turkle, *Life on the Screen*, 178.

⁸⁵ Percy, *Lost in the Cosmos*, 27-28; Wolfson, Sam. "Snapchat photo filters linked to rise in cosmetic surgery requests." *Technology*, The Guardian, August 9, 2018. <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2018/aug/08/snapchat-surgery-doctors-report-rise-in-patient-requests-to-look-filtered>.

concerning the idea of a boundary that potentially exists between a digital and nondigital world and what the consequences are regarding the deliquescence of that boundary. For thinkers such as Astra Taylor, Turkle, and others, the more one engages with the online world, the more any boundary between that world and the nondigital dissipates.⁸⁶ Understanding the notion of digital/nondigital boundary dissipation is fundamental to our quest in order to explore the consequences that will be engaged with in chapter four: “The Digital-Condition.”⁸⁷ Condition was chosen here to exemplify the idea that where one finds themselves creates the state of their being in a way that they do not always have control of. The condition of the self is not always a product of existence, it is impure; virtual; a result of being a certain way—it is ersatz. Simply because something is communicated as is, does not mean it exists. If it is not as is and is merely inscribed as is, then the existence of the self in-itself is ersatz—an impure virtual representation.⁸⁸

Chapter four will conclude our quest with an exploration of a fundamental issue concerning the digital condition in light of an understanding of the self I will developed in chapter three. If the self competes with itself and engages with a process of *self-amnesia*, what does the self do to itself and what do others do with other selves once selves digitize themselves. How does the action of digital performance affect the existence of the self: does it become

⁸⁶ Astra Taylor, *The People's Platform: Taking Back Power and Culture in the Digital Age*, (New York, NY: Random House, 2014), 7; Turkle, *The Inner History of Devices*, 15; Kimberlyn Leary, “Cyberplaces,” in *The Inner History of Devices*, 86-97, Sherry Turkle, ed., (Bogart, GA: Graphic Composition, INC., 2008), 86-87; Lincoln, Kevin. “Where is the boundary between your phone and your mind?” Technology, *The Guardian*, December 6, 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/usnews/2018/dec/09/tech-mind-body-boundary-facebook-googlehile>. While Kevin Lincoln is not a “thinker” he is *bringing-forth* the idea of how the digital and nondigital interact in a meaningful and material fashion. That the digital has an effect on the physiology of our brains.

⁸⁷ Digital and condition are attached via hyphen to illustrate the relationship between one’s condition and their surroundings. I.e. the digital has a link to one’s condition and that must be emphasized. This, for me, is best done by compounding them into a single term. This is also done to show how this condition is not necessarily condition as such.

⁸⁸ Ersatz is a great representation for the problem at hand since it emphasizes the impure inscription of that which is represented, while also attempting to be a virtual representation.

increasingly impure? Upon answering this question we will have successfully completed our methodological quest opening the way to understand the digital condition by exploring contemporary cases that are a direct consequence of our digital condition.

The first, is the idea of an unhappy self and society. That is, expanding from the idea of a self that furcates itself and then interacts with that self as distinct from itself and how that makes the self even more lonely and depressed.⁸⁹ This is to say that the hyper-self-furcation found in the digital age of easily discernable worlds to perform within, has a unique effect on one's self-health. For Postman, when we are furcated from ourselves in a meaningful and tangible sense, we are further from our physical location and our internal mind than we were prior to any construction of a self, let alone a digital-self.⁹⁰ For Turkle, a digital furcation rips a self from the self and puts it outside as unique, different, yet still the same. It creates a self that is either never seen as the self, or a self the self aspires to become. Furthermore, these selves have the freedom to engage with selves that exist bereft of place. Which Turkle calls "being alone together."⁹¹ That even though we are "more connected" than before, we are not actually connected. This connected-nonconnected life allows the digital-self to influence the nondigital-self to be more like the digital-self. We know this has become an issue in light of *Snapchat dysmorphia*: a psychological desire to look more like one's snapchat filtered self-performance.⁹² This issue of self-versus-self (or *not-self*) and the ability to throw oneself outside of the nondigital-self will draw us towards issues concerning the self-existence after death, i.e. what happens when we

⁸⁹ Percy, *Lost in the Cosmos*, 73; John Hamilton, "The World Wide Web," in *The Inner History of Devices*, 64-76, Sherry Turkle, ed., (Bogart, GA: Graphic Composition, INC., 2008), 64-65; Marsha H. Levy-Warren, "Computer Games," in *The Inner History of Devices*, 77-85, Sherry Turkle, ed., (Bogart, GA: Graphic Composition, INC., 2008), 77-78.

⁹⁰ Postman, *Technopoly*, 140.

⁹¹ Sherry Turkle, "Connected, but alone?" From "TED Ideas Worth Spreading," https://www.ted.com/talks/sherry_turkle_alone_together?language=en

⁹² Anna Davies. "People are getting surgery to look like their Snapchat selfies." Health & Wellbeing, BBC, April 19, 2018. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bbcthree/article/9ca4f7c6-d2c3-4e25-862c-03aed9ec1082>

have the capacity to continue a self-existence postmortem? These issues of self-furcation as conditioned by a digital age will be a primary focus in the concluding chapter.

The second consequence of interest is the restructuring of the self from engaging as a digital-self. Since the self can furcate and be distinct online, we will concern ourselves with how the self sees itself as a digital thing, whilst not being a digital thing. The digital is still meant to represent the “original authentic” thing, yet it is distinct: it is not the self. However, the online self has digital memory, digital markers, and digital aesthetic representations that are representative of the nondigital original (which lends itself not only to the postmortem-digital-self, but also to the self as a data-object). This leads to political states and businesses using the digital representation of the nondigital-self as surveillance data.⁹³ Which then leads to the hyperization of the self as standing in reserve. Which is to build off the idea posited by Heidegger: that technology forces people to “stand in reserve.”⁹⁴ For him, technological and modern liberal economic existence had a profound effect on people that caused them to be no different than a resource—thus creating the human resource. This notion is exacerbated online: hyperized. The online-self is bought, sold, and mined for advertisement and data gathering purposes.⁹⁵ Digitization commodifies the digital-self into a *digital-human-resource*. The digital-self has found itself waiting *in reserve* for some entity to come by and extract it for its own gain. Following Postman’s discussion regarding technological existence, the technopole of the digital

⁹³ Samuel Nunn, “Tell Us What’s Going to Happen: Information Feeds to the War on Terror,” in *Critical Digital Studies: A Reader, Second Edition*, 293-311, (Toronto, ON: Toronto University Press, 2013), 293-294.

⁹⁴ Heidegger, “The Question Concerning Technology,” 19.

⁹⁵ David Taras, *Digital Mosaic: Media, Power, and Identity in Canada*, (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 2015), 165; Ben Gilbert, “How Facebook makes money from your data, in Mark Zuckerberg’s words,” *Technology, Business Insider*, April 11, 2018, <https://www.businessinsider.com/how-facebook-makes-money-according-to-mark-zuckerberg-2018-4>; BBC. “Facebook staff ‘flagged Cambridge Analytica fears earlier than thought.’” *Technology, BBC*, March 22, 2019. https://www.bbc.com/news/technology-47666909?intlink_from_url=https://www.bbc.com/news/topics/c81zyn0888lt/facebook-cambridge-analytica-scandal&link_location=live-reporting-story.

age is *jettisoned* into an age of (in)voluntary self-commodification. The ‘in’ is bracketed off because one voluntarily goes online to perform their digital existence, however, self-commodification into a resource is not so voluntary—a duality of voluntary and involuntary. Thus, the *thrownness* of a digital-self is that of a *digital-standing-in-reserve*.

Now that we have come full circle, I believe it is safe to say that the question has been *laid-bare*. Therefore, this seems like the most natural place to transition into the next part of the quest. As discussed earlier, the following chapter will problematize the methodological issues concerning how one comes to understand a digital existence. The following chapter is necessary to ensure we have a solid foundation from which we may develop knowledge. Without an actual digital *logos of method* (rational path towards truth), there can be no movement towards our goal. Therefore, rather than floundering in the waves gasping for the air of meaning, let us move towards building a solid foundation.⁹⁶

⁹⁶ It is important to note that some seemingly important elements have not yet been touched upon, while keeping in mind that some will not be touched upon in this quest. The issue concerning “traditional” surveillance will not be explored for two reasons. First, it is already a highly covered topic, though the way I am presenting the self may shed some theoretical light on the matter. Second, the issue concerning the “human resource” as a *digital-standing-in-reserve* interests me more than the surveillance issue, which means it has been prioritized. That being said, the *digital-human-resource* idea lends itself to the surveillance issue. States and corporations can purchase *digital-human-resources*. Meaning, the surveillance issue will be covered, though it is covered more as a by-product of *digital-human-resources*, since states were always already in a process of surveying their populations. The difference with the digital-condition, is that it is a particular kind of surveillance. It is a surveillance that begins primarily with the data representation of the self as the self, though it can translate into the body. The body can be digitized to the online through physical tracking. I am still grappling with the digitization of the body, which is why it will not be thoroughly explored. That will be left for a future project.

Problematizing Methodology Laying the Foundations of a Knowledge Path Towards the Digital⁹⁷

When we consider our present time it would appear that technological connections amongst human populations have fundamentally changed the structure of the world. Theorists like Sherry Turkle, Donna Haraway, Neil Postman, and many others have all discussed the existence of an ever growing human-technological connection that has had a profound effect on our very being—this is the nature of the human-technological becoming throughout history.⁹⁸ Recalling Postman, we have essentially left the nondigital era and are now living in a digital technopoly. Who we are as individuals and what we are as societies is shaped and molded by our relationship with a dominant technology. This technological shaping is not a new phenomenon

⁹⁷ This chapter started, like most academic works, as an independent essay. The essay save file was simply named “How do I know?” Similar to thinkers before me, I am continually baffled by the mere concept of knowing anything at all, especially given the existence of our digital lives that have become intertwined with our nondigital (or traditional) lives. While many have pondered on the idea of knowing, not many have taken the idea of knowing and attempted to understand that in terms of digital existence. Furthermore, knowing is usually studied in the traditional formats of epistemology or psychology. Rarely is there an effort to fuse ontology, epistemology, psychology and method in order to truly understand knowing—a fully rounded out methodology, or *logos of method* if you will. That is, how is it that we actually come to know so that we may know anything at all. Thus, this chapter is born. For how can I say anything about digital life, if I’m not convinced I can properly move towards knowing anything within a world that encompasses digital life.

⁹⁸ Sherry Turkle, *Life on the Screen*, 9-10. Here Turkle discusses the idea that we have come to a point where our identities are becoming inseparable from our technological and/or digital identities; Neil Postman, *Technopoly*, 3-4. In the introductory portion of the text, Postman posits the idea, through a hermeneutic discussion of Plato’s Phaedrus, that we are and were always already inseparable from our technologies. That new technologies have always altered our relationship with ourselves and our world; Donna Haraway, “A Manifesto for Cyborgs: Science, Technology, and Socialist Feminism in the 1980s,” in *The Donna Haraway Reader*, 7-46, (New York, NY: Routledge, 2004), 7-10. Haraway begins her ‘Cyborg Manifesto’ by putting forward the idea that *cyborg* is not merely a person who is part machine and part human, rather, a cyborg is more accurately part technology and part human. She posits that simply engaging with technology in a constant and seemingly internalizing fashion makes us cyborgs. For Haraway, we are already ingesting medical technology (pills, IVs, etcetera), getting prosthetics (literally attaching technology to our bodies), and we are constantly engaging with computers and cell phones. These technological relationships change how one engages with others in their world, ultimately changing their world. For Haraway engaging with technology changes how people are and us as people. For Haraway, our fascination with technology as a species has made a world in which we are already (and possibly were always already) cyborgs; Kevin Lincoln. “Where is the boundary between your phone and your mind?” This case study by the CBC, attempts to show the profound effect digital media has on our physical reality. Lincoln explores the idea that our minds are changing do to a literal “re-wiring” of our brain’s physiology from constant close proximity with cell phones. This study, potentially shows the reality put forward by these theorists.

nor a new discovery. Technological shaping cannot simply be looked at as moving from a nontechnologically dominated instance to technologically dominated one. Rather, we ought to consider that there are instances where a technology has not enveloped our being, while other technologies already are. That is, our being moves from an instance where one particular technology has no effect, to that technology having an effect. We cannot simply point to a moment where we truly rule over our technology. There are instances where technology has moved from a point of nondomination to one of domination. We can consider this domination as a moment of change, or an evolution of our being-in-the-world.

Turning to Plato's *Phaedrus*, particularly, the passage where Socrates recounts the story of Thamus and Theuth. We can see how technology has changed our being in the past. In order to demonstrate this, Plato focuses on our relationship with memory. In the *Phaedrus*, Socrates explained to the eponymous character that Theuth (the advisor to an ancient Egyptian ruler: Thamus) claimed that writing (among some other arts) would make the Egyptians wiser while giving them a better memory. Thamus criticized that notion, by pointing out that writing will in fact harm memory. The Egyptians would lose the need to remember since memory will be inscribed elsewhere rather than in their minds—writing, for Thamus, would develop an accidental and unavoidable technical evocation.⁹⁹ To further highlight the idea of technical (re)structuring we can consider Heidegger and Hannah Arendt who both explained that there came a time when humans were no longer capable of examining their lives from within. That the “Age of the World Picture” externalized the anthropocentric Archimedean point of the human—there was a technological self-transcendence. They claimed that we had lost the ability to consider ourselves from within our minds, that we can now only consider ourselves by removing

⁹⁹ Plato, “Phaedrus,” Alexander Nehamas trans. and Paul Woodruff trans., in *Plato: Complete Works*, 506-556, John M. Cooper ed., (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 1997), 551, (274c-275a).

ourselves from ourselves.¹⁰⁰ Our technical pursuits of more precise representations of ourselves through picturing our world developed a knowing-self and a studied-self. The technical aesthetic representation of existence fundamentally altered our self-consideration. We had not moved—as posited by Postman from an instance of control, to one of no control—rather, we were always already engaging in the dialectic of technological history. Having considered this, let us focus on digital technology.

Consider the existence of digital social media and how reliant we are on these platforms to see the world in real-time, to keep us connected, to discuss important issues, and to represent ourselves as we desire to be represented.¹⁰¹ This raises the question concerning how prominent the technopole phenomenon has become in today’s world. Furthermore, if a digital-technopole existence is already a reality, how do we come to understand ourselves given such an existence? An existence where we are technologically bound, causing a need for both a digital representation and a natural representation, or as Sherry Turkle puts it: “a tale of two aesthetics.”¹⁰² One aesthetic is the natural representation (or nondigital), and the second is the digital (or technical) aesthetic surface that is projected or performed out into the world. The term ‘tale’ is used here to imply a sense of fiction. The world divide, for Turkle, is an imagined divide that is necessary for understanding the world as it represented, but not necessarily as it truly exists. It is a fiction since both of these aesthetics are simultaneously represented digitally and nondigitally. That is to say, in the contemporary world, everything is, at minimum, always digital and nondigital—there is no separation; no divide; no gap, they are blended and fused as one, yet we are capable of discussing and separating them. Therefore, a question of concern is: how does

¹⁰⁰ Heidegger, “The Age of the World Picture,” 116-117; Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 2-8.

¹⁰¹ Sherry Turkle, *Life on the Screen*, 9.

¹⁰² Sherry Turkle, *Life on the Screen*, 36.

one come to know anything when we are seemingly stuck in an ever-present duality of representing our existence? This question brings forth the problem of representation that exists in connected societies, i.e. the problem of relating one's representation of themselves with themselves, themselves to the world, and the world with itself.

Having brought that forward, I will endeavour to show that there is no relationship problem, rather there is a problem of understanding which stems from a problem concerning how knowledge is framed—how methodology is understood. That in reality, there is no separation between the supposed horizons of worldly things. Rather, all things are fused as worldly things with other worldly things in the world.

When we focus on connections, we begin to notice what appears to be a space for relationships or performances to exist, instead of seeing a fusion of horizons.¹⁰³ This fusion of horizons is only visible when one problematizes methodology from the standpoint of a problem concerning anthropocentric representation. We can only see this problem when we search through and beyond language itself.

Laying-bare the problem as such shows the representation problem stems from the issue that was *brought-forward* in the introduction chapter—the issue concerning communication. Things are being simultaneously represented in the world through art, language, digital technology, and other forms of communication.¹⁰⁴ Representation is not the sole problem concerning a technologically focused society. There appears to be a relationship problem that stems from a capacity to relate digital and nondigital representations as one. This comes from what seems to have been an internalization of digital realities and their relation to the nondigital. This apparent internalization should have made any boundary between the digital and the

¹⁰³ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 317.

¹⁰⁴ Sherry Turkle, *Life on the Screen*, 10.

nondigital essentially nonexistent. However, internalization fails to do so. Finally, there is a problem of projection or performance which stems from our desire to control representations and relationships, by performing them in the world and to an online audience (our digital society).¹⁰⁵ We attempt to take command of the world around us in an attempt to ensure that we are recognized as our desired self-representation.¹⁰⁶ Our digital actions become nondigital aesthetic representations that are then inscribed into the nondigital world through our digital performances, ultimately refusing any fusion of self-existence. These problems deliver us down many paths.

Focusing on any individual path (i.e. representation, relation, performance) brings us towards a method to solve one problem. I will endeavour towards a complete (or wholistic) approach which avoids the semantic trap, i.e. focus furcates reality, which then furcates understanding into disjointed semantic representations. Thus, our methodological outlook ought to be capable of defurcation. To do this one must move towards seeing limits and how limits come together, rather than looking at how they are separated.¹⁰⁷ To answer this question concerning a duality of a digital/nondigital existence, one must problematize the limits of existing epistemologies in order to come towards knowing reality as it truly is, rather than how it appears. As such, my hermeneutic exploration of the limits of representation, relation and performance of aesthetics in order develop a methodological understanding properly suited to understanding the contemporary digital-nondigital world of today begins.

Methodology at first glance appears simple enough, as we all have some baseline assumption about how we come to make knowledge claims. However, when one problematizes

¹⁰⁵ Turkle, *Life on the Screen*, 10.

¹⁰⁶ Frantz Fanon, "The Negro and Recognition," 165.

¹⁰⁷ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 305.

methodology as it truly is, that is to say as a *logos of method*, one realizes its complexity. Simply speaking, methodology is the study of methods, or alternatively, it is the truth concerning the processes towards creating or finding pathways towards knowledge—it is that which frames our understandings. For thinkers like Heidegger, and methodology theorists like Jonathan Moses and Torbjørn Knutsen, one cannot know what methodology is if one does not already understand knowledge frames and what the essential being of the world is.¹⁰⁸ One must understand both epistemology and ontology in order to understand methodology.¹⁰⁹ When thinking about knowledge this makes sense. How does one know if they have no conception of the world in which they live? Further, how does one know if they do not know what knowledge is? Therefore, my quest requires that I place theorists that write about—either explicitly or implicitly—problems concerning ontology and epistemology in an exegetical-dialogue concerning *logos of method*. Doing this will allow me to develop a more complete process of knowing. This particular process will be bound within a specific understanding of human knowledge production as a *Bildung*¹¹⁰—the cultivation of what has been known in order to know better. While a complete *Bildung* understanding is seemingly impossible it is always already in a process of being done; no one understanding is bereft of that which lead it to that understanding, which was itself a part of a previous understanding. Being that we as humans think from thoughts developed from others who have understandings from others, this process is not alien nor untrue, though it

¹⁰⁸ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 21-23.

¹⁰⁹ Jonathan W. Moses and Torbjørn Knutsen, *Ways of Knowing*, 2-5.

¹¹⁰ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 9. *Bildung* is roughly translated from German to culture. However, for Gadamer, it is not so simple. Culture is not meant simply as one's culture, it is one's cultivation of self. I.e. how one has been cultivated from being-in-the-world. *Bildung* is the thing that is near impossible to engage. Gadamer writes that it encompasses: "concepts such as 'art,' 'history,' 'the creative,' 'worldview,' 'experience,' 'genius,' 'external world,' 'interiority,' 'expression,' 'style,' 'symbol,' [concepts] which we take to be self-evident, contain a wealth of history."

is never complete.¹¹¹ Thus, the limitations will always be what has been known (baseline assumptions) and that which is either unknown or forgotten. That being said, I will attempt to avoid the problem of preliminary assumptions that might cloud my path towards truths by unpacking Bildung during the exegetical process in order to ensure assumptions are either true or disregarded if found to be false. This Bildung approach is necessary, as it will allow the limitations of a methodology to be enveloped (through fusion) and brought into a more complete and less limited understanding of methodology.

If this chapter is to begin developing a “more” complete methodology that is capable of developing knowledge by engaging within a complex digital-nondigital reality, one is required to understand that the digital is both a technological and an aesthetic phenomenon. Therefore, an artistic and technological understanding of reality is always necessary. The artistic understanding of reality will be put-forth through fiction, primarily Kafka’s *Metamorphosis*. This fictional representation of knowledge will be hermeneutically explored as any other form of knowledge presentation concerning self-representation and Bildung. This is based on an assumption that fiction is a written form of an aesthetic understandings of the world—an assumption that will be challenged.

Engaging with literary aesthetic representations of the world will allow me to properly engage with the world in a more complete, interdisciplinary and multivariate manner. Doing so acknowledges that knowledge of the world is not merely pure reason bereft of taste and aesthetics. A proper Bildung methodology points to everything that humans can know and in any fashion humans can present knowledge which includes art as novels, paintings, digital images,

¹¹¹ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 9-11. This complete process of knowing is seemingly impossible, i.e. one cannot know all that can be known.

etcetera.¹¹² Building on the use of art, and to fuse more horizons, I will use a more traditional generalizing small-n case study approach by engaging with published psychological interviews and journal articles as a means of showing the “real” world connections to a theory of methodology. These cases directly involve contemporary technologies as a focus of the studies. Meaning, my approach involves a technological understanding. This interdisciplinary approach to problematizing methodology will help move me towards revealing an all-encompassing methodology more capable of engaging with a complex reality. Furthermore, it will develop a baseline approach that will be used throughout the thesis to both understand contemporary issues and continue developing the methodological outlook.

Acknowledging both a complex reality while problematizing methodology makes choosing a true starting point for this chapter, subsequent chapters, and subsequent quests I will one day take relatively difficult. Taking a historical or genealogical approach, i.e. choosing a particular idea from the past or choosing a theorist that lived in a particular point in time as a so-called beginning as a means of developing knowledge overtime, is rather tempting. Given my Bildung assumption, it would be easier to take an approach that builds a historical dialectic. However, doing so would not properly engage any assumptions, as I would be assuming that truth moves from one instance of truth to the next (progressive), internalizing each instance of truth as it presents itself in time; creating a complete representation of the truth at every new instance.¹¹³ That would be problematic because it assumes truth prior to truth. That truth can be

¹¹² Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 317; Walter Benjamin, “The Storyteller, 364-365: at this point Benjamin is explaining the impact of the novel as a representation of the extremes of human life; Earlier (“Section I,” 362), he explains the importance of the story, and how it portrays human experience in a communicable way that is representable to all, so long as they understand the words. All this is representative of what Gadamer explains in truth and method about human knowledge, that it is a Bildung of all that is human, experience, judgement, taste, aesthetics and most importantly language and discourse—communication (Gadamer, 387).

¹¹³ Michel Foucault, “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History.” (Electronic Copy, 1971, 76-100), 79. Retrieved from: <https://noehernandezcortez.files.wordpress.com/2011/04/nietzsche-genealogy-history.pdf>

found in the past, while also being here in the present, meaning complete truth is always in the future. That we can simply pick an origin point to develop from, or that we could in fact ignore past thoughts. Progressive understandings of knowledge imply that past knowledge is less true or altogether untrue. Or, on the same vein, it implies present truth is false due to a forgetting and that truth is only found in the past.¹¹⁴ Furthermore, historical-genealogical approaches run the risk of developing a potential error into more error.¹¹⁵ This is not to agree with my earlier statement that truth cannot be found in the past, this is merely to show that truth cannot be taken for granted, it must be shown. Finally, I must refrain from taking the route that most easily satisfies my assumptions if I am to test my assumptions in order to take the question concerning methodology seriously. Therefore, a historically dialectic hermeneutics is unsuitable for this quest.

As the one posing the question and to continue the quest analogy, it is safe to assume I already have an answer (another assumption if you will). The simplest answer to the question concerning methodology is *methodology in-itself* (one would hope). The simplicity of this answer raises questions. The most obvious being: what is the essential being of methodology? To this I have already said it is derived from both an ontological and epistemological understanding. Then what is the fundamental nature of these two things? Discovering this gets at the essence of questioning itself. Namely, that the purpose of questing for an answer is to discover a *way* towards the thing in question and that *way* ought to reveal the being of the thing itself (very pedantic).¹¹⁶ Questioning in this manner necessitates engagement with assumptions that precede

¹¹⁴ While this is not fully stated, I am implying that a mixing is necessary. That forgetting is always possible and truth can be found in the past and that truth could be progressive, i.e. we can better define and understand the truth over time. Both are always true. We cannot simply pick one of the other. We must employ the middle ground.

¹¹⁵ Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," 79.

¹¹⁶ Heidegger. *Being and Time*, 21.

the occasion of the question. Not doing so brings the same issue of error I pointed out earlier: an assumption made in error, will develop more error just the same. Thus, the questioner ought to engage with themselves, meaning they must engage with their assumptions, questions, and teachings that led them to their quest(s).

Such an engagement means one will engage with their world. The one that they were thrown into, that then developed into the world they worlded as a worlding entity.¹¹⁷ Distinguishing the world in this manner means that the world is all that influences the person doing the questioning—the world “bears-upon” the person that is *being-there-in-the-world*.¹¹⁸ People have a relationship with the world they live in. People are not without some world. A world as a structure represents all that a person is, all they can be and all that makes them as they are (which should *bring-out* the difficulty in revealing understanding). For Christine Daigle, a person that is in the world is a “trans-Subject/trans-Object.”¹¹⁹ A person as *trans* means that they are all that they are as oneself individuated from others and themselves while being-in-the-world-with-others-and-themselves, and they are both immanent and transcendent, meaning they are an “unfolding project.” For Daigle, this means that as one becomes, they transcend themselves and others, they are immanent as free and situated beings, while being immanent in-the-world-with-others: they are tied to others’ freedom in the moment. All this is to say that people are individuated beings bound up in all things societal: conversation, politics, books, family, friends, etcetera. A *trans*-being is seemingly immaterial by nature, a representation of self, a communicated entity.¹²⁰ As an immaterial communicated being, no one person is free of

¹¹⁷ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 319; Heidegger, “The Thing,” 179-180.

¹¹⁸ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 81-82. Bears-upon is taken from Heidegger and the idea that the world’s presence presses upon those that are being-there-in-the-world with its weight.

¹¹⁹ Christine Daigle, “Trans-Subjectivity/Trans-Objectivity.” In *Feminist Phenomenology Futures*, 183-202, Helen A. Fielding ed. and Dorothy E. Olkowski ed., (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2017), 185-190.

¹²⁰ Aristotle, *Politics*, Joe Sachs, trans., (Indianapolis, IN: Focus, 2012), 28.

their world: they are a *Bildung* of the language world. However, this does not mean that they are *inter*-related to all things within their world. By being a thing of language (a semantic entity), they create a horizon onto themselves and horizons onto other things and put space between themselves and other things. Or another way to think of it: a horizoned thing transcends any notion of a world totality into a pedantic realm of being. Transcendence, therefore, refuses relation; a *trans*-space is bereft of relation. However, since they also exist within a world of shared existence, they are not without any influence from that world. The things in the world interact with them in some fashion, otherwise there would be no way to experience the things of the world in order to realize the existence of other things. Things in the world give understanding to *trans*-entities of themselves and the *things of the world*. Things *bear-upon* the self, allowing the self to realize the self and thing as distinct entities,¹²¹ i.e. there is a phenomenological self-alienation when existing as an individuated *trans* entity.

Trans-being brings forward notions of object-oriented ontology (OOO) as a means of understanding all the individuated things in the world as things in-themselves. An OOO understanding, according to Rebekah Sheldon, refuses relational understandings like a *trans*-subject/object refuses *inter*-relations by being *trans*. To remind us of OOO's importance to the quest and to define it for this chapter: OOO distinguishes between the form of the thing (that which the thing is representative of) and the thing as it is before a knower (the object itself).¹²² This is clearly reminiscent of Platonic philosophy. In *The Republic of Plato*, one can discern from Plato's explanation that there is a realm of being wherein the forms exist and there is a realm of becoming wherein representations of the form exist.¹²³ These things, for Plato, are three

¹²¹ Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 67. Heidegger, "The Thing," 172-172.

¹²² Rebekah Sheldon, "Form/Matter/Chora, 194-106.

¹²³ Plato, *The Republic of Plato*, " 279.

times removed from the thing itself because the form is the thing itself (being), and the thing is a representation of the thing as a thought or consideration of it as a thing in becoming: 1) thing in the realm of being, 2) thing in becoming, 3) thing as perceived in thought—the *in-itselfness* of the thing in question. Which is to say that a person does not know the thing as it is, they know it as a representation (as communicated, as a language-, artistic-, built-, etcetera-thing: an entity). In this sense, a thing represents itself to a knower, and the knower knows it through language. Language then becomes a representation of a representation (the form representing itself), which is represented in the world (becoming).

As stated earlier, the representation approach to epistemics is problematic because it “separates the world into ontological disjoint domains of worlds and things, leaving itself with the dilemma of their linkages” as points of interest where knowledge can be discovered.¹²⁴ That between the thing that represents itself and the human representation of it through language (or thought), there exists a gap. This gap becomes a knowledge gap wherein we cannot hope to understand the thing itself or the representation of the thing since the gap denies that which links the thing in and of itself to its language representation—the thing in-itself. Further, this appears to create an issue where the thing represents itself prior to being made a thing of language. The thing, in this sense, self-inscribes into the world and we internalize that self-inscription. To solve this problem Sheldon turns to Plato and his work the *Timaeus*.

In the *Timaeus*, according to Sheldon, Plato *puts-forth* the idea that between the realm of being and the realm of becoming there exists a figurative relational apparatus called a “chora.”¹²⁵

¹²⁴ Quote is from: Barad, “Posthumanist Performativity, 811; Sheldon is referenced here because she develops from this idea that representations have a fundamental issue. This issue, for her and Barad, is an issue concerning a “representation gap.” That the representation of a thing is disconnected in some sense from that which it represents. As a result, we require some way of getting away from representation. Which for Sheldon is a relational understanding through the chora and for Barad is a movement towards performative understandings. Sheldon, “Form/Matter/Chora,” 209-211.

¹²⁵ Sheldon, “Form/Matter/Chora,” 211.

For her, the chora activates an ontology of “material-affective circulation.” For her, representation moves through the chora from the object to the form of the object and back.¹²⁶ It is a continual process that is always occurring. The chora is “the third thing” that binds the object to the form. It does this by existing in a third space that is in-between the form and the object. Being in-between is what allows it to represent the relationship between the form of the thing and the object representation of the thing, creating a totality of the thing itself.¹²⁷ This allows Plato’s notion of ‘three’ to persist. The representation gap is changed from a problem of knowledge of how a thing represents itself, to a problem of how a thing is a thing as an effective representation of a relation that exists in-between.

The problem of effective representation turns us away from Daigle and the idea of *trans*, towards the *inter*-relations of a thing and itself. The object in question is not *trans* since it is a relation: it is *inter*-objectified. It is not about the thing and all that it represents. Rather, it is about the object and its *inter*-relations with itself, i.e. its form, its chora, its matter, and its language representation as an inscribed action.¹²⁸ The chora, as explained by Sheldon, becomes an addition to the problem of representation, a third step, another reduction of a thing in question. It perpetuates the pedantic reality of a semantic semiotics. The chora places the representation of a thing in a third space wherein inscription occurs: it ensures the gap persists by refusing any fusion of horizons.¹²⁹ It occurs in a third space in-between the form and the object outside of the human experience. The chora as a relation represents the inscription of the thing itself from the human. The object becomes unobjectified. It becomes a thing of reason, rather

¹²⁶ Sheldon, “Form/Matter/Chora,” 213.

¹²⁷ Sheldon, “Form/Matter/Chora,” 213.

¹²⁸ Butler, “Bodies that Matter,” 44.

¹²⁹ Butler, “Bodies that Matter,” 38.

than a thing itself as itself.¹³⁰ Representation of the in-between moves knowledge away from the purview of the object and the person, into the rational dematerialized performance of reality. In this sense, we can turn to Frantz Fanon and his argument about the incapacity of a self to self-represent.¹³¹ The *inter* ontological structure necessitates that inscriptions be performed by things capable of performing, while also having inscriptions placed upon them, thus denying them self-representation. Things are not the thing it is, things are that which is placed in-between it and its form. Objects become the *inter*-related inscriptions of the in-between. The *inter*-relation becomes an inscriptive pedantic reality (*trans*) in its own right. By trying to be more of the thing by overcoming the representation gap, we actually entrench the gap when we focus on the *inter*.

Inscriptive representation places greater importance on the aesthetic of the thing. Knowledge in this sense comes from the capacity to put inscriptions out there upon things, rather than being self-inscribing. Knowers following this path are attempting to discover the beauty of the thing in question.¹³² It becomes about how the thing can or should be seen and then subsequently read. As Sheldon puts it, choratic knowledge requires choratic interpretation.¹³³ Knowledge in this manner becomes a reading of performed relational inscriptions. When one comes across an object that appears to present itself to them, one prescribes meaning upon it by inventing a third space to link it to its form and that becomes its representation. From there, further knowing is interpreted from inscribed representations of the *inter*-relations of the in-between: one reads the world as it has been represented, not as it is represented, nor as it truly is. Knowledge of the world in this sense can only be of some world (or space) that is in-between.

¹³⁰ Butler, "Bodies that Matter," 49. Here Butler says matter (object) becomes dematerialized due to the reason of the chora. The chora becomes the matter. The matter no longer represents itself. Things are always *in-themselves* and never *in and of themselves*.

¹³¹ Fanon, "The Negro and Recognition," 165, 169.

¹³² Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 47.

¹³³ Sheldon, "Form/Matter/Chora," 216.

In a digital world, this would mean that the digital representation is an inscribed representation of the thing, while simultaneously being an aesthetically inscribed (digital) representation of the thing through *posting*. The *post* would also be a representation of the form of the thing and the thing as nondigital. Since all nondigital things are represented digitally,¹³⁴ there would be a digital and a nondigital relation to concern ourselves with. While it could be a useful exercise to separate things into its component parts: form, object (or thing, matter, subject, digital image representation), and chora, it does not move knowers towards knowing the thing itself. If anything, it moves us away from knowing anything at all. Especially if the goal is to use language to communicate knowledge. The *inter*-relation is dependent on knowing the form and the object in order to know how they relate, so that one may speak of the thing itself as the third thing. Knowing then is never of the in-between, it is always of the form and the thing being experienced. In this sense, one is trying to discover where the form and where the thing ends, in order to create knowledge in-between the limits of these things as though they never meet; as though the thing was never linked to its form in the first place.¹³⁵ The in-between, and how the form and thing are related must be invented as being real, never having been real in the first place. All things become an invention of language. All that is ever experience is the dematerialization of things as an in-between.

This, for theorists such as Donna Haraway and Karen Barad, brings us towards performativity (and feminist-queer theory) as a hopeful fix to the representation-relation problem. If language is part of the problem there must be some way of overcoming this issue, some way of overcoming language. Barad posits that we must move away from representation completely and move towards relations and performativity. For her and Haraway the problem is

¹³⁴ Turkle, *Life on the Screen*, 177.

¹³⁵ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 305.

not language itself, rather the problem is the semiotics of language. As language goes, at least for humans, speaking in terms of representations (semantics) causes us to always come up against Zeno's paradox: perpetual reduction through inventions of representations and relations.¹³⁶ If all things require an inscribed meaning, one must reduce all things and inscribe them all with meaning. They must turn that which is in-the-world into things through the action of language. Furthermore, representations and relations assume an origin point; there is a representation or relation that we can start from in order to make better representations and relations.¹³⁷ This is the same problem I began with when discussing my assumptions: I cannot simply accept my assumptions nor can I simply choose a point in history and move along through time. Choosing a representation or inventing a space to start from assumes the adequacy of the first representation and the invention of the relational space—it was either true, or almost true and we are building on its truth to become more-true. However, if it was in error, we are building more error. Furthermore, when we consider the reductive nature of representation we come up against perpetual reduction and add complexity through more relationships. For relational spaces, if the thing and its form becomes more difficult to relate, the space becomes larger, making in-between inscriptions less relatable to its representations, meaning the representation gap persists. Each reductive-expansive instance runs the risk of more points of error, and from each point of error we build even more error. Though, if error is not the problem, there is always the problem of continual splitting, adding more to the equation of knowing, moving truth further away from thing in question. Though for Barad and Haraway, this problem is inherent in human semiotics. Thus, they posit a movement away from a representative semiotics completely.

¹³⁶ Barad, "Posthumanist Performativity," 812.

¹³⁷ Barad, "Posthumanist Performativity," 804-808.

Such a semiotic movement brings us into what is considered a posthuman world view. The reason it must be *posthuman* is that human is an inscriptive representation in-itself.¹³⁸ As such, any movement away from representation must also be a movement away from a conception of human as human. For Barad this is a performative movement towards an acceptance that all things are agential bodies: material.¹³⁹ Meaning, we must move away from the deobjectification (or dematerialization—a refusal of thingification) of the body. For Barad, making bodies material gives them agency. With agency all bodies perform that which they are when they either are or are not being perceived.¹⁴⁰ It is an acceptance that things are as they are regardless of human presence or knowledge. A human knower is not necessary for there to be a material thing.

Performance as a projection of something knowable is the animation of actions pertaining to the occasion in which bodies are acting out their being. In this sense, it is not about the subject/object distinction, rather, it is about the *intra*-actions being done by the bodies performing in the instance.¹⁴¹ It is *intra* because performances occur simultaneously within and from without the body (bodies) that is (are) acting when bodies are acting or being in a space at a specific time. This moves one further away from *trans*-existence while simultaneously moving away from *inter*-relations, since the performance occurs in the world, not in an inscribed in-

¹³⁸ Donna Haraway, “Ecce Homo, Ain’t (Ar’n’t) I a Woman, and Inappropriate/d others: the Human in a Post-Human Landscape,” in *The Donna Haraway Reader*, 47-63, (New York, NY, Routledge, 2004) 49-51. Here Haraway is discussing the issue concerning semiotic construction. That we as humans have a Faustian disorder in which we engage in semantic alienation or inappropriation. Through speech we make things (or people) inappropriate, thus inappropriating them (alienating). Any correction to language semiotics ought to deal away with semantic thingification.

¹³⁹ Barad, “Posthumanist Performativity,” 829.

¹⁴⁰ This, according to Barad, is similar to the original problem of representation, things represent themselves. The difference lies in semiotics, in discourse. Inscription of the thing is not coming from the thing, nor is it coming from some other thing. Things merely are. Furthermore, this is clearly linked to a quantum mechanics understanding of the world. That which is perceived is not in the place it is perceived, while also being in the place it is perceived. Yet, while not being perceived it is always in the place it is.

¹⁴¹ Barad, Karen. “Posthumanist Performativity,” 827.

between space, nor are they performing beyond their bodies bearing back onto themselves, while bearing upon others. Therefore, performance refuses effective inscription. *Intra* is within the performances that occur to the bodies from the bodies. The performance internalizes the relationships (*intra*-relations) that are being performed. Performance becomes a space, in which performances relate within each other. Doing this puts the posthuman within a sort of relationality, i.e. the performances relate to each of the bodies. However, for Barad, focusing on the relations (or linkages) places a specific Archimedean point that is external looking outward and inwards.¹⁴² Such a focus would create a prescribing effect that is similar to choratic readings of the world. Barad refuses a determining point from which any objectification can occur. The posthuman move must be an epistemic movement that refuses such totalizing maneuvers, because objectification prescribes by inscribing representations upon bodies, stripping them of their body and applying body as a prescription from some other through reason.¹⁴³ As such, performativity is a movement away from eternal universals towards an acceptance of a space-time continuum on which performances occur and knowledge is finite from knowers as being in reality as becoming. Being moves away from a realm of eternal universal forms, towards the realm of becoming, in which bodies are being themselves as themselves when they perform. Any self that is conceived within this frame of mind is only the self when performing that self.

Performativity in this manner, at a glance, appears to solve many problems and fits in quite well with an aesthetic approach to understanding the world as digital-nondigital. Living as an agential performer, means that one essentially performs their self. Which sounds similar to the discussion earlier in the chapter, when I put forward the idea from Sherry Turkle that we project ourselves into the digital world. That there is a desire for self-representation. The limitation with

¹⁴² Barad, "Posthumanist Performativity," 829.

¹⁴³ Barad, "Posthumanist Performativity," 829.

Barad's performativity is its inability to move beyond the instance as a moment in time, i.e. a performance is only capable of internalizing performances as they are occurring. Any and all *intra*-relations can never exist beyond their moment in time. Therefore, Barad's performativity cannot allow a digital-nondigital that is bound up in time as a process of history, and memory or data. The horizon of the performed self-thing is the instance of the self-thing's performance. The performance is centric to the performing thing—anthropocentrism persists. When it performs again it is not that self-thing it is another self-thing, a thing-self perhaps (though not literally).¹⁴⁴

What could be seen as a fix to performativity, as presented, would require a complete acceptance of the thing's performance as an instance in time of the thing, not the thing itself. Thus allotting it the freedom to represent itself and to be represented beyond itself, moving the thing towards an absolute and total thing.¹⁴⁵ This absolute thing, would be a *Bildung* thing—a cultivated collection of its performances and the performances that it interacted with—a fusion of performances. Things would *internalize* their performances and become a collection of its digital performances, and its nondigital performances: its data, memory, and history. The selfness of a thing in this sense is a total-self that *intra*-relates with performances.

Rendering a thing as an absolute thing, forces it to come up against the world, since a totalization gathers its definable qualities, i.e. it does not do away with its semantic qualities. The reason being, things exist in the world and as a result they are robbed of the opportunity to not only perform themselves as themselves, they are robbed of being recognized as that which performed themselves as themselves.¹⁴⁶ A world as a structure creates a world wherein people or things cannot be recognized as themselves, rather they can only be recognized in relation to that

¹⁴⁴ While the difference between saying *thing-self* and *self-thing* is negligible. The idea is not to define some new term up against some other term, it's only to show that it is the same thing, just slightly different.

¹⁴⁵ Fanon, "The Negro and Recognition," 169.

¹⁴⁶ Fanon, "The Negro and Recognition," 163.

which placed the structure that defines selfness upon them.¹⁴⁷ In this sense, structures determine how a self can be represented as itself. The body thing as *intra* refuses the object thing as *trans*, while the *trans* thing refuses the body thing as *intra*. Simply moving from one pedantic view of the world to another does not do away with the semantic issue of human semiotics. The conversation regarding humanness may cease being, while the conversation regarding body becomes—however, it is a mere semantic replacement for a bygone understanding, i.e. it continues to carry the *trans*-semantic baggage of the prior while gathering new content.

Stepping back to the human, consider Fanon. For him, human is only human so long as it is capable of exerting its conception of human upon other humans.¹⁴⁸ Therefore, if one performs as body when the structures inscribes them as human, they are never that which they perform. Which could be approached in the opposite direction. The human acting as human when it is inscribed as body in a world of bodies is never allowed its humanness. If they wish to be the specific being they desire to be, they risk self-degeneration, by placing themselves outside of the desired structure of being. Not only that, if one communicates their performance, they are no longer that which they believed they performed—they become their effective inscribed representation. In this sense, so long as there is language that is bound within semantics, there is representation of all things.¹⁴⁹ Performance of an absolute self, or a self-in-time is never possible. Language dictates it as such,¹⁵⁰ i.e. through language we furcate any one thing into many possible things, e.g. myself today or myself tomorrow is still myself, or “you are not being

¹⁴⁷ Fanon, “The Negro and Recognition,” 164.

¹⁴⁸ Fanon, “The Negro and Recognition,” 168.

¹⁴⁹ Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, 80. Rorty titles this section of the text: “Persons Without Minds.”

¹⁵⁰ Turkle, *Life on the Screen*,” 177-178.

yourself today,” a common saying amongst people. The self as a thing is many things. Our language must, for some, overcome this issue.

Changing or inventing a new semiotics is challenged by the idea that language is always a discussion about ‘X.’ That regardless of the signification or semantics within a semiotic system, we are always referring to something when we are talking. Regardless of how advanced or antiquated a language is, it is always referring to something, but never the thing itself, e.g. myself today, is not my actual or total self. That is, the authentic self is never the thing as represented. To highlight this idea Richard Rorty engaged in a thought experiment regarding an alien race: the “Antipodeans.” His invented species has a different approach to effective representations, and to performing the relationships between their words and their meaning. Instead of saying: “I feel sadness,” the Antipodeans say: “my C-fibres are firing,” or in other words, the material thing that makes sadness is acting within my brain to make me sad. Their semiotics appears to have done away with the semantic representation gap. Their words project “raw feelings,” they appear to project the thing itself, rather than a representation of the thing.¹⁵¹ For the Antipodeans, language is always a performance of exactly what is occurring as it occurs. Their words are always directly discussing the thing itself: the body, the material. It is not some dematerial abstract term like sadness describing some complex biological process in a nuanced phenomenological fashion. Rather, their words perform their exact biological process, “my C-fibres are firing,” my biological response that causes a feeling of what English speaking humans call “sadness” is taking place. The importance for Rorty, and myself, is that the Antipodean language is not doing anything different from a more traditional earth based nuanced language. It is simply more direct. All that has occurred, is a replacement of sadness with “C-fibres firing.”

¹⁵¹ Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*,” 91-93.

This still requires understanding of what these words—these representations—or how these words relate to a biological response or what these inscribed effective performances mean. It is still a structure bound within language being placed upon subjects. One loses their capacity to self-represent if they lack understanding, or they desire for more accuracy through new unknown representations. Structure always denies the individuated representation of a thing.

We can see this idea of a structure denying self-representation playing out in Kafka's *Metamorphosis*. In the *Metamorphosis*, Gregor Samsa is never capable of truly performing himself as himself. Regardless of his transformation into an insect, an understanding of his self is inscribed onto him from another—the office clerk—a character in a position of power who is capable of structuring the world. The clerk says to Gregor through his bedroom door: “since you are wasting my time so needlessly I don't see why your parents shouldn't hear it too. For some time past your work has been most unsatisfactory.”¹⁵² We as the audience are aware of the two instances of dramatic irony taking place in that phrase. First, we, unlike his family, are aware that Gregor is actually a good employee. His sales are fairly decent, and he is never sick or late. He is always on the road working hard. His family, however, is unaware of this fact. So they have no choice but to accept the words of a structuring entity: the office clerk. Second, we as the audience are aware of the situation Gregor is in. He is in no shape to confront human beings. Furthermore, due to the newness of his transformation he is incapable of opening the door. He still needs to learn how to move before he can ever hope to open a door, and he no longer looks like a human being. The characters on the outside believe he is just sick and lazy. That he is simply refusing to open the door. They are applying a different reality onto Gregor's reality

¹⁵² Franz Kafka, “The Metamorphosis,” in *Franz Kafka: The Complete Stories*, 89-139, Nahum N. Glatzer ed., trans. Willa and Edwin Muir, (New York, NY: Schocken Books Inc., 1971), 97.

without even being aware of the reality of the situation within the room. The dramatic irony becomes cosmic irony: nothing is as it appears for the characters in the story.

Gregor's total reality in this instant is not within his grasp. He is incapable of being a free agent. He is being denied the opportunity to perform his self to others, for two important reasons. First, there is so much newness that he is incapable of doing anything for a time, and the locked doors deny others the ability to interact with him. There appears to be two worlds; not unlike the conception of at least two worlds found in this work: digital and nondigital. His world moves at his pace and another world that exists beyond the horizon of the door is moving at the same pace, yet distinct in every conceivable manner. Second, Gregor is incapable of explaining the real situation. When he tries to tell everyone that he will be up and out to get on the road, all they hear is the hushed squeals of an insect.¹⁵³ Denied the ability to speak and perform as a familiar body, Gregor has lost the ability to perform his humanness, to perform his actual exist as the body that is Gregor—he has lost the ability to relate. His state of being, who he is at this moment in time is not communicable. His selfness cannot be performed. This new reality has created a structure that denies him the capacity to represent himself. Only what people are willing to perceive, has become his reality.

Over the course of the story, Gregor is slowly denied any claim to his existence as himself. This denial culminates when his sister finally joins the others and says: “We must try to get rid of it” (‘it’ being Gregor).¹⁵⁴ Throughout the story, each character, one by one (although the father never truly believes it is Gregor), loses faith, and inscribes insect Gregor as not-Gregor. They deny him any and all performances of himself as himself: there is no *intra*-relation of his performances with the other performing bodies. He cannot effectively inscribe himself to

¹⁵³ Kafka, “The Metamorphosis,” 98-99.

¹⁵⁴ Kafka, “The Metamorphosis,” 133.

others, denying them the ability to effectively inscribe his real self onto himself: he cannot *transcend* beyond himself to be more himself. Thus, he is incapable of *bearing-upon* the others to inscribe some understanding of Gregor'sness. Further, he is denied any ability to *inter-relate* with the other humans, thereby denying him any chance of sameness and existing within a similar world of relations. Finally, he is denied any chance at *intra-relations*. His performance of himself, cannot relate to the others. His time in his room is distinct from theirs, which puts him outside their world of possibilities. His moments in time are not commensurate with their moments in time. Even then, when the door finally opens he is still never the performance of himself. The others cannot come to understand no matter how hard Gregor tries. He ultimately becomes and dies as some over grown insect that is only there to make their lives worse. Yet the readers, the narrator, and Gregor know that it is Gregor inside that insect and that he is performing himself at every instance. All there is for Gregor is his internalized selfness. He becomes the imagined room next door, or the misremembered room that never was.¹⁵⁵ That is, as far as any of the characters are concerned, there is no Gregor, yet for Gregor there is Gregor. Gregor can only be his *trans*-self.

The problem is that the structure of the world refuses his projection of himself. He is only able to project what others are willing to recognize. If performance is the way of portraying the selfness of a thing as material, then self is never about self at all. Since Gregor as material, as body, is insect. Self in this instance is only about what is experienced in the purity of the occasion, denying any chance at knowledge or at the very least, it denies knowledge as a *Bildung*. Knowledge of anything is come to through communicable performances that inscribe the world for others to understand, so that they may also inscribe the same.¹⁵⁶ A thing is *trans*-

¹⁵⁵ James, "Does 'Consciousness' Exist?" 43-44.

¹⁵⁶ Body for Gregor is the thing that ultimately denies his selfness.

inter-intra simultaneously, i.e. a thing is always fused, it is always blended, it is bereft of horizon. A thing *in and of itself* is a metamorphosis of itself. Only things *in-itself* are burdened with a horizon. Through questing (or proper methodology) one attempts to overcome this burden, or to borrow from Haraway, through questing we attempt to overcome the “elementary structures of signification.”¹⁵⁷

Before moving on and keeping on the topic of metamorphosis, we can turn to clinical interviews concerning one’s understanding of themselves. Anne Pollock interviewed a man and his wife about how they are coping with his new cardiac defibrillator: “Samuel: I don’t think I would ever return to the old person. Sarah: It’s like me before and after the kids. They call it a transition, it’s not, it’s a metamorphosis.”¹⁵⁸ Here we are given two different effective inscriptions of the self to unpack. Samuel had a life altering surgery where he now lives with a device that shocks him every time his heart might stop. He has morphed into a literal cyborg, which is a similar conception of the self held by most of Anne’s patients.¹⁵⁹ They have become new selves, while still being their old selves. They are as absolute now as they were before. Like Gregor, they are still that which they were while being all their newness—they are a *Bildung* self. The wife, describes giving birth the same way. She had humans living as part of her that have since left her and are no longer physically apart of her, yet they are still part of her. She has truly become new, but she is still the same self she was before, during, and after. All selves undergo this process of *Bildung* simply by being in the world. Every inscribed performance of self is a metamorphosis into a new self that is still the old self. The limit of the self only exists in the language of the self as a concept of one’s self. The limit as a horizon does not actually exist

¹⁵⁷ Haraway, *The Donna Haraway Reader*, 78.

¹⁵⁸ Anne Pollock, “The Internal Cardiac Defibrillator,” in *The Inner History of Devices*, 99-111, Sherry Turkle, ed., (Bogart, GA: Graphic Composition, INC., 2008), 107.

¹⁵⁹ Pollock, “The Internal Cardiac Defibrillator,” 99-111.

when the self is a *Bildung* of itself. Through time we are always absolute, we are always that which we were and that which we are becoming. The self is the form of itself and it is the becoming of itself. It is *inter*, *intra* and *trans*. *Inter* because one cannot still be one's self if one is not related to that self. *Intra* because the relationships it engages with matter to making it that which it is. It is *trans* because it exists beyond the instance of its performances.

This conception of self as a *Bildung* thing is only possible with a specific structural reality of the world in which selves exist. Further, it is only possible to know that absolute selves do exist, because of how Gregor and the interviewed patients are presented to us at this moment. Like Walter Benjamin and his discussion concerning the novel, the world as a written inscription is an extreme representation of worldly experience.¹⁶⁰ It is extreme because it is always a limit of that which it seeks to represent. Meaning it always represents the limit (the extreme) of the thing being represented. It is the limit of the event in time. The written event does not continue to unfold beyond itself in time, because it is an object. It is the horizon of the aesthetic surface of that which it seeks to represent. It cannot be anything more, nor can it be less. It does not reduce beyond what is presentable at the occasion of its coming into being (occasioning), and it does not present itself beyond what it is presenting within the confines of what can be understood from it.

However, as another horizon (a person most likely) comes up against it, it is capable of transcending beyond its original occasioning. The meeting of horizons (the coming together of limits) is the point of knowledge, the coming together of worlds.¹⁶¹ It is necessary for *Bildung* and for the possibility of *inter-intra-trans* beings. A thing cannot transcend beyond itself if it does not meet-up against some other thing and *intra*-relate with it in order to mix into the world of the other thing meeting it. This does not deny the structure discussed earlier. The structure is

¹⁶⁰ Benjamin, "The Storyteller," 364-365.

¹⁶¹ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 317.

still present. There can be no horizon without structure. This is to say that each thing is a structure in-itself, while existing in a world that structures the capacity of things to relate and transcend beyond each other. Furthermore, the world itself as a structure is bound within these meetings of horizons which inscribe upon the world new meaning and understanding. The world itself transcends beyond itself as horizons meet. Therefore, every instance of questioning, or every instance in general, is the coming together of worlds within the world as the prime structure. Horizons come together to produce inscriptions of that which is occurring as it occurs. No occasion in this sense, is bereft of time, space, place, subject, or matter. It is all of this at every instance. In this sense, this is what Heidegger meant when he wrote about the idea of worlds worlding or things gathering.¹⁶² Essentially, things that are capable of knowing about the world come up against some other thing and gathers that thing into it by *intra*-relating with it. It then worlds the world as a continuing of the world which was already there.¹⁶³ The world gathers all the *intra*-relations occurring within it, allowing the world to *transcend* beyond itself. The world itself is a *Bildung* of all that which has occurred within it. The issue that presents itself here is the horizon. Which only exists at this point in time because it is inscribed to exist, not because it truly exists. The knowing thing (or human) limits itself as itself apart from other things by exerting horizons abound.

This is also true in terms of the digital. An anthropocentric digital reality clearly structures all of that which occurs within it. A digital space is coded to allow specific ways of representing anything within it. Nothing can be more than the encoded structure allows.¹⁶⁴ This is a result of the digital world as being brought forward from humans for humans. Humans

¹⁶² Heidegger, "The Thing," 179-180.

¹⁶³ Heidegger, "The Thing," 179.

¹⁶⁴ Wendy Hui Kyong Chun, "Crisis, Crisis, Crisis; or, the Temporality of Networks," in *The Nonhuman Turn*, 139-166, Richard Grusin, ed., (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2015), 143.

interact with it, and it in turn interacts with humans. Which is to say that the horizons of people come up against the digital, and the digital up against the human. The digital engages in the worlding process of *Bildung*. Things occur in the digital as they occur anywhere else—they occur in “real-time.”¹⁶⁵ While there are many differences between how digital representations are put out into the world and how digital interactions change people,¹⁶⁶ the process in which this occurs, is still a *Bildung* process. Therefore, in order to properly understand the digital-nondigital world, one must understand the nondigital structure and the digital structure (the digital world) in-themselves, i.e. as constructed horizons. From there one can then come towards understandings the world as it is—a *Bildung* of itself. Through understanding structures, we come to understand horizons and through understanding these horizons we can see how thingification deconstructs the world into limited domains thereby allowing us to see the reality of a fused existence—a boundless world. Exploring the world in this manner shows the world as it truly is *in-itself* rather than *in and of itself*, i.e. as a digital world coming up against a nondigital world as a digital-nondigital world worlding a world that structures all that is within it.

If the world is a boundless thing that we then world worlds within that we then live within as dematerialized *trans* beings makes any paths towards truth appear impossible, and any world that is beyond language appears farfetched. However, the being of the world (ontology) from the understanding developed in this chapter as a *Bildung* of meeting horizons alters the world and the things doing the meeting. Which means that knowledge can only occur at the “fusion of these horizons which supposedly exist by themselves” (epistemology).¹⁶⁷ Knowledge therefore is never of things as things, but as things-in-the-world in a complete, unitary and

¹⁶⁵ Chun, “Crisis, Crisis, Crisis; or, the Temporality of Networks,” 145.

¹⁶⁶ Kevin Lincoln. “Where is the boundary between your phone and your mind?”

¹⁶⁷ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*,” 317.

whole—limitless, horizonless. No one thing can be defined as it is, i.e. bereft of all other things, otherwise we would always be discussing things from a purely anthropocentric frame of references. Should we wish to move beyond anthropocentrized epistemic frames, one must understand that things are always fused with the worlds in the world and the worlds are fused to the world, thereby making knowledge a whole. Methodology derived from the presented ontology and epistemology is the study of these fusions as a means to overcome the presence of horizons. Thus, any methodological exploration of a world wherein a digital world exists must understand the digital as part of the world, and that neither the nondigital nor the digital exists independent of each other as worlds—they are bereft of furcating horizons. They exist as a fused thing: the world in and of itself. Therefore, no understanding of the modern human—or anything for that matter—can be bereft of digital existence. The existence of digital technology has altered not only how people interact, it has also altered the physiological structure of our brains: the digital has affected the physical,¹⁶⁸ something to be expanded up in the following chapter.

In closing, any methodological understanding cannot focus on representations (*trans*), relations (*inter*) or performances (*intra*). Representations create gaps between things, denying them the ability to fuse as they are in reality. Relations appear to accept the fusing of things. Though a relational fusion only exists in an invented space of reason and this space accepts the gap that exists between representations and therefore denies any fusing of horizons, since horizons must not meet in order for there to be a relational space in the first place. Performance, denies fusion because performance is always of bodies to bodies, not of related things nor of things that transcend each other. A performing world is always one of individuation and thus boundaries and horizons with gaps in between them. While this world of boundaries, spaces and

¹⁶⁸ Kevin Lincoln. “Where is the boundary between your phone and your mind?”

gaps is not nonexistent. It is only the world that exists due to appearance—not truth. Therefore, in the following chapter, we will explore the world from this methodological standpoint; as a *trans-inter-intra* Bildung (a whole) of itself in order to move towards understanding the world as such. Upon understanding the reality of the world one may understand what and how the self is and how the self affects understanding one's world and one's existence. This can only be done by understanding how existence is, how it is understood, and how these realities affect existence. Therefore, let us move towards questing through the world.

The Question(s) Concerning the World A Hermeneutic Quest across the Digital-Nondigital Fusion of Horizons¹⁶⁹

Having *laid-bare* the foundations of a methodological understanding in the previous chapter, we must now embark on the next phase of our quest: understanding the world. Prior to discussing the primary *object* of the thesis—the self—one must understand where the self exists. The baseline assumption is that it exists within the world. In the previous chapters we consistently called upon the idea of the world. If we are to follow through with the desired praxis, my assumptions must be explored. Therefore, the world itself must be traversed and revealed. This revelation will, not at all surprising, come by means of communication: language, i.e. a technological revelation. While this at first glance is a problem, we must push forward and endeavour to push the limits of our processes and our capacity to understand. We will continue with our technological metaphor as an acting thing whose act is revealing. Furthermore, we will continue from the idea that the digital world is a technopole world, i.e. the digital as a technology dominates the technopole.

Consider how a thing that is meant to reveal (technology, digital simulation) is capable of dominating that which intends to use it. For Heidegger, a thing that creates, or dominates is a thing that *projects-upon* worldly things.¹⁷⁰ *Projecting-upon* is a process of ordering or structuring that which is *near*.¹⁷¹ This is to say that things that exist in the world are structured by other

¹⁶⁹ A play on Heideggerian and Gadamerian thought.

¹⁷⁰ Heidegger, “The Question Concerning Technology,” 343. In the “The Question Concerning Technology” Heidegger’s work is translated using the language of *setting-upon*. The language of *projecting-upon* found in *Being and Time* is more accurate for the purposes of this paper. Project-upon will be treated as a verb since this is how Heidegger uses it. Project-upon fits with this quest because it conveys a digital notion not necessarily seen in setting-upon. That is, we can consider the idea of projecting an image. Furthermore, I used performance and projection interchangeably in the previous chapter. As such, for the sake of both simplicity and clarity, we ought to continue with similar terms.

¹⁷¹ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 15; Martin Heidegger, “The Thing,” 177-180.

things in the world. *Nearness* in this sense is not representative of being in close proximity in a literal sense of physicality. Rather, *nearness* is representative of the capacity to either *project-upon* or be *projected-upon*—to be prescribed a structure of being understood. Therefore, there are things that all things are projected upon. Furthermore, there are things that can and there are things that cannot *project-upon* other things, i.e. *projecting-upon* as revealing.¹⁷² The defining feature of a thing's capacity to reveal the world through inscription would be its capacity to both exert and experience *nearness*.¹⁷³ The discussion of these things that can and those that cannot fully endure *nearness* will be discussed later during the chapter's unpacking of the world and how the world structures (*projects-upon*) that which is in it.

The notion of structuring brings forth an important socio-political aspect in understanding how technology dominates, or rather, what it means to be a structure that structures. For Frantz Fanon, a structure is that which refuses absolute individuated self-representation.¹⁷⁴ The selfness of a thing is only capable of being represented as itself in the manner that the structuring entity allows. Fanon explains this in colonial terms. A colonial structure only allows a colonized person to represent themselves as human so long as they conform to the idea of human that was placed upon them by the colonizers.¹⁷⁵ As such, an entity wishing to self-represent must abide by the structure that determines possible representations. Therefore, a structure determines what anything is as itself: structures structure, as worlds world, thoughts thought, and selves self.¹⁷⁶ A human living in a structure is only human so long as they are conforming to what has been revealed as human. Or, a chair is only a chair so long it is being revealed as a chair within the

¹⁷² Heidegger, "Question Concerning Technology," 8-9.

¹⁷³ Heidegger, "The Thing," 180.

¹⁷⁴ Frantz Fanon, "The Negro and Recognition," 186.

¹⁷⁵ Fanon, "The Negro and Recognition," 186.

¹⁷⁶ This is to continue and cement the idea of using some nouns as verbs. Which is not done by accident. I am continuing a tradition that dates back to before Heidegger.

bounds of what is deemed a chair within the structure. Thus, a structure is that which *projects-upon* things. Since all things and structures exist within the world, and the world *projects-upon* all things that exist within it—the world appears to be the prime structure. It is that which structures first.

As the first structure—existentially speaking—the world exists first. It must be existentially prior to all that which is in-the-world. Meaning the world is not its corporeal self as a material object hurtling through space: planet earth. Rather, the world is an ontic-ontological phenomenon that structures all that which is in-the-world.¹⁷⁷ This means that the idea of world as planet, or rather, that the world exists on the planet is only possible with the world existing as it already does. The objectification of the planet as the space wherein one places the world follows the conception of the world itself.¹⁷⁸ The world is the place wherein one finds all things as things and where one finds things capable of experiencing *nearness*. Things experience *nearness* first by being-in-the-world. They must have been there in order to know that they are *near* something.¹⁷⁹ Therefore, something must be-in-the-world in order to experience the world itself. The world cannot be a world unless it too is capable of exerting *nearness*. As discussed earlier, that which *projects-upon* must express *nearness* otherwise there would be no capacity for structuring. Which means that structuring comes from *nearness*. That is to say, being *near* is a preliminary necessity of being structured.

Structured things are either all things in-the-world, or they are only some things that are in the world.¹⁸⁰ Either all things exert and experience *nearness* or only specific things experience

¹⁷⁷ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 79.

¹⁷⁸ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 79.

¹⁷⁹ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 75; Heidegger, “The Thing,” 164-165. *Nearness* in this sense is never bereft of worldliness.

¹⁸⁰ “In the world” is bereft of hyphen here for obvious reasons. If only some things are structured by the world, then there is no fusion of all things and thus, the world would not be a unitary phenomenon.

nearness. To distinguish between things that experience *nearness*, Heidegger put-forth the idea of things that have “presence-in-the-world” and things that are “being-there-in-the-world.”¹⁸¹ This is to distinguish between things that are being-there (Dasein)—i.e. entities: soul, spirit, mind, self, or person—or things that are merely present in the world, i.e. things.¹⁸² An entity is that which is capable of realizing its *nearness* to things and other entities. Things on the other hand are only capable of having presence in the world, i.e. things only exert *nearness*—therefore, presence is a sort of proximity experienced by something that is not the thing in question.

Entities are *near* to things and entities exert *nearness* onto things and other entities.¹⁸³ Since things also exert *nearness*, they can structure and it is this capacity to structure that they *project-upon* the entities within-the-world. However, this proximity is not the literal physicalness of the thing in question, rather it is the phenomenological existence of the thing that *projects-upon*.¹⁸⁴ It is in this sense how the planet is not the world, rather, the world is gathered into the planet. This is not to say that all things gather the entirety of the world; this is also not to say that the planet gathers the entirety of the world. Rather, things only gather what is necessary to be the thing itself—its ontic being. For the world as a whole transcends beyond things. In this sense, things are only capable of gathering as much of the world as is necessary to present the thing in-itself.¹⁸⁵ Things are not more than what they are capable of being to entities that are there-in-the-world. A thing is only its presence-in-the-world. Presence in this sense is that which is *brought-out* from revealing as a result of one’s *nearness*.¹⁸⁶ As such, the presence of a thing is only that which can be experienced by an entity that is capable of revealing through experience; which is

¹⁸¹ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 79.

¹⁸² Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 73-75.

¹⁸³ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 84-85; Heidegger, “The Thing,” 164.

¹⁸⁴ Heidegger, “The Thing,” 170.

¹⁸⁵ Heidegger, “The Thing,” 169.

¹⁸⁶ Heidegger, “The Thing,” 179-180; Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 89. In this sense presence is never put-forth.

why presence was momentarily equated to physical proximity. The thing as being present to that which is *near* then gathers itself from the world as having been revealed by the entity.

When thinking of this in a purely political sense, we would see that politics is a thing that exerts *nearness*; however, it like all things in the world gathers the world into it, thereby further revealing it. Following this, we would understand the government as a political world entity that gathers the horizons of the people living within it to be more of the world. This results in either a more dominant Fanonian structure (colonized state; authoritarian) or a more liberal/free state (some democracies; a theoretic anarchic state), whilst always being total or attempting to be total. Each would result in different world views, thereby different worlds, thus the political world would appear to be a world in-itself.

This is only possible because of the world existing as it exists—an anthropocentric space of being: a pedantic reality. The world does not exist without things having *been-there-in-it*: the world was worlded (revealed).¹⁸⁷ This is to say; the world is revealed by gathering things and entities into itself—it is prescribed by entities revealing it. The world joins (fuses) with that which it *projects-upon* after the world is revealed and subsequently gathered. The world as the world is therefore a product of this fusion. It is revealed as the world from having been fused with that which is in it.¹⁸⁸ The world transcends its own horizon while that which is in-the-world *transcends* its own horizons so that they may come together in order to have fusion. Through this transcendence it is capable of *inter*-relating with things within it thereby allowing entities to *intra*-relate with other entities towards a shared existence within the world (phenomenological existence). That is, no entity or thing is simply itself bereft of fusion. In this sense, the world might be argued as being existentially posterior to that which is within it. The world cannot

¹⁸⁷ Heidegger, “The Thing,” 179-180.

¹⁸⁸ Heidegger, “The Thing,” 180; Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 317.

become unless there are entities that already exist within it. These entities that are already there would project themselves upon each other in order to fuse their knowledges, and from that the world would then be created (not revealed, nor worlded). However, one may argue that this is not the case. Since it is from the world having already *been-there*, that the world is worlded from revealing the world as having *been-there*. That is, revealing requires something to be there in order for it to be revealed. The world does not come from the minds of people. As discussed earlier, technologies reveal, and language is no exception. In this sense, the world exists beyond language, however, like things and entities, the world gathers that which has been revealed as itself into itself; which then causes it to be worlded as the world that was revealed, not as the world as such.¹⁸⁹ The worlded world would be the thing resulting from the fusion of all possible horizons of things and entities within it. That is to say; although the world exists prior to the entity, it as a *world* in-itself can only exist posterior to the entity. The world as worlded is always a prescription of some believed *a priori* ontic-object. For this consider the Aristotelean community. It is both social and political, in that a social is always political and a political is always social.¹⁹⁰ The political cannot be as it is without some social direction shaping it, while the social is always being influenced by the political it *puts-forward*. No one thing exists as it does without some other making it as it is.

If the world exists prior to and the world is revealed by that which is within it, either all things are always already within it from the beginning or they come to be found within it. Thinking back to the notion of having been *jettisoned* into an age (or era)—that age would be a representation of the world at the time it was revealed to the entity seeking the world—allows us

¹⁸⁹ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 86-89. Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, xxiii-xxiv.

¹⁹⁰ Aristotle, *Politics*, 27-28.

to consider finding oneself in the world. Heidegger calls this phenomenon *thrownness*.¹⁹¹ Being *thrown* is the initial process of something as being-in-the-world (*being-there*, Dasein). The first instance of *being-there* is a having been *thrown*. One is not simply always already in the state that they have found themselves. Rather, they come into the state that they have found themselves, whether they chose to be in that state or not.¹⁹² This links back to the idea of the world as a structure. One does not choose the structure they find themselves in, rather the structure is given to them. For this we can think back to Gregor. He did not choose to wake up as an insect, he woke up as an insect; he was thrown into this new era of his life. It is once one becomes aware of the structure that they have been *thrown* into, that they come to reveal the world structure in which they have found themselves. As a result, the world must *appear* to always be first in order for the world has to have *been-there*. This must be if one is to find themselves in the world. That is, the world one finds themselves within is the world as prescribed up to that point. The world can be pushed to be more than the instance of having been *thrown* if the world horizon is pushed, i.e. understanding is expanded, ultimately either expanding knowledge of the thing or changing the understanding of the thing—the world is never being, it is becoming.

Before moving on, let us consider an interesting fictional example of finding oneself in a state that was unchosen and not understood until one comes to reveal the reality of the world they found themselves in, subsequently worlding the world in which they had discovered. In an episode of *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, Captain Jean-Luc Picard of the USS Enterprise and his crew find themselves *jettisoned* across the universe to its very edge. This was a result of a warp engine experiment gone wrong. After spending some time in this area of space Picard

¹⁹¹ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 174.

¹⁹² Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 175.

finally discovers an interesting phenomenon of that part of space. He announces to the crew: “it seems that in this place, the world of the physical universe and the world of ideas is somehow... intermixed. What we think, also becomes a reality.”¹⁹³ This quote is interesting for a number of reasons. It illustrates quite well the idea of worlding as revealing the world through representation (language; digital; technology). The world is worlded from ideas mixing into (or being inscribed into) the physical world. The world as physical gathers from the world of language into a world of things which then presses upon the world of the physical in order to create a world of phenomena. It takes in that which is revealing it. From there it is brought-forth, or gathered into the human frame of mind.¹⁹⁴ This gathering, or this joining of ideas and world is the process of worlding. It is a process of mind fusing with the world. It is a process of two horizons coming together. The horizon of thought moves across the horizon of the world in order to then world the world as it is to the mind or minds involved in worlding the world through revealing.¹⁹⁵ Thus, the world is not without revealing, for the world is as much mind as it is not mind. This is to say that the world exists both beyond and within the mind—it cannot *be* known without minds; however it can *be* without minds.¹⁹⁶

The idea of minds rather than mind is a necessary component of worlding the world as the world in-itself. The world, as eluded to earlier, is not itself as itself without all, or at the very

¹⁹³ Rob Bowman, dir, “Where No One Has Gone Before,” from *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, S1:E5, (Los Angeles, CA: Paramount Domestic Television, 1987, Netflix), 26:41-26:54. This will quote will also be of interest later when discussing the digital-nondigital fusion of horizons.

¹⁹⁴ Heidegger, “The Thing,” 72.

¹⁹⁵ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 370.

¹⁹⁶ Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, 70. Here Rorty begins a thought experiment wherein an alien race with a fundamentally different frame of mind (to which he declares them as *mindless*). They understand their world in a completely different fashion than that of the humans. Upon first impressions the people could say that the aliens have no minds, however, they have differing minds that are incommensurable with that of the humans. What is interesting here is that while the humans and the Antipodeans never come to truly understand each other, their worlds are changed. They bring in part of the world of the other. As a side, the antipodeans refuse the very notion of mind as it is not a really physical thing that can be understood through positive science. For them there is only the brain.

least, the world requires many horizons fusing together in order to world the world in-itself. Entities are *being-there* with others that are *being-there*. No entity (or person) exists without others: other minds; other horizons.¹⁹⁷ The world comes to be from being revealed, and therefore must be revealed as a thing of knowledge: an epistemic phenomenon representing the world itself. Therefore, the world is best known from fusing the horizons of knowledge, which is why this chapter has been focusing on a hermeneutic exploration of the world by questing through communication, rather than engaging in objective scientific measurements of the world as an object—for the world is not an object of science if it is an object of language.

Had we been exploring the world as an object of science, we would have been exploring the planet as a culmination of scientific parts as objects, i.e. atoms, particles, rocks, mountains, water, air, oxygen, nitrogen, etcetera.¹⁹⁸ None of this would be the world as such, as these are particulars of a physical thing that exists in the world as a language prescription that gathers these other language prescriptions of science objects as they then gather the world into themselves. These gatherings of particulars of the planet would still need to be presented as language in order to communicate understanding.¹⁹⁹ From there, one would need to navigate that understanding in order to reveal the world. Hermeneutics would still be necessary regardless of the approach. Which is why this particular quest is being done by navigating what Walter Benjamin called the “extreme of experience.”²⁰⁰ Writing and communication as a moment in time is the extremity of what is known at that time the pen draws ink. It is the complete horizon of understanding that could be expressed at the time of its *putting-forth*.²⁰¹ When one seeks the

¹⁹⁷ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 219; Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 305.

¹⁹⁸ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, xx.

¹⁹⁹ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 4-5.

²⁰⁰ Walter Benjamin, “The Storyteller: Reflections on the Works of Nikolai Leskov,” 364-365.

²⁰¹ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 350, 387.

world, one is fusing the horizons of the world, subsequently worlding the world; i.e. they are revealing the world by fusing the extremes of experience (human knowledge horizons). This is to say and to harken back to the Krokors: the ‘guides’ to this quest (or any questioning) are already out there.²⁰² Which is why the world can be revealed in this manner.

Thus far our current understanding of revealing *laid-bare* in this chapter, reveals the world as a *Bildung* thing: a cultivation of itself.²⁰³ This is to say that the world like any entity or thing within it, is a cultivation of that which is within it, that which is brought-forth from itself, and that which is *near* it. The world is a dialectic of itself—a *Bildung* self; self-prime.²⁰⁴ It is revealed as the world when it is revealed. However, in being revealed as having been brought-forth, it is the product of minds revealing it and that which is being perceived in order to reveal it, which results with itself. It is also a product of itself over time. That is, when it is worlded in one instance and then worlded later, it is not without its prior worlding. It is still that which was worlded. The world as being worlded is then always world-prime.²⁰⁵ The world is not bereft of time. It exists within time. Further, it is not without space.²⁰⁶ The world provides the capacity for an understanding of space and time, while also providing space and time to that which is within it, and it is dependent upon space and time to be itself as a *Bildung* entity. The world is entity-prime just as it is structure-prime. The digital world would then have to be a *Bildung* entity and structure if it is to be a world.

²⁰² The idea of ‘guide’ here is taken from the Krokors and Gadamer. That for the Krokors, we need not invent understanding to discover meaning in the world, rather we need to look at what is already known. We should look to the extremes of human understanding. For Gadamer, any idea of original thought comes from fusing horizons. Therefore, thoughts of thoughts thought original thoughts. Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 317; Krokors, “Introduction,” 8.

²⁰³ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 9.

²⁰⁴ Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 64.

²⁰⁵ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 19; Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 83-86. $A = \text{world}$, $A + (-A) = A^1$, itself up against the negation of itself is itself as more itself: itself prime. The world over time should be revealed more as itself, that is more understanding of it with more understanding of it “should” reveal more of it.

²⁰⁶ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 427-428.

The digital world, and the world discussed thus far would not be worlds in their respective areas. Rather, they would merely be representations of the worlds they mean to portray. The world or nondigital world, is the traditional world that people understand—the physical; the world of proximity. The digital world would exist in kind. However, for Sherry Turkle, the digital world is a “medium on which to project” ourselves and it is a space that offers us “the opportunity to build new kinds of communities.”²⁰⁷ Therefore, the digital world appears to be different than the world because it is a space where active doing of selfness comes first. One is not *thrown* into the digital world; one *throws* themselves. Rather than passive becoming of self and then active realization of worldness from being a self in the world, it would appear that the digital world is constructed (rather than revealed) as a thing from entities being on it. The digital world is a place where we “invent ourselves,” where our perception of a “unitary self [becomes a] multiple self,” where a “*virtual personae*” comes to life.²⁰⁸ The digital world is not a place of *throwness*, rather it is a place of *self-projection*. The digital at first glance is not a structuring entity, since we appear to structure it.

Approaching the digital world in a nonreductive sense, would show the digital world to be vast. It includes within itself many spaces to self-represent: social media, video games, email, online chat rooms, movies, dating apps, simulations, etcetera. With many spaces to consider, I’ll begin with Marsha H. Levy-Warren’s interviews with her therapy patients that play online games. Levy-Warren first discussed being online with a young woman (Tamara). While in Levy-Warren’s office, Tamara is shy and only answers questions in one, two, or three words. However, online, Tamara is highly expressive, chatty, funny, and charming; she is a completely

²⁰⁷ Sherry Turkle, *Life on the Screen*, 9. While Turkle doesn’t directly mention the digital world, she does discuss the idea of the cyberspace and digital reality, which can be construed as the digital world.

²⁰⁸ Turkle, *Life on the Screen*, 10.

different self. Online Tamara becomes her “other self” (she furcates into a multiplicity).²⁰⁹ She uses the cyber reality of online games as an opportunity to project herself (she *throws* herself) as she wishes to be projected. There is nothing that stops Tamara—and Levy-Warren’s other patients—from being who and what they want to be.²¹⁰

Another instance of using the digital world as a space where one can be that which they choose to be, can be found when looking at the life of disabled people who use video games to be free, to find joy, and openness that the nondigital world denies them.²¹¹ Consider the life of Mats. A young disabled man who rarely left his parents basement because of how difficult it was, or because he did not like the life he had to live. The life that the structure of the nondigital world forced upon him. However, in the digital world of the World of Warcraft on the planet Azeroth, Mats could travel anywhere, be anyone, and he could project what he thought of himself. Furthermore, according to Mats’ father, no one needed to know of his real-life disability unless he personally made the effort to express it.²¹² The digital world truly appears as a place where one can be free to self-project as they wish. It appears as a place wherein one *projects-upon* the world, without the world pressing back.

The cyberplace, the data space, or the digital world is a place where “computational ideas alter traditional ways of thinking about surface and depth, unity and multiplicity, and the authority of stable meanings.”²¹³ The digital world is a place where anything is possible. One does not appear to be bound to their original *thrownness*. It would appear that there is no structuring structure that exists online.

²⁰⁹ Marsha H. Levy-Warren, “Computer Games,” in *The Inner History of Devices*, 77-85, Sherry Turkle ed., (Bogart, GA: Graphic Composition, INC., 2008), 76.

²¹⁰ Levy-Warren, “Computer Games,” 75-85.

²¹¹ Vicky Schaubert, “My disabled son’s amazing gaming life in the World of Warcraft,” *Disability, BBC*, February 7, 2019, <https://www.bbc.com/news/disability-47064773>.

²¹² Vicky Schaubert, “My disabled son’s amazing gaming life in the World of Warcraft.”

²¹³ Kimberlyn Leary, “Cyberplaces,” 87.

Kimberlyn Leary discovered, while interviewing her patient Matthew, that people do not have to conform to their structured (nor self-structured) nondigital world identity while projecting themselves into the digital world. Matthew came to realize that he could ‘self-represent’ his identity online. He could be whatever he wanted, while being himself offline. He could actively furcate his identity. So Matthew chose to be a digital woman, while staying a nondigital man. He did this in hopes of seducing other women looking for women in hopes of deriving “something ‘real’ from imaginary contact.”²¹⁴ He was tired of getting rejected in both the real world and digital world as a man. So he tried his hand at being a woman with other women, while continuing to consider himself to be a man. He had some success, and gained some happiness from it. Though, it never seemed to be complete. He did not figure out the “trick.”²¹⁵ There was something about the digital that was baring Matthew from gaining exactly what he desired. There seemed to be some structure he needed to overcome. The realities of the nondigital seem to have been protruding into the digital, or there is a digital world structure to concern oneself with.

Pushing forward, I turn to Michà Cárdenas and her transition from a man to a woman. Instead of living as a woman for a year (365 days) to see if that was what she truly wanted. She decided to live in ‘Second Life’ for 365 hours.²¹⁶ This allowed Cárdenas to live as she desires. To truly represent herself in such a way that the nondigital structure does not allow. She decided that the best way to live as not herself when she was not yet her true self (still a “man”), was to live as a dragon; to be truly not herself, yet still herself in a virtual reality.²¹⁷ She chose to truly

²¹⁴ Kimberlyn Leary, “Cyberplaces,” 88.

²¹⁵ Kimberlyn Leary, “Cyberplaces,” 88.

²¹⁶ Michà Cárdenas, “Becoming Dragon,” 373. ‘Second Life’ is a digital online program that allows people to create avatars and interact with other people. It can be done on a computer just using a monitor, or it can be done using a Virtual Reality (VR) headset. Cárdenas chose the wear a VR headset in order to truly immerse herself in the experience.

²¹⁷ Cárdenas, “Becoming Dragon,” 375.

challenge the notion of being what is expected. However, Cárdenas did come up against some structural issues. She was not free to simply be. At one point while living in ‘Second Life’ she was kicked out of a virtual bar for being a dragon and doing things that the bouncer decided a dragon should not be doing, i.e. interacting with other patrons and pole dancing.²¹⁸ It would appear that the digital world has limitations and is bound to the socio-political prejudices of those that engage within it. Cárdenas was being refused self-representation, she could not perform her true self. There was an insufficient capacity to self-*project-upon* the digital world. The digital world pressed back. The bouncer has a conception of how the digital world ought to be ordered, and denied Cárdenas her individuated selfness. This is similar to the problem of selfness found in a nondigital structured existence. That is, the digital world that one worlds is not the world worlded by all other entities.

This is all to explain that the digital world is not as free as one might perceive it to be. It is not without structure. The digital world, like the nondigital world *projects-upon* that which is *thrown* in it regardless of the digital world being a place where one *throws* themselves. Once *thrown* they are subject to the structure of the digital. As in the world, those that are in-the-digital-world, experience a *nearness* that is similar to that of the nondigital world. The digital world is a place wherein entities or things are “constituted in interaction with machine connections; it is made and transformed by language... and understanding follows from navigation.”²¹⁹ Being online means that one is merely a part of the whole that is the digital-nondigital world. They are not separate from the structure that they are within. The digital world, like the nondigital world described earlier is still a system of communication, representations

²¹⁸ Cárdenas, “Becoming Dragon,” 380.

²¹⁹ Sherry Turkle, *Life on the Screen*, 15.

(*trans*), relations (*inter*), and performances (*intra*).²²⁰ The digital world is coded, and it becomes from having been *thrown* (coded) so that people may then *throw* themselves into it. In this sense, the digital world, like the nondigital world is existentially prior to anything being within it.²²¹ While this may be obvious, it is still important. If one were to be truly free in the digital world, that is, without limitations; then the digital world would have to be existentially posterior. Limitlessness requires world posteriority. The world must come to be after that which it is *thrown* into it because if the world is created by the *self-thrower*, then the world would be subject to the *thrower* and nothing else. If something has the ability to fully create and continue to create without the hinderance of any structure beyond itself, only then would there be no limitations. The digital world exists *out-there* before anyone can be in it. In this sense it is a prime structure similar to the nondigital world. The last aspect of Turkle's quote is the most striking—the idea of 'navigating' it. It is striking because I have been navigating the world as the world being worlded by fusing horizons. The digital world as a navigable world means that it can be hermeneutically quested. There are structures that exist within it that can be quested through.

As a technological entity, the digital is capable of *projecting-upon*, i.e. it is capable of both gathering and being gathered, meaning it has the basic necessities of worldliness: a technological world nonetheless. A world suited for a technological existence, for cyborgs perhaps. For Donna Haraway, the cyborg is a human that is bound up within their technology, that is to say, it *inter-relates* with technology. The cyborg is one that has allowed technology to pervade into their very being.²²² The cyborg is a person that is reliant on and needs technology to

²²⁰ Wendy Hui Kyong Chun, "Crisis, Crisis, Crisis; or, the Temporality of Networks," 143.

²²¹ While this may be obvious, it is still worth saying. Since, if one were to be truly free in digital world, that is, without limitations, the digital world would not be existentially prior. It would be posterior to that which is it *thrown* into it because that which is *thrown* into it would truly create it once being in it. The digital world exists-there-before one can be in it. In this sense it is a structure.

²²² Donna Haraway, *The Donna Haraway Reader*, 9.

get through their day—to be one’s self. The cyborg is a lot like the technopole: fused to their technology. In this sense, someone who is always online is engaging in cyborg or technopole like tendencies. The clinical patients and Mats, who I discussed earlier in the chapter were portraying these tendencies. Focusing on Mats: he was more himself online than in real life.²²³ He was incapable of being who he was without the World of Warcraft. He was a cyborg. His real self-projection was an online technological projection. He required the digital world to *project-upon* him in order for him to be himself. The digital World of Warcraft denied him his nondigital self-projection (disabled) just as the nondigital world denied him his digital self-projection (a warrior). At no point was Mats his absolute self.

Before moving forward I think it is safe to assume that there is an obvious mistake in the preliminary assumption that we have been following to this point. As has been shown, the world appears to be both *a priori* and *a posteriori* to entities’ epistemic realization or existence. It is not *a priori*, nor can it be one or the other (if we are to truly fuse horizons). Which should be seemingly impossible, however this is the fundamental nature of the world.

When considering William James, we understand that “I know also of the thing which yesterday was but is no more, and I only remember. Both can determine my present conduct, both are parts of my reality in which I keep account.”²²⁴ Here, through discussing perceptual knowledge, James criticizes the idea that the phenomenon is an actual thing that exists in reality merely because one may give an account of its existence. Though this is not to refuse the accounted things capacity to *bear-upon* other things. Rather, it is to acknowledge that though I experienced *nearness* before, I continue to experience the *nearness* of the thing here and now even though it is existing then and there. However, he pushes further by examining the

²²³ Vicky Schaubert, “My disabled son’s amazing gaming life in the World of Warcraft.”

²²⁴ James, “Does ‘Consciousness’ Exist,” 17.

“apprehension” of the thing.²²⁵ That is, when one experiences reality, they apprehend it. This is to use the dual meaning of an apprehension. When one gains knowledge of the thing, they gather it into themselves. Thereby apprehending it in a sense of gaining but also in a sense of stopping. One can only know they have apprehended the thing in hindsight. That is, the world only appears to be *a priori* because it is always being apprehended. Which points us towards it’s *a posteriori* nature. Since it exists in hindsight, it exists after the fact, yet, it is always being looked at as having already been there. That is, it has to have been there in some capacity but cannot be made into a thing until it is created as a thing—its creation alters it away from what it was. As the world becomes a thing it gathers some of that which brought it into being; thereby altering it into that which it was not, whilst still being that which it was, thus the world is never *a priori*.

Pushing forward let us consider consciousness. Our consciousness as an apprehended thing paints the world in such a way that allows consciousness to exist and that the world must be a particular way because consciousness is an existing thing.²²⁶ Which is to say that by being aware of some existence causes one to paint the world in a phenomenological sense of understanding. Existence occurs within the mind and the mind attempts to understand the world by apprehending it in an understandable fashion. This then makes the world appear as though it is existentially first, though this is only the case when one attempts to understand it as a thing in-itself. That is, the world is not actually a thing. It is merely a way of understanding. What this does, ontologically, is “confine” the possibilities of existence within the limited structure created by the thinking entity.²²⁷ Which is to explain that the world is in reality *a posteriori*. Which reveals our previous dismissal of limitlessness. The world is actually limitless. What we as

²²⁵ James, “Does ‘Consciousness’ Exist,” 17.

²²⁶ James, “Does ‘Consciousness’ Exist,” 12.

²²⁷ James, “Does ‘Consciousness’ Exist,” 15

entities do is structure the world into representations, relations, and/or performances. We give into our Faustian desire to reduce, thereby forcing ourselves into a lifelong Zenonian paradox of worlding. Every instance of apprehension causes a stop, an extreme, a horizon, an unlimited existence of furcations. These horizons have interesting and potentially devastating effects on our very being (which will be elaborated on in the following chapters). One cannot take the appearance of worlds lightly. They may not exist, though they have effects that are unavoidable. This seemingly tangential argument is, albeit circular, necessary. I must go back on the refusal of the limitless world we arrived at earlier. For if the world had limits, there would be a limit of worlds, though our Faustian-Zenonian existence does not allow for a limit of world creation. Furthermore, the capacity to make the world as we wish is always there and is always being done. The digital is programmed and controlled (at great difficulties and expense), while the world is (re)structured by those that structure it, or (re)structured through history. To continue with Fanon, this would be the western government structuring existence within its colonial history—its colonial world. Or, as Michá Cardinas discovered, the digital is not actually separated from the nondigital and I will now give an account showing that the nondigital is not separate from the digital. These created worlds are not distinct in-themselves. They all exist within the whole: the world *in and of itself*.

This idea of the whole: the world *in and of itself* is what I have been questing towards. The idea that the “online and off-line are not discrete realms,” that rather they exist as one.²²⁸ Therefore, the digital-nondigital world exists in a manner where the digital has actual effects on the nondigital and vice versa. While one may imagine using the digital realm as a means of escape from political pressures, as we have seen in recent years, this is not always the case. The

²²⁸ Taylor, *The People's Platform*, 8.

reality of the nondigital permeates its way into and then beyond the digital, while the digital does this in kind. To understand this we need only think of ideas like the *digital tribe*. A term that explains how a digital community is capable of exerting itself beyond nondigital boundaries to exact state wide or global actions, while socio-cultural norms of the nondigital affect the very make-up of the *digital tribe*.²²⁹

To further expand the conversation around these two worlds coming together as a whole of existence, I'll consider augmented reality (AR). When using this technology one seeks to literally bring the nondigital into the digital and the digital into the nondigital in a relatively tangible observable manner. Apps such as Pokémon Go, Aruler, Augmented Car Finder, and many others all seek to bridge the imaginary digital and nondigital divide.²³⁰

Pokémon Go, is a game that brings the Pokémon experience into the real world. It allows users to catch “wild” monsters (Pokémon) in real-life while walking the streets or anywhere in the world, so long as they have access to the internet. No longer do they have to play a game and live vicariously through some other character in the game. With AR they have literally become the character of their game. Aruler and Augmented Car Finder bring the real into the digital. Aruler allows the user to point the camera of a phone at a room or object in the nondigital in order to measure its dimensions—it acts as ‘a ruler.’²³¹ In a meaningful way, it allows one to truly reveal the nondigital world within the digital world, bridging the divide can supposedly exists. Augmented Car Finder, allows one to point the camera on their phone in front of them in order to locate their car. It points them in the direction of their car and allows them to walk

²²⁹Taras, *Digital Mosaic*, 10-13.

²³⁰ Mark Jansen, “The best augmented-reality apps for Android and iOS,” *Mobile, Digital Trends*, August 28, 2018. <https://www.digitaltrends.com/mobile/best-augmented-reality-apps/2/>.

²³¹ Mark Jansen, “The best augmented-reality apps for Android and iOS.”

towards it.²³² What this means is that the developers have creatively projected the nondigital into the digital world, while also projecting the digital into the nondigital world. All of these apps, “augment” reality by creatively and seamlessly overcoming the divide that appears to exist between the two worlds. This “augmentation” is really just the realization of the whole of existence ultimately bringing into question the mere idea of the possibility of a divide. Which stands to reason that the *digital tribe* is an inaccurate description of the reality of the groups in question. They are merely *world tribes*, global communities who happen to use digital tools to communicate. While it may be useful to categorize them as a “digital thing” in an effort to study them, to define them as such would be misleading. One must not give into the pedantic reality as reality in-itself.

Next, consider human physiology and the effects the digital has on it. Consider what “the internet is doing to our brains.”²³³ If the idea that the digital-nondigital is a fusion of worlds beyond speech (a whole) and not separate worlds that exist apart from one another is to stand true, then they must affect us in a similar and tangible manner beyond merely having an effect on communal spaces. Both worlds must be capable of affecting our physiology, i.e. the digital-nondigital cannot merely be a fusion in speech. The nondigital world’s ability to affect our physiology does not need a defence since one could just pour hot coffee on themselves and feel the effects immediately, or go outside and feel the change in temperature, humidity, or lighting. However, with the digital it is not immediately apparent.

²³² Mark Jansen, “The best augmented-reality apps for Android and iOS.”

²³³ Taylor, *The People’s Platform*, 6. For Astra Taylor, the neurological side effects are there and unavoidable. However, for her, focusing on these side effects blinds us from the actual going-ons of the internet, such as corporations taking advantage of the situation. While this might be true, my argument is that we must understand the effects in order to understand the reality of our contemporary fused worlds. Doing so will allow us to understand why the digital can be used in the manner that Astra Taylor sees.

By considering video games, I may be able to explain that they have a positive effect on our nondigital abilities. Case studies by the CBC and BBC showed correlations between playing video games and one's motor skills. Playing video games affected an athlete's reaction speed, or in the case of surgeons, it helped them train to make more precise movements.²³⁴ Furthermore, these case studies point to evidence that playing certain video games—one's that are colourful and require precise movements (Super Mario 64 as an example)—showed a correlation with a positive growth in the areas of the brain most commonly associated with navigation and fine motor control.²³⁵ This is to say that the digital does not merely exist out there independent of our nondigital existence. Further considering the affects the digital world has on our brains, I turn to a Guardian case study. They found that being online—in the digital world—correlated with information showing the brain has been restructuring some neural connections differently than if one was to spend less or no time online.²³⁶ That since the inception of digital media, our brains have begun to observably reorganize themselves. Which caused the author of the article (Kevin Lincoln) to consider the question: “Where is the boundary between your phone and your mind?”²³⁷ Such a question assumes the existence of a boundary between the two worlds, i.e. a digital/nondigital existence, rather than a digital-nondigital existence, or more accurately: existence. For Kevin Lincoln and others like Astra Taylor, the existence of a digital world “[erodes] the middle space” that exists in-between the digital/nondigital.²³⁸ The existence of a divide or boundary comes from an anthropocentric misunderstanding of being in the world.

²³⁴ BBC. “Horizon: How video games can change your brain,” Technology, *BBC*, 16 September, 2015. <https://www.bbc.com/news/technology-34255492>; Ignacio Estefanell, “Could video games be the key to athletic success?” Technology, *CBC*, May 26, 2017. <https://www.cbc.ca/sports/brain-gaming-industry-athletic-success-1.4114268>.

²³⁵ BBC. “Horizon: How video games can change your brain.”; Ignacio Estefanell, “Could video games be the key to athletic success?”

²³⁶ Kevin Lincoln, “Where is the boundary between your phone and your mind?”

²³⁷ Kevin Lincoln, “Where is the boundary between your phone and your mind?”

²³⁸ Taylor, *The People's Platform*, 7.

When one is in-the-world, they are not being there independent of that which is in-the-world. This would include the digital world as much as it includes the nondigital world. To be in-the-world is to engage in *Bildung*: to gather in the world or worlds that one comes up against as the world gathers that which comes up against it.²³⁹ Which is why they do not exist independent of anything as themselves in some reductive manner. Rather, they exist as bound to and with all things in-the-world. It is for this reason that the digital has an effect on the nondigital in meaningful ways. It affects physiology and nondigital understandings, while the nondigital affects the digital in kind. The world is still the prime structure as a structuring thing. However, it is not without the digital. Which is to say, to understand the reality of the world, an understanding of both the nondigital world and the digital world is necessary. One cannot ignore one in hopes of developing knowledge of it independent of the other, because both are a part of the whole—neither exists in a vacuum.

In closing this part of the quest, the digital-nondigital fusion exists as the whole within which worldliness is prescribed to exist is an inescapable reality of existence. This was, again, shown without much newness. The words for this reality were already out there. They just had to be found. They needed to be quested for. This is all to say that the world was always already a fusion of worldly horizons. It was always a digital-nondigital fusion of horizons from the moment the digital world was *thrown* and the digital age became possible. With this understanding *laid-bare*, we may now consider the *self*.

²³⁹ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 9-10; Heidegger, “The Thing,” 178.

The Self

Exploring the Authenticity of Self-Existence²⁴⁰

The original title of this chapter was “The Phenomenology of Self,” a clear tribute to Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit*. That title, however, found itself within a specific ont-episteme-method-logical framework: a particular pedantic-world. Thus, I considered the idea of replacing the term phenomenology with another, exegesis perhaps. However, that would deliver the same issue. It would construct a particular world-frame that alienates all other understandings.²⁴¹ Furthermore, either term potentially alienates the truth by placing any epistemic reality within error. Therefore, it is up to us to make every attempt to overcome these issues of worlding whilst keeping in mind that we are always worlding when we follow a linguistic-communicated-hermeneutic inquiry—a world as was shown previously is brought forth through communicating understanding. This is done through open questions, i.e. one ought to avoid binding frameworks if at all possible.

Our quest, however, does keep us within an epistemic mindset wherein we are concerned with the aesthetic-linguistic-ideal²⁴² of the thing in question: the self. Due to the questions thus far, our specific approach necessitates that our quest begins with the assumption that the self is a shared communicable experience: a phenomenon. Therefore, its *ont* (being) is fundamentally tied to language, it is a language thing. The *episteme* (knowledge or understanding) is linguistically derived. Thus, its method of discovery (or praxis) will, once again, be hermeneutic.²⁴³ That is, all

²⁴⁰ Following a quasi-Hegelian mode of questioning, I can bring forth the truth of selfness and therefore digital selfness.

²⁴¹ Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals and Ecce Homo*, 16-17; Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 1.

²⁴² Friedrich Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals and Ecce Homo*, 99.

²⁴³ What’s interesting here, and will be pointed to in the next paragraph, is that the choice of hermeneutics both precedes and follows the discovery of it being a language thing. Hermeneutics was chosen prior to any engagement, and hermeneutics is shown to be the best possible praxis time and time again. Not because it is inherently so, rather

exegetical-phenomenological discoveries are hermeneutic by their very nature. Which means that we are moving through, at the very least, both pedantic-worlds I tried to avoid. This should not be seen as problematic as the goal of our quest is to fuse horizons. By engaging in multiple world-frames we are fusing horizons, thus allowing us to quell the issue of knowledge-alienation (this is not to say that all understandings will be encompassed in this work, as some understanding(s) will be alienated without our knowing or effort).

Having laid-bare the baseline assumption, we must unpack and discover what this phenomenon is, and whether it is truly shareable, i.e. it is an actual experience beyond language. Furthermore, the imposition of an exegetical approach follows the methodological framework presented earlier, an exegesis: “does not, of course, help us avoid asking [the] other question[s],”²⁴⁴ which is necessary if we are to truly unpack the self. We must ask or approach the self with a multiplicity of questions in order to avoid the issue of creating error into more error and a formulation of knowledge premised upon untested assumptions—we ought to avoid, when possible, creating a world of err. Now then, let us continue our quest as we strive to move towards bringing forth the authenticity of known things.

Our question concerning the self begins as a question regarding its legitimacy as a thing beyond language; is the thing in question a “real,” or is it—as William James declared consciousness to be—a mere thing of thought?²⁴⁵ Which is in line with Nietzsche and the notion that human thought has the capacity to *will* phenomenological ideas as an inauthentic-authentic reality, i.e. thought creates the perception of an authentic reality instead of an actual authentic

because the approach dictates it as such. The thing being a thing of language is shown to be true through hermeneutic inquiry, yet hermeneutic inquiry is supposedly chosen after we attempt to discover its truths hermeneutically. That is, the world as being hermeneutically traversable is predetermined prior to it actually being possible. In essence, the world was worlded as such from the beginning and this quest is, seemingly, forever stuck within it.

²⁴⁴ Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals and Ecce Homo*, 99.

²⁴⁵ William James, “Does ‘Consciousness’ Exist?” 9.

reality—a pedantic reality of language.²⁴⁶ Following these trains of thought we are moving along with the issues presented earlier. The issue of the world as being both boundless—bereft of limit or horizon—yet our phenomenological understanding fundamentally furcates the world into distinct worlds of existence. That is, understanding the world as a *Bildung* is dialectic: from the world (a) we find *not-the-world* (-a) which then gives us world-prime (aⁱ).²⁴⁷ This dialectic formulation of knowledge production/progression presents the problem of the *a priori-a posterior* world discussed in the previous chapter. A conception of something as it is to the perceiver only appears as it does now not because it has always been as it is now, rather because it became as it is *not* from trying to perceive it. For the self, and the idea this thesis is premised upon is to stand true (i.e. the self is a replacement for the soul) the self only became because from the soul (a) the not-soul (-a, or self) was brought out.²⁴⁸ Which makes it appear as though it was always already there—it pre-empted itself.²⁴⁹ Just as when one attempts to perceive and interpret the world (aⁱ), it appears as though it has always already been there; however, it is only there in hindsight—it does not pre-empt itself, it only appears do so through interpretation. As a result, our interpretation forces us to create that which is *not*, into that which is.²⁵⁰ The world is

²⁴⁶ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals and Ecce Homo*, 16; James, “Does ‘Consciousness’ Exist?” 16-17. These two thinkers are fundamentally discussing similar (if not the same) thing. While they may not be using the same terms, they are moving towards similar conclusions. What’s interesting and will become of greater importance as the chapter moves forward, is the use of terminology. For James we are discussing the precept and how it confines the interpretation of the percept, in a similar fashion to how the will of knowledge for Nietzsche confines the authenticity of reality and knowledge.

²⁴⁷ Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 83-86. $|A + (-A) = A^i|$

²⁴⁸ Although, arguably far more complex if we follow the line of Rorty: soul (a), mind (-a), body (-aⁱ), self (-aⁱⁱ) and or consciousness of self. It is up to us to either continue with the self as the culmination of thought, to move onto another conception (-aⁱⁱⁱ), or (for Rorty) to do away with reductive philosophic redundancies altogether, what he calls abnormal speech; Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, 318.

²⁴⁹ Eric Voegelin, *The New Science of Politics: An Introduction*, (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 27.

²⁵⁰ Voegelin, *The New Science of Politics*, 27-29. Here Voegelin is discussing the idea that the representation appears to pre-empt the self only because we being with the assumption that the self is there, however, it is only there because we assumed it prior to it being-there which then makes it appear as though it was always there; Nietzsche, *The Genealogy of Morals and Ecce Homo*, 24-25. Here Nietzsche is beginning the discussion regarding “Good and Evil,” “Good and Bad,” wherein he takes a philological approach to show how they are the same thing. The only difference is that one is theological (good and evil) and the other is secular (good and bad). The structures

not better understood, rather it is merely understood given what is either known now, or how one happens to be looking at it when one is looking at it. Which is all to say that nothing becomes through time (progress) more itself. Thus, the assumption stated in the methodology chapter still stands: one cannot simply look through time as though answers to truth are progressive, nor can one simply begin from the occasion of inquiry.

The issue pertaining to inquiry discovered within the chapter on methodology forced an exploration of differing and seemingly incommensurable ways of knowing. Representation of *trans* things seemed antithetical to the relational *inter* existence of objective knowledge. Finally, the *intra* existence of body actors seemed to exist in a realm unto itself completely bereft of all other ways of existing and understanding. Yet, when we pushed these notions, we discovered that they are not distinct notions. Rather, they are merely different presentations of a specific semantic understanding. They all attempt to create new understandings under a specific semantic world view—a pedantic reality. The *body* of a thing is an attempt at materializing language. Which fundamentally dematerializes the body by representing it in language. For Judith Butler, the discursive thingification of objects or body is inherent in language performances.²⁵¹ Thus, we concluded that all things are all of these apparitions simultaneously. A thing is *trans-inter-intra* (a whole) in reality. Doing so allowed us to see how the world apprehends the *trans* worlds that were worlded by the *inter*-relations of objectification as a result of the inscribed performances of a (de)materialized body *intra*-relating as a discursive action. That is, through hermeneutics we

of the world create different understandings which then create different world views, which are then upheld through a miss-authentication. That is, we *will* the idea of secularism over theology as a way to explain the authenticity of the present, not the other way around. The reality of the now does not *will* itself upon people, people *will* it upon themselves and others through and from the *will to power*. If you're familiar, you could also think of this in terms of Aristotle's physics: the movement of not-being to being from the understanding of the underlying thing.

²⁵¹ Butler, "Bodies that Matter," 49. As a result of choric semiotics, or communication. The act of talking about objects in language thingifies them, i.e. we perform deobjectification. The body as matter ceases to be when one performs its discursive inscription out into the world of forms—it is dematerialized.

revealed the complex relationships that exist in the world—the relationships that make up the whole of existence.

The most interesting aspect of this quest is that the revelations we discovered were always pointing us towards *self*: the world's self, the thing itself, the thing in-itself, and the thing in and of itself, as some examples where we made calls to selfness—the self appears to have some relationship to wholeness. We have until now, been assuming both the existence of and the authenticity of some ideal self-thing. While this chapter may undermine all that was done prior to it, one cannot merely reject all that was done before and start over. If we were to have begun at the self, we would have had to assume everything found in the preceding chapters. I needed to bring-out the self. It needed to be the thing that everything depends upon. However, regardless of the self's authenticity or reality, the preceding knowledge was not created in a vacuum. The current chapter's quest is meant to pinpoint a foundation of knowledge creation through language. Then and only then can we move on to understanding self-existence in a digital age. Thus, this chapter will appear bereft of digital inquiry. However, this is done on purpose. A purpose directed at coming to selfness as such.

In Heidegger's discussion of being where he explained that we always assume the existence of and knowledge of the very thing we are always already discussing without even being aware of it.²⁵² For Heidegger, assumptions concerning baseline truths leads to confusion

²⁵² Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 1. We can also look to Heidegger and admire his ability to understand that the quest for the supreme baseline assumption is fruitless. Time dictates that we cannot truly know the being of the thing. The anthropocentrization of things makes it so that they are only visible from outside a particular point of view. The methodological frame of view is dictated by the ontological reality and epistemic modes. However these things are a product of the methodological frame of view. As a result we are always in a state of forming views from views that are formed from views that were necessary to form the first view. That is, our views are a product of both our previous and forthcoming views. There is no foundational view, no occasion prime. The occasion is always the point of inquiry; Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 486-488. While we further consider this idea we can turn to Plato and understand that this notion is not new. In the Myth of Er (Plato, *The Republic of Plato*, 302, line 619c-e), the souls choose lives to live. The issue most come across is that they do not know why they lived good lives, they do not know why they avoided suffering in the underworld and were awarded pleasure in heaven. So some chose Tyranny

regarding reality, or the world in-itself—the world *in and of itself* is always mistaken for the world *in-itself*. No knowledge of actual truth can be found bereft of an examination regarding the very thing that is necessary to understand both knowledge and life itself. Ultimately, our quest is bereft of justice if we do not question the very thing necessary for my claims up to this point. Nor would it have been just to start at the self as though what was presented is either false, or assumed to either be or have been.

Following this we truly realize our self-imposed Faustian disease of epistemic accuracy. We find ourselves incapable of discovering a real representation of our ontic existence. There is not, nor was there ever any discernable human entity at the bottom of the magnifying glass.²⁵³ Philosophers failed in their desire to define the human-self as a thing. Psychology failed in its desire to understand the human-self as a distinct thing, and governments continue to fail in their need to codify and group human-selves within groups of cultural-selves, regional-selves, etcetera.²⁵⁴ From this we can safely assume that the imposed furcation of the self-thing is not some phenomenon that exists in a vacuum. It's a thing that was always already happening, i.e. the furcation derived from defining the essence, nature, or foundation of a thing is not new, nor inherently false. It must be said that I am not looking to cure existence of the self, nor to define the true self in order to create a self-existence bereft of consequence—I do not think either is possible. Rather, I am looking to understand the self. Taking into account our seemingly inescapable relationship with the self in order to shed light on how understanding is both

thinking they could live an even better life and gain reward once again. However, some of these souls lived a life of virtue not because of their own will, but because they were habituated to do so as a result of their regime. Their baseline assumptions of how to live well, or how to be oneself were based upon an error of self-knowledge. Everything they based their ideas of knowledge upon were misleading them towards a life of tyranny and the greats of sufferings in both life and the afterlife. Plato was pointing to the idea that we assume to know the truth or what the truth is based upon and then makes claims about our lives or life in general from these assumptions without actually knowing what these assumptions are. We build error into error.

²⁵³ Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, 186-188; Donna Haraway, *The Haraway Reader*, 51.

²⁵⁴ Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 3rd ed., (Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame University Press, 2007), 68.

developed and given, in order to shed some light on our contemporary digital-condition, and our inability to either be whole or realize the whole.

In our journey to realize the whole one might wish to stray from reduction and complexities that would otherwise destroy the whole. However, in order to truly obtain a minimal understanding of the whole, we must endeavour to problematize it; bring out its complexities, i.e. it must be *laid-bare*. To this end, we will first consider Donna Haraway's four-square semiotics—the “Promise of Monsters.”²⁵⁵ For Haraway it is not as simple to say *this* and *not-this*, rather we must realize that the world (or nature) is far more complex. When we think of the world, we have the problem of that which is outside the world, which she calls (b, or outer space) and if the *world* (a) has a *not-world* (-a), then *outer space* (b) has a *not-outer space* (-b) as distinct from the world. Furthermore these things and *not*-things all engage in a complex relationship where they bear-upon each other. Thus, for Haraway, all things do not merely relate in a simple back and forth or simple moving forward, they also criss-cross.²⁵⁶ With this complex representation of wholeness, we can come to understand the semiotic issue inherent in representation, relation, and performance of self in order to truly understand the self with an eye towards the whole.

First let us consider how outer space is not simply the *not-world* and how the world is not simply the *not-outer space*. For simplicity and with an eye towards understanding the world in -itself, consider *selfness* instead of *worldness*. There is the *self* and the *not-self*, which is always related or opposed to in some regard with the *other* and the *not-other*.²⁵⁷ The *not-self* is how the

²⁵⁵ Haraway, *The Haraway Reader*, 77.

²⁵⁶ Haraway, *The Haraway Reader*, 77. Following previous thoughts put forward: $|a + -a + a^i|$ and $|b + -b = b^j|$ then $|a^i + b^j = c^k|$. However, since all things in this instance are relating, the idea of equals no longer exists for the equation. Rather one might think of it as $|a \sim b| \sim |-a \sim -b| \sim |a \sim -a| \sim |b \sim -b| \equiv |a \neq b| \sim |-a \neq -b| \dots$ and so on. In this case there is no attempt to make something equal something else, instead one is merely attempting to represent the relationships of performed existence.

²⁵⁷ Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 59.

self relates to itself and not the *other*. For the *other* has its own *self* that relates to itself and is therefore opposed to the occasioning-self that has come to realize the *other*—that which is outside the *self*.²⁵⁸ The *other* cannot be the *not-self*, since it is not occasioning its own existence from outside itself. The *other* is always being occasioned from the *self* as a differentiated other—separate from: it is not the self in question. Thus the *self*, or *world*, is the realm, space, place, area, or occasion where one finds themselves. This approach allows us to come to the realization that in the world we find selves, i.e. a multiplicity of others. Therefore, there is the *self* which finds itself in the world surrounded by *others*. It then stands to reason that we could, if we so desired, add to our equation of semiotic relations. The *self* is related to *not-itself*, while the *other* is related to the *not-other*, which all find themselves in the *world*, which is related to *not-world*. The *not-thing* (self; other; world) only comes about when one realizes the primary self of the thing in question and attempts to understand that thing. However, it was shown earlier that the *world* is not furcated into disjoint domains of being. Therefore, it might stand to reason that the *not-world* is a false representation of existence since it is worlded from the world itself as not being the world, yet it is still the world. Either the existence of the *not* is nonexistent, or its representation is distinct from worlding, selving, thinging, and thoughting.²⁵⁹ Therefore, our objective must now turn to understanding the *not* that results from occasioning.

The occasion when one realizes that which is *not-this* and that which is *outside-this* brings with it a sense of immediacy.²⁶⁰ In the moment of some revelation one becomes aware of *that* which is not *that*, while at the same time they realize all that which is outside of *that* is

²⁵⁸ Haraway, *The Haraway Reader*, 77-78; Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 68-69.

²⁵⁹ Here I am calling upon a notion put forward earlier where I borrowed from Heidegger, Percy Walker, and Aristotle the ideas that the world worlds (worlding), selves self (selving), things thing (thinging), and thoughts thought (thoughting).

²⁶⁰ Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 59.

differentiable from *that*.²⁶¹ It is from this differentiation that we are capable of realizing *outsidedness*—in terms of the world we mean outer space and in terms of the self we mean the other. From the realization of difference we are capable of perceiving that which can be alienated from immediate inquiry. That is, the process of occasioning causes all that which is not-this to become alien; it is not necessary. From this we better understand why the world as the world, or the self as the self becomes both possible and difficult. At the occasion of revelation we perceive the world as it is here and now; alienating all that was then and there from the world as it is interpreted in the occasion. Thus, a world is worlded. Or in the case of the self, the self is alienated from itself. If we consider our friend Gregor we can more easily understand this.

Gregor (from Kafka's *Metamorphosis* that we discussed earlier) is bound to his existence within the room (world). His self as it is, is bound to the room. Outside his room is the rest of the world, however it is outside his room-world, thus it is outer space. It is here in outer space where the others perceive him as the self that was here and now—a human—which is Gregor's then and there. He is experiencing both his *world* and *not-world* simultaneously. That is, Gregor here and now (in the room) is an insect with all the memories of Gregor. The human-bodied Gregor that existed previously (then) in a world (there) no longer exists for Gregor. He is restricted human selfness and thus human worldness. Yet, the here and now for the people outside of Gregor's room can only understand Gregor as a human-bodied entity since that is all they know. They are being denied immediacy. Which causes them to invent their own immediacy: an immediacy predicated upon a bygone occasion.

Here we can see Haraway's "Promise of Monsters" playing out quite exquisitely. Constructing the world through this lens of this and not-this with outer-this and not-outer-this not

²⁶¹ Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 69.

only alienates self from others, but self from self. Gregor's world is being worlded from selves that do not exist in his world. They are extraterrestrial to his immediate state of being-in-the-world. They are not-being-there (*not-Dasein*). They are being-out-there. The out-there is just as capable of being-there as those that are actually being-there. That is, "real-time" of the being-over-there occurs regardless of being-there.²⁶² One does not need to be in an area to know what is going on. One simply knows. The difference with online real-time is that one appears to be actually gaining information that is of the instance they are perceiving as it is occurring over there. However, that information is curated for an audience.²⁶³ Just as Gregor's world is curated for the family. They do not need any of the information required to actually understand what is going on. They only need the word of the office clerk: 'he is lazy.' That why he is in bed. They do eventually find out that he is an insect. However, they do not believe he is actually the insect and he is banished to the room as some ne'er-do-well troglodyte that has no business being in the house. Ideally, they would get rid of the insect, but they cannot; it will not leave.

An important aspect here is that the room ceases being the world and the rest of the world ceases being outer space. It all becomes one. In other words, just as before, there is only the whole. The world only appears to be these things, i.e. its opposite and it's not-self because we allow it to be as such. We allow the monsters of our semiotic creations to master our world perception.²⁶⁴ It is not because this is the way the world truly it is, it is because of the way we relate to it; the way we represent it forces our performance of it to be as such. The world comes from our performances of being-there. The self that is being-there is only there so long as it is being performed as a representation of the self. The self-performance is only the actual self so

²⁶² Wendy Hui Kyong Chun, "Crisis, Crisis, Crisis; or, the Temporality of Networks," 143.

²⁶³ Taras, *Digital Mosaic*, 141; Turkle, *Life on the Screen*, 256.

²⁶⁴ Haraway, *The Haraway Reader*, 112.

long as the occasion does not cease being. In this case, self as the self ceases being after the occasion has passed. For Sherry Turkle and Walker Percy, the self is this way because we furcate our understanding of world existence, which then translates into self-understanding. Or, more specifically, there is no total self-thing, rather there are instances of selfness.²⁶⁵ Just as the world is not merely a thing that can be “pointed to,” allowing me or someone to say: “that which I am pointing at is the thing. Look you can see where the thing’s limit ends, and the other begins.” This idea of things and world has translated into understanding of all things including the self. That one may say: “I am this, this is my self.” However, there is reason to believe that, like the world, there is nothing that can be pointed to that defines the self as some totalized singular entity with definable boundaries.

To understand why the self might not be a thing that exists out-there-in-the-world, Percy asks that we think of ourselves in this moment: what you are doing? What are you thinking about? Then when you are done that you should consider: what am I usually when I am not here in this moment? Am I different?²⁶⁶ Regardless of one’s ability to define themselves as that which there self truly is, Percy argues that our self is different in every instance of being one’s self. For instance, consider being with family; then consider being with friends; then consider being with co-workers; and then consider being online. Are you performing the same way in every instance? If the answer is yes, Percy would tell you not to read his book (as a joke: the book is meant to help you find yourself, yet he made the argument that you cannot find yourself in the book).²⁶⁷ To make his point, he broke his self-help book into questions instead of chapters. Each question represents a potential self: the *envious self*, the *bored self*, the *impoverished self*, and the

²⁶⁵ Percy, *Lost in the Cosmos*, 10-11; Turkle, *Life on the Screen*, 178.

²⁶⁶ Percy, *Lost in the Cosmos*, 10-11.

²⁶⁷ Percy, *Lost in the Cosmos*, 13.

depressed self, to name a few.²⁶⁸ His point here is that the self can be viewed in many possible manners. That is, when we try and pinpoint exactly what kind of self one might be, one will only find disappointment.²⁶⁹ At one point you may be sad and thus your understanding of self might be clouded by that sadness. At another instance you may be happy and your understanding of self is, again, clouded by that moment of happiness—we could do this with any emotion, any social instance, and we could even add in issues of memory, i.e. time as the supreme cloud of understanding the self.

What's interesting about this is what we are doing with the self, that is, there is an otherization, or alienation of self to self. The *not-self* (-a) ceases being *not* and becomes other (b). Just as when we alienated the world from the world in our exploration of Gregor's world. We alienate the self from itself. Human Gregor is alienated from insect Gregor. The question then becomes, is there even a self? Is it a legitimate thing? Or, the best way to consider it, what makes it possible for the self to be a thing?

The idea of things was presented in the previous chapter when we discussed the world. That things are phenomenological dematerialized imaginations. If the self is a thing, then it is willed through the power of human imagination similar to how the world as a limited thing is worlded into being from semantic semiotics. The thing is a signifier resulting from semantic reality that attempts to create a total whole whilst rejecting the whole. Any one thing is an attempt to pinpoint exactly what something is. For instance, the self, is the attempt to define exactly what something is—whether it is a couch; a person; a world—a distinct thing in-itself. The issue that one runs up against is what has been alluded to time and time again throughout

²⁶⁸ Walker Percy lists twenty possible selves in the first part of the book as chapters, and then explains the possibility of more throughout the rest of the book.

²⁶⁹ When I take his test I am the “Divorcée from West-Chester.”

this quest. A thing only exists as the thing in question at the occasion when it is being perceived. The self is only that self while it is being perceived by the thing perceiving it. Whether it is the self attempting to know itself, or some other self striving to know some other-other self. Which happens to be a problem discussed by Gadamer, Turkle, Heidegger, Haraway, Percy, Barad, William James, and Eric Voegelin (to name a few)—i.e. the problem of scientific inquiry. A thing does not exist beyond the occasion of inquiry. Which for the self means that it only exists when one wills-it-into-existence. Following this line of thinking we come to the Percy's notion of the *Amnesic Self*.²⁷⁰

The *Amnesic Self* follows the idea that the self ceases being after it is no longer being willed into existence. Thus, a self has no need for it and forgets about that self.²⁷¹ When something ceases being it is no longer a thing and therefore is removed from existence entirely. Yet, the self still desires the forgotten self to exist since it is always trying to pinpoint something that is either that self, or itself. That is, the self has a nostalgia for itself. In other words, once a self becomes, it desires its existence. However, it also destroys its own existence and the existence of other selves. Since the self can be so easily done away with, the self cannot legitimately exist. However, that does not stop it from being a legitimate thing. A thing being a product of language means it exists in language, not that it does not exist at all. Which is to say: language allows us to create reality, just like the computer creates reality. In other words, we *will* a conception of being into existence. In this case, we *will* the self into being.

The idea of *willing-into-existence (or being; or reality)* follows two lines of thinking. First, the ideas presented earlier concerning worlding and its counterparts—when one worlds the world they are merely *willing* it into being. However, *willing* tends to bring with it a notion of

²⁷⁰ Percy, *Lost in the Cosmos*, 17.

²⁷¹ Percy, *Lost in the Cosmos*, 17-18.

action, i.e. one does it deliberately. This is because ‘to will’ is a verb and thus inherently describes an action. While acting is unarguably deliberate, revelation is not. As in the introduction chapter, action is revelation. The revelation as caused by an action is not the inherent purpose of action. Meaning that when one acts, they are either trying to reveal, or they are doing something else (like using a technology) and they happen to reveal. As a result, worlding can be deliberate or a by-product of some other action. The performance described in the second chapter is another way to think of it. When we perform through language, we reveal reality. Performance of body makes the body the reality. However, these performances alienate other performed realities.

To understand the issue of *willing* reality as action let us turn to Plato and an important anecdote: the Allegory of the Cave. Starting with the troglodytes who have found themselves chained up in a cave staring at shadows on the wall, we are led to understand how people misconstrue reality for *what appears to be* with *what is*. The cave dwellers can only see shadows on the wall and are told these are real things: trees, hills, animals, etcetera.²⁷² For them, this is the real world.²⁷³ Through there being-there-in-the-cave they mistake the inauthentic for the authentic; they legitimize the shadow world. Through their actions of learning they build a pedantic reality of their own. Their worlding (or *willing*) is not deliberate, it is a by-product of where they have found themselves learning. In other words their action is learning and through learning they world. Which for Plato and Nietzsche is no different than learning in any other environment. When one learns, they world the world.²⁷⁴ What appears to be reality can be made to become reality. When Plato, through Socrates, pushes this story and one of the troglodytes is

²⁷² While Plato does not list the shadows, we could imagine these might be some of the things presented in the shadows.

²⁷³ Plato, *The Republic of Plato*, 194.

²⁷⁴ Plato, *The Republic of Plato*, 193-194; Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals and Ecce Homo*, 100-101.

freed from the cave, it find itself in the “actual” real world. There is the sun, there are actual trees, actual hills, and actual animals. The representation of things ceases being its reality. Real material objects become its reality, allowing it the capability of giving an account of real objects.

When the freed cave dweller returns to tell the others, they do not believe it. This other world is both antithetical and destructive to theirs.²⁷⁵ To conceive of the antithetical world is to destroy the first world. Through Plato we can understand that one action may lead to another revelation. To learn something about something is to have a specific frame of reference. However, regardless of how one refers to their world as world, the world of the troglodytes and the world of the non-cave-dwellers exist within the same world—they exist within the whole. It is not the world in-itself, rather it is existence as a whole. For if we look at the world in and of itself, one finds the world as it is to the troglodytes and the world as it is to those outside the cave (yet they know of the same things, they just perceive them differently). Both worlds are taught simultaneously to different peoples. Each world is viewed as different in-themselves, yet, and this is key, they exist simultaneously. That is, every self-representation does not exist bereft of *other* or previous representations. The former cave dweller understands the real world from its previous knowledge of shadows. It gains nothing new other than a different image of what something is.

Continuing with the idea of *willing into reality*, the second line of thinking is found within works from Nietzsche and William James. It should be noted that these thinkers were not working towards the same goals, yet their philosophic beginnings are very commensurable and useful when put in an exegetical-dialogue. For both thinkers we live(d/?) in a world wherein we believe inauthentic things are authentic in nature and as a result we build understandings based

²⁷⁵ Plato, *The Republic of Plato*, 196.

upon false notions.²⁷⁶ For Nietzsche the issue begins with the notion that the, or an *ideal* can or does exist.²⁷⁷ For him, philosophers have always been obsessed with finding some ideal representation of things in nature, i.e. the ideal human or ideal representation of human, the self, the ideal form, and the ideal government, state or society, to name a few contemporary/historical obsessions. What this ultimately does is cause people to desire either the impossible or to think the impossible is actually real. What Nietzsche does appear to have thought was agreeable with these other thinkers, is that these ideals are possible, however, they must be *willed* into existence and then *willed* onto others in order to be real. That is, the *willing* of the ideal is akin to the Platonic Myth of Metals. Therefore, for Nietzsche, the ideal does not exist, it is merely *willed* into existence. For both Nietzsche and James, it is the power of our consciousness that is capable of *willing* and thus leading us astray.

Regardless of the consciousness agreement, James does appear to differ from Nietzsche in the realization that the consciousness is the beginning of the issue. For him, the mere acceptance of things like consciousness is what propels us towards and deeper into inauthentic realities: “consciousness as such nothing can happen, for, timeless itself, it is only a witness to happenings in time, in which it plays no part. It is, in a word, but the logical correlative of ‘content’ in an experience.”²⁷⁸ For him, things such as consciousness (or selfness for our purposes), come about as the result of a rationalization of experience(s). This neither denies its existence as a thing, nor accepts its existence as real. The thing in-itself only exists because we have some need to explain reality in a communicable and shareable manner—we are bound to a desire of phenomenalizing reality. As creatures bound to language we thingify things through our

²⁷⁶ Nietzsche, *Of the Genealogy of Morals and Ecce Homo*, 110-111; James, William James, “Does ‘Consciousness’ Exist?” 8.

²⁷⁷ Nietzsche, *Of the Genealogy of Morals and Ecce Homo*, 112.

²⁷⁸ James, “Does ‘Consciousness’ Exist?” 10.

semantic semiotics. The self is not free of this reality. It, like all things, is bound to a pedantic reality of understanding.

These pedantic realities do not have to be destroyed. They are not inherently bad, but they ought to be understood. If we understand both semantics and semiotics properly, we do not simply replace one thing with another, we understand something differently which then changes not only our relationship with semiotics but our pedantic reality. The signification of something is raised beyond its place of importance. What is meant by that? Semiotics as we know it deals with signification and symbols. Earlier we discussed the body as both significant and symbolically representative of the human entity and now we are discussing the self as not merely the human entity, but the essence of thingness—the representation of all communicated existence. An idea put forward from Bloom, Nietzsche and James (in hopes of not overstating the issue), is that the self was a replacement for the soul. For them, it ceased being about a detachable soul matter and became about a conscious representation of body and mind (the self).²⁷⁹ When we discussed the body instead of the self we moved towards creating the body not as a material thing, but as a dematerial thing performed through language. While the body bereft of language is undeniably material; once we bring into the language realm, we dematerialize it. What is one way in reality can be made another through the “consciousnesses will of power.”²⁸⁰ It is only once we realize the power of our *will* has created an inauthentic-pedantic-reality that we can understand the consequences of that reality. That is, the problem of methodology is always a problem of representation (*trans*), relation (*inter*) and performance (*intra*).

The representation of reality as the world creates a specific understanding of all things within it, including the self. How these representations relate to the real existing thing is

²⁷⁹ Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind*, 173-179; James, “Does ‘Consciousness’ Exist?” 10.

²⁸⁰ Nietzsche, *Of the Genealogy of Morals and Ecce Homo*, 110-111.

tarnished by an understanding of the thing in question. Then, when one performs as themselves within a specific understanding of self as a thing, they otherize themselves from themselves. It is this otherization of self that we will be discussing in the next chapter. Self-otherization/alienation not in language and communication, rather, and most importantly, in the digital. What happens when the *Amnesic Self* comes face to face with its digital-self and how does this way of existing affect the existence of the self? That is, what is the digital-condition of the self?

The Digital-Condition

The Socio-Political Consequences of an Ersatz Existence in a Digital Age

*This moment in the mirror is Nina [Arsenault] the mannequin cyborg gazing at Nina the Buddhist monk gazing at Nina the mannequin cyborg, an anamorphic gaze in which each comes together as one in the image of the mannequin-cyborg-monk.*²⁸¹

As we consider this idea of a self acting upon its not-self while the other-self(selves) act upon both the not-other-self and the aforementioned selves, while they in turn act upon the other(s), we begin to see the politics of self laying itself bare: a politics of acting upon—a politics of *action*. That is, the self creates a condition dictated by acting as ‘I’ or acting as ‘not,’ or acting ‘in’ or ‘out.’ Or, to quote Hannah Arendt, “this plurality is specifically *the* condition—not only the *conditio sine qua non*, but the *conditio per quam*—of all political life.”²⁸² When one finds themselves existing within a condition of being this and not-this, while also being here (in) and not-here (not-in or out), one comes face to face with the reality that being is always a plurality of one and many—a singularity whilst being a multiplicity. Which, as pointed out earlier, is an idea regarding the simultaneous nature of being both political and within a political community put forward by Aristotle.²⁸³ When one acts as oneself amongst others, they are

²⁸¹ Shannon Bell, “‘Philosophizing with a Scalpel’: *From Nietzsche to Nina Arsenault*,” in *The Digital Dionysus: Nietzsche and the Network-Centric Condition*, 236-249, Dan Mellamphy and Nandita Biswas Mellamphy eds., (eBook: Punctum Books, 2016), 242. Here Shannon Bell is discussing the issue of being a single self when one’s self desires perfection. Nina, an escort and model, needs to be perfectly beautiful and as a result continuously engages in plastic surgery in order to stay young and to become “more beautiful.” Yet in becoming more beautiful she becomes more herself. Her old body is never her body after it has been left. What’s emphasized is that Nina is no different than anyone else. Everyone ages and as they age their body becomes different than one it was. Even the body is in a state of becoming. The purpose of this is to illustrate the issue of time. Regardless of what one uses to illustrate the thing in question, the thing is always changing, time dictates it as such. Which coincides quite nicely with Heidegger’s *Being and Time*. Regardless of the fact that something that is being is fundamentally stable, time forces it to exist as becoming. That is, even being is constantly engaging in construction as worlding.

²⁸² Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 7.

²⁸³ Aristotle, *Politics*, 27-28.

always performing both themselves as they see themselves, themselves as others see them, themselves as their group (or faction) sees them, and themselves as the self the structure allows them to be. That is, as we discussed earlier, the self is always itself while never truly being itself. It exists within Fanon's colonial structuralism, whilst existing within Gregor's room and not room. It exists within Hegel's master-slave dialectic, while being within Haraway's world of monsters. However, and most importantly, in our contemporary world that has fused with a digital world, the self exists within the digital.

“When we step through the screen into virtual communities, we reconstruct our identities on the other side of the looking glass.”²⁸⁴ This quote from Turkle highlights the inescapability of being a fused-self-of-selves which accentuates Shannon Bell's discussion regarding Nina looking into the mirror: we cannot escape the conditioning effect of the virtual other. One's self is “real,” virtual, political, phenomenon, etcetera (the list goes on). In this light we see the fundamental consequence of being a self. That is, the self is truly never real. The call to self is always a call to an ersatz existence. It is always an impure copy of itself—like Gilgamesh's acceptance of an ersatz immortality in lieu of true immortality in order to save the soul of his friend Enkidu. What one must question is what is the consequences of living an ersatz existence? What is the consequence of having anthropocentric boundaries within a boundless world?

Before moving forward with our quest, let us return to the issue concerning the world. Earlier, I put forward that the world is fundamentally boundless as a fused reality. We came to this by exploring it both theoretically and qualitatively, and we found that the world is indeed fused as a single entity while appearing to exist as disjoint domains of being. Yet, as we pushed forward along our quest we continued to come up against furcated realities; whether it is in the

²⁸⁴ Turkle, *Life on the Screen*, 177.

form of this and not-this, digital and not-digital, world and not-world, or something of the like. Which brings us to an issue regarding the digital. If we apply the semiotics of monsters, we see that the digital is both a *not* and an *outer*. That is, the digital is both not-the-world, whilst being outside-the-world. The digital is both because it is part of the world, yet exists as a place where one throws oneself to perform a not-self as a potential other. Just as the world where this computer that I am using to write this quest is not the world as such, nor is the world shown within the world as such—it is a communicated world, a language world, it can only ever be Benjamin's extreme representation of the world at the time of writing—it is merely one semantic piece of the greater puzzle. We know this because we can very simply create a boundary between one world, the world of the mind and the world of the digital, the world as communicated and the world as it was experienced, or the world of the physical body and the world of the digital. Yet, when we explored the world, both ontologically and epistemically, we put the physical in the digital and we put the digital in the physical. We moved towards a realization that the digital does indeed affect the physiology of our physical reality: it affects the make-up of our brains and thus, our minds. We have truly fused and bound ourselves to it, we live as digital-cyborgs. Our condition is neither simply human nor simply body. Our condition is also digital. Thus, let us for the majority of this chapter weave thought and theory with “real” happenings of the world by throwing ourselves into the digital and seeing what it has to offer regarding our contemporary existence.

Since we have come full circle and must see our quest to its natural conclusion not by pushing further into the messy relationship of being self and not-self; rather, by looking out into the world for descriptions of being-digital. This chapter will be a concluding chapter by looking to journalism and academic works in order to discuss contemporary events involving individuals,

governments, and businesses in order to understand the politics of being digital. I will focus on the digital-self as incorporeal representation of the self in order to move towards understanding the digital as being a not-(outer)-self that has gathered some semblance of the prime self. Doing so will allow us to push towards understanding how individuals, governments, and businesses understand the digital-self as an authentic representation of self while never being a true authentic representation. That is, the self, whether digital or not, is never fully *trans-inter-intra*, it can only be a portion of the whole.

Let us begin with the idea that the self is a replacement for the soul and what that means for the self as digital. The soul, as we know, in many religions or metaphysical understandings exists beyond bodily life (it is incorporeal), and at times, is immortal. Whether we are considering the Platonic soul and its ability to recollect information from a previous life,²⁸⁵ the redeemable Christian soul that lives on in an incorporeal afterlife, or the Hindu soul that can reincarnate into a new body postmortem. This idea of self as thing that both replaces the soul and does not exist beyond language, forces any idea of existing beyond the life of the body appear impossible since a body is necessary for the first instance of communicating the existence of a thing. And thus, like in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, we have not merely killed god, but we have destroyed the soul and all that it brings: eternal life. If the self is amnesic and self-destructive, then there is no Platonic recollection, no incorporeal existence after life, and no reincarnation. However, we ought to keep in mind that the digital-self exists beyond the physical body.

The idea that the digital-self is incorporeal is quite obvious (barring the fact that the digital requires the material components of the internet and computers), it is an ersatz incorporeal, i.e. it is not the corporeal body of the human actor, it is an incomplete virtual representation of the

²⁸⁵ Plato, "Meno," in *The Dialogues of Plato: Volume 1*, 133-186, R. E. Allen trans., New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1984), 164.

human actor. One does not exist “materially” online, they present themselves digitally for all to see in digital form. It is lights and code, not skin and bone. The digital-self presents itself as a virtual representation of some nonvirtual thing. The question becomes, what are the possibilities surrounding an ersatz incorporeal self-representation both pre and postmortem?

We can begin answering this question through the seemingly obvious: the digital space is a place wherein one may tell their own story, i.e. the digital is a space for the personal storyteller to make one’s self in their own image: a space of self-curation, a place of self-presentation. In this sense one creates a divide between the self that is nondigital and the self that is digital. Which, if we recall is a question we began dealing with in previous chapters. The world merely appears to be divided between the digital and the nondigital. There is no divide between our minds and the digital. However, when we explored the self we discovered that boundaries can be created. The self can be a self in one instance and then a not-self in another. The self can go as far as being an ‘other.’ One living as a self that is other or *not*-other begins to build not only a self-structure, it begins to create a mythology of self.²⁸⁶ As one performs this specific self-representation in the digital, this self is given life. It, as the phenomenon of self, world, thing, etc., gains life by being experienceable. That is, the “self-prime,” and others, legitimize its existence as they legitimize all other inauthentic entities.

To make this point clearer, consider Lynn Hershman Leeson and her social-(digital)art experiment that blurred the boundaries between the cyber body and the real body. Leeson begins by accepting that the first instance of being digital requires some nondigital body to put it into being—action is necessary to digitize, there must be some nondigital actor: a human-actor.²⁸⁷

²⁸⁶ Mahesh Daas, “Circuits, Death, and Sacred Fiction: The City of Banaras,” in *Critical Digital Studies: A Reader, Second Edition*, 393-397, Arthur Kroker and Marilouise Kroker eds., (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 2013), 395.

²⁸⁷ Lynn Hershman Leeson, “Romancing the Anti-body: Lust and Longing in (Cyber)space,” 86.

However, these digital bodies may eventually take on a life of their own. She shows this by creating the ‘anti-body’ named Roberta Breitmore.²⁸⁸ Roberta took on a life of her own, even though she did not exist. She stayed in hotels, communicated with people, she made her own art, she even endured her own exorcism. Roberta, an anti-body—not having a body of her own—engaged in the world as though she was a bodied being, as though she had self-image to portray, yet there was never any Roberta Breitmore. She was an invented body that was given life in order to make the point that digital entities do not need the self that actioned them into being. One may make their, or a digital existence that which they desire. However, we are always brought back to the issue of being a dragon.

If we recall, Michà Cárdenas attempted to be not-herself and was denied full experiences due to structural issues. Roberta, like Michà Cárdenas, was not exempt from structural issues. She was being played by Leeson. Leeson began to have Roberta’s memories, her fears, her victimization, and her traumas, which forced Leeson to exorcise her from existence. Roberta moved beyond being a mere monster of language and became a monster of psychology. Roberta affected the real world, she affected her creator. Which brings us to a common theme of the digital world. It is clear that the digital is not merely a space to be oneself, it is a space to be more than oneself, to be either not-oneself or, to some, more than oneself—one’s perfect image of self.

When we consider how social media allows us to digitally represent ourselves, at minimum, in both word and image, we can appreciate that it is not merely here and now, because it is simultaneously then and there. There can be time between the first instance of thinking about acting online and the actual action online. Regardless of the time between first thinking to act

²⁸⁸ Lynn Hershman Leeson, “Romancing the Anti-body,” 89-92.

online and actually acting online, the act of being online is always after the occasion of action (which is not new, the realization of action is always after the action). The revelation of self-digital-representation is not in real-time. Once one finally wills the digital representation into being, they are willing a particular, and desired (potentially perfect) representation of their self. The digital will-to-being becomes a will-to-beauty.²⁸⁹ I say this to highlight something very important: the digital is not a representation of the self as it is, rather it is a representation of the self as it is desired to be represented. The digital-self relates to how one wills their own personal authenticity. Like the self, the digital-self portrays an inauthentic-authenticity. Like how Roberta was brought into being, the digital-self gains substance by being-in-the-world. When we push this we see how the self as digital other presses back upon the self.

Leeson, while acting as someone completely separate from herself and then allowing this cyber-other to live a life of its own was being affected by it. It attempted to change her and instead of allowing it she chose to eliminate it. However, what if someone is not doing it as an experiment. What if it is just someone's day to day? Consider the case of "Snapchat dysmorphia" and how in 2018 it was on the rise in the United Kingdom (UK).²⁹⁰ Plastic surgeons in the UK reported that more and more people were requesting and going through with plastic surgery to make themselves look more akin to their snapchat filtered self. Because people cannot filter their nondigital-body on command, they were finding it difficult to feel as though they were their true self. Something was stopping them from being whole. The *intra* essence of their being was being denied existence. Thus they needed to turn to other means. They needed to literally transform themselves into the digital-self performance. People were coming to a point where they could no

²⁸⁹ Shannon Bell, "Philosophizing with a Scalpel," 243.

²⁹⁰ Anna Davies, "People are getting surgery to look like their Snapchat selfies."

longer compete with their digital-self and the digital-self started pressing back and they acquiesced to its will-to-beauty (its will-to-power). Rather than live as a depressed-self unable to be their “perfect-self” they chose to materialize the digital. Which really goes to show that the self has the capacity to otherize itself and live up to itself as the self lives up some “real” other. The digital continues to show itself as affecting the nondigital: we blend with our digital representation and performances. We seek to relate to it and we perform it not only online, but in the so called real, the nondigital. We refuse to allow it to transcend us by only existing in the past. Everything coalesces into the fused world of reality.

As we continue exploring the reality of contemporary self-existence within a digital fusion of horizons, we can consider what happens to this digital self-representation after death. For this we will turn to Twitter and what it allows for deceased users. The key word to keep in mind here is that Twitter “allows” actions to occur. The company creates a structure in which people may act. It is what people choose to do with this structure that affects life. Just as Snapchat creates a structured existence wherein users may will-more-beauty which in turn causes a desire to become that specific performed self-representation. If the coding of the structure was not as it is, certain actions would be impossible, making certain desires impossible.²⁹¹ That is, some inauthentic existences would not be worlded if it was impossible to have worlded it prior to a second worlding. Thus, consider the capacity of the postmortem digital-self.

In November of 2019 Twitter put-out a press release alerting users that inactive accounts would be deleted to allow the usernames to return to circulation. What this did was set off a stream of backlash against the company as people did not want to “lose their loved ones” and

²⁹¹ Wendy Hui Kyong Chun, “Crisis, Crisis, Crisis; or, the Temporality of Networks,” 143.

some feared the idea that their online presence would cease to either exist or influence.²⁹² People could no longer treat the digital-self as a true replacement of the soul.²⁹³ People are beginning to see their digital-self as a postmortem story of self; a personal memorialization of their existence or the existence of a loved on. It is not merely seen as a representation of self, it is seen as the self *in and of itself*. It does not matter that the digital-self is only portions of the whole-self, what is important is the story that the digital-self tells. Like the pilgrims of Banaras, one uses the digital-self to tell a story of self. The self lives in the circuit of the digital as the soul lives in the metaphorical circuits of the eternal half of Banaras.²⁹⁴ The incorporeal digital-self has the capacity to live beyond the body just as the soul did before it. The difference with the soul and the digital-self, is that we can see it and interact with it. I can go online today and interact with my deceased friend Alysha. While she does not interact back, her story is there and her story continues as people (re)post memories or speculate where she would be now. The self lives on in story, as the self lived on in books, memories, memoirs, and pictures, prior to digital reality. Which is to point out two things. This self-memorialization is both new and not-new. It was always possible, it is merely larger in scale. Anyone and everyone with access to a computer can live beyond themselves, just as Jesus promised when he opened the gates of heaven to everyone if they confessed. The digital appears to have equalized the afterlife; so long as companies are willing to spend the resources necessary to keep the deceased online.

²⁹² Jasper Hamill, "Twitter drops plans to delete accounts belonging to dead people." World, Metro UK, November 28, 2019. <https://metro.co.uk/2019/11/28/twitter-drops-plans-delete-accounts-belonging-dead-people-11232093/>; Paolo Zialcita, "Following Backlash, Twitter Offers to 'Memorialize' Accounts of the Deceased." Technology, NPR, November 27, 2019. <https://www.npr.org/2019/11/27/783385093/following-backlash-twitter-offers-to-memorialize-accounts-of-the-deceased>.

²⁹³ I am not arguing that people are actively seeing the digital-self, or the self as a replacement for the soul; rather, I am merely that the idea is palpable given the circumstances.

²⁹⁴ Mahesh Daas, "Circuits, Death, and Sacred Fiction: The City of Banaras," 394.

As the digital-self allows the self to exist beyond itself we cannot simply look at it as an individual which other individuals interact with. The world is not merely individuals acting with individuals. The world is a place of seemingly unlimited action—anything can be done with the digital-self, should one have either the means, desire, or capacity. The most obvious of which is the act of acquiring digital data, i.e. digital surveillance.

Since the digital-self tells a story, one could be forgiven for thinking that it is in fact the authentic self. If one accepts this reality they would treat digital media posts as representative of the person—they may assume a harmony of word (or image) and deed between the posts and the person.²⁹⁵ One very recent (at the time of writing) event that exemplifies the issue concerning surveillance is how Trans Mountain used the data it both bought and found by mining through mounds of online data.²⁹⁶ Regardless of whether or not people were physically protesting the Trans Mountain pipeline twinning project, the mere act of sharing posts, liking, or commenting on posts that were against the project put people under the crown corporations radar. The company would deem these people persons of interests (POI). They were assigned their digital actions as real actions. What Trans Mountain failed to realize is that the digital space allows people the freedom to “virtue signal” or to put temporary thoughts that they have no intention of following through with.²⁹⁷ When online, one seeks to join likeminded others, as they do offline. They build factions, or as some like David Taras call it—digital tribes.²⁹⁸ When one is online they are not bound to the physical space of the here. One may protest from thousands kilometers away, while not even needing to completely agree with the sentiment of their own posts. Yet, in

²⁹⁵ The idea of harmony of word and deed is taken from Gadamer and his papers concerning Logos and Ergon.

²⁹⁶ Barrera, Jorge. “Trans Mountain monitoring anti-pipeline activists, labelling some as ‘persons of interest.’” *Indigenous*, CBC, November 25, 2019. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/indigenous/tmx-docs-reports-1.5370221>.

²⁹⁷ Taras, *Digital Mosaic*, 156-157.

²⁹⁸ Taras, *Digital Mosaic*, 116-117; Aristotle, *Politics*, 146-147.

this modern digital age of surveillance, what is said is immediately available and anyone can be marked as being a member of potentially harmful faction. Something businesses and governments make themselves aware of, should they feel insecure about theirs or some other's actions.

The interesting issue here is not the issue of surveillance in of itself (a topic with plenty of ink on the subject) but how the digital-self is seen and subsequently used. One does not merely have the data in front of them at all times. One must either actively pay people to search for it, or purchase the information from specialist companies like Cambridge Analytica.²⁹⁹ Or governments and businesses may simply spend the resources necessary to *mine* the data themselves.³⁰⁰ Which brings us to an important issue: the notion that one is “mining” for the data of the digital-self, i.e. the digital-self is a data-self. It takes time and effort and is phenomenalized into a process akin to resource gathering. This brings us back to an issue put forward in the introduction. The issue that people became a resource. It is not merely a theoretic representation of life in a particular era, it is the existence of the technological, capitalist, and digital-selves. Once the self is *thrown* into the digital it stands-in-reserve waiting to be interacted with. Waiting for likes, comments, shares, etcetera. The digital-self stands in-reserve like a resource is seen to be in reserve for some business or other entity to make some capital gain. Or, another way to think of it, since the data-self is being purchased for use by some other who intends to master it

²⁹⁹ Carole Cadwalladr and Emma Graham-Harrison. “Revealed: 50 million Facebook profiles harvested for Cambridge Analytica in major data breach.” *The Cambridge Analytica Files*, *The Guardian*, March 17, 2018. <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2018/mar/17/cambridge-analytica-facebook-influence-us-election>.

³⁰⁰ Jason Osler, “The government is mining your social media data, but with good reason.” *Canada*, *CBC*, September 7, 2019. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/the-government-is-mining-your-social-media-data-but-with-good-reason-1.4813339>; Elizabeth Thompson, “Canada Revenue Agency monitoring Facebook, Twitter posts of some Canadians.” *Politics*, *CBC*, January 19, 2017. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/taxes-cra-facebook-big-data-1.3941416>.

for its own gain. The digital-self—like Heidegger’s discussion of the technocrats and nature—has been mastered and bent to the will of some other.³⁰¹ Which goes to show that the world is dialectic. The master-slave dialectical existence of the before has found itself online: ‘a’ continues its existence within ‘a.’

The addition of the master-slave dialectic into our understanding of *being-digital* adds an essence of an involuntary state of existence. If we consider Shannon Bell and her paper on Nina, we understand the reality that one can choose to be a commodity (beauty commodity in Nina’s case) both physically and digitally. However, the mining of the data-self for personal gain is a potentially (or most-likely) unjust and unwelcomed use of the data-self. When one is highlighted as a POI for merely sharing a post that is against your project, or when someone engages in personal communication and you have access to that information and sell it for a profit, you are using the digital-self of another for your own personal, factional, or corporate gain. The digital-other does not see those profits, yet it is their self that is, like a commodity, being put out there for financial gain. By fully considering the digital-self as a master-slave dialectic we can unpack this notion through (re)exploring the question concerning a nondigital-self that competes with the digital-self for mastery over the self.

Returning to *Snapchat Dysmorphia*, we can see how the selves we create compete for domination over the self while they exist as separate entities. The nondigital-self acquiesces mastery over the self when it sees the digital projection as other. Just as in Hegel’s master-slave dialectic. Once a master accepts another master as equal to it, it gives up a portion of its control over its world which then demotes it to a slave of the other master.³⁰² In Hegel’s version, the master gains sense-certainty and realizes that everything around it is not an extension of itself.

³⁰¹ Heidegger, “The Question Concerning Technology,” 14.

³⁰² Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 60-69.

The other master does not, and enslaves the former master. Applying this understanding to a digital-nondigital-self worlding, we can see how one self (the nondigital) worlds a world wherein its digital performance is not an extension of itself, rather that it is only either a representation, a performance, or relatable to the originating self. This separation of understanding allows one of the selves to gain mastery over the other. In this case, the nondigital-self gives into the mastery of the digital-self. That is, when one allows its understanding of the world to furcate, it denies fusion, which then allows its digital-self to be another, rather than an extension of itself.

Once the digital-self becomes another, it allows the nondigital-self to cut off its ties to its digital furcations creating an illusion that its digital-representation is a *not* (and another). The creation of the self's *not*-self or *other*-self is what allows the self to become a *digital-standing-in-reserve*. When one truly furcates its selves into distinct things in-themselves the other selves cease being itself as a fused entity which is why the digital-self ceases being an extension and becomes a resource-representation of the self—the self does not see it as itself. The self becomes something else entirely—a commodity. This is what grants governments and businesses the opportunity to use the self as information rather than an extension of the person it is meant to be, a *trans-inter-intra*-self.

These issues of hyper-self-otherization is only visible when we endeavour to understand the world as it is, a world of inauthentic-selves being portrayed as authentic-others. The digital resource becomes a nondigital resource, i.e. the digital creates financial benefits in the nondigital world. Action in one world-furcation has real effect in another, because they are fused as a single world—the digital is not its own realm of being distinct from the world.

Now that we come full circle for the last time, we can complete our quest to discover the contemporary world of our digital age. The self lives an inauthentic-authentic existence that

creates consequences that may appear positive to some, but are, in reality, negative to self-existence. The important thing of note about this quest is that we did not find this information by creating new ideas and new information, it was all discovered hermeneutically. That is, we searched through the *transcendent* information of being-in-the-world and mixed that with the *inter*-relationships of being with others in order to understand the *intra*-performances of the self. Simply speaking, we quested through the communicated world we live in, which includes the digital. Any methodology concerning the digital concerns the whole.

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