THEL, BLAKE, HEIDEGGER, AND THE QUESTION OF BEING
THEL, BLAKE, HEIDEGGER, AND THE QUESTION OF BEING:
A STUDY IN FUNDAMENTAL ONTOLOGY

By
MARK TRUSCOTT, B.A.

A Thesis
Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies
in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements
for the Degree
Master of Arts

McMaster University
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MASTER OF ARTS (1994)  
McMASTER UNIVERSITY  
(English)  
Hamilton, Ontario  

TITLE: Thel, Blake, Heidegger, and the Question of Being: A Study in Fundamental Ontology  

AUTHOR: Mark Truscott, B.A. (McMaster University)  

SUPERVISOR: Dr. Donald Goellnicht  

NUMBER OF PAGES: viii, 124
ABSTRACT

This thesis uses Heidegger's *Being and Time* to read Blake's *The Book of Thel* as one character's search for the meaning of the Being which characterizes all things. The introduction shows that Thel realizes that the metaphysical characterization of Being as 'simply self-evident' in its substantiality in beings is questionable inasmuch as this view is not able to answer her questions about her own apparent 'ontological nebulousness,' her own being "like a watry bow."

The possibility of this indeterminacy comes to Thel's attention as she stands in the face of a glimpse of the ever-present, certain, and immanent possibility of her death which can happen at any time. This possibility tells her that her ownmost potentiality in Being is to not-be. From this point, Thel begins to question the metaphysical representation of Being in beings in general. And, as chapter one shows, this questionability casts Thel's world into the mood of an 'anxious questioning,' which sets her on her way to an encounter with the Being she is asking about.

Chapter two shows that in order to arrive at such an encounter, Thel's 'anxious questioning' must cast off the metaphysical world-view into which Thel has grown. This proves no easy task. The Lilly, the Cloud, and, at first, the Clod of Clay work to prevent this casting off from taking place. These characters, who represent the metaphysical 'public' of which Thel is part in her everyday existence,
attempt to keep Thel within the bounds of their 'public' use of language which necessarily passes over Being. Thel is only able to escape this domination for long enough to repeat her question in a number of different contexts, and to partially disclose the death which she always is, before finally letting go of her anxiety. She therefore misunderstands her initial glimpse of her own ontological nebulosity, and discloses her Being as an object of fear—which is, as such, necessarily a metaphysical representation.

The conclusion shows that *The Book of Thel* illuminates failings or oversights in *Being and Time* through its very narrativity. Blake's poem stands in the region of narrative thought while Heidegger's analysis falls victim to a overshadowing methodology.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Dr. Donald Goellnicht for his patience and expertise in reading and commenting on a number of drafts of this thesis, as well as for his calm encouragement during the months it took me to research, write, and revise it. Thanks also to Dr. Jeffery Donaldson for reading a draft of my thesis and for reminding me of the power of poetic language. Thanks to Dr. Gary Madison for helping me to come to an understanding of philosophical hermeneutics and for reading a draft of my thesis. I would also like to thank Dr. David Clark for his introductions to Blake's poetry and to poststructuralism, as well as for his help in formulating my initial question.

I must also express my gratitude to those who have stood behind me in a number of different ways during my entire post-secondary education: my mother, my father, my grandmother, and my sister, Mary, all without whom I would never have made it to this point. And finally, thanks to Simon for keeping me company during the long hours it took to write this thesis, as well as for adding his own type-written comments from time to time; and thanks to Lisa for reading and commenting on my thesis and for reminding me of my humanity when the task at hand seemed anything but human.
Glossary of Abbreviations

AR -- Blake, William. All Religions Are One
E -- --. Europe
J -- --. Jerusalem
T -- --. The Book of Thel
IB -- Erdman, David V. The Illuminated Blake
H. -- Heidegger, Martin. Being and Time. (Sein und Zeit pagination)
LH -- --. "The Letter on Humanism"
WB -- --. "The Way Back into the Ground of Metaphysics"
SR -- Rajan, Tilottama. The Supplement of Reading
RM -- Ricoeur, Paul. The Rule of Metaphor
TN -- --. Time and Narrative
## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER ONE</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER TWO</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONCLUSION</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WORKS CITED AND CONSULTED</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Introduction

While critics have usually not granted *The Book of Thel* a central position in the Blake canon, allowing it usually to fall between "the lyrics" and the "the major prophecies," they have given it some attention as an early attempt by Blake to begin to articulate some of the "truths of human existence" (Weathers 71-2). There has been little agreement as to "the meaning" of the poem, but a few consistent, structural elements have arisen from the fray. Whether she is interpreted as a disembodied "soul" (Damon 310, Harper 248, and Raine), "any form of embryonic life, from a human baby to an artist's inspiration" (Frye 232-3); desire personified (Levinson 287), a human "consciousness" (Heppner 91), a "fully' human girl (Carr, Gleckner 163, 206-7, Johnson 275, Linkin, Margoliouth 55, Pearce, and Wilkie 63), Woman of the late eighteenth century (Murray), or, indeed, a protean composite of a number of the above (Berger 326-7, Bloom 53, Mellor 197), Thel makes a journey from one state, place, or plane to another and learns, or does not learn, something of herself in the process. Critics do not agree, however, on what this lesson might be. Interpretations vary from how she can "develop her potential life into an actual one" (Frye 233); through how she might overcome her "intense anxiety about her present mode of existence, which seems to her to have death or absence already within it" (Heppner 81, 83); through what she must do to react to a neoplatonic "premonition" that she will fall into the world of Generation (Damon 75; see also Harper 249, and Raine); to how she might negotiate late eighteenth century, British society--specifically, its conception of marriage--as Woman (Murray). In the process,

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1 For Damon, she is also "the Queen of Hell, Persephone" (75).
she is aided (Gleckner 165, 169; Linkin 66; Margoliouth 56), impeded (Pearce 38, 42), or simply met (Birenbaum 101, Johnson 268) by a cast of other characters (the Lilly, the Cloud, the Worm, and the Clod of Clay), the last of whom shows her to "her grave."

This grave itself represents, variously, "Generation" (Frye 233), "Ulro,"2 the place where "Thel at long last confronts this identity of hers that she has tried so hard to evade" (Johnson 271), the body (Ellis and Yeats, here representing the neoplatonic tradition which includes Damon, Harper, and Raine), "the interior of the body" in which the consciousness is "rooted" (Heppner 91), or "exactly what anyone ... nurtured on the doctrines of natural religion, materialism, biologism and an epistemology of the physical senses must find" (Pearce 32). Finally, most commentators agree that Thel's final ultimate from what is disclosed by the voice of the grave is either a shameful display of some sort of cowardice or the result of a serious, existential mistake which might be, for instance, her very acceptance of a mortal body.3

2 ... "Ulro" as "spiritual death" (Margoliouth) and "the grave-plot of self-interest" (Duerksen 19, 21) ...

3 There are five exceptions to the view of Thel's demise as negative. Bogan, who claims that the voice in the grave is Thel's own but in her future role as "protestor" and that her fleeing is a running "not away from anything--nothing threatens her and she has been promised a safe return--but back to the present and her innocent youth, where she belongs," where she "will [prepare to] someday speak her mind" (31). Wilkie claims that [h]owever we interpret Thel's retreat to the vales of Har at the very end of the poem, she would seem to have made some, though slow, progress before that point; other wise she would not have undertaken even her tentative descent to the underworld in response to the Clod's invitation. (68)

Johnson, similarly, reasons that "[s]tarting from her seat, shrieking, and fleeing are at least signs of life" which mean that Thel "is no longer an onlooker" (272). And, finally, Winston Weathers, summarizing his and Donald Pearce's view, states that "[i]f we rejoice in the return of Alice and Dorothy from their dreams, back through the looking glass, the
While, taken together, these commentaries attribute an impressively wide range of often mutually exclusive meanings to *The Book of Thel*, still, since they quote the same written words, they all comment on the same work. The disagreements arise because each interpreter necessarily focuses on a different element of the poem, and gives it meaning by bringing to it an interpretive tradition to which he or she perceives that component to belong. These `traditions,' however, necessarily include material from far afield of the written poem, which serves to fill in the interpretive gaps of the written work.

Meanwhile, having been struck by the ontological import of the questions and similes of Thel's initial lament, I have chosen to focus on the matter of that lament, and to allow the subject of its figurative language to illuminate the rest of the poem in my interpretation:

O life of this our spring! why fades the lotus of the water?  
Why fade the children of the spring? born but to smile and fall.  
Ah! Thel is like a watry bow, and like a parting cloud,  
Like a reflection in a glass, like shadows in the water.  
Like dreams of infants, like a smile upon an infants face,  
Like the doves voice, like transient day, like music in the air....

(T 1: 6-11; E 3)

return to normalcy, sanity, and reality, we must equally rejoice in Thel's return from the biological nightmare that she, in her role as the creative psyche, endures" (74).

4 For instance, Frye takes the `different planes' of existence motif as primary and brings to it his own interpretation of Blake's divided cosmos; while Murray focuses on the historicity of Thel's womanhood and discusses the poem in light of the Reverend Martin Madan's aptly named eighteenth-century treatise on the institution of marriage, *Thelyphththora*.

5 The proportion of the poem that this reading effectively illuminates will stand as justification for its appropriateness.
Here, it initially appears that Thel is 'merely' apprehensive about a life which must, eventually, be cancelled out by death; that she is distressed by the fact that she is "born but to smile and fall"; that her life is a "spring" which must turn into autumn, and then into dead winter; and that she, like the "lotus" "fade[s]," or, more properly, is presently "fad[ing]," a process which must always end in death. But, if we take these questions in light of an initial reading of the final two lines of Thel's motto, that is, of her guiding principal, "Can Wisdom be put in a silver rod?/ Or Love in a golden bowl?" (T i: 3-4; E 3), a reading in which the stability of the Being of the silver rod and that of the golden bowl stand in contrast to that of Thel's own, perceived fading, the transience, mutability, and, most importantly, the lack of a substantial foundation which characterize Thel's present understanding of her existence as such come to the forefront. Indeed, a "watry bow," for instance, is obviously much less determinate in its Being than is a substantial silver rod. Now, turning back again to the images of the final lines of her motto, this time with the nature of Thel's interpretation of human ontology in mind, Thel's distress comes to focus on the possible lack of stability and substance which characterizes the Being of 'Things' in general when metaphysical representations are thrown into question; it becomes a questioning of the obviousness of the very Being which gives Things their

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6 Here, we should compare Thel's motto to the following passage from Jerusalem for a confirmation of Blake's feelings about metaphysical abstraction: "To freeze Love & Innocence into the gold & silver of the Merchant/ Without Forgiveness of Sin Love is Itself Eternal Death" (64: 23-24; E 213). Frosch claims that Blake's notion of forgiveness is "less a moral principal contrary to accusation than a radical abandonment of moralism" and its metaphysical abstractions (91).
seemingly self-evident and determinate 'isness' in metaphysical interpretation.  

    Can Wisdom be put in a silver rod?  
    Or Love in a golden bowl? 

------------------------

Ah! Thel is like a watry bow, and like a parting cloud,  
Like a reflection in a glass...

------------------------

Can Wisdom be put in a silver rod?  
Or Love in a golden bowl? 

Indeed, with this return to her motto, Thel's question becomes one of fundamental ontology, that is, one of Being as such, not just a concern with her own existence.

While one, especially in the days of Descartes and Newton in which Blake lived, might 'naturally' think that a human quality such as "[w]isdom" might be "put in a [stable] silver rod," or that "[l]ove" might be put "in a [secure] golden bowl" (my emphases), as if the rod and bowl simply are static and fully self-identical, 'physical' Things which can therefore 'contain' non-physical things, Thel seems to be realizing that this view is at least questionable. I argue that Thel is beginning to realize that death, the

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7 This 'turning back' is justified considering that the motto comes at the end of the poem in two extant copies (Rajan SR 241).

8 And in which, I argue, we live for the most part.

9 See Donald Ault's Visionary Physics (5-16) for an explanation of the problem of the process of integration in Newton, which, incidently, betrays Newton's own difficulties with metaphysics.

Also, Winston Weathers states that Blake knows that "Love and Wisdom are in 'thinking,' not in 'containers'" (83). I agree to the point where I will use Weathers' term 'containers' in this context throughout my study.

Finally, Ecclesiastes 12: 6 and 7, "Or ever the silver cord be loosed, or the golden
event, might only be the last gesture in her own existence of the non-substantial yet fundamental, ontological characteristics which she adumbrates with respect to her Self in her initial lament. Thel announces in this passage that she is unsure of the ontological constancy of the beings of her motto which are "said' to 'hold' wisdom and love inasmuch as this is the view which she throws into question.

Christopher Heppner claims that the similes in Thel's lament are "images of epiphenomena, appearances which exist only as temporary modifications of an underlying substance felt to be more real than they" (81). But, we need to ask, how substantial are these underlying substances?! The "watry bow," as Heppner admits, is "created by the refraction of light in air-borne moisture" and is therefore "a kind of doubly removed appearance" (81); but what about the glass, the water, the child, and the dove? Admittedly, they will "persist" after their "emanations' have dissipated, but for how long and how stably? Glass is a typical vehicle for metaphors of fragility; water, in the form of a river, is the Heraclitean image for the omnipresence of change (Bidney 76); the infant will quickly grow into a child and then into an adult and will eventually die ("Why fade these children of our spring?"), just as Thel will; and death is also something which will certainly come to the dove most likely before it does to Thel. Further, with the

bowl be broken, or the pitcher be broken at the fountain, or the wheel be broken at the cistern./ Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it," which seem to be Blake's source here (see Ferber "Thel's Motto..."), support my reading of Thel's motto as presenting the abstracted 'Nature' which must be annihilated for there to be truth, in Blake's eyes.

Heraclitus writes, "It is not possible to step twice into the same river" (quoted in Bidney 76). Indeed, even if standing in order to allow for a reflection, water will move at the first breeze and never regain this initial, reflective 'arrangement' or 'shape.'
relative fragility of its structure, the dove is not the most reliable of substances in life either. These 'foundations' are therefore not determinate in form; they are, rather, always changing or, at least, always subject to change. Indeed, these are not stones, rods, or bowls of which Thel speaks. They are images of instability and indeterminacy, and, as such, are the bases or 'containers' for other images which are their 'emanations.'

Meanwhile, Thel places her Self, which is usually considered a stable and self-evident substance of some sort, on the level of the emanations of these less than substantive foundations. As Nelson Hilton puts it, "[v]ividly comparing herself in quick succession to nine transient phenomena, [Thel] disintegrates as a personality, becoming only a voice [an especially nebulous phenomenon itself] living from one simile to the next" (30).

Indeed, in Thel's world, things seem uncertain 'all the way down.'

It now seems that Thel's concern in her initial lament, in addition to being about death, is about the lack of motionless ground against, on, or in, which to position her own ever-changing and therefore indeterminate Self. She sees that while she is, for instance, the ontologically nebulous dream of an infant in her existence, the ground, the infant, on which she founds that existence is also ontologically 'unstable.' She is therefore asking, 'What does it mean to be, to carry out this "life of this our spring"; why are we, if, like the "lotus of the water" or the "children of the spring," we are constantly "fad[ing]"? 'What does it mean to be, of what significance is, an entity without an unchanging and determinate, metaphysical 'essence' such as that which
characterizes the "simple physicality" of metaphysical representations of rods and bowls.\textsuperscript{11} And, further, a question which it is necessary to answer in order to ask the preceding ones: "what \textit{is} this volatile and therefore ontologically indeterminate ground on or in which I am standing as an existing being which makes me say "\textit{is}"?"

O life of this our spring! why fades the lotus of the water?  
Why fade these children of the spring? born but to smile & fall.  
Ah! Thel is like a watry bow...

These similes make clear that Thel cannot answer questions about such substances as her "Self," and about such events as death, without determining--in the face of now possibly questionable, received, metaphysical theories of existence (such as those advanced by Deism, Cartesian rationalism, Newtonian physics, and, I think particularly, \textit{Naturalism})--what it means to \textit{be} if that Being is something which is not to be understood in terms of, for instance, the "simple and self-evident physicality" of the determinate " substance" of rods and bowls.\textsuperscript{12} This, latter consideration, I argue, is Thel's concern throughout the poem.

But why should I, after over one hundred years of serious Blake scholarship, be the first to recognize this potential reading if such a reading is not a "theoretical" disfiguration of a properly self-sufficient poem? In terms of the history of critical

\textsuperscript{11} The "simple, self-evident physicality" of the rod and bowl of a materialist metaphysics can be, for instance, easily translated into the "simple, self-evident" mental substance of the Cartesian ego, or the eventually "self-evident" God substance of Deism.

\textsuperscript{12} I will examine questions about Self in this thesis, but only when they apply to Thel's formulation of the \textit{Seinsfrage} (the "Beingquestion") which, in this reading, is her immediate and overriding concern.
interpretations of *The Book of Thel*, Harold Bloom has, of course, previously noticed the nature of Thel's concern with the insubstantiality of Being, and, indeed, for instance, so has Christopher Heppner. Neither have, however, made this concern the focus of a sustained study. They have 'passed the issue by,' assuming it easily resolvable, and gone on to other, 'more pressing' concerns, such as Thel's avoidance of her sexuality and the cyclic nature of the Natural life-cycle in which Thel finds herself. In my opinion, it is impossible even to mention these problems until some progress has been made on the 'Being question.' We cannot say, for instance, what sexuality, death, or regeneration, *is*, without a clear idea of what 'is' (to be) is.

I respond to the latter, hermeneutical challenge by claiming that the question of Being *is*, or can *be*, what the poem asks if it is allowed to do so. In fact, it seems to me that my reading of the question of fundamental ontology in *The Book of Thel* has been covered over by previous interpretations. I do not mean to say by this that critics such as Frye, Johnson and Heppner have been actively misleading or negligent in their exegeses. The culprit is, rather, as I shall show in the course of this study, the very language in which these critics and others interpret Blake's poem (which, of course, is

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13 Heppner, for instance, claims that Thel must overcome simile, which is "the language of doubting selfhood," and live by metaphor, which is "the speech of the true self" (87). He tells us that Thel must use "metaphoric acts of imagination which identify the world as oneself, and oneself as the world" in "sacrificial and yet self-fulfilling metamorphoses" (87). This is all very well and, indeed, concurs with my interpretation in many ways. What this interpretation does not explicitly consider, however, is what it means to say that one *is* the world and that the world *is* oneself and what an analysis of this notion illuminates in the rest of the poem. In my interpretation of *The Book of Thel*, Thel does not even arrive at being able to say the 'is' of these statements confidently.
itself written in that language, but, as shall soon become clear, with an important difference in usage).\textsuperscript{14} Indeed, as I shall argue, Thel's concern is not, and cannot yet be, as common language usage exclusively allows, with the question of how to live as a 'unified person' (in any social, psychological or existential sense) in the 'world of human affairs,' from the perspective of an unborn soul or that of one already living in the world.\textsuperscript{15} Her distress is, instead, as I intend to show, over that which makes all of these other concerns possible: it is over Being itself—a concern for which we have no workaday expression. While Thel expresses this concern poetically, I will interpret it philosophically, which, for this study, means from the standpoint of Heidegger's study of fundamental ontology, Being and Time. This will allow me to uncover the question of Being in Blake's text, which, in turn, will allow me to understand his poetic expression better.

To provide a vocabulary for my reading, that is, to give me a traditional framework through which I can make Thel's concern intelligible in thought, I have enlisted the aid of Martin Heidegger. For him,

Metaphysics [the language of Descartes and Newton] thinks about beings as beings. Wherever the question is asked what beings are, beings as such are in sight. Metaphysical representation owes this sight to the light of

\textsuperscript{14} Blake's use of language in The Book of Thel is different from that of the everyday public (which includes Bloom, Frye, Johnson, and Heppner) in that it questions the verb 'to be' and its declensions. Meanwhile, the public language of these others takes the word 'is' for granted and uses it as if it were a pre-given 'word-token.'

\textsuperscript{15} Common language usage does not, for instance, allow one to say that death is something which one always is, or that one is, for the most part, undifferentiated from Others in one's existence. In the course of this thesis I will say both of these things of the world of The Book of Thel.
Being. The light itself, i.e., that which such thinking experiences as light, does not come within the range of metaphysical thinking. ("WB" 207)

Indeed, there is, for Heidegger, something which underlies the existence of `Things' that provides them with their very "quiddity" or `isness,' and which we, in our day-to-day lives and language, do not even consider (see Steiner 34). As George Steiner says, "the one wonder that was to preside over Heidegger's life declared itself early and inescapably [and was Leibnitz's question]: Why are there essents, existents, things that are, rather than nothing?" Heidegger, however, rephrased this question in a number of ways; for example: "What is the Being [das Sein] which renders possible all beings [das Siende]?" (34-5). In Heidegger's thought, therefore, one cannot begin to know anything of beings until one discloses to oneself the meaning of Being which underlies them, which lights them up. For this reason, that is, in order to make Being an issue about which one can ask, Heidegger provides an opening to a way of speaking Being in the language of his first major work, *Being and Time*.

To clarify my position in this thesis, however, I must note here that Heidegger never reaches his goal. His lifelong project is `only' a refinement of the `Beingquestion' [Seinsfrage]. I, likewise, `only' intend to disclose what I think is Blake's phrasing of the

16 If we take `Things' to mean, for instance, that which is stable as a physical existent, or even that which is composed of stable, physical particles or `atoms.'

17 "Lights them up" in the sense of letting these beings appear. If we are getting away from any substantial notions of Being, i.e., those that posit an unchanging underlying substance to which qualities attach, as Thel seems to be doing, this `lighting up' offers an appealing alternative in that it, too, is ever changing and is, in a sense that `to which qualities attach' in their appearing.
very same question; for, as will become clear at the end of this study, Blake never arrives at a definitive answer to the Seinsfrage either. As I have argued, it is a similar questioning of this Being which allows beings to be, this light which allows us to see beings, which is Thel's explicit and primary concern in The Book of Thel, albeit anxiously and poetically constituted and expressed.\textsuperscript{18} The language of Being and Time, meanwhile, can help to make this poetic expression manifest to thought.

For metaphysics, meanwhile, for the language of Newton, Descartes, Bloom, and Heppner, "the light [of Being] itself is considered sufficiently illuminated as soon as we recognize that we look through it whenever we look at beings" (Heidegger "WB" 207). This use of language looks upon these beings, these 'Things,' as if they are 'containers' for Being, in the sense of constituting the only meaningful expressions of that Being which is itself otherwise meaningless (H. 4).\textsuperscript{19} These 'containers' are thus the only things one needs to know. Metaphysics thereby quickly passes over the question of Being as something which is simply 'self-evident.' 'That tree is a tree. It's as simple as that.' Indeed, Heidegger tells us that "metaphysics posits beings in their Being and so thinks of the Being of beings. But it does not discriminate between the two" ("LH" 276). Likewise, according to Blake, metaphysics tells us, for instance, that we can and indeed must put Wisdom in a silver rod and Love in a golden bowl in order to understand them.

\textsuperscript{18} The questions, "What does it mean to Be?" and "What is the Being which renders possible all beings" are, I think, similar enough to be the same in that they both require an explanation of the significance of Being apart from that of beings.

\textsuperscript{19} 'Containers' are indisputably substantial Things which simply are according to metaphysical representation.
Wisdom and Love, like Being, are only comprehensible *in* beings, and, as such, are mysteriously, but simply, self-evident. Wisdom, Love, and Being are, in themselves, unintelligible yet self-evident somethings which, however, somehow make people, their 'containers,' act with wisdom and love--and *be*. But, says Blake's criticism, since we are members of a metaphysical society, we cannot concern ourselves with the nature of these very somethings since they do not find expression in our language of 'simply substantial' beings, of rods and bowls. It is for this reason that, according to Blake and Heidegger, "metaphysics almost seems to be, without its even knowing it, the barrier which keeps man from the original involvement of Being in human nature" ("WB" 211).

Heidegger says elsewhere that the domination of metaphysics over our understanding

rests, especially in modern times, on the peculiar dictatorship of the public.... The public itself, however, is the metaphysically conditioned--as it is derived from the domination of the subjectivity--establishment and authorization of the overtness of the existent in the absolute objectification of everything. Therefore, language falls into the service of arranging the lines of communication, on which objectification as the uniform accessibility of everything for everybody expands, disregarding all limits. So language comes under the dictatorship of the public. The public predetermines what is intelligible and what must be rejected as unintelligible. ("LH" 273)

So, for the most part, we are in a vicious circle: metaphysics dominates thought--the way one understands oneself and one's world--by always making the Things of thought "public" (H. 138)--that is, quickly and easily accessible to everyone inasmuch as the Being of these Things is passed over--through language, while the dominant 'public' necessarily and actively determines the bounds of thought as metaphysical, also through
This is why, for instance, to move back to the poem at hand, when Thel expresses her concern to the Lilly, the Lilly counsels,

...thou shalt be clothed in light, and fed with morning manna:  
Till summers heat melts thee beside the fountains and the springs  
To flourish in eternal vales: then why should Thel complain,  
Why should the mistress of the vales of Har, utter a sigh.  

(T 2-3: 23-1; E 4; my emphasis)

These normative questions which come at the end of the Lilly’s speech are precisely expressions of the self-limiting of public talk to discussing the ‘natures’ of, and relations between, metaphysical representations of beings. Public talk does not allow one, unless one is ‘strange,’ to consider the meaning of the Being of these beings. Indeed, the public circumscription of language defines Thel’s struggle to comprehend the nature of Being inasmuch as she “perform[s]” “all [her] genuine understanding, interpreting, and communicating, all [her] re-discovering and appropriating anew” “[i]n [public, or metaphysical, language], out of it, and against it” (H. 169).

To be sure, for the most part, what language talks about is ‘public’ in that everything must be shared to be meaningful and must be meaningful immediately and to everyone of the linguistic community to be an element of language. The Lilly, the Cloud, and, for the most part, the Clod of Clay, speak in well used, and therefore ‘easy,’ expressions of the doctrines of Natural religion and Natural science (see Pearce 30). For instance, as Donald R. Pearce notes, the Cloud’s speech,

O maid I tell thee, when I pass away,  
It is to tenfold life, to love, to peace, to raptures holy:  
Unseen descending, weigh my light wings upon balmy flowers;  
And court the fair eyed dew. to take me to her shining tent;
The weeping virgin, trembling kneels before the risen sun,
Til we arise link'd in a golden band, and never part;
But walk united, bearing food to all our tender flowers
\( (T\ 3: 10-16; \ E\ 4) \)

sounds, in its substance, to a person of the eighteenth century, much like a comfortable
yet sinister passage from a 1770 treatise by D'Holback entitled *The System of Nature; of
the Laws of the Mortal and Physical World*, which reads,

it is by paleogenesis, this regeneration, that the great whole, the mighty
macrocosm, subsists; who like the Saturn of the ancients is perpetually
occupied with devouring her own children. (quoted in Pearce 31)\(^{20}\)

Death, therefore, becomes easy for the metaphysical public since each individual's parting
is swallowed up by the "Laws" of a "tenfold life." One's Being is not, in this case,
something to be concerned about. This 'easiness' is compounded by the fact that this
type of expression is, in the eighteenth-century, commonplace in everyday, scientific and
religious discourse to the point where it requires no thought--for instance, thought of the
rather sinister overtones of this doctrine--at all in its saying. One voices this type of
expression as easily as one answers 'fine' as another passes in the hall and asks, 'how
are you doing?'

But, in order to ask her questions, Thel leaves the anonymity and repetitiveness
of her family and seeks "the secret air" (1: 2; E 3) of thought. Thel's conversations with
Others often involve an assertion of individual identity on her part ("Dost thou O little
Cloud? I fear I am not like thee" (3: 17; E 5)). As Heidegger says, in order to speak
Being, one must "take up" the "unhiddenness of Being" "into language and preserve it

II (London. 1770), 2; 282.
in language" (271); one must be an individual and not 'public.' One must question precisely what one normally takes for granted. This, indeed, is part of Blake's point in Thel's conversation with the other characters. In order to think Being, Thel finds she must labour to escape Others who themselves struggle to prevent her from "Being-[her]-Self" (H. 113-130); she must flee to the "secret air" (1: 2; E 3) of thought in order to ask her question.

Indeed, the Others' 'coherent' (in the metaphysical sense) thought out of which Thel must think is linguistic inasmuch as it 'joins and fits' concepts together in a 'publicly' understood grammar. This grammar, for instance, places death as an event which marks the end of a particular Self, and always puts Wisdom and Love in rods and bowls.21 It is for these reasons that "[t]he freeing of language from grammar [itself the 'house' of metaphysics], and placing it in a more original and essential framework, is reserved for thought and poetry" (271) which, for this thesis, is exemplified by Thel's opening lament.22 There, in the "secret air," Thel uses metaphor and simile to express what is inexpressible in everyday, public language usage which uses words as if they are pre-given tokens with fixed meanings, and which uses grammar as a fixed system of relations between ideas and entities. Indeed, Thel describes, for instance, the fading which characterizes existence itself, not just the event, or "case" (H. 252) of death in the

21 Indeed, my use of language is extremely metaphysical here as often is Heidegger's—which he himself readily admits, for instance, with respect to Being and Time in his "Letter on Humanism" (280).

22 'Thought' in Heidegger's primordial sense, which is limited to truly individual thinking about Being rather than thinking in the technical, that is, theoretical, sense of making logical connections between representations of beings.
existence of a formerly stable Thing. She says, we are "born but to smile and fall" (T 1: 7; E 3) in a way which is like being a "watry bow" (8) (and the juxtaposition is all-important); that is, 'as soon as we are born, we are old enough to die,' and death, therefore, is always with us as the possibility of the impossibility of anything in our existences. This, in turn, she claims, makes us nebulous in existence, like the "watry bow," which is, metaphysically speaking, 'there and not there at the same time.' It is through such individual use of public language that one, briefly, tears language from its 'public bed.'

I believe that, in The Book of Thel, this is precisely what Blake is explicitly trying to do—to free thought from 'publicness' and to think about Being through poetry. While much of Blake's poetry certainly disrupts public understanding, I believe it is in The Book of Thel that he explicitly formulates his notion of the meaning of Being. With Heidegger's help—that is, with the partially freed language of Being and Time—this is what I intend to demonstrate.

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23 While there is a period and a long-voweled "Ah!" separating these two phrases, the momentum of Thel's lament, created by the rapid succession of her questions, is enough to carry ideas and images from one sentence to the next in the way I am describing here.

24 It is true that, for instance, the Cloud's speech, too, uses highly figurative language, but, since, as Pearce shows us, it is expressing a common idea, the figures are merely ornamental.

25 The question of whether or not this meaning is one which is consistent throughout his corpus is too large to discuss in this thesis. I believe, however, that this study, in its disclosure of the Seinsfrage in The Book of Thel, will make it possible to investigate this issue further as one of Blake's concerns in other poems.

26 The language of Being and Time retains its ontological potency because its metaphors are still 'live,' that is, they still resist easy, public talk (see Madison).
But, to allow for an objection some readers will undoubtably wish to voice, in the introduction to her *Blake, Kierkegaard, and the Spectre of Dialectic*, Lorraine Clark writes, "Blake scholarship has been persistently rife with analogues, and the appearance of yet another is likely to meet with skepticism if not outright dismay" (1), before she adds her own joint study to the list: Blake and Kierkegaard. Why, then, we might just as well ask, do we need yet another, a study involving Blake and Heidegger?

There are, arising from what I perceive to be a common concern with the nature of Being, and from a common approach to attempting to develop it, both of which I have briefly outlined above, at least four constitutional elements of each thinker's world that invite the comparison I am making. While up to now only implicit in my discussion, these likenesses will turn up again and again in the course of my examination, and will refer me back to Thel's, Blake's, Heidegger's, and my original concern

27 I am constituting the issues of both Blake's and Heidegger's writing (all of Blake's and, primarily, Heidegger's *Being and Time*) as two relatively unified 'worlds' (*Welt*). Although there are, as is well known, historical 'shifts,' or 'turns' (*kehre*), in both Blake's (see, for instance Cox 22, Clark, and Bidney) and Heidegger's (see Ballard 118, Steiner 3, 31, and Zimmerman 286) views, the consistency of both philosophies which subsists in the set of overarching concerns of each thinker (which might be thought of as an 'identifying situatedness') is enough to subsume the changes into 'a world' for each. While I would not go so far, for instance, as to endorse Frye's notion that "anything admitted to [Blake's] canon, whatever its date, not only belongs in a unified scheme but is in accord with a permanent structure of ideas" (14), the 'situatedness' of each thinker's concerns with respect to those of his contemporaries does provide some sort of unity to each of Blake's and Heidegger's outputs. Thus, the 'Blake' I will be discussing is a construction using thought from throughout his corpus and which is also expressed in my interpretation of *The Book of Thel*, an interpretation which itself, I hope, will be justified by the proportion of the poem it serves to explain. With respect to Heidegger, meanwhile, I will focus on his philosophy prior to his 'turn' (*kehre*), exemplified by *Being and Time*, but viewed from a point encompassing some of his thought after *Being and Time* as well.
--the question of Being. They will thereby remind me that Blake and Heidegger are beginning to answer the same question in a similar manner and will thereby show me that I am uncovering a reading of the question of fundamental ontology in *The Book of Thel*. This will throw the rest of the Blake corpus into somewhat of a new light.\textsuperscript{28} I need, however, to explain these themes from the outset of this study in order to establish its validity, so let me begin.

Both Blake and Heidegger locate the 'objects' of their analyses (Eternity, Being) within the world of common experience, a world which, however, 'covers over' the 'objects' at this point in the history of thought;\textsuperscript{29} both, being influenced by Idealism, give ontological priority to human understanding--often manifested as imagination--in their universes;\textsuperscript{30} both hold the individual as ontologically prior to his or her community;\textsuperscript{31} and both reject a reified Selfhood. These correspondences, when combined with the notion that *The Book of Thel* seems to be Blake's formulation of the *Seinsfrage*--which is

\textsuperscript{28} It will allow us, for instance, to better ask what the Tyger *is*, so that we might be able to understand "who made" it. Indeed, Blake claims, for instance, that human beings *are* their imaginations; this study will allow us to understand this "are" better.

We must keep in mind, though, that Thel's phrasing of the *Seinfrage* is not as developed as Blake's, as is evident, for instance, in the 'grave scene' in which Thel 'covers over' Blake's disclosure of Being as if it were a definite object of fear.

\textsuperscript{29} I do not think that there has been enough progress in thinking Being since Blake's time to warrant calling Heidegger's age a different point in the history of philosophy from that which Blake occupies. And I think both Blake and Heidegger would agree with me here.

\textsuperscript{30} Blake is influenced by the Idealism of Berkeley, Heidegger by that of Kant and Husserl.

\textsuperscript{31} The individual is, however, a product of his or her community and, for the most part, cannot distinguish him or herself from Others.
precisely the business of Heidegger’s project, and which is, for the most part, covered over by everyday public language—provide, I believe, ample justification for my study.

The intentions of both projects—Eternity in Blake’s; Being in Heidegger’s—are ‘in’ everyday experience, but must be uncovered for there to be truth. As Bidney says, Blake uses the term ‘Eternity’ to “characterize creative life in time” ( xv; my emphasis). It is the "Moment in each Day that Satan cannot find" ( M 35:42; E 135; my emphasis), in which one can hold the world before oneself and experience it to its fullest. In "Auguries of Innocence," therefore, Blake solicits us:

To see a World in a Grain of Sand  
And a Heaven in a Wild Flower  
Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand  
And Eternity in an hour  
(1-4; E 481) 

Or, to put the same idea more prosaically, and in the form of an axiom, he counsels that "Whenever any Individual Rejects Error & Embraces Truth a Last Judgement passes upon that Individual" ( VLJ 84; E 551); that is, whenever one casts off Natural religion and Natural law (which, as examples of the solidification of abstraction into Truth, are the cause of Error), one meets Eternity or Being as such. Indeed, ‘Eternity’ is a state of

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32 Heidegger’s ontological use of the word ‘in’ will become clear as we move into my argument proper. For now, however, it must suffice to say that Being is ‘in’ the world as that which allows us to see, that is, it is ‘in’ our seeing of the world, or Being-in-the-world, as the light which illuminates the world.

33 The ‘in[s]’ in this passage are of an imaginative kind, as is indicated by the "see[ing]" which realizes "a World," "Heaven," "Eternity," and "Infinity." They are therefore most unlike the "know[ing]" ( T:i: 1; E 3), metaphysical ‘ins’ of Thel’s motto.
one's understanding; and whenever one breaks with the limitations placed on understanding, on 'seeing,' by the Nature of Natural religion and philosophy, one meets with the Infinity and Eternity of imaginative vision. In a like manner, Thel uncovers the question of Being only when, and as soon as, she leaves her family and puts off their metaphysical language of absolute representations--of rods and bowls.

While the object of Blake's project in his entire corpus is Eternity, the question of Being which he raises in *The Book of Thel*, as that which begins to resist the solidification of entities into metaphysical representations, bears on the rest of his poetry as a necessary realization for admission to this realm. In addition, Eternity is, in part, an authentic mode of Being (perhaps even more authentic than Heidegger's 'authentic existence'), that is, a mode of Being which does not distort Being as such. In many respects, then, as I shall now show, it is difficult to distinguish Blake's Eternity from Heidegger's Being. We must not, however, carry this comparison too far, for there are differences (for instance, the necessity of Blake's God's participation in Eternity).^34

For Heidegger, similarly, as I have indicated above, Being is 'that upon which beings rest,' or, as he says with Aquinas, "[a]n understanding of Being is already included in conceiving anything which one apprehends in entities" (H.3; emphasis in

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^34 Heidegger, meanwhile, claims that "[t]hrough the ontological interpretation of *Dasein* as Being-in-the-World, there is neither a positive nor a negative resolution of a possible Being-towards-God. However, through the elucidation of the transcendency there is first obtained an adequate concept of *Dasein*, in consideration of which one may now ask what exactly is, ontologically, the relationship between God and *Dasein*" (*Vom Wesen des Grundes* 28, ft. 1; quoted in "LH" 294).
original).\textsuperscript{35} This is to say, "[w]henever one cognizes anything or makes an assertion, whenever one comports oneself towards entities, even towards oneself, some use is made of \textquote{Being}' (H. 4).\textsuperscript{36} \textquote{Being}' is that which allows beings to be and it is that which allows us to encounter beings in the world. When we see, that is, when we experience our world in our existence, the world is \textquote{lit up} so that things can appear to us in a way in which we can understand them. "The light itself, i.e., that which such thinking experiences as light" ("Way" 207) is Being. This Being, however, "does not come within the range of metaphysical thinking" (207) since such thinking only thinks about substantialized beings, about \textquote{Nature}. Within the history of metaphysics, therefore, the thought of Being is also that which is--since it is necessarily always the closest to us in our Being and since metaphysics causes us to move away from ourselves in our Being and towards beings--"the darkest of all" (H.3), the one which is least developed. Meanwhile, this Being changes in our experience of it through history. It is therefore truly of infinite possibility from our perspective as historically located beings.

We must keep in mind, though, that for both Blake and Heidegger, the object (Eternity or Being) cannot ever be uncovered fully. In Blake's system, one must take a rest from the strains of Eternity's mental warfare in Beulah, \textquote{the married land}, from time to time. One must leave off from an understanding in which contraries, such as

\textsuperscript{35} Indeed, Heidegger does hold this up as a presupposition that requires investigation, which is precisely what this presupposition has historically prevented. In the end of \textit{Being and Time}, though, Heidegger will keep this saying, but, "repeating" (H. 385) it, say \textquote{in} in the sense of \textquote{involved in an understanding of}... rather than \textquote{in} in the metaphysical, that is, spatial, sense.

\textsuperscript{36} Again, Heidegger reworks this saying from how it stands when he first quotes it.
male and female, cannot co-exist, yet in which they are both present and `at war' with each other, and rest in an understanding in which these contraries can exist in harmony. In Heidegger's case, one must keep Being partially covered in order to exist as an everyday, historical human being, that is, in order not to become `strange' to one's society.

Meanwhile, as I have already mentioned, the human understanding is that through which these objects (Eternity, Being) are both covered over and uncovered. Indeed, on the flyleaf of Swedenborg's *Divine Love and Divine Wisdom* Blake writes, "If God is anything he is Understanding" (E 591). I might confidently extrapolate from this statement the notion that divine intervention occurs through the human understanding; and indeed, later, in *A Vision of the Last Judgement*, Blake writes, "Men are admitted into Heaven not because they have curbed & governd their Passions or have no Passions but because they have Cultivated their Understandings" (97; E 553-4). As Harvey Birenbaum states, "[u]nderstanding [is] not for Blake ... theoretical or speculative ... but [is] rather a matter of the greatest, most immediate urgency--[it could be a matter of] `salvation'" (6) if that understanding is imaginative, or, conversely, it could mean damnation if it is not.

The latter `result' is brought about by Urizen, who understands the world in terms of Natural law and Natural religion:

2. Time on times he divided and measur'd
Space by space in his ninefold darkness
Unseen, unknown! changes appeard
In his desolate mountains rifted furious
By the black winds of perturbation

(U 3:8-12; E 69)

These "changes" which Urizen brings upon Eternity first turn it into a void, and then into
'hell,' or `Ulro:'

2. And his world teemed vast enormities
Frightening, faithless; fawning
Portions of life; similitudes
Of a foot, or a hand, or a head
Or a heart, or an eye, they swam mischevous
Dread terrors! delighting in blood

(23: 2-7; E 80)

Urizen's analytic understanding discloses an analytic world which is, for Blake's characters, whether they know it or not, the terror of terrors. Indeed, "[t]he Eye altering alters all" (E 476). It is the understanding which results from one's own mode of Being-in-the-world as "having been" that, for Blake, constitutes one's world. This is again what occurs when Thel, who understands as "having been" a shepherd, discloses all of the characters of the poem as pastoral, as "children of the spring" (T 1: 7; E 3) "who love to dwell in lowly vales" (1: 17; E 3), who spend their existences in activities such as "bearing food to all [their] tender flowers" (3: 16; E 4), and who are "image[s] of weakness" (4: 2; E 5) as were the lambs to which Thel once attended.

The same is true for "Dasein" according to Heidegger, who claims that "understanding" is "one of the constituents of the Being of one's `there' in general" (H. 143). To explain more fully, in an "equiprimordial" (H.142) combination, `state-of-mind,' `discourse,' and `understanding' establish the clearing which is `lit up' by

37 "Having been" (H. 326) is, for Heidegger, an element of our historicality which refers to the past which we carry with us and which we project into the future where it appears to us. I will discuss this element further in chapter one.
`Being' and which Heidegger calls Dasein's `there'.\textsuperscript{38} While I will discuss each of the three moments of disclosure in the first chapter, for now, in the interest of simplicity, I will characterize them as one process. I will call this process "Understanding" with a capital `U.' The `there' which the Understanding discloses is the illuminated ground on which beings can appear to us. Since we \textit{are} while we experience, while we Understand, we experience the world as "Being-there" or "Dasein" as our Being-in-the-world `lights up' beings.

As Heidegger says,

To say that in existing, Dasein is its `there,' is equivalent to saying that the world is `there,' its \textit{Being-there} is Being-in. And the latter is likewise `there,' as that for the sake of which Dasein is. In the `for-the-sake-of-which,' existing Being-in-the-world is disclosed as such, and this disclosedness we have called `understanding' [or, for now, improperly, `Understanding']. (H. 143)

"Dasein" is, literally translated, `there-Being' or, to put our translation in a manner closer to common English idiom, `Being-there.' This is the human mode of Being which is expressed as "Being-in-the-world [\textit{In-der-Welt-Sein}]" (H. 52-62). This latter expression signifies the fact that human Being cannot be divorced from the `where' of its Being

\textsuperscript{38}`Equipmentorial' means simultaneously, logically and temporally. While understanding and state-of-mind are equiprimordial in that "[a] state-of-mind always has its understanding, even if it merely keeps it suppressed... [and u]nderstanding always has its mood" (H. 143), discourse is equiprimordial (H. 161) inasmuch as state-of-mind and understanding are "intertwined" (Zimmerman 108) with discourse so that the world might be intelligible to them; that is, so that there might be, for instance, in metaphysical discourse, \textit{distinct entities} within it.

Of course, the `equiprimordiality' of these moments causes them to become slightly `blurred.' It is therefore impossible for Dasein to have, for instance, a state-of-mind without a particular understanding and without a particular discursive articulation.
which `shows up' in Dasein's Being-in--Descartes' methodological doubt through which he persuades himself that he is "precisely only a thing that thinks; that is, a mind, a soul, or intellect, or reason" (Descartes *Meditations* 416) which is functionally divorced from any world, notwithstanding. Dasein's "`there' [Da]" (H. 134-166), again, is the "clearing within which beings can present themselves" (Zimmerman 16) as illuminated by the light of Being. Understanding is the manner in which one's "world" (Welt) or "there" is disclosed in Dasein's *Being-in*, which is itself that which allows Dasein to be Dasein in the first place, again, Descartes' methodological doubt notwithstanding. But, as I have indicated, the "Da" or "world" is inseparable from "sein," which, together (Da-sein), is what we as human beings are; which is to say that we, as this disclosure, are disclosed to ourselves at the same time as the world is, and through that world, `in' Understanding.

To give an example, first in metaphysical terms, I am now sitting at a computer working on my thesis. My thoughts are in my mind, I am at my desk, and I am

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39 To understand the phenomenon of `Being-in-the-world' fully, one must understand the particular, "existentiale" (as opposed to spatial) mode of "inhood" (H. 53) that Heidegger is talking about (see H. 54-63). Briefly, Heidegger's `in' is more of an `indwelling' (H. 62) than a `being inside' in the sense of the spatial situation of two Things.

By way of a parenthetical remark to draw further the parallel between Blake and Heidegger, Blake has a similar attitude toward the Cartesian variety of metaphysics, as is evident in the following passage: "He who Doubts from what he sees/ Will neer Believe do what you Please/ If the Sun & Moon should doubt/ Theyd immediately Go out" ("Auguries of Innocence" 107-110; E 483).

40 ...as this clearing in which things are lit up as being understandable, as being a world.
transferring my thoughts onto the computer screen through the keyboard and central processing unit which sit on my desk. For Heidegger, however, my Understanding, which Understands computers as things which I use when writing essays, which is a function of my Being-in-the-world as 'having been' a student, is making the computer appear as it is—as an essay writing tool—and, thus, the way in which my computer is 'showing up' in my Understanding is part of me as Dasein. To be sure, my thoughts about Heidegger's notion of Dasein are 'in' the way in which I am articulating this paragraph, and, as such, these sentences are part of me as Dasein. The way in which I am Understandingly using the keyboard and the central processing unit of this computer is making them the way they presently are in my 'there,' and so they, too, are part of me as Dasein. In this way, I allow my 'Being-in-the-world' (my everyday mode of Being-there) as 'having been' a student of phenomenological hermeneutics to 'light up' my 'there' through my Understanding. My 'there' consequently comes within the bounds of my Being-in-the-world, my Being-there, as that which I am Understanding.

While Thel has not yet begun to answer the Seinsfrage explicitly, her imagining of herself as "like a watry bow and like a parting cloud/ Like a reflection in a glass. like shadows in the water..." is a first step toward an answer to the final questions of her motto: "Can Wisdom be put in a silver rod?/ Or Love in a golden bowl?," an answer which is already on its way toward a characterization of herself as a Dasein. It is a motion away from the self-substance suggested by Thel's motto, which passes Being over, and toward a Self as dispersed and ever-changing, a Self which makes Being a question.
Beyond Thel's own awareness, Blake actually constructs Thel as a Dasein, as is evident, for instance, from the pastoral world of the poem (which reflects Thel's pastoral `having been'), and Thel's anxious "paleness" which will later disclose the anxious `grave' (but then cover it over before interpretation can take place). Indeed, Blake seems to have more of an answer to the Seinsfrage as it pertains to Thel's Self than does Thel.

Throughout his corpus, Blake stresses the imagination as the authentic mode of understanding. For him, "Imagination is the Divine Body in Every Man" (Annotations to Berkeley. E 652) which, as I shall now show, implies a preference for the individual over the group. Although he does posit a single, justifying foundation for `the Poetic Genius' of all individuals, Jesus, in terms of human existence, "all humans are alike (tho' infinitely various)" (AR P. 7; E 3; my emphasis) in their use of this Genius. Indeed, the annihilation of this principal is the problem depicted in plate eleven of The Marriage of Heaven and Hell.

Initially, Gods and Geniuses are the products of individual poets' imaginations as they interact with their natural surroundings as well as with their communities and states:

The ancient poets animated all sensible objects with Gods or

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41 There is more evidence for Thel's being a Dasein but, in the interest of space, I refer the reader to my discussion of the `constitutedness' of Thel's world in chapter one (25).

42 It is for this reason, that is, to highlight the priority of individuality, that all of the characters in The Book of Thel wear crowns, at least figuratively (see Gleckner 173).

43 Here, "Jesus" seems quite similar in function to Heidegger's "Being" which allows Dasein to disclose a world in the first place.
Geniuses, calling them by the names and adorning them with the properties of woods, rivers, mountains, lakes, cities, nations, and whatever their enlarged & numerous senses could perceive. And particularly they studied the genius of each city & country, placing it under its mental deity.

(MHH plate 11)

Then Urizenic law abstracts the Poetic Genius from the individual poetic imagination:

...a system was formed, which some took advantage of & enslav'd the vulgar by attempting to realize or abstract the mental deities from their objects; thus began Priesthood. Choosing forms of worship from poetic tales. And at length they pronounced that the Gods had ordered such things. Thus men forgot that All deities reside in the human breast. (MHH plate 11; my emphasis)

For Blake, when the products of an individual's imagination—which are the necessary condition for participation in "the Poetic Genius"—become abstracted and systematized and thereby become Law, any truth that is transmitted 'in' the poem is lost. It is for this reason that any formulation of truth or morality for a community, such as "One Law for the Lion & Ox," rather than one law for each individual (which itself implies no 'Laws' at all), "is Oppression" (plate 24).44

This is why Thel's leaving her family to seek "the secret air" (T 1: 2; E 3) of her poetic questioning of her received understanding of Being is an affirmative action in terms of that questioning. Her family is like the "flocks" (1) it leads in its placing the group before the individual. Indeed, Thel and her mother, "Mne. Seraphim," are the only

44 I draw this interpretation from my presentation of The Marriage in Dr. David Clark's 1993 undergraduate Blake seminar where I used Roland Barthes' Mythologies as a critical map. Since then, I have discovered that Tilottama Rajan has carried out a similar exegesis (SR 217-218).
family members who are given enough of an individual identity to be named.\(^{45}\)

Similarly, for Heidegger, "[t]he expression `Dasein'... shows plainly that `in the first instance' this entity is unrelated to Others, and that of course it can still be `with' Others afterwards" (H. 120).\(^{46}\) Indeed, "the `they'" (H. 126), the anonymous `one' of normative interpretation, in its "publicness" (H. 127), is that which covers over Being through metaphysical language so as to make things "easy" for Dasein (H. 128): so as to allow Dasein to become "disburdened" (H. 127) of its "ownmost," finite "potentiality-for-Being" (H. 86, 144, 250) which, as Thel is beginning to understand, is its own essential meaninglessness. This lack of inherent meaning is carried throughout Dasein's existence and is usually expressed as the death Dasein always potentially is. When Dasein dies, which is always an inherent possibility, its world loses meaning. Heidegger tells us further that, in order for Dasein to exist authentically, it must "[Be]-towards-death" (H. 260),\(^{47}\) it must be towards "that possibility which is [its] ownmost, which is non-relational, and which is not to be outstripped" (H. 251). It is in this manner that, as authentically

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\(^{45}\) And, indeed, we can assume that neither would Thel be named if she did not leave the vale.

\(^{46}\) The former possibility ("individual Being-in-the-world") will be foregrounded in the first chapter while the latter ("Being `with' Others") will briefly become important in the first chapter with respect to Dasein's "historicality," and an explicit concern in chapter two as the "Being-with" and "Dasein-with" which are essential to Dasein in its very structure, and to Thel.

\(^{47}\) "Existence [Existenz]" (H. 303) or, as sometimes translated, "ex-istence" ("LH" 277) is "the standing in the clearing of Being" (277) through Understanding which characterizes Dasein. Here, therefore, authentically existing Dasein must constantly disclose the death which it is in its `there.'
existing, Dasein is, 'in the first instance,' individualized by its own Being. 48

While it is important to note that both Blake and Heidegger hold the individual as primary in existential and ontological matters, it is also important to realize that, at the same time, both also object to a reified selfhood, to the Self as rod or bowl. Indeed, as Blake's Milton, the poet-hero, tells his Spectre, Satan:

Thy purpose & the purpose of thy Priests & of thy Churches
Is to impress on men the fear of death; to teach
Trembling & fear, terror, constriction; abject selfishness
Mine is to teach Men to despise death & to go on
In fearless majesty annihilating Self, laughing to scorn
Thy Laws & terrors, shaking down thy Synagogues as webs

(M 38: 36-41; E 138)

For Blake, a reified self—that is, a 'self-point' which is substantialized as a representation to the point where it becomes more 'real' than anything else in its solidity—is the ultimate denial of the imagination, the 'fluid,' forgiving Self, which is able to transform fallen temporality into Eternity in its recognition of the infinite possibility which characterizes each moment and phenomenon.

In discussing this issue, Heidegger writes,

One of our first tasks will be to prove that if we posit an 'I' or subject as that which is proximally given, we shall completely miss the phenomenal content [Bestand] of Dasein. Ontologically, every idea of a 'subject' -- unless refined by a previous ontological determination of its basic character -- still posits the subjectum no matter how vigorous one's ontical protestations against the 'soul substance' or the 'reification of consciousness.'

(H. 46; quoted in Zimmerman 70)

Indeed, for the later Heidegger, Dasein is 'unselved' to the point where it is 'merely'

48 Heidegger's notion of 'death' will be described fully in chapter one.
"the necessary vehicle for the process of [Being's] self-unfolding" (Zimmerman 338).

For Heidegger, the authentic Self is the openness to the essential meaninglessness of one's own Dasein (this ground for Self allows for changing meaning), which makes it possible to take hold of given possibilities while realizing that they are not absolute. A substantial self, meanwhile, seemingly grounds Dasein as having its own meaning in its stasis and thereby prevents it from realizing its ownmost potentiality-for-Being. This parallel, incidentally, is why I have chosen to use Heidegger as my guide through The Book of Thel, and not, for instance Kierkegaard or Nietzsche. Both of these, latter thinkers, in their philosophies of will, hold (more) tightly to a subjectivistic Self.

Blake's and Heidegger's 'individualism,' then, is such that it does not (wish to) posit a 'self substance.' It is in this sense that, for both, in the world of the inauthentically existing person,

The Vegetative Universe, opens like a flower from the Earths centre:  
In which is Eternity. It expands in Stars to the Mundane Shell  
And there it meets Eternity again, both within and without.  
(J I: 13: 34-36; E 155-6)

In other words, if the abstraction which one experiences as the world, or 'Nature,' of Natural science and Natural religion is annihilated, the Eternity which is "within" mundane entities as that which is "contained" by them, and that which is "within" Dasein, will meet the Eternity which is "without" the world of everyday, Natural existence. This annihilation will destroy the Natural barrier of solidified truth, the "Vegetative Universe,"

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49 Zimmerman argues that Heidegger's ontological project is compromised by a tendency toward a humanistic Self and for that reason calls him, as Heidegger has called Nietzsche, "the last metaphysician" (315, ftn.).
which prevents the fulfilment of Eternity or authentic existence. In this manner, Eternal Being will fill the voids of Natural science and Natural religion, which are, for the inauthentic Self, the spaces between me, as a substantial Self, and the Things I see. This annihilation will thereby obliterate the distinction between subject and object which comes as a result of Natural abstraction. There is, therefore, for the authentically existing person, no substantial Self which stands outside the world it experiences once Eternity, or Being has been realized.

With these similarities between Blake's and Heidegger's ontologies which serve to point up their shared understanding of a shared question 'in mind,' I must now turn to Heidegger's notion of "repetition" (H. 385) in order to situate this study in the history of Blakean and Heideggerian scholarship. To quote Zimmerman, "repetition[, for Heidegger,] is the re-vitalization of a possibility by bringing to it what is peculiar to Dasein's own historical situation," or "the appropriation of a past possibility in term's of one's own current situation" (296). While this repetition must indeed lead to interpretive "violence," it can also, with sensitivity to the ontological issues involved, "keep" the possibilities "open" (Zimmerman 347) through which Being speaks in the 'earlier' text:

> It is true that in order to wrest from the actual words that which these words `intend to say,' every interpretation must necessarily resort to violence. This violence, however should not be confused with an action that is wholly arbitrary. The interpretation must be animated and guided by the power of an illuminative idea.

(Heidegger _Kantbuch_ 207; quoted in Zimmerman 267)

50 These "voids" are, of course, existential ones. Indeed, Descartes' material plenum is as much an existential void in its `Being-a-barrier,' as are the voids of Newton's system.
To put my explanation anecdotally, my "illuminative idea" for this thesis initially came from *The Book of Thel* itself and it is approximately that which is outlined at the outset of this introduction (3-8). Having then no background in Heidegger (I had read some Nietzsche and Sartre), I was directed his way as a means of answering certain questions I thought Thel and I shared;\(^5\) and I suppose, in a sense, that Thel has therefore been my guide through *Being and Time*. Having reached an understanding of Heidegger's phrasing of the *Seinsfrage* in this work,\(^5\) I now turn back to Thel's predicament, guided by a developed understanding of what I, originally, "only" intuitively understood to be her question, and with the intention of uncovering Thel's quest for an understanding of Being.

But before I get into my study proper, let me outline the course that this thesis will take. It will be guided by the following statement: "*The Book of Thel* is a dramatization of Thel's inquiry into the nature of her own Being as a point of entry into her questioning of Being as such, a quest which she carries out by disclosing and then interpreting her world as an "anxious question." Her eventual failure to reach an understanding of Being is a result of her inability to "cast off" the "they's" rationalizations in the face of anxiety and thereby to be "resolute" before Being. This leaves her in a situation of "untruth," or "inauthentic existence," wherein she exists as lost in public, metaphysical abstractions. This "lostness" is, however, necessarily characteristic of most of human existence.

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\(^5\) Thanks to Dr. David Clark for this direction. I have, however, only gone half the way to carrying out the study he suggested in which I would go on to Paul de Man's deconstruction of Being.

\(^5\) I must thank Dr. G. B. Madison and the members of the 1993-94 *McMaster Phenomenology Seminar* for their assistance in my coming to this understanding.
In order to carry this study out, in the first chapter I will focus on the first half of the term "Being-in-the-world," that is, "Being-in," with respect to Thel's quest: I will discuss Thel's situation in-the-world and how that situation discloses Thel's world as an 'anxious question,' with a view to Dasein's structure. For this reason, I will discuss at length the ontological assumptions of the poem, which an understanding of Heidegger helps to disclose. Therefore, in this first chapter, I will deal very little with the actual narrative 'motion' of the poem. It will be necessary to develop these assumptions in order to move to the 'story' of Thel's concern with Being itself.

In the second chapter, I will examine the second half of the ontological expression of Dasein's Being, "in-the-world," and how Thel's world 'answers back' to her in her "Being-with" and how these answers are therefore examples of various forms of "solicitude." Here, I will describe Thel's story. Also in the second chapter, I shall investigate Thel's failure to hold on to her phrasing of the Seinsfrage, which becomes evident when Thel discloses her very Being-in-the-world through fear rather than through anxiety and, consequently, sees it as a grave.

In conclusion, I will evaluate Thel's, Blake's, and Heidegger's phrasing of Heidegger's guiding question and show how the narrativity of The Book of Thel illuminates a failing in Being and Time.
Chapter One
Thel as Being-in

Once again, in this chapter, I will only discuss Blake's ontological presuppositions in having Thel ask the Seinsfrage as she does. It will be necessary to uncover and confirm these assumptions in order to discuss the narrative of Thel's struggle in chapter two.

Blake makes clear throughout The Book of Thel that Thel is 'in-the-world' as a Dasein as she asks the Seinsfrage. She is disclosing herself as her 'there' and her 'there' is thus very much herself.\(^1\) Thel sees "thro [her eyes] & not with [them]" (VLJ 95; E 555); she does not see with her vision solidified into the functioning of a physical organ--which is itself necessarily removed from the field of perception--but in permitting her 'environment' and 'imagination' to interact in such a way as to allow them to become one--through her eye.\(^2\) Thel's "Eye altering alters all" (E 476) when informed by her imagination; that is, her eye functions in a "complex phenomenological interchange between inside and outside in which the verb 'altering' describes both what [her] eye does to ... object[s] and what happens to [her] eye in the process" (Rajan SR 212) when she sees imaginatively. "As the Eye--Such the Object" (Blake Annot to Reynolds. E 634)

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\(^1\) Dasein's 'there,' again, is the "clearing within which beings can present themselves" (Zimmerman 16) to Dasein, which is itself composed of this 'there' (Da) and its Being (sein).

\(^2\) Birenbaum glosses this passage in the following manner: "To see with the eye would be to use it as an instrument that examines an object; to see through it is to see in the manner of seeing" (135; note 4). See also Clark (178), and Frosch (28).
and vice versa.

In fact, in the course of this chapter, I will show that Blake implies that the eye, through which the imagination sees, and its `object' are properly disclosures in the same process of lighting up, and that there is therefore no sense in distinguishing between subject (eg. the eye) and object (eg. the Lilly) in the first place. As I will explain further, but with respect to other examples, Thel's physical `eye' is often less a part of the imaginative disclosure of her `there,' of her Self as a Dasein, than are the words of the Lilly, the Cloud, the Worm, and the Clod of Clay. Indeed, when Thel sees `in the manner of seeing,' that is, as a Dasein, she is mostly unaware of her organs and they are therefore most often not a part of her identity, of her world. Dasein is the way in which the `object' appears in its `there,' whether that `object' be Dasein's own eye or a Lilly. It is in this sense that "Man, the fully risen faculty that does not exist apart from its activity of imagination, is alone universal" (Frosch 182; my emphasis). Indeed, it becomes apparent that Blake sets this dynamic firmly in motion from the outset of my Heideggerian reading of the poem when we look at the title page with Dasein in mind.

Let me begin with a quick sketch of a few of the title page's implications in order to situate myself in this Heideggerian reading of the poem. In the composition, a female figure holding a shepherd's crook stands in the bottom left corner underneath a weeping willow which, in its drooping, frames both the poem's title and the composition's field.

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3 Frosch also claims that "Man['s]' emanation, the work of "His" imagination, is "constantly manifesting herself anew, always `descending out of heaven'" (182). I think Heidegger would agree if one's `emanation' is the same as Dasein's `there'--a claim for which there is ample evidence inasmuch as, for Blake, one's emanation must be owned in order to realize Eternity while an abstracted emanation is the damning `Nature.'
of action. In the bottom right corner, two figures, one male and one female, 'embrace,' as two flowers, rooted further to the right, open their hungry mouths in the figures' direction; a third flower crosses over to the shepherd figure's side and bows in front of her. The lettering of the title appears over these 'embracing' figures and is composed of four types: a small, chiselled "THE"; a similarly rigid but italicized "BOOK" which leans slightly to the right and is shaded perspectively; a flowing script which characterizes the title's "of"; and a large "THEL" which is similar in its lettering to the "BOOK" but is vertically straight and appears to be much more solid in its shading. On these letters sit various figures, some reading, some playing instruments, while light foliage wraps itself, vine-like, around the "THEL," and emanates, flame-like, from the "BOOK" and the "of." Two birds and a figure fly in the spaces between the words.

If, as most commentators have it, the figure in the bottom left corner of the composition is Thel (see Erdman IB 34, and Mellor 196)--we can indeed identify her by the crook she holds, with which, up to a moment ago, she has been leading "round [her] sunny flocks" (T 1: 1; E 3)--then Thel stands both aloof from the action of her `there' (itself indicated by the arching branch) as Thel the figure, and `within' it, represented by her name as part of the title. On a closer look, however, one can see that the position in which Blake has `Thel the figure' standing is rather unusual. With one thigh pushed forward, in front of the willow trunk, and with shoulders leaning slightly back, behind the tree, her posture allows for interpretations in which she stands both outside `the field
of action' and within it. If we do take the composition within the border provided by the branch as depicting her 'there,' then the figure of Thel, as she who constitutes her 'there' as her Self and not other Daseins (H. 41), is separate from the action in which she engages; while in ontological terms, her body, and indeed her Self, are themselves part of her 'there,' the field in which beings—including herself—are disclosed by her Being-in-the-world.

Meanwhile, in a manner which strengthens my position, the branch which borders the field of action mirrors the curve of Thel's crook and, as such, seems to symbolize that her 'there' is in her charge as her flock has recently been. Indeed, this metaphor, which calls to mind the Christian pastoral tradition, is appropriate to describe Thel's relationship to her 'there' inasmuch as her 'there' is a scattering of her identity under the influence of the 'lighting up' of Being as Thel's Being-in-the-world. The 'there' of the poem, then, is, for the Heideggerian, an extension of Thel's person inasmuch as it falls under

4 I think Dr. David Clark pointed this unusual position out during his 1993 undergraduate seminar on Blake.

5 ...that is, in the existential-ontological process of constitution...

6 Blake, I think, leaves room for a reified Self in his deconstruction of the Natural world as is evident in his criticism of one Law for the lion and ox in The Marriage of Heaven and Hell which I have outlined in my introduction. Indeed, in my allowing for this figure standing partially outside the action of her 'there' is also a reflection of the source of Zimmerman's criticism of Heidegger's metaphysics in which the former claims that the latter implies a metaphysical Self in his description of resoluteness (see Zimmerman 315; fn. 26). In order to be resolute in the face of the public so that one can begin to 'unself,' one, paradoxically, needs a Self which allows one to break off from the easy 'listening away' which characterizes Dasein's everydayness.

7 See the first epigram at the beginning of the next chapter.

Also, in his "Letter on Humanism," Heidegger tells us that our proper role as human beings is as the "shepherd[s] of Being" (288; cf. Zimmerman 338).
her influence in her 'Understanding' and thereby expresses her identity.\(^8\)

Further, as Donald Pearce notes, the bending branch of the willow tree is "clearly an enlarged version of Thel's shepherd's crook, itself a (reversed) mark of interrogation" (29 ftn.). This seems to indicate the manner in which Thel's 'there' is under her influence. I would, however, alter Pearce's interpretation slightly since it seems to me that Thel's state-of-mind is one of an 'anxious questioning' rather than of a composed and masterful "interrogation" as one can readily see in the fitful and cluttered articulation of Thel's concern in her initial lament.\(^9\) And, I think I can be safe in saying that this 'anxious questioning' of her 'there' has to do with the Seinsfrage inasmuch as my interpretation of Thel's initial lament casts that passage as a questioning of the ground on which Thel stands as an existent, and inasmuch as she repeats this question throughout the poem, showing that it is not just a 'passing fancy' contained to a single episode.

Indeed, Thel expresses her questioning of the simple priority of beings over Being in each episode of the work. As I have shown, in her motto, Thel asks about the appropriateness of representing Wisdom and Love as being 'contained' in rods and bowls. Then, in her initial lament, as I have also already shown, she describes her Being which

\(^8\) As I have said, Dasein's 'there' is the disclosure of its identity to itself.

The reader will recall that I have used (capital 'U') Understanding to signify Dasein's process of disclosure as a whole.

\(^9\) Birenbaum has found another example of such a state-of-mind in Blake which might, by comparison, illuminate the mood of Thel's questioning. He says, "the questions in 'The Tyger' mythologize, precisely and vividly, a pointedly nonvisual image that projects the tone of questioning, a tone beyond awe and short of horror, at once pained and exhilarated, intensely enlivened by its own daring in pressing the questions as far as they will go" (65).
is "born but to smile and fall" (1: 7; E 3) as Being "like a watry bow" (4) in its nebulosity. To be sure, since Thel is aware that she has 'in' herself the certain potential to not-be at an indefinite time in the future, that is, since any meanings which she projects can be instantly meaningless at any time, she projects this not-yet of death in her understanding and is therefore characterized in her Being by a certain, indefinite, immanent potential to not-be. And again, this lament, in turn, retroactively points up the uncertainty of the rod and bowl as containers for anything, now including Being.

Later, after the Lilly has tried to quell the questioning of her initial lament, Thel reiterates her concern, claiming that she is "like a faint cloud kindled at the rising sun" (2: 11; E 4), and that, to clarify this preceding image, she has the potential to "vanish from [her] pearly throne" (12) at any time. She asks the Lilly, "who shall find my place" (12) in a world-system of stable and definite representations such as those of silver rods and golden bowls.

Later still, after the Cloud has tried to distract Thel from her concern by describing his and the "fair eyed dew['s]" (3: 13; E 4) "use" (22), feeding flowers (16), and after Thel's own falling into the Cloud's curiosity (17-20), Thel repeats her concern about the 'cloudiness' of her Being,

But Thel delights in these no more because I fade away,
And all shall say, without a use this shining woman liv'd,
Or did she only live. to be at death the food of worms.

(3:21-24; E 5)

Again, since Thel believes that she has no definite "use" in life, the uncertainty of the meaning of her Being comes to her attention. She sees that, since she gains meaning only at death, she might better say that the meaning of her Being is in not-Being. Once again,
the line between Being and not-Being becomes unclear in Thel's understanding.

When the Worm arises (3: 30), Thel tells this character that she sees him or her "wrapped in the Lilly's leaf" (4: 3), an image which recalls those of substantial support in her initial lament. Thel says further that she sees the Worm with "none to answer, none to cherish thee with mothers smiles" (6), again, repeating her concern with the uncertainty of existence.

Finally, after the Clod's reassurance that "we live not for ourselves" (4: 10; E 5) and are therefore grounded in the immortality of divinity, Thel remembers her preceding laments:

And I complained in the mild air, because I fade away,
And lay me down in thy cold bed, and leave my shining lot.

(4: 12-13; E 5)

Once again, Thel holds on to her perception of her fading, of her Being a "watry bow," in the world of rods and bowls.

Because of this `holding on' to her concern, which is itself initially indicated by the questions of her motto and then refined by her initial lament, Thel's `there' indeed seems to be `framed' by an `anxious question' as it `appears' in the poem proper. The entire poem is thus informed by the questioning of Thel's initial lament. If, however, we disclose Heidegger's notion of "state-of-mind" as contributive to the constitution of Dasein's `there' in the way I have described in my introduction with respect to my computer, these elements of the title page to which Pearce points will become relevant to those of the preceding discussion of `the imaginative eye' in Blake, and to my Heideggerian reading of the poem as a whole.
As I have shown in my introduction, for Heidegger, "state-of-mind" (or, in Ballard's translation, "situatedness"), understanding, and discourse constitute Dasein's 'there' equiprimordially. As he says with respect to state-of-mind, the category into which Thel's 'anxious questioning' falls,

\[\text{the mood has already disclosed, in every case, Being-in-the-world as a whole, and makes it possible first of all to direct oneself towards something.}\]

Having a mood is not related to the psychical in the first instance, and is not itself an inner condition which then reaches forth in an enigmatical way and puts its mark on Things or persons. It is in this that the second essential characteristic of states-of-mind shows itself ... state-of-mind is a basic existential species of [Dasein's and the world's] disclosedness, because this disclosedness itself is essentially Being-in-the-world. (H. 137)

That is, the state-of-mind in which a Dasein is in-the-world determines the very nature of that world, the "\`that-it-is'" (H. 135) of that Dasein's 'there,' as it initially appears. Meanwhile, the psychological states or moods which Thel may or may not acknowledge 'within' herself--such as her fear of death and the uneasiness she experiences with respect to talk about sexual matters, which have been so well documented\[\text{11}\]--are subsequent to,

\[\text{---}10\text{---}I\text{ must note here that although this chapter will focus on Dasein's Being-in as an almost solipsistic structure which however is given its Understanding by the `they,' in truth it is, as I shall show in chapter two, very much a function of Being-with--to the point that Others "are those from whom, for the most part, one does not distinguish oneself--those among whom one is too" (H. 118). While this split in my discussion may seem misleading at first, it is one which Heidegger himself makes in his addressing of issues in a categorical structure. This `solipsism' is also necessary in order to account for, among other things, the "resoluteness" of authentic existence. Again, this split will be repaired in chapter two.\]

\[\text{---}11\text{---}While most commentators see the limitations of a reading focusing on Thel's fear of death only, see Berger (326), Carr (78), and Frye (233) for useful discussions. On sexuality, see for instance Heppner (94), Linkin (69), Wilkie (73-84), and Frosch on Thel and the cult of chastity (89) and, most usefully, on reawakened sexuality (159f).\]
and indeed result from, the mood in which her 'there' is disclosed. To be sure, Dasein's state-of-mind discloses Dasein's 'there' in a particular mood before psychological interpretation of that 'there'--which, in modern times, places moods in Dasein--can even begin.

But further, for Heidegger, state-of-mind, in its functioning in the constitution of Dasein's 'there,' is also ontologically prior to "ontical" understanding "in the sense of one possible kind of cognizing among others (as distinguished, for instance from 'explaining')" (H. 143), because

[p]henomenally, we would wholly fail to recognize both what mood discloses and how it discloses, if that which is disclosed were to be compared with what Dasein is acquainted with, knows, and believes 'at the same time' when it has such a mood. (H.135)

To be sure, state-of-mind discloses the "'that-it-is'" of Dasein's 'there' while its "whence" and "whither," or its meaning in interpretation, remain "veiled" (H. 135). In other words, the functioning of Thel's state-of-mind of 'anxious questioning' in the ontological constitution of her 'there' occurs ontologically prior to Thel's ontical understanding and misunderstanding of her world, her (ontical) psychological states, and the (ontical) communication which occurs between her and the other speakers, and indeed informs all of these.

Further still, and this will become important in the second chapter of this thesis, these moods "disclose Dasein in its thrownness, and--proximally and for the most part--in

12 ...i.e., that which occurs subsequent to the understanding which discloses Dasein's 'there' along with state-of-mind and discourse.

"Ontical," meanwhile, means 'of that which is on the level of beings, as opposed to the ontological level of Being.'
the manner of an evasive turning away" (H. 136); that is, states-of-mind are means of covering over the nullity which, according to Heidegger, underlies Dasein's "thrown, factual, finite existence" (Zimmerman 95), and which, therefore, has the potential to expose Dasein's existence for what it is upon this nullity's disclosure. States-of-mind provide Dasein with meaning which seems to be Dasein's own and which seems to be grounded in 'the world' as absolute truth which the world 'speaks.' Ontologically, neither of these appearances are true. Dasein's Being-in-the-world is, rather, null in its ability to disclose any thrown meaning. These states-of-mind thereby disclose Dasein's nullity in a negative sense, that is, as 'covered over' by positive yet ungrounded meaning.

To have a "thrown, factual, finite existence," meanwhile, means to exist, to stand in the light of one's Being, in a way prescribed by the 'throw' of one's historical situation which has always already happened, and to be unable to do anything but carry the "throw" of this existence out because this existence is what one "factically" is.13 Thel cannot choose, for instance, to have been brought up as masculine instead of as feminine in her existence as a Dasein.14 Nor can she, if we assume that she exists in a period and place close to Blake's, choose to be a stand-up comic or a samurai warrior. And finally, nor can she, according to Heidegger, have a non-metaphysical state-of-mind. These possibilities will not even 'show up' in her 'there' since they are not of her historical situation. As Heidegger would say, Thel is the "Being of [her] basis," not the "basis of

13 "Facticity" is the "'that it is and has to be'" (H. 134) of Dasein's thrown existence.

14 I borrow this example from Dreyfus (307).
[her] Being" (H. 285), and she must, therefore, exist in the way which has been given to her by the `throw' of existence. She is always already "guilty" (H. 281) of her finitude as a Dasein because she can never `come clean' in the sense of escaping her `thrownness' and disclosing the null Being-in-the-world which is truly her own as itself.

But Thel's mood of `anxious questioning' is of an unusual sort: it is one which, while it is necessarily a turning away from the nullity of Thel's Being-in-the-world, works to `hold the way open' for a confrontation with that very insignificance in its questioning of the absolutism of a received, metaphysical Understanding. And, as Heidegger says in his "The Question Concerning Technology,"

[q]uestioning builds a way.... The way is a way of thinking. All ways of thinking, more or less perceptibly, lead through language in a manner that is extraordinary. We shall be questioning concerning technology, and in so doing we should like to prepare a free relationship to it. (3)

Later, he states that "questioning is the piety of thought" (35). For the Heidegger of `The Question...,' questioning is the state-of-mind and the ontical activity which prepare for a disclosure of Being. While I shall say, following the Heidegger of Being and Time, that questioning is an ontical activity and therefore `merely' operates on the level of constructions `on top of primordial disclosure,' it is clear, in the case of The Book of Thel, that `questioning' as the state-of-mind which belongs to the activity of questioning as an ontological foundation can open the way to a disclosure of Being. Here, in this identification of questioning as a possible opening of the way to Being, Blake provides a useful illumination of the Heidegger of Being and Time, an illumination which Heidegger himself echoes in later works. We must not forget, however, that even Thel's
state-of-mind of 'anxious questioning' is given to her as a thrown, public possibility. It can, therefore, be anyone's, and is not grounded in the world as such. Because this 'anxious questioning' nevertheless appears to Thel as being her own and as being grounded in the world, it covers over the nullity of her Being-in-the-world.

Indeed,--and this is important to an understanding of Thel's quest as an asking of the Seinsfrage--as Zimmerman says, "[e]ven in Being and Time [that is, before Heidegger's kehre] of course, the suggestion appears that state-of-mind can involve the average approach to Being of a society" (96; ftn. 11). We can find this suggestion in Heidegger's discussion of Dasein's thrown states-of-mind when it is combined with that of the 'equiprimordiality' of state-of-mind, understanding, and discourse, both of which are described in this thesis. Briefly, since Dasein's thrown states-of-mind are intertwined with Dasein's thrown understanding of Being, a Dasein's state-of-mind will invariably involve that Dasein's thrown understanding of Being. If the dominant, that is, the "average approach to Being" is one which discloses Dasein's world metaphysically, that is, as a place where beings are first and foremost 'simply self-evident' 'containers' for Being, children will be 'socialized,' that is, Daseins will be 'constructed,' with a state-of-mind which, while it will have other 'properties,' invariably discloses the world in this metaphysical mood. Rods and bowls will always appear as 'containers' for Wisdom and of Love. These Daseins will thereby pass Being over. Indeed a Dasein from a metaphysical society will not be able to escape this state-of-mind since it will, of course, carry out a 'thrown, factual, finite existence.'

By way of a qualification, in arguing that Thel is of a 'metaphysical society' in
her historicality, I am only speaking to issues which relate directly to `the history of Being.' While I think it is true that many historical matters are fundamentally determined by the `average approach to Being of a society,,'¹⁵ this is not meant to imply that studies of Thel's `material historicality,' such as Murray's, are of any little value. In the interest of focus, however, since I am arguing that Thel's `anxious questioning' concerns the nature of Being, I will keep discussion of Thel's historicality to thrown, `average' approaches to issues of fundamental ontology.

Certainly, it seems as if Thel's state-of-mind invariably involves "the average approach to Being of [her] society" but does so as she attempts to expose this approach as an approach in attempting to leave her `purely pastoral' community. Indeed, as I have said, Thel cannot escape this community completely as long as she is as `having been.' Thel, since she is a thrown Dasein, still discloses her world as metaphysical. What is `free' about her disclosure is, however, that this world shows up as questionably metaphysical. She `puts two thrown modes of Being together' in order to gain her limited freedom: that which I will shall `Being-metaphysical' and that which I shall call `Being-a-questioner.'

Indeed, Thel can never escape this average approach, for all three moments of the disclosure of her `there' will always be given to her by her thrown historicality. This is why Thel cannot say that she suspects that she might be something other than a metaphysical being without forming her questions from within received metaphysical

¹⁵ Indeed, I do not think I am unjustified in saying, for instance, that the French and American revolutions are results of a preceding, `questioning' state-of-mind with respect to Being like Thel's, except more widely spread, and not the other way around.
language which expresses Being in terms of beings such as "lotus[es]" and "watry bow[s]." She thereby passes over a `direct' phrasing of the question of Being. Indeed, for Thel, there is no alternative to disclosing metaphysical beings. She can only lift metaphysics up to questioning, to its possible disclosure as an approach to Being. She can only ask, `if I am something other than a metaphysical being, for which I have no name or expression, what meaning might I have in a metaphysical world?' This question, however, `lights up' metaphysics in a new way inasmuch as it becomes an approach which might not be absolute in itself.

Similarly, as I have said, "Thel's Motto," which begins the poem in most copies,\(^{16}\) expresses Thel's state-of-mind's attempt to negotiate the metaphysical tradition into which it has been thrown:

\begin{verbatim}
Does the Eagle know what is in the pit?  
Or wilt thou go ask the Mole:  
Can Wisdom be put in a silver rod?  
Or Love in a golden bowl? \(T i: 1-4; E 3\)
\end{verbatim}

Here we now have a more explicit recognition of some of the paths of questioning I have been describing and an explicit indication of Thel's lifting of metaphysics to a new light. As I have said, for Thel's (and Blake's and Heidegger's) contemporaries, Wisdom and Love (and Being), if they are to be understood, if they are to be `known,' must be

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\(^{16}\) The motto begins the poem in all extant copies except N and O (Rajan \textit{SR} 241). Indeed, this dynamic is also apparent in the copies in which the motto appears after the sixth plate inasmuch as it could prompt the reader to reflect on these presuppositions with a reading of the poem in mind--and even more so when we take into consideration the fact that the motto appears \textit{both} before and \textit{after} the poem proper in the history of the poem's printing. In this view, the metaphysical tradition becomes truly oppressive in its surrounding of the poem.
manifested in (in the spatial sense of 'inhood') stable beings—that is, Wisdom and Love (and Being) must be contained in substantial entities if they are to be meaningful. And, for metaphysics, this 'knowledge,' if it is to warrant that classification, must be absolute. Thel's state-of-mind, meanwhile, as I have described, begins to question the competence of these 'objects' as 'containers' for Being at the outset of the poem proper. This begins to light up metaphysics as an approach which cannot give absolute answers. Indeed, implicit in this questioning of the reliability of 'containers' is Thel's challenge to the positivity of such ontological 'truths' as might be advanced by the solidity of the representations in a 'Wisdom in rod' or a 'Love in bowl' scenario.17 Blake shows this questioning of absolutism explicitly in Thel's queries about the differences between the eagle's and the mole's perspectives: "Does the Eagle know what is in the pit? Or wilt thou go ask the Mole."18 And Thel continues both of these lines of questioning throughout the poem. Indeed, if metaphysics cannot answer these questions so as to

17 Heidegger does say that "language is the house of Being" (271), that "[t]hinking works at building the house of Being ... [but that n]evertheless, thought never creates the house of Being. Thought accompanies historical existence..." and that "from the materially understood essence of Being we shall some day be more easily able to think what 'house' and 'dwelling' are" ("LH" 298). He also says that "language is the dwelling of the essence of man" (300). For Heidegger, though, a 'house' is not a 'container' but an "abode" in which one "dwell" (300).

18 To quote Beer, "Blake is using the eagle and the mole to represent imaginative and physical experience respectively, and to assert that neither can be a substitute for the other: each complements 'lame philosophy' in a different fashion" (200). I am not convinced that the eagle represents "imaginative" experience and that the mole stands for the "physical" variety. It seems to me, at this point, that they simply symbolise differing perspectives. The rest of Beer's analysis, however, I agree with.

The culmination of this challenge occurs in the grave scene of plate six in which different perspectives disclose different questions 'in' the same words.
render them meaningless, then metaphysical representations show up in a new and questionable light.

Again, Thel's is a very unusual mood indeed. Even though her state-of-mind is concealing her ontological `guilt' through her very having-a-mood, both of these challenges to the metaphysical `covering over' of the question of Being with `simply substantial' beings which I mentioned above (that to the solidity of substances and that to the absoluteness of metaphysical truths) are also present as a foundation in all of Thel's ontical questions about beings. These ontical challenges are part of a continued disclosure of Thel's thrown Understanding.

Asking questions is a form of interpretation and is therefore, as I have indicated with respect to state-of-mind and psychical moods, an `ontical' operation; that is, it is carried out on the level of beings. This asking questions is opposed to the `anxious questioning' of Thel's state-of-mind which actually discloses her `there' and is therefore `ontological.' But this is not to say that Dasein creates something different `on top of' the disclosure of its `there.' Indeed, for Heidegger,

[i]n interpretation, understanding does not become something different. It becomes itself. Such interpretation is grounded existentially in understanding; the latter does not arise from the former. Nor is interpretation the acquiring of information about what is understood; it is rather the working-out of possibilities projected in understanding. (H. 148)

Interpretation, then, while it is carried out `after' the initial disclosure of a `there,' is not something which can be experienced as something other than understanding. It is, rather, the explicit recognition of "whatever involvement that which is encountered can have" (H. 148). This development is carried out in a `hermeneutic circle' in which what is disclosed
in Dasein's `there' is taken up into Dasein's interpretive "fore-structure" (H. 151) and then worked out in terms of the thrown possibilities which Dasein has at its disposal, that is, in its `there.' In interpretation, therefore, I actually, consciously consider what I have disclosed as my `there' in terms of that disclosure. In fact, Heidegger says that interpretation is a function of understanding's "own possibility--that of developing itself" (H. 148). Perhaps Damrosch sums this dynamic up best when he claims with respect to 'Blake as mystic:'

...every mystic is guided by cultural assumptions, and often by specific programs of religious discipline, to anticipate what he will experience and to organize it even as it occurs in the categories of his tradition. And, if this is so, then a philosophical explanation, however paradoxical its language may be, is not so much a translation after the fact as an interpretation of the experience within the categories that governed it. (50)\(^1\)

So, regardless of whether or not she is a mystic, Thel's existence as a Dasein--in its disclosure of a `there' and in its interpretation of that `there'--is completely "[set] upon" (Heidegger "Question" 24; my emphasis) by the metaphysical "with-world" (H. 118) or `culture' into which she is `socialized' or `thrown.' It is `set upon,' however, in a manner which is starting on its way to a disclosure of Thel's `Being-in-the-world as such' through `anxious questioning.'

With all of this--that is, with the historical nature of the three moments of the constitution of Thel's `there' and that of her interpretations--in mind, we can understand Thel's situation better when we say with Blake that "the Prolific would cease to be

\(^1\) He also says that "Blake had a profound understanding of this truth, and his myth is a radical exploration of [this] symbolic meaning of human experience" (50-51).
Prolific unless the Devourer as a sea received the excess of his delights" (*MHH* 16; E 39). In other words, in this case, the `product' of those who work to stretch the bounds--the permitted articulatable meanings--of a language must be limited by the restrictions of past usage of that language in order for it to have any persuasive force in the linguistic community or `public.' Utterances must be limited by convention in order for them to have any intelligible, literal--which is to say, lexical or `thrown'--meaning. Indeed, what Blake is describing through Thel's interaction with received meaning is the functioning of what G. B. Madison calls a "natural language."

For Madison, "[t]he meaning of an utterance in natural language is often fluid and capable of further development because the meaning of words is ambiguous or polyvalent" while, as he says with Copi, "any rules which may be formulated are merely descriptive of past usage, not prescriptive for the future" (197). He later quotes Copi as saying that these rules introduce the "order" necessary for all meaning (197) and, as I will add, correspond to the normative rules which the public, or "the `they' [das Man]" (H. 126-130) sets forth in `delivering Dasein over' to ways of disclosing its `there.' In this conception, the "further development of a natural language" is achieved through the "fabrication of metaphors" (197) which function by extending ... literal meaning; [a metaphor] explains the new and strange by linking up with and likening itself to what is already known, to what is

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20 We cannot properly say that the linguistic utterances of Dasein are its "product" because what Dasein says is (an expression of) what it *lives through*, not what it `manufactures.'

21 As Ricoeur says, "...one must dissociate the notion of literal meaning from that of proper meaning. Any lexical value whatsoever is a literal meaning" (*RM* 188).
old and familiar. To coin a metaphor is to sally forth against the unknown, to capture it, and to force it back within the bounds (clôture) of a belief system. (199)

In other words, metaphor destroys literal meaning; it creates a "semantic impertinence" in order for its language to reconstitute itself around a new meaning. This in turn allows the user of the metaphor to understand what is described in a new way.22 The articulatable meaning of the natural language is thereby stretched as the ambiguity and polyvalency of its individual terms are exploited.

It is this strategy which Thel's thrown, "anxious questioning" employs in acting as the ontological underpinning for Thel's ontical interpretation's expression:

Ah! Thel is like a watry bow, and like a parting cloud,  
Like a reflection in a glass. like shadows in the water.  
Like dreams of infants. like a smile upon an infants face,  
Like the doves voice, like transient day, like music in the air;  
(T 1: 8-11; E 3; my emphasis)23

Since Thel's thrown mode of discourse is only able to express meaningful Being in terms of "simply self-evident," static, substantialized beings which "simply contain" that Being, Thel's "anxious questioning" must constitute its suspicion that Thel is in fact not a

22 Indeed, linguistic 'meaning' means meaning for the "'they'-self [Man-selbst]" (H. 266-268) or, as Dreyfus translates, the "'one'-self" (239).

While there are many other theories on the functioning of metaphor, I will only address this one since it seems most able to illuminate the language of Thel's questions and coincides with the rest of the theoretical material of this essay.

23 We must remember here that, in its equiprimordiality with the other three moments of disclosive Being-in, "[a] state-of-mind always has its understanding, even if it merely keeps it suppressed" (H. 143), and that discourse is "existentially equiprimordial with state-of-mind and understanding" (H. 161; emphasis omitted). For these reasons, Thel's state-of-mind can use language in language's discursive, that is, ontological foundation which we see here expressed ontically.
simply self-evident,' static substance in her Being but something less fixed and solid through simile, a species of metaphor, on the level of discourse. This metaphoric dynamic prevents Thel’s state-of-mind from escaping received conceptions inasmuch as it must build its articulation with the material of its metaphysically thrown ‘having been.’ Indeed, her thrown, ‘anxious questioning’ must compare Thel to ‘emanations’ of substantive beings in order to articulate its hunch. It must claim that Thel is "like a watry bow," for instance, in order to say that her Being is something which is not like the metaphysically posited, simply self-evident Being which is most readily expressed as a rod or as a bowl. Meanwhile, in saying that she is "like a watry bow," her state-of-mind is also making clear that Thel is not a "watry bow," that is, that Thel is unlike a "watry bow" in contexts other than the one in which it is ‘telling’ here--for instance in

...and indeed metaphor, for instance, in her motto.

I disagree with Heppner when he says that "Thel, within the structure of the poem, refuses to accept metaphor as a key to her identity, and persists in expressing the intangibility of her identity by means of anxious similes" (86). If Thel were to say she that she is a "watry bow," we, as readers, would still understand her figure as I describe on this page--and so would Thel. Indeed, this figure would still function according to the ‘is/ is not’ ontology of metaphor inasmuch as its two terms would still be functions of their past and mutually exclusive, public use. Indeed, metaphor provides no "key" in itself.

I also disagree with Heppner when he says that "Thel experiences her consciousness as an image or rainbow in the air because it is not rooted in acts, because it is not realized as a Use" (Heppner 89). Thel’s interpretation of her ‘anxious questioning’ is as much an activity as is running or deciding to change one’s life.

What is especially interesting about this speech of Thel’s is that it is figurative language spoken by a poetic figure which is thus of a similar insubstantiality to that of the figures which the speech describes. In this way, Blake shows that Thel indeed has something to worry about.
existing as something other than a manifestation of `simply substantial' being.\textsuperscript{26}

To be sure, even though a rainbow seems to be something other than a `simply substantial' being in and of itself, in order to make it intelligible we, as metaphysical, must claim that it is a manifestation of, for instance, `simply substantial' water droplets. We all know that water `simply is' and that, therefore, so is a rainbow. In this way, a "watry bow" is, actually, `simply substantial' in the metaphysical sense. Indeed, in calling the rainbow a `watry bow' Thel's state-of-mind makes this metaphysical underpinning clear. The same can be said for the infant's smile and dream in that the metaphysically substantial infant becomes the foundation for these `incorporeal vapours' in our metaphysical understanding. Thel's `anxious questioning,' however, places Thel's Self (which is usually considered a substance in metaphysics) on the level of these `emanations' and asks that it be understood as a Self as such. It asks that we imagine what it would be like to be such an `emanation' without a foundation. This, in turn, causes Thel (and us) to consider Thel's state-of-mind's images of normally metaphysical foundations (as expressed in interpretation), such as the infant, as somehow existing without metaphysical foundations. She helps us on our way to this consideration by choosing fragile or transitory images for foundations. In this way, Thel's ontological `anxious questioning' opens a space, a `leeway,' in which Thel's interpretation can express this `anxious questioning' of metaphysics for which there is, in her world, no other vehicle for understanding or expression.

\textsuperscript{26} The word "telling" indicates an ontological "Articulation" and is Dreyfus's translation for the German "Rede" (Dreyfus 224).
Thus, it is in this relation to linguistic limitation that Thel—and indeed Blake and Heidegger (since they, too, are thrown, factical, and historical beings)—work in their questioning, and it is thereby that they `hold the way open for Being.' To be sure, it is from within this limitation by received tradition, in the form of received discourse and language, that their questioning constitutes and interprets their worlds.

All of this having been said, I must not deny that, as a reader, I am necessarily introducing elements of my own, thrown `having been' into my interpretation of Thel's constitution and interpretation of her `there.' Indeed, I am—obviously—introducing understandings projected by my `having been' a student of phenomenological hermeneutics `into the poem as a whole' by way of my foundational interpretation of Thel's initial lament. Of the danger involved in this necessary process of appropriation, Heidegger says the following:

... in our interpretation ... our first, last, and constant task is never to allow our [interpretive fore-structures]... to be presented to us by fancies and popular conceptions, but rather to make the scientific theme secure by working out these fore-structures in terms of the things themselves. (H. 153)

In other words, and to apply this passage to my study, since this thesis is an interpretation of a poem which has shown itself to be open to an indefinite number of explanations, since all of these explanations necessitate some understanding of `having been' from without the literal poem, and since I cannot have access to Blake's actual intentions, I must make sure of two things: that my interpretation of Thel's words coincides with evidence from the rest of the poem in such a way as to allow the work coherence `in its own terms,' and that my interpretation persuades my reader of its appropriateness when
its presuppositions are laid bare. For success in terms of this latter requirement, I have advanced what I think is a sufficiently strong argument for the appropriateness of a Heideggerian reading of *The Book of Thel* and I must continue to take care that my reading is coherent in itself and thereby continues to be appropriate; while, to satisfy the former standard, that is, the need for coherence in my reading with respect to the written poem, what I now intend to show is that, *throughout the poem*, Blake presents his reader with elements which `reflect' Thel's concern, and which, at the same time, seem to be constituents of her world as a `there.' While these elements will of course also be participants in my interpretation, the proportion of Blake's poem which my interpretation explains effectively must stand as persuasive evidence in the eyes of my reader in that it shows that I am interpreting *The Book of Thel* "itself ... in so far as it enters into the intelligibility of Dasein" (H. 152; my emphasis); for this is, of course, the only manner in which a human being can get to `things.'

To begin, Christopher Heppner notes that

[i]n each episode, Thel meets her own thoughts and even her own words in substantial form, and the whole process of the poem is really a self-interpretation, partly in the guise of a critique of the rhetorical forms of Thel's language. (86)

For Heppner, the Lilly, the Cloud, the Worm, and the Clod of Clay are all Thel's thought and speech substantialized, and, I think, here we can partially agree with him. Thel's world is, in Heideggerian terms, necessarily the result of her disclosure of her `there,' in part, through discourse. If language is discourse's expression (H. 160) then, yes, in a reductive analysis, these characters are the `products' of Thel's words when we take her utterances together with her state-of-mind and understanding; and if her thought
is intelligible, that is, articulated, then so too is it, as an expression of discourse, the
development of the means of disclosing or uncovering these creatures in Thel's world
through interpretation. And, indeed, as Heidegger says with reference to the "sight"
[Sicht] which Dasein in each case is, and in a manner of which Heppner would surely
approve,

[t]he sight which is related primarily and on the whole to existence we call
`transparency' [Durchsichtigkeit]. We choose this term to designate
`knowledge of the Self' in a sense which is well understood, so as to
indicate that here it is not a matter of perceptually tracking down and
inspecting a point called the `Self,' but rather one of seizing upon the full
disclosedness of Being-in-the-world throughout all the constitutive items
which are essential to it, and doing so with understanding. In existing,
entities sight `themselves' [sichtet `sich'] only in so far as they have
become transparent to themselves with equal primordiality in those items
which are constitutive of their existence: their Being-alongside the world
and their Being-with Others. (H. 146)

This is to say that Dasein can interpret its Self only by interpreting that which appears in
its `there' (which, as I have shown, is constituted through state-of-mind, understanding,
and discourse), whether this refers to those non-Dasein-like beings which appear in
Dasein's "Being-alongside" its world, or to Other Daseins which appear in Dasein's
"Being-with Others." We can say, then, that "Thel meets her own thoughts and even her
own words in substantial form" and that "the whole process of the poem is really [in part]
a self-interpretation, partly in the guise of a critique of the rhetorical forms of Thel's
language."

Heidegger calls the function of discourse in the constitution of a `there' the
"Articulation [Artikulation] of intelligibility [Verständlichkeit]" (H. 161), which
Zimmerman glosses as the "join[ing] and fit[ting] together [of entities] in an orderly
"way," an order which is formed in terms of the possibilities understanding discloses (107). And indeed, to begin to respond to Heppner's assertion, according to the "historicity" (H. 20) of Heideggerian hermeneutics, the beings of Thel's world are articulated as distinct, self-contained entities such as rods, bowls, Lillys, and Clouds, which `contain' emotions, understandings, and Being, because of the primarily metaphysical discourse in which Thel has lived in her "having been" (H. 326).27

For language and thought to function in this manner, however, as we have indicated, Dasein must combine—or intertwine—their ontological foundation, discourse, with state-of-mind and understanding. To take the first of these structures, then, Thel's state-of-mind is one which, as we have found above, is first of all informed by a metaphysical preference of beings over Being, but which is also uncertain of the stability of those beings in the flux of time and in light of the ever-presence of death. Together, these certain, immanent characteristics of Thel's state-of-mind's awareness cause these beings to "fade" (T 1: 6; E 3) and, eventually, to "vanish" (2: 12; E 4) at an indefinite time in the future. This, in turn, causes Thel's state-of-mind to focus on the Being of these fading beings. Thel's state-of-mind is therefore anxious inasmuch as it is a questioning of the world into which it has been thrown.

We should not be surprised, then, that the first representative of Thel's world, the Lilly, while it is a `natural object,' is "watry" (1: 16; E 3), is "weak" (1: 18; E 3); that the second, the Cloud, likewise an `object' of nature, does "fade away" in "one hour"

27 See my discussion of the historicality of state-of-mind above (5). See also my footnote 37 in my introduction for an explanation of "having been."
(3: 2; E 4), does "vanish" (3: 9; E 4); that the third, the worm, while it is a body (it does not even 'transcend' in the Sartrean sense through speech, although it does "weep") is "an image of weakness" (4: 2; E 5), is "helpless & naked" (4: 5; E 5), is like one in the fleeting stage of infancy (4: 3; E 5); and that the final example of a mundane object, the Clod of Clay, is one who "exhal[es]" "her life/ In milky fondness" (4: 8-9; E 5), is one who lives "not for [herself]" (4: 10, E 5), who herself "knows not" and "cannot know" (5: 5; E 5) how she is "given ... a crown that none can take away" (5: 4; E 5). Indeed, Thel does not find any rods, bowls, or rocks who would be trustworthy in containing love, wisdom, or even their own Being. All of the characters she meets are, as entities in a world or 'there' informed by her own state-of-mind's 'anxious questioning' of metaphysics, 'objects' of uncertain stability in the world which is also characterized by metaphysics, whose state is 'anxious' in that they can foresee their own demise or dissolution—although they themselves do not seem to be aware of this in the disclosure of their own 'theres' as we saw with respect to the Lilly's and Cloud's speeches in my introduction.

Finally, to move to the third moment of disclosure, these characters are also elements of Thel's projected understanding of her own "potentiality-for-Being" (H. 145); 28 that is, they are constituents of "what [she as Dasein] is capable of" (H. 336) in terms of the 'significances' of the "for-the-sake-of-which" (H. 116-117) of her "projection" (H.

28 A "potentiality-for-Being" is a manner in which Dasein discloses its 'there' which is given to Dasein by its Being-with and which might refer to Dasein's potentiality-for-Being a shepherd or a samurai warrior. Depending on which potentiality-for-Being a Dasein projects, its 'there' 'shows up' differently, for instance, as a shepherd-world, or for another Dasein, as a samurai warrior-world.
As we can see from the opening of the poem, Thel is most capable of—her potentiality is in—Being a shepherd who, however, 'anxiously questions' the usefulness of her profession, her for-the-sake-of-which; which is to say, she is equipped by experience to take care of "lowly" beings in such a way as to have misgivings about the fact that those beings are understood, first and foremost, as 'simply self-evident,' metaphysical beings. This is why the beings she meets are ones who "dwell in lowly vales" (1: 17; E 3), who might work in the fields beside Thel, "bearing food to all [their] tender flowers" (3: 16; E 4), who plead, like pastoral sheep to be "cherish[ed] ... with mothers smiles" (4: 6; E 5), and who, as the "meanest thing[s]" (4: 11; E 5), themselves "[bow] over" (4: 8; E 5) their own charges. Each entity in the world Thel discloses is pastoral in its significance, but, as I shall now show, Thel also discloses each as foreseeing the day when it will no longer participate in such a structure of for-the-sake-of-which—although things might be different in the characters' own 'theres.'

As Thel is well aware—that is, as she understands—her "ownmost," ontological potentiality-for-Being is to die, to be no more (H. 250) at some indefinite time in the future, and (most of) her interlocutors, who are not only unstable as substances but who certainly will die as well, reflect this awareness: the Lilly knows that the "summers heat [shall] melt [her]" (1: 24; E 4); the Cloud knows that he will "pass away" (3: 10; E 4) and "Nothing [will remain]" (10); the Worm "weep[s]" (4: 4; E 5) until the Clod "exhal[es]" "her life" (8) upon him or her, likely indicating that the Worm requires

29 "For-the-sake-of-which" refers to a role within which Dasein exists. Dasein's "projection" is Dasein's existence and is that which causes Dasein's 'there' to show up in terms of Dasein's potentiality-for-Being.
affirmation of life in the face of death; and the Clod herself "pit[ies]" (7) the weeping Worm, again probably marking the Clod's empathy for the Worm's melancholy in the face of certain, immanent death at some indefinite time in the future. Indeed, it seems significant to my response to Heppner that all of Thel's interlocutors' speeches share her awareness of the presence of death in life as a certain but indefinite, immanent possibility, in addition to sharing her appreciation for the questionability of the stability of substances (although the characters do not seem to disclose this awareness to themselves as Daseins as is evidenced by their attempts to prevent Thel from thinking Being). In this way, I can uncover the last of the three moments of the constitution of Thel's `there,' understanding, in my Heideggerian reading of the poem.

Beyond these three moments of disclosure, it seems significant with respect to this discussion of the `constitutedness' of Thel's `there' that the characters `arrive on one another's heels'; that is, that there seems to be no distance between the spatial position of each character and that of the next, nor does there seem to be a lapse of time between their appearances, in which Thel walks through the vale to find another entity with whom to converse. Indeed, one of the first figures in Thel's opening lament, the "lotus of the water" (1: 6; E 3), seems to beget her first conversant, the "Lilly," who "[a]nswer[s]" (16) Thel's speech by saying "I am a watry weed;/ I am very small, and love to dwell in lowly vales" (16-17). When Thel complains to the Lilly that she is in fact more "like a faint cloud kindled at the rising sun" (2: 11; E 4) than a watry weed, the Lilly

30 Blake's character, Urizen, also shares this awareness, although he attempts to escape the situation: "I have sought for a joy without pain,/ For a solid without fluctuation" (U II: 4: 71; E 70).
immediately says,

Queen of the vales the Lilly answerd, ask the tender cloud,
And it shall tell thee why it glitters in the morning sky,
And why it scatters its bright beauty thro' the humid air.
Descend O little cloud & hover before the eyes of Thel.

The cloud descended....

(2: 13-17; E 4)

When Thel decides that the Cloud's description of his Being as Being the being who feeds flowers does not suit her own Being, she complains that, "... all shall say, without a use this shining woman liv'd,/ Or did she only live, to be at death the food of worms" (3: 23-24; E 5). The Cloud quickly responds,

...fear not and I will call
The weak worm from its lowly bed, and thou shalt hear his voice.
Come forth worm of the silent valley, to thy pensive queen.

The helpless worm arose...

(27-30)

Thel's is a particular projection, one in which she is trying to come to an understanding of the Being which is the basis for beings, and which Dasein must in all cases take over as that which it itself is, in a world of beings who claim to be the bases or 'containers' for their own Being, self-evidently, and in and of themselves. As we have seen, Thel's constitution of her 'there' is one which questions her received understanding of Being as simply contained in beings. Her 'there,' then, is a "making-present" (H. 354) of entities, a "letting-things-be-involved" (H. 354) which 'figure in' to Thel's particular projection, that is, who or which are relevant to her concern. In a Heideggerian reading of *The Book of Thel*, then, Thel's making-present is, as are all of Dasein's operations, "based upon" the "enabling ground" (H. 151) of "temporality" (H.
Indeed, Dasein, achieves this "letting-things-be-involved" 'in' and through time. As such, Dasein makes-present by "awaiting" the involvement of entities in its project and by "retaining" that which it makes involved (H. 353); which is to say, Dasein's temporality itself--the manner in which time spins itself out in a particular Dasein's 'there'--awaits and retains; or, more properly, and all-together, the way in which Dasein constitutes the letting-things-be-involved or making present of its 'there' is 'based upon' "the unity of a retention which awaits" (H. 353). This in turn results in Dasein's "absorption of concern in its equipmental world" (H. 354). 31

This absorption does not allow non-equipmental entities to appear unless they appear as obstructions to Dasein's project. It is in this manner that Thel discloses her 'there.' She is only concerned with those entities which will 'further' her project (in a positive or a negative sense) and does not, therefore, concern herself with those entities which do not function in this manner. For this reason, she does not include these irrelevant entities in the disclosure of her 'there.' Indeed, Thel "does not have [the time]" (H. 404) for beings which do not figure into her concern (such as her physical eye) and they are, consequently, absent from Thel's world (unless, of course, they 'get in Thel's way' so as to 'take time up' and thereby 'figure-in' to Thel's concern in a negative sense).

So, as we can see, the world of The Book of Thel is constituted by Thel as a

31 "Equipmental" means, for our purposes, 'of that which has the property of being involved in Dasein's projection in a positive manner.'
Dasein in her asking of the Seinsfrage. This does not mean, however, that Thel "create[s]" (86) this world, as Heppner claims. On the contrary, and this will become important in the next chapter, the world of the poem is very much there 'in itself,' although Thel can never experience it 'in itself' as such. In other words, the world of The Book of Thel would be, for instance, as much a 'there' for the Lilly as it is for Thel if we were given a chance to 'see it through the Lilly's eyes,' that is, from her perspective as a Dasein. The Lilly's, however, would be a slightly different 'there' from Thel's, depending, for instance, on her own, affective state-of-mind and her own understanding.33 "Every Eye Sees differently[.] As the Eye--Such the Object" (Annot. to Reynolds E 634). That is, to give an example which we would not find in the poem but which I have given in my introduction, while the Lilly's "Vision of Christ" might have him with a "hook nose like [the Lilly's]," Thel's might have him with a "snub nose like to [Thel's]" (EG 33; E 516) in her 'having been,' which, for Blake, does not mean that Christ is a mere product of, or merely present in, different people's imaginations.34

32 I am using 'there' as an adverb here, not as a noun as in "Thel's 'there.'" Also, for Heidegger, the world in itself is Dasein's 'there.' I am straying from Heidegger's idiom in this sentence.

33 The following passage of Heidegger's is appropriate here: "Dasein's ownmost meaning of Being is such that this entity [another "Dasein-with"] (which has been freed environmentally) is Being-in in the same world in which, as encounterable for Others, it is there with them" (H. 123). Here we have an expression of the Heideggerian concepts "Being-with" and "Dasein-with" which will become explicit concerns in chapter two.

34 This is why, for instance, Los's God must (while it is in "ourselves in whom God dwells") "[Stretch] a hand to save the falling Man" (J 38: 13-14; E 128; my emphasis; cf. Damrosch 248).

Another example of this notion in Blake occurs in his annotations to Lavatar:
Indeed, while "Thel meets her own thoughts and even her own words in substantial form," these thoughts are *constitutions*, and these words are *interpretations*, of characters who exist "in themselves." It is in this sense that Thel "*animates* the objects in the Vales of Har" (Levinson 291; my emphasis); she does not create them.

I am now prepared to discuss Thel's articulation of the *Seinsfrage* with respect to the illumination provided by Heidegger's own phrasing of this question in *Being and Time*. As we have seen, Thel's questioning is motivated by misgivings about the received belief that human existence is grounded in substance of a solid, undeviating, and therefore seemingly "self-evident" nature. She suspects that, if she is right in her misgivings, she, as a human being, might even be "doubly removed" from any such, substantial foundation if there are any at all. She suspects that her mode of existence is one in which she is always "fading like the lotus of the water" (1: 6; E 3) and eventually "vanish[es]," which, together, make it difficult for her to find her "place" (2: 12; E 4), as a "transient" (1: 11; E 3) and nebulous or "cloudy" being, in a static, metaphysical ontology. This brings her attention to the question of Being. Thel asks, "If I am a being who fades and then vanishes, that is, if I am one who is transient in such a way so as to always have death present in my Being which in turn makes me 'cloudy' or nebulous in my Being--if..."

"...All of us on earth are united in thought, for it is impossible to think without images of somewhat on earth" (E 590). See also Frosch (29).

35 We can see this dynamic when the other characters seem to mean something by their speeches other than what Thel hears. While they intend them to comfort, Thel takes their words as confirmation of her fears. The characters' speeches, then, are always composed of the same words, but mean something very different depending on who hears them. I shall explain a similar example on the final plate of the poem, in chapter two.
I am at least twice removed from those beings who own meaning in their stability as substances—what sort of significance does that give me; what is the reason for my ever having lived in such a world? What meaning do I, or does anything for that matter, as likely something different from a metaphysical being, have?’ This, in turn, points up the possibility of the very insubstantiality that she suspects, this time with respect to the possible insubstantiality of a received system of belief.

I have shown, then, that Thel is, in this Heideggerian reading of *The Book of Thel*, a Dasein existing in-the-world so as to disclose or constitute that world as an ‘anxious questioning,’ an ‘anxious questioning’ of the metaphysical doctrine of the priority of beings over Being. What we must now examine is the narrative which Thel discloses as is sketched by the poem—from her initial asking of the *Seinsfrage*, to the brush with ‘Being-in-the-world as such’ which that asking brings about—and the manner in which she is "Being-alongside" and "Being-with" the other beings she encounters in her ‘there.’
Chapter Two

Thel and 'Being-with'

*Look not upon me, because I am black, because the sun hath looked upon me: my mother's children were angry with me; they made me the keeper of the vineyards; but mine own vineyard have I not kept.*

Song of Solomon 1:5

What do we discover when we give sufficient thought to the matter? This, that the authentic attitude of thinking is not a putting of questions—rather, it is a listening to the grant, the promise of what is to be put in question.

Heidegger "The Nature of Language." 71

I will begin this chapter by pointing to our first glimpse of Thel in her poem. The passage runs as follows:

The daughters of Mne. Seraphim led round their sunny flocks,
All but the youngest. she in paleness sought the secret air.

*(T 1: 1-2; E 3)*

Here, we have the beginning of what will quickly become a struggle on Thel's part. Already indicated by her "paleness" in this context, Thel's is a struggle to escape the absolutism of the oppressive influence of her largely anonymous family and their 'average approach to Being.' It is this, Thel's state-of-mind's labour for the identity required in order to hold on to its 'anxious questioning' of received belief, and her state-of-mind's eventual failure to reach this separation, that I wish to trace in this chapter. We must not forget, however, that Thel does, and indeed must, always take part in this anonymity—and that, in her everydayness, she works to constitute it. Although Blake seems to abstract the anonymity of everydayness and place it in the characters of Thel's family, the Lilly, the Cloud, and, for the most part, the Clod of Clay, we must never think that this everyday anonymity is something which stands apart even from authentic Dasein, that is,
in this poem, from Thel's authentic moments in which she can ask the *Seinsfrage.*\(^1\) What Thel *can* escape is the *absolutism* of the 'they's' view.

While, in my introduction, I quoted Heidegger as saying that "[t]he expression 'Dasein' ... shows plainly that 'in the first instance' this entity is unrelated to Others, and that of course it can still be 'with' Others afterwards" (H. 120), and while I have, especially in chapter one, made mention of 'Being-with' with respect to Thel's thrownness, I have yet to explain fully the second half of this assertion. This chapter will show, however, that once I explain this latter portion of the quotation, the sense of the first will no longer seem as obvious and 'easy' as it might have in my introduction and first chapter. For "Being-with" (H. 120) is, in some senses, the essential structure of everyday Dasein. And, further, as I will show, 'Being-with' is a structure which actively works to prevent Dasein from exercising its limited, individual freedom. While chapter one focused primarily on Dasein's Being-in with respect to the three moments of disclosure and only mentioned Dasein's Being-with, this chapter will be an exploration focused explicitly on the meaning of 'Being-with' in the world of *The Book of Thel,* and will discuss how this structure affects Thel as a Dasein in her state-of-mind's movement through the narrative of the poem. With this shift I will, however, need some more time to examine 'Being-with' as the *ontological* foundation of Dasein's "with-world [Mitwelt]"

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\(^1\) Thel's family, the Lilly, the Cloud, and the Clod of Clay, are complete beings in and of themselves. They do, however, represent public selves ('they'-selves) who have become lost in their by publicness (the 'they') to the extent that they do not recognize themselves as selves in Heidegger's ontological sense. While they are not, strictly speaking, allegorical figures, they are caricatures and, at the same time, represent the 'they' of Thel's own 'they'-self by virtue of their like ontological structures but differing modes of existence.
As a means of entering this discussion I will begin by discussing "Being-with's" everyday ontical expression which Heidegger calls the "they's" "idle talk."

In the section of Being and Time on "Idle Talk" (H. 167-170), Heidegger remarks that

[t]he everyday way in which things have been interpreted is one into which Dasein has grown in the first instance, with never a possibility of extrication. In it, out of it, and against it, all genuine understanding, interpreting, and communicating, all re-discovering and appropriating anew, are performed. In no case is a Dasein untouched and unseduced by this way in which things have been interpreted.

(H. 169; Dreyfus's translation 25)

I have already noted Dasein's thrown historicality with respect to state-of-mind, understanding, discourse, and the public fore-structure of interpretation. I should note here, however, that the phenomenon to which Heidegger refers above seems more thoroughgoing and active in its inclusion of Others in Dasein's 'there' than I have previously indicated. To show this, I will focus on one sentence from the above passage. Heidegger says that "[i]n 'idle talk', out of it, and against it, all genuine understanding, interpreting, and communicating, all re-discovering and appropriating anew, are performed" (H. 169). I will note three things with respect to this sentence: that 'idle talk' characterizes Dasein's initial disclosure of its 'there' through 'idle talk's' role in Dasein's 'socialization' or 'Being-delivered-over' (H. 134) into public ways of 'seeing,' which makes all further discovering 're-discovering'; that it is--and let us note the struggle implied here--'against' idle talk that 'all genuine understanding, interpreting and communicating' happens, which seems to indicate that 'idle talk' is somehow un-genuine; and that, as I have already shown with respect to Dasein's thrownness, 'idle talk' is
pervasive--"all genuine understanding...." Indeed, on this last point, and to continue with my quotation, as Heidegger says,

In no case is a Dasein, untouched and unseduced by this way in which things have been interpreted, set before the open country of a `world-in-itself' so that it just beholds what it encounters. The dominance of the public way in which things have been interpreted has already been decisive even for the possibilities of having a mood--that is, for the basic way in which Dasein lets the world `matter' to it. The `they' prescribes one's state-of-mind, and determines what and how one `sees.' (H. 169-70)

It is in this prescriptive sense that Dasein's basic and everyday structure is `Being-with.'

An examination of this mode of Being will give me more clues as to the nature of Thel's state-of-mind's `anxious questioning' inasmuch as it is an `anxious questioning' of received beliefs. I will thereby show that, indeed, the nature of the role of these received beliefs in Dasein's existence makes this `anxious questioning' a struggle against its own tendency to disclose it world through `idle talk,' that is, as a `"they'-'self [das Man]' (H. 127).

It is in such a world of Being-with or "with-world" (H. 118) that Dasein encounters Others. But, as I have only implied until now,

[b)y `others' we do not mean everyone else but me--those over against whom the `I' stands out. They are rather those from whom, for the most part, one does not distinguish oneself--those among whom one is too. This being-there-too [Auch-da-sein] with them does not have the ontological character of a being-present-at-hand-along-`with' them within a world. This `with' is something of the character of Dasein; this `too' means a sameness of Being as circumspectively concernful Being-in-the-world. (H. 118; my emphasis)

In other words, for Heidegger, I do not encounter Others as separate subjects or objects `out there,' but rather as those who are involved along with me in my for-the-sake-of-which, in my Being-in in a particular `role,' which is itself, as I have shown in chapter
one, 'given' by the way in which things have been publicly interpreted, that is, interpreted by Others. And, at the same time, I participate in this Otherness by accepting and carrying out these public interpretations.

For example, I am aware--without explicitly saying so, to myself or to another--that the shirt in front of me was made by someone (a Dasein), most likely in a factory, and then delivered, by someone else, to the store from which I bought it, a store which is owned by another someone. In the store, I bought the shirt from someone else still who was working as a clerk--and all of these people were (probably) wearing similar shirts in a similar manner and, like me, have (probably) not even entertained the possibility of wearing them in a different way.

Which reminds me (again, normally without putting my understanding into words) that I am aware that many of the people I saw in the film I watched last night were also wearing similar shirts in a similar way, and so were many of the people I saw when I looked out my window a few minutes ago. In fact, whenever I have seen a 'normal' person wearing a shirt, that person has been wearing this type of shirt in this way. I therefore understand, that is, I disclose this shirt as something that I wear on the upper portion of my body, with the seams on the inside, and the collar on the outside because that is the way 'one' wears a shirt in my world. Indeed, this is the way the shirt is in the everydayness of my with-world. In fact, I also understand, without articulating it, that if I were to wear this shirt differently, I would probably be treated in a manner that I do not like, and be made to wear another shirt which marks me as someone who is not a regular participant in my world: indeed, I would be 'subversive,' 'absent-minded,' or
'insane.' And, I have known this for as long as I can remember.

But, as I look carefully at the seam on the left shoulder, I realize that I should probably catch a bus, which will be driven by someone, return to that store I mentioned earlier, and buy another shirt, or go to another store, in which and on the way to which I will find more people, and buy some thread. I am, as a Dasein, always aware of Others in this fashion, `without really thinking about it,' that is, without articulating my awareness so as to explain it in an essay such as this one. It is in these senses that I, as a Dasein, encounter Others environmentally (H. 117), and, indeed, cannot distinguish myself as Dasein from Other Daseins in `my' disclosure of `my' with-world.

Indeed, as I have said with respect to her thrown, `anxious questioning' of the appropriateness of the metaphysical conception of Being, Thel has for the most part been unable to distinguish herself from Others in the disclosure of her `there.' She has fully accepted metaphysics in the past because `one's' world is metaphysical. She has thereby been a `they'-self. She is (or her state-of-mind is) only now beginning to realize that this disclosure might not reflect the only possible potentiality-for-Being as an approach to

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2 ...which, of course, now that I think of it, I am writing, in part, for particular Others, so that I will be granted my Master's of Arts degree by those and still Others at McMaster University....

In the above paragraph we have an example of what Heidegger would call discourse (Rede) (the actual wearing of the shirt) being described in talk (Gerede) in the sense of Being removed from its primordial context in `the actual doing of something.' I am, however, `actually doing something' in writing this thesis inasmuch as I am trying to clear a way for Being so that it might be more unhidden in the lives of those who read this and in my own.

3 These Others, since they are also Daseins, are "Dasein-with" (H. 118) in my disclosure.
Being. In this way, she is beginning to make a distinction between her `Self' and the `they' of her `they'-self:

The daughters of Mne Seraphim led round their sunny flocks,
All but the youngest. she in paleness sought the secret air.
To fade away like morning beauty from her mortal day:
Down by the river of Adona her soft voice is heard:
And thus her gentle lamentation falls like morning dew.

O life of this our spring!...

(T 1: 1-6; E 3)

While this Self which Thel isolates must be something other than an example of the metaphysical `subject,' Thel, indeed, begins to leave the vale of her upbringing--the everyday, anonymous with-world of her thrownness (which, among other things, is metaphysical in nature). While I am not yet prepared to describe the ontological distinction which Thel is on her way to making, I can set out on the way to such a description by understanding, with respect to Heidegger's notion of the `they' (or, in Dreyfus's translation, "the one" (152)) and its use of `idle talk,' what went on, and indeed what goes on (for she has not escaped her metaphysical with-world), when Thel `publicly' led, and `publicly' leads, "round [her] sunny flocks."

As I have indicated with respect to my shirt, for Heidegger, in the `idle talk' of the `they,' "[t]he Being-said, the dictum, the pronouncement [Ausspruch]--all of these stand surety for the genuineness of the discourse and of the understanding which belongs to it, and for its appropriateness to the facts" (H. 168). In `idle talk' `one' need not have an actual experience with what is being talked about in order to `know' it. The `one' of Thel's world, of her culture, is a substantial subject because that is what `one' is and has `always been (for as long as the `they' can remember).'. Indeed, `one' can put
Wisdom in a silver rod because the 'they' says 'one' can. Truth is tautology and expression substantiates discourse. Since the 'they' "communicates ... by following the route of gossiping and passing the word along[, w]hat is said-in-the-talk as such, spreads in wider circles and [thereby] takes on an authoritative character" (H. 168). And, as I have said, Dasein's 'there' is, for the most part, the with-world of its initial and continual 'socialization' or Being-delivered-over: Thel's environment is, primarily, the vales of Har.

Further, as I have also already indicated, at the same time as this 'passing the word along' 'spreads in wider and wider circles,' so too does it become "uprooted" (H. 170) from any actual, that is, "primordial" (H. 168) experience with what it is talking about. When Dasein exists in 'idle talk,' the things being talked about are 'closed off' in their Being--the Being which Thel is struggling to get to know--and understood as pre-given beings. And, indeed, Being-in in the mode of 'idle talk' sustains this state-of-Being:

Ontologically this means that when Dasein maintains itself in idle talk, it is--as Being-in-the-world--cut off from its primary and primordially genuine relationships-of-Being towards the world, towards Dasein-with, and towards its very Being-in. (H. 170)

It is this 'uprootedness' which characterizes the 'they's' mode of disclosure in The Book of Thel.4 And, since the 'they' of the 'they'-self knows things through 'idle talk,' it does not need to take the time to ground its knowledge in a primordial disclosure of its Being-in-the-world. The 'they,' therefore, has time to know everything. Indeed, the Lilly and

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4 Again, here, we must not overlook the positive effect of closing-off: that it allows us to know enough to carry out our existences.
the Cloud speak to Thel briefly, gather all that they need to know, and are off to find new curiosities.

Further, in order to "keep moving,'

the "they' maintains itself factically in the averageness of that which belongs to it, of that which it regards as valid and that which it does not, and of that to which it grants success and that to which it denies it. In this averageness with which it prescribes what can and may be ventured, it keeps watch over everything exceptional which thrusts itself into the fore. Every kind of priority gets noiselessly suppressed. Overnight, everything that is primordial gets glossed over as something that has long been well known. (H. 127)

Heidegger calls this "glossing over' a "levelling down" (H. 127) of disclosure inasmuch as it constitutes a "closing off' of primordial truth. He relates this "levelling down to averageness' to Dasein's inherent concern with its difference from Others, which he calls "distantiality" (H. 126). Dasein's distantiality does not like to perceive any distance between its own position and that of an Other, and therefore attempts to prevent Others--and indeed itself inasmuch as it thereby "buys into' averageness--from reaching that which it does not have in sight. Together, then, these three phenomena (distantiality, averageness, and levelling-down) compose the "they's'" publicness" (H. 127).

It is this "publicness,' that is, the "publicness' of "idle talk,' that makes the Lilly, the Cloud, and the Clod of Clay so quick to react to Thel's state-of-mind's "anxious questioning,' in order to tell Thel not to worry, in order to keep her in a metaphysical "frame of mind'-- because that is the way "one' thinks. Indeed, the Lilly responds to Thel's concern that she will "fade away" instantly, as if this concern is a "curiosity' that she has often noted and has easily quieted with an appeal to the obvious, stable ground of God. The Lilly "comforts' Thel's concern that she is "like a watry bow" by saying
that she (the Lilly) and that, nevertheless, as everyone knows, "a watry weed" (T 1: 16; E 3); yet, as everyone also knows, she is "visited from heaven and he that smiles on all./Walks in the valley. and each morn over [her] spreads his hand" (19-20). The Lilly tells Thel to "rejoice," for her transience is grounded in "light" and "morning manna" (23) as is everyone's. She asks, "why [then] should Thel complain? Why should the mistress of the vales of Har, utter a sigh" (25)? In other words, she demands that Thel tell her why 'one' should worry about that which 'one' does not 'normally' even consider if 'one' is not 'strange'?5

To be sure, as Heidegger says,

the 'they' ... puts itself in the right and makes itself respectable by tacitly regulating the way in which one has to comport oneself towards death. It is already a matter of public acceptance that 'thinking about death' is a cowardly fear, a sign of insecurity on the part of Dasein, and a sombre way of fleeing from the world. (H. 254)

The Lilly's distantiiality makes sure that Thel does not disrupt the averageness of the 'they's' easy approach to death as an event which 'happens' to 'one.' Indeed, according to the Lilly, this approach "is already a matter of public acceptance." She therefore construes Thel's 'anxious questioning' about the presence of death in her own existence, and therefore about the non-substantiality of her Being, as one which is abnormal in its anxiety. Thel's 'anxious questioning' is thereby transvalued as a sign of cowardice; and the Lilly's cowardice consequently shows up as being 'respectable.'

5 Of course, this 'levelling down' functions most effectively when it is carried out by one's own Dasein as a 'they'-self, that is, when a Dasein does not even allow itself to disclose that which 'one' does not 'normally' consider. When a Dasein breaks free from this domination, we can be sure, as we see in The Book of Thel, that Others will quickly come to its 'rescue.'
Further, the `they' has an endless number of representatives to carry out this levelling-down. When Thel is unconvinced by the Lilly's speech and insists that she is therefore perhaps not like the Lilly but more "like a faint cloud kindled at the rising sun" (2: 11) in her Being, the Lilly calls upon another of the `they's' agents who is better equipped to help in this particular situation: the Cloud. When Thel asks the Cloud why he "complainest not when in one hour [he] fade[s] away" (3: 2), he easily and confidently assures her that, as everyone knows ("know'st thou not[?]") (7)), that when he "vanish[es]" and is "seen no more" (9), that is, when he "pass[es] away" (10), "[i]t is" not only back to life but "to tenfold life, to love, to peace, to raptures holy" (11). He is therefore stable in his existence. As Heidegger says, "in Being with one another, the `neighbours' often still keep talking the `dying person' into the belief that he will escape death and soon return to the tranquillized everydayness of the world of his concern" (H. 253).

Having thus counselled Thel, the Cloud, assuming that his answer is sufficient, goes on to other, `more interesting' topics of conversation--which, however, are tangentially related to Thel's concern--in order to preserve the `flow' of the conversation, and in order to avoid difficult talk of the death which Thel suspects she is. He describes his "court[ing of] the fair eyed dew" (13), and his "bearing [of] food to all [of his and the dew's] tender flowers" (14), an activity which, `incidentally,' will occur after his apparent "fad[ing] away."

Indeed, as Heidegger says, the `they's' "curiosity," which is expressed in its `idle talk,'
is characterized by a specific way of not tarrying alongside what is closest. Consequently it does not seek the leisure of tarrying observantly, but rather seeks restlessness and the excitement of continual novelty and changing encounters. In not tarrying, curiosity is concerned with the constant possibility of distraction. Curiosity has nothing to do with observing entities and marvelling at them .... To be amazed to the point of not understanding is something in which it has no interest. (H. 172)

The Cloud wants to keep Thel from disclosing anything "exceptional" by preventing her from "tarrying observantly" "alongside" her primordial concern. He therefore tries to shift her attention to a new distraction: his `use.' We can see, then, that the `they's' curiosity, when combined with `their' normative function, results in this sort of `covering over' and `levelling down' when one of its members begins to question the meaningfulness of what the `they,' what `one,' normally says. The Cloud tells Thel that her concern with Being, since experienced and known by `everyone,' is one which should be so easy for `one' (for `one' will pass on to "tenfold life") that `one' should not even spend any time in it (for `one' should never `tarry alongside' anything). He then proceeds to interest her in another curiosity, thereby inviting her back into the fold of the `they.'

For Heidegger, this `distantiality' which the `they' exhibits with respect to Thel's `anxious questioning,' this concern for Others, is an example of "solicitude" (H. 121), for which there are two extreme possibilities in its positive mode: "[i]t can, as it were, take away `care' from the Other and put itself in his position in concern: it can leap in [für ihn einspringen] for him" and "take over for the Other that with which he is to

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6 Indeed, we must remember that Thel is still, in part, a `they'-self inasmuch as she participates in a community. She could not, for instance, participate in such an exchange of questions and answers if she did not know what constitutes a question and an answer.
concern himself"; or it can "leap ahead of him [ihm vorausspringt] in his ... potentiality-for-Being, not in order to take away his 'care' but rather to give it back to him authentically as such for the first time" (H. 122).7

While "[e]veryday Being-with-one-another maintains itself between these two extremes" (H. 122), it should be obvious from my discussion above that the Lilly's and the Cloud's solicitude is much more of the 'leaping in' variety than of the 'leaping ahead.' The Lilly and the Cloud make Thel's concern one which they have already dealt with and attempt to give it back to her as if already resolved. And further, as the Lilly and Cloud show, "[i]n such solicitude the Other can become one who is dominated and dependent, even if this domination is a tacit one and remains hidden from him" (H. 122). In other words, in light of Heidegger's notion of 'solicitude,' these passages reveal the Lilly and the Cloud as "dominating" Thel inasmuch as they are attempting to compel her to give in to her 'they-self' completely and to accept things as 'easy.' And, what is more, this 'leaping in' prevents the Other Dasein, Thel, from achieving a primordial relationship with that with which it is concerned.

Thel, however, is not convinced by the 'they's' rhetoric. She claims that she is "not like" (3: 17; E 5) the Cloud in his feeding of his and the dew's flowers, and then, carried by the flow of conversation, continues on her own tangent, the feeding of birds. She finally brings the conversation back to the original issue of her nebulous Being, which is as such because it has death or not-Being within it:

7 To disclose something authentically is to disclose it so that it is not distorted in its Being.
But Thel delights in these no more because I fade away,
And all shall say, without a use this shining woman liv'd,
Or did she only live. to be at death the food of worms.

(21-23)

It seems as if the awareness of the `not-yet' of her death forces Thel to consider her own finitude once again, for she has understood that it has the potential to `cancel' any other existential possibility, any other "use" she might have at any time.

But, of course, the `they' has an easy answer even for this concern:

The Cloud reclind upon his airy throne and answer'd thus.

Then if thou art the food of worms. O virgin of the skies,
How great thy use. how great thy blessing; every thing that lives,
Lives not alone, nor for itself... 

(25-27)

Here, the `they' quickly appeals to the doctrines of deist religion (see Pearce 30). And, again `of course,' the `they' has first-hand experience of this expression of Thel's worry, too:

fear not and I will call
The weak worm from its lowly bed, and thou shalt hear its voice.
Come forth worm of the silent valley, to thy pensive queen.

(27-29)

And the Cloud sails on to new curiosities. But, here, the functioning of the `they' breaks down for a moment: the sight of the worm does "astonish" (4: 1; E 5) Thel and causes her to `tarry alongside:

Art thou a Worm? image of weakness. art thou but a Worm?
I see thee like an infant wrapped in the Lillys leaf:
Ah weep not little voice, thou can'st not speak. but thou canst weep;
Is this a Worm? I see thee lay helpless & naked: weeping,
And none to answer, none to cherish thee with mothers smiles.

(2-6)

This passage deserves careful consideration because of its potentially pivotal
position in the dynamic of Thel's conversation with the `they.' Thel's astonishment disrupts the "constancy" (H. 128) of the `they's' `idle talk,' but probably the most salient element of this description is the Worm's speechlessness, and his or her weeping.

But first, what is the Worm? Thel connects this image both to her usefulness at death of which the Cloud has just told her, and to her uselessness in life of which the Cloud's `assuring' speech makes her aware. In a sense, then, the Worm, as representative of Thel's potential `use' at death, is connected to the meaning of Dasein's death which Dasein in every case is. That is, since Thel's life is meaningless in itself (she has no `use'), and since she gains meaning at death (her `use,' then, is to be the food of worms), her life is always meaningful in its certain but indefinite, immanent potentiality for not-Being. If this is so, then what the silent worm seems to say is that this meaning is somehow unspeakable in itself. In other words, if we employ a pathetic reading, which draws on one half of `the Eye altering alters All,' the meaning of death is, in itself, `inArticulatable' in the language of Blake's fallen humanity.

The Worm's "weeping," meanwhile, seems to be a sort of vigilance on the part of death if we accept Kathleen Raine's reading of Blake's "Little Girl Lost" and apply it to The Book of Thel. With respect to the lines, "How can Lyca sleep,/ If her mother weep" (23-24; E 20), Raine claims that "[t]he mother is the higher consciousness that

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8 The Cloud, of course, has attempted to articulate death, but has done so in such a way as to `explain it away' as being an entry into the "tenfold life" (3: 11; E 4) of mechanical Nature.

9 The capital-A in this word indicates that it is the Articulation of interpretation, not of intelligibility in ontological understanding.
opposes the lapse of the soul into its temporal dream" (Raine in Pinto 32). The mother's weeping, then, seems to be for a "lapse" on the part of a child into the inauthenticity of fallen existence. While I cannot accept Raine's neo-platonic interpretation that the soul must be rescued from its temporal dream, \(^{10}\) I can alter it so that the worm's weeping becomes an 'authentic' watchfulness over Thel's 'inauthentic' publicness, which, however, says nothing in itself.

In not speaking, then, the Worm seems to be indicating that what he or she represents is something which defies and 'stops' the 'uprootedness' of idle talk 'short,' and which forces Dasein into silent consideration. Indeed, it seems to have done so in Thel's conversation with the 'they,' for the public characters' (the Lilly's and the Cloud's) easy public talk has fallen silent. This, however, should come as no surprise since "[d]eath, as possibility, gives Dasein nothing to be actualized, nothing which Dasein, as actual, could itself be" (H. 262). Indeed, since death is the "possibility of the impossibility of comporting oneself toward anything, of every way of existing" (H. 262), it is inArticulatable in itself, it is necessarily beyond any and all for-the-sakes-of-which, and thereby eludes the 'idle talk' of the 'they' which, nevertheless, attempts to 'level death down.'

To be sure, 'in its own eyes,' the 'they' can even manage to 'know all about death'; it has "already stowed away [gesichert] an interpretation [and an interpreter] for this event" (H. 253). Before we know it, "[t]he Clod of Clay[, hearing] the Worms

\(^{10}\) ...and, I think, neither could Blake, for Los, Blake's poet-hero, needs a renovated time in order to show us Eternity (see Frosch 150-151).
voice, ... rais[es] her pitying head" (T 4: 7; E 5). Indeed, Thel herself has already reacted to her own amazement and has attempted to comfort the Worm: she has told it to "weep not" (4). Death has become, for Thel (now a `they'-self) and the Clod of Clay, "a mishap which is constantly occurring--as a `case of death'" (H. 252-3). It must therefore be pushed `out of mind,' that is, out of Dasein's disclosure, as much as possible.

Indeed, next comes the Clod of Clay's explanation:

O beauty of the vales of Har. we live not for ourselves,
Thou seest me the meanest thing, and so I am indeed;
My bosom of itself is cold. and of itself is dark,

He that loves the lowly, pours oil upon my head.
And kisses me, and binds his nuptial bands around my breast,
And says; Thou mother of my children, I have loved thee.
And I have given thee a crown that none can take away
But how this is sweet maid, I know not, and I cannot know,
I ponder, and I cannot ponder; yet I live and love.

(4-5: 10-12, 1-6; E 5)

Here, the Clod of Clay attempts to ground her knowledge of the stability of her existence in a divine guarantor. We "live not for ourselves" and therefore our meaning is grounded somewhere else which is more stable.11 But what is unusual about the Clod is that she admits that this grounding is not explicable by `rational' means, that is, in `idle talk.' This grounding is not, for the Clod, justifiable because the `they' `says it is so': she "know[s] not, and [she] cannot know,/ [she] ponder[s], and [she] cannot ponder."

11 Indeed, this speech seems to be a fallen parody of the "New Born Man" of The Four Zoas: "Not for ourselves but for the Eternal family we live/ Man liveth not by Self alone but in his brothers face/ Each shall behold the Eternal Father & love & joy abound" (133: 24-26; E 387). Here, the grounding is in the "Eternal family," in one's "brothers face," rather than in a mysterious saviour as it is for the Clod.
Indeed, the Clod admits that she requires a "leap" of faith to such "subjective truth" (Kierkegaard 338, 189): "Yet," she says, "I live and love."

But still, the Clod reverts to "recoining death as just 'a case of death' in Others--an everyday occurrence which, if need be, gives us the assurance that one is still living" (H. 254): her final assurance is, "yet I live and love."¹² She is not the not-yet of her death; she pushes death 'out of mind.'

Nevertheless, all of this does not keep the Clod of Clay from finally giving Thel some authentic guidance. In the end, she 'leaps ahead' of Thel to give her concern back to her in authentic form: she asks, inviting Thel into the "land unknown," "Wilt thou O Queen enter my house. 'tis given thee to enter, / And to return; fear nothing. enter with thy virgin feet" (5: 16-17). The Clod's movement back and forth between modes of solicitude is not unusual considering that, as I have said, for Heidegger most positive solicitude falls in between the two extremes of 'leaping in' and 'leaping ahead.' What is important to notice in this respect is that the Clod's final guidance is not, in fact, advice in the 'normal,' that is, the 'public,' sense. Indeed, rather than telling Thel about death, that is, rather than fitting death into one of the public's strategies of for-the-sake-of-which and giving it back to Thel as if already resolved, the Clod points to death, thus

¹² Indeed, it seems as if Heidegger got the idea for his notion of the 'not-yet' of death from Kierkegaard: the latter writes: "if I am mortal, then this means that this uncertainty [death] cannot possibly be understood in general if I am not also such a human being in general. But this I am not.... Therefore it becomes more and more important to me to think it into every moment of my life, because, since its uncertainty is at every moment, this uncertainty is vanquished only by my vanquishing it at every moment" (167). Thus, for Kierkegaard, even if one has faith in the Christian God, death must still become a part of life.
opening the way for Thel to an appreciation of it in Thel's own, 'questioning' manner.\(^\text{13}\)

The Clod's rhetoric, which takes up the most part of her appearance in the poem, is really not, however, at all different from the Lilly's and the Cloud's. This seems, at first, to indicate that the Clod is primarily a member of the 'they.' Yet she is finally able to respond to Thel's concerns \textit{authentically} inasmuch as she points to the nothingness of death which Thel in every case \textit{is}, and which the other characters have been attempting to cover over.\(^\text{14}\) This leads us to a challenge: Why, we must ask, as a member of the 'they,' should the Clod provide Thel with guidance which is any different from that of the other characters? What makes her different from the other members of the anonymous public?

I think the answer to our question comes when we examine the 'natures' of these characters with respect to Thel's. While these creatures speak in a strikingly human manner and of deeply human concerns, these figures, nevertheless, are not quite human. They are, after all, a Lilly, a Cloud, a Worm, and a Clod of Clay, and, as such, are also essentially different from one another. Whether or not we take Pearce's view and conclude that each of these characters represents a different 'branch' of the Natural religion and Natural science which was so prevalent in Blake's time (28), we must allow that they do seem to be of different 'classes,' in some sense or another. If nothing else, the Lilly seems to represent vegetable beings; the Cloud, those of the air; the Worm,

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\(^{13}\) This bears strong resemblance to the 'releasement' of the later Heidegger's poetic (versus objectifying) language.

\(^{14}\) "Death, as possibility, gives Dasein \textit{nothing} to be actualized, \textit{nothing} which Dasein, as actual, could itself \textit{be}" (H. 262).
`fleshy' creatures; and the Clod of Clay, those of the earth. I have also shown that Thel brings each character forth with an expression of her own concern—that is, each but the Clod of Clay. Indeed, unlike Thel's other interlocutors, the Clod of Clay arrives as a sort of spokesperson for the silent Worm, and, as such, is not a part of Thel's collection of self-interpretive similes. She is not, therefore, an immediate part of Thel's projection of the for-the-sake-of-which of her understanding potentiality-for-Being. The Clod of Clay seems to represent a `more distant' Other than do the other characters. She seems to be of a `class' that Thel is not immediately familiar with.

Indeed, as I have said, the Clod does not come into the conversation directly. She is not called upon by another conversant, but, rather, enters the exchange by way of a genuine concern which she shares with Thel: the meaning of finitude—the Worm. Of this sort of meeting Heidegger says,

> The Being-with-one-another of those who are hired for the same affair often thrives only on mistrust. On the other hand, when they devote themselves to the same affair in common, their doing so is determined by the manner in which their Dasein, each in its own way, has been taken hold of. They thus becomes authentically bound together, and this makes possible the right kind of objectivity [die rechte Sachlichkeit], which frees the Other in his freedom for himself. (H. 122)

It seems, then, that the Clod's ability to finally `leap ahead' of Thel comes because of a combination of the Clod's `Otherness,' that is, her awareness of a difference in the disclosure of her `there' from that of Thel's, and vice versa; from both conversants' resulting ability to actually hear the Other, rather than a version of their own perspective on their common concern; and because of the Clod's and Thel's common concern itself
which `grabs hold' of both conversants authentically.\textsuperscript{15}

Blake seems to be arguing that with Otherness comes another perspective and other lexical `truths' about such phenomena as death and Being which break through the `levelling down to averageness' of the `they.' When two unfamiliar perspectives meet in conversation, the groundlessness of their `truths' might come to the fore if each conversant listens to the Other actively. This active listening can in turn be prompted by a shared concern which grabs hold of each conversant authentically. Finally, with this lack of grounding in view, it becomes possible for each to free the Other for authentic existence. It is here, I think, that Blake makes one of his most important contributions to his conversation with Heidegger, whose own rather underdeveloped analysis of solicitude benefits from the exchange.

Before I examine the nature of Thel's brush with death, its view of `Being-in-the-world as such,' and the possibility of Thel's realization therewith of her own and metaphysics's finitude, I need to round out my study of the Lilly, Cloud, and Clod of Clay as the `they' with an explanation of what effect their dominance over Thel has with respect to her authentic potentiality-for-Being--that of asking the \textit{Seinsfrage}. While I have

\textsuperscript{15} I do not think it would be unjust to interpret the Lilly and the Cloud as `hirelings' of the `they' inasmuch as their actions are controlled by public interests rather than by their ownmost. Their being called by other `members' of the `they,' then, seems to be a `hiring.'

While Heidegger is referring \textit{primarily} to the primordial mode of discourse, absorption in the world of concern, as opposed to that of `idle talk,' Blake seems to be arguing with a slightly different focus that, indeed, common concern \textit{is} possible in communication.

With all of this in mind, we must not forget, however, that the Clod of Clay and Thel are both still, in part, `members' of the `they' in being `they'-selves.
shown that they `close' Thel `off' from a primordial understanding of Being by claiming to have reached such knowledge through `idle talk,' Heidegger enumerates a number of other pertinent manners in which this `closing off' is achieved by the `they' to which I have only alluded.

For instance, as I have indicated, the Cloud is impatient with Thel because she spends too much time focused on her concern: he is agitated because he sees that Thel is "tarrying alongside" her awareness of the questionability of the `they's' metaphysical conception of Being. For Heidegger, this impatience is a result of what he calls the "curiosity" of the `they' which comes about when one "take[s] a rest" from primordial activity; when one rests, "circumspection [thereby] becomes free and is no longer bound to the world of work" (H. 172) which itself keeps one in a primordial relationship to things ready-to-hand. In this "state of sight" (H. 170), "Dasein lets itself be carried along [mitnehmen] solely by the looks of the world" (H. 172), and, as I have shown is the case with `idle talk,' thereby becomes 'uprooted.' Indeed,

[curiosity, for which nothing is closed off,\textsuperscript{16} and idle talk, for which there is nothing that is not understood, provide themselves (that is, the Dasein which i s in this manner [dem so seienden Dasein]) with the guarantee of a `life' which, supposedly, is genuinely `lively.' (H. 173)

It is for this reason that, for instance, the Cloud sees Thel's concern with Being as tedious and tries to bring her `back to a lively life' which simply accepts metaphysics with his talk about feeding flowers.

\textsuperscript{16} Heidegger is speaking from the point of view of curiosity and idle talk here. Indeed, as we have already seen, curiosity and idle talk close Dasein off from disclosing its `there' authentically.
Finally, the following characterization of the world of the "they" should sound familiar after hearing the "they's" rhetoric in *The Book of Thel*:

Everything looks as though it were genuinely understood, genuinely taken hold of, genuinely spoken, though at bottom it is not; or else it does not look so, and yet at bottom is. Ambiguity not only affects the way we avail ourselves of what is accessible for use and enjoyment, and the way we manage it; ambiguity has already established itself in the understanding as a potentiality-for-Being, and in the way Dasein projects itself and presents itself with possibilities. Everyone is acquainted with what is up for discussion and what occurs, and everyone discusses it... (H. 173)

Indeed, it seems clear that this is the way in which each of the speaking characters responds to Thel's concerns. Thel has only to mention the manner in which she perceives herself in a simile—a figure which should require some thought to understand, some discovering which brings about astonishment—and the character to whom she has been speaking has, predictably, brought another who is the vehicle of Thel's description of herself, rather than a representative of the simile as simile: the "they" 'already knows' but, really, does not hear Thel's metaphorical concern as metaphorical. The Lilly, the Cloud, and, to an extent, the Clod of Clay 'translate' Thel's primordial concern as a passing fancy in the 'tenfold life' of the "they." In the world of the "they," these characters appear to have already "genuinely understood" Thel's concern; while Thel, herself, appears to have no understanding of what she is talking about (or, indeed, to be talking about nothing). It is in this manner that the "they" attempts to make Thel's concern look ridiculous, for since it seems as if the "they" already knows what Thel is only anticipating, and since their knowledge appears genuine, Thel seems 'backwards' in her 'anxious questioning.' "This ambiguity is always tossing to curiosity that which it seeks [time]; and it gives idle talk the semblance of having everything decided in it"
(H. 174). In the disclosure of the `they'-self, the `they' appears to have everything--including Thel's concern with Being--quickly and completely in its grasp, and Thel's primordial concern looks to be `falling behind' in the endless quest for curiosity.

Nevertheless, since Thel, as a Dasein, has grown and fallen into the `they' and has thereby become, for the most part, a `they-self'; and because the `they' promises this `they'-self a `lively life'; Thel discloses the `they's' appeals as being attractive. Indeed, because `idle talk' and `ambiguity,' "having seen everything, having understood everything, develop the supposition that Dasein's disclosedness, which is so available and so prevalent, can guarantee to Dasein that all of the possibilities of its Being will be secure, genuine, and full" (H. 177), the `they's' appeals are "tempting" (H. 177) to Thel. It is for these reasons that Dasein "loos[es] itself in the `they'' (H. 177). This loosing of oneself in the `they' of one's `they'-self is the inauthentic mode of what Heidegger calls "falling" (H. 175), in which Dasein turns away from itself and exists in the `they's' truths as if they were absolute. But, for Heidegger, as I have indicated in chapter one, this `falling' itself is not something which Dasein can ever escape--even in authentic existence.

In falling, Dasein falls away from itself and into its world, the world of thrown disclosure, "which itself belongs to [Dasein's] Being" (H. 176). Indeed, Thel's thrown state-of-mind which I have been calling `anxious questioning' is a mode of her Being-in-the-world which is itself in every case falling into its thrownness. It is in this manner that Dasein gets "absorbed in the world" (H. 53) of its concern which is always thrown. Therefore, for Heidegger, "authentic existence is not something which floats above falling
everydayness," but, rather, "existentially," it is only "a modified way in which such everydayness is seized upon" (H. 179), one in which Dasein does not `lose itself' in the `they' of its `they'-self. To be authentic, Dasein must own the nullity which is the basis of its Being--it must find, or disclose, it very thrown Being-in-the-world.

I have noted in chapter one, and developed the idea in this chapter, that Thel as Dasein has always already fallen into a thrown world, that is, a world dominated by the `they' and its limited range of potentialities-for-Being. I have also noted, in this chapter, that this is, for Heidegger, the case for both inauthentically and authentically existing Dasein. The difference between these modes of existence cannot be, then, the presence or absence of this public limitation in the disclosure of Dasein's `there.' The difference is, rather, an awareness, in authentic existence, in Being an authentic Self,

of the limits of any and all belief systems. It is the existential, concrete realization of the relativity and folly of all belief systems, of all dogmatism, and of one's own innate desire to possess reality whole. (Madison 177)

Madison calls this authenticity "wisdom" (177). Dasein must keep falling into its thrown belief system in order to disclose its world in a meaningful manner, but, in order to exist authentically, that is, in Madison's words, in order to be `wise,' Dasein must also be aware that these belief systems into which it is falling are necessarily ungrounded. This awareness is possible through Dasein's `holding on' to what is revealed in "anxiety [Angst]" (H. 182-191). And anxiety as such, as I have suggested in calling Thel's state-of-mind an `anxious questioning,' is always `pushing to the fore' in Thel's mood in The Book of Thel.

Anxiety reveals to Dasein its very Being-in-the-world and, as Dreyfus translates,
the *insignificance* of "intraworldly" understanding, or, as the standard translation goes, the insignificance of disclosure and interpretation "within-the-world" (H. 186) of Dasein's 'there.' Dreyfus reviews

When anxious Dasein is drawn away from the roles and equipment it has taken up, the for-the-sake-of-whichs provided by the one [or the 'they'] and the whole referential nexus appear as constructs—a cultural conspiracy to provide the illusion of some ultimate meaning-motivating action. Social action now appears as a game which there is no point in playing since it has no intrinsic meaning.... The anxious Dasein can still see that there is a whole system of roles and equipment *that can be used by anyone*, but, just for that very reason, the system has no essential relation to *it*. (180)

In other words, in anxiety, Dasein becomes "not-at-home" (H. 189), it feels "uncanny" (H.188), in the world of the 'they.' In anxiety, the 'they's' meanings, its structures of for-the-sake-of-which, are exposed for what they are, groundless constructions on the nothingness, the insignificance, the meaninglessness, of Dasein's `Being-in-the-world as such' which now obtrudes itself. Dasein may now see that all of its meaning comes from the thrown with-world of the 'they,' and that it has none in itself.

Once anxiety discloses Dasein's `Being-in-the-world as such,' Dasein's "resoluteness" (H. 267) can take hold of what is revealed in anxiety: that the meanings in which Dasein exists are not its own and that these meanings are not grounded in anything other than Dasein's falling thrownness. And, with this resoluteness, Dasein can attain what G. B. Madison calls "wisdom" (176), which is that which Heidegger calls "authenticity" (H. 191).

But, further, Heidegger claims elsewhere that,

Anxiety is nothing other than the pure and simple experience of Being in the sense of Being-in-the-world. This experience can, though it does not have to ... assume a distinctive sense in *death* or, more precisely, in
We then speak of the anxiety of death, which must be kept altogether distinct from the fear of death, for it is not fear in the face of death but anxiety as the affectedness of naked Being-in-the-world of pure Dasein. There is thus the possibility, in the very moment of departing from the world, so to speak, when the world has nothing more to say to us and every other has nothing more to say, that the world and our Being-in-it show themselves purely and simply.

(\textit{HCT} 291; quoted in Dreyfus 311)

What Heidegger is saying here is that, in anxiety, Dasein discloses the insignificance which is also disclosed to Dasein by an awareness of the `not-yet' of death, to which he refers here as Dasein's "dying." Because, as I have indicated throughout this study with respect to Thel's awareness, death is not-yet, that is, because death can instantaneously annihilate all of one's own Dasein's potentialities and possibilities at any time, because it will certainly come sooner or later, and because it is not to be outstripped, Dasein's existence is always already characterized by this possibility; that is, each Dasein \textit{is} in its existence the certain, immanent possibility that the world will suddenly become meaningless in its insignificance to one's own Dasein at any time. It is for this reason that, for the authentically existing Dasein, that is, for Dasein when it holds on to what anxiety reveals, all meaning is necessarily "\textit{ironic}" (Madison 177; my emphasis), which is to say, all meaning is also necessarily potentially meaningless at the same time. This is why Thel asks,

\begin{quote}
O life of this our spring! why fades the lotus of the water?
Why fade these children of the spring? born but to smile and fall
Ah! Thel is like a watry bow, and like a parting cloud,
Like a reflection in a glass, like shadows in the water...
\end{quote}

(\textit{T} 1: 6-9; \textit{E} 3)

Thel is aware that her mode of Being is like the meaning of her living, which is itself characterized by the ever-presence of the certain yet indefinite, immanent possibility of
death: she is "born but to smile and fall" "like a watry bow"; that is, she is aware that the meaning of her Being, in the throw of existence (in the flow of the "spring" (6)?), is nebulous, is also characterized by the meaninglessness of the usual conception of not-Being, "like" the Being of "a watry bow." But let us look at Thel's brush with her own 'Being-in-the-world as such' first.

The 'grave' scene on plate six represents such an anxious encounter in this Heideggerian reading of the poem. There, in "the land of clouds" (6: 6; E 6)--that is, in the land which does away with disclosures and interpretations involving 'simply stable, definite substances and truths'--Thel's now anxious state-of-mind discloses the "couches of the dead, & where the fibrous roots/ Of every heart on earth infixes deep its restless twists" (3-4). In her anxiety, Thel reveals "the worldhood of the world" which is prior to any particular, positive significance derived from an order of for-the-sake-of-which, as well as disclosing the nullity of her own Being-in as Being-in.

Thel employs the primordial mode of discourse, "keeping silent" (H. 164), in order to disclose the voice of her 'Being-in-the-world as such.' While this "keeping

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17 ...which is Thel's at this point in the poem...

18 Of course, Dasein's Being-in-the-world as such, since it is precisely that which is not something definite within-the-world, cannot be put into the 'idle talk' of lexical speech: Dasein's Being-in-the-world as such is not something which can be incorporated into the significance of a particular for-the-sake-of-which since the worldhood of the world is precisely that which comes before any particular construal. For this reason, the figures of the grave and of the voice are analogies for the actual disclosure of the anxious world.

19 In Jerusalem, Blake locates Beulah, his land of pleasure where "Contraries are equally true," "Beneath the bottoms of the Graves, Which is Earths central joint" (J II: 48: 13-14; E 194).
silent" is different from that which characterizes Dasein's primordial experience, in this situation Thel does not advance any positive understandings or interpretations of her 'there' (the latter, a category which includes questions) in the form of public talk, or indeed in the form of use, but rather, lets the world which her Being-with discloses speak to her in its own voice. Thel is, in looking reticently upon the worldhood of the world, disrupting the 'idle talk' of the other characters.

The world of Thel's Being-with as her 'Being-in-the-world as such' says,

Why cannot the Ear be closed to its own destruction?
Or the glistening Eye to the poison of a smile!
Why are Eyelids stord with arrows ready drawn,
Where a thousand fighting men in ambush lie?
Or an Eye of gifts & graces, show'ring fruits & coined gold!
Why a Tongue impress'd with honey from every wind?
Why an Ear, a whirlpool fierce to draw creations in?
Why a Nostril wide inhaling terror trembling & affright
Why a tender curb upon the youthful burning boy!
Why a little curtain of flesh on the bed of our desire?

(T 6:11-20; E 6)

These are the 'they's' questions. We could imagine the Lilly, for instance, asking why Thel cannot close her "ear[s]" and "eye[s]" to questions, to "creations" of concerns about Being, which are disruptive of Thel's composure as a 'they'-self. Thel should, if she were 'normal,' be acting upon her "desire" for a 'lively life,' not asking questions about the mundane topic of her Being.

These are, however, also Thel's questions, or, at least, the questions of someone in a position similar to Thel's. Indeed, Thel might ask, why the 'they' of her 'they'-self always provides her with distractions from that which she is primordially concerned with, why her "eye[s]" and "ear[s]" must be subjected to this 'idle talk' which 'levels' her
primordial concerns and "desire[s]" down.' It is in this way that the world remains articulated into questions which, however, are themselves indeterminate in their appeal. They are therefore, in an anxious sense, meaningless—that is, they have no meaning until someone takes hold of them and interprets them in a particular, but ungrounded, manner.  

This, as I have indicated above, is not to say that Dasein must avoid falling into the 'they's' meanings, "for one knows that without them one would be a stranger to any human world and could not communicate with others or live in their company" (Madison 177). Indeed, Dasein needs the 'they's' for-the-sake-of-whichs in order to make sense of the world, and in order to get along with Others, that is, in order to exist in a common or with-world in all three moments of disclosure. Dasein must always return to its absorption in, or its falling into, the world of its concern after its brush with its 'Being-in-the-world as such' if it wants to remain 'sane.' This is, again, what Heidegger calls 'falling.'

But, as Heidegger describes further, this return can be carried out in two manners: Dasein can flee back to its involvement and interpret what it has seen in anxiety as a fearsome encounter, or, as I have said, it can return in such a way as to 'hold on to'

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20 I think we can say that it is for this reason that "Blake's poems describe a reality that, while it can have no effective existence beyond our perceptions and representations of it, can have no single representation--no single myth; instead we must keep creating and responding to it in new visions" (Frosch 183).

Indeed, we can also say, in a like manner, that, as I claimed in my introduction, *The Book of Thel* is indeterminate in its meaning—that is, until its possibilities are actualized according to a particular focus and a particular tradition.

For a different analysis of the indeterminacy of these questions, see Murray (292-294).
what is disclosed by its anxiety. The former choice is to deny the ontological character of the world and to replace it with a definite object of fear, and the latter is to accept the nullity of one's `Being-in-the-world as such' and to become `resolute.' In fear, Dasein covers over the indefinite and extraworldly character of that which is disclosed and interprets it as something definite and in Dasein's world, while, in `wisdom,' in "resoluteness," Dasein allows itself to disclose this indeterminacy.

When Thel repeats her concern that she is "like a watry bow" (1: 8; E 3), that she is "like a faint cloud" (2: 11; E 4), that she "fade[s] away" (3: 21; E 5), and that she will "leave [her] shining lot" (5: 13) at an unspecified time in the future, she betrays her initial `holding on' to the indeterminacy of what is revealed in anxiety throughout her conversation with the `they' of her `they'-self.

We can now see, in Thel's `holding on' to her anxiety, that *The Book of Thel* does not operate in a conventional narrative sequence, but rather presupposes its final plate in its motto and initial sequence of action. When Thel leaves her family and seeks the "secret air," she is holding on to what she sees, but does not fully understand, in her grave. She sees that the activity of leading her "sunny flocks" is not meaningful in itself as her mother, sisters, and the other speaking characters of the poem would have her believe; she perceives that as she "fades away" then so does *her* "place" or meaning in the metaphysical system of meaning. She also sees that, at the same time, the `they' will

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21 I think I am justified in saying this inasmuch as this reading explains Thel's motivation for leaving her home; indeed, Blake hints at this sequence of events with Thel's "paleness" (1: 2; E 3) at the outset of her journey.

I will be able to explain this flexibility further below.
hold that "place" open for Another--for any Other--in the same way that the questions on the final plate are not exclusively meaningful as the "they's," or as Thel's. She perceives that meaning is not grounded in Dasein. But, as Thel also discloses in the sixth plate, the world is not a ground for meaning either: any element of the world can mean more than one thing at the same time, depending on who takes hold of it--just as the questions on plate six are meaningful in different ways depending on whether the "they" asks them or Thel does. They are not like determinate rods or bowls which "contain" "Wisdom" and "Love" respectively.

It is with these impressions in mind that Thel asks her initial questions on plate one:

O life of this our spring! why fades the lotus of the water?
Why fade these children of the spring? born but to smile & fall.
Ah! Thel is like a watry bow, and like a parting cloud,
Like a reflection in a glass. like shadows in the water.
Like dreams of infants. like a smile on an infants face,
Like the doves voice, like transient day, like music in the air;

(6-12; E 3)

I have already said that Thel's concern here is with respect to her unstable ground as an existent; now we can see how Thel perceives this ground: she sees it, Being, as lacking definite, inherent meaning which makes it impossible for her to occupy a "place" in a metaphysical system. She sees herself in her Being as, for instance, a "parting cloud" which has meaning, but only fleetingly, before it changes shape and thereby changes meaning-- or vanishes and thereby becomes meaningless, leaving its "place" for Another. She sees herself as something other than the stable and determinate rod and bowl of her motto.
Indeed, if we accept Heidegger's characterization of the worldhood of the world, Thel is, for instance, in the first place, "like a watry bow" in that she does not embody one definite meaning. Not only this, but she changes in outward form and thereby changes meaning as does the "parting cloud;" she therefore does not embody a permanent meaning. She is the Being of her basis, not the basis of her Being. That is, her present meaning is a `product' of her with-world and, as such, she can, in herself, support other an infinite number of other meanings. Her mode of Being is other than that which characterizes, for instance, a metaphysically conceived "silver rod" in that it does not simply retain a stable form and self-identical meaning which metaphysics translates into a representation of a simple, stable, and substantial being. Thel is ontologically "Guilty!"

Having said this, I cannot, of course, abandon the narrative sequence of the poem completely; I must still account for the significance of Thel's journey of conversation which ends with the grave scene on plate six. It seems, therefore, that Thel discloses the worldhood of the world twice in the poem: once as the motivation for her journey and once at that journey's completion.

Again, to justify this interpretation, we know that Blake often moved plates in the binding of various copies of his poems, that he did not number such components as fronticepieces, mottos, and tailpieces, and thereby "provided a heuristic stimulus to the reception of the text as flexible rather than dogmatic" (Rajan SR 203). It seems to me that Blake's description of Thel's "paleness" in the second line of the poem proper serves precisely this purpose, that is, to allow the reader to play with the sequence of events in
the poem. Indeed, this "paleness" seems to both explain Thel's eventual disclosure of an anxious world through her "anxious questioning," and be explained by it. The poem is, then, in a sense, a potential cycle.

The final plate (in most copies), then, in the light of Heidegger's *Being and Time*, both explains Thel's journey and is its goal: in her conversation with the "they," Thel is both attempting to understand her previous brush with her "Being-in-the-world as such" and is "holding the way open" for another disclosure of the same kind. Again, Thel's state-of-mind's repetition of Thel's concern to each character is its attempt to remain in the light of Being; the characters' responses, meanwhile, as I have said, are for the most part attempts to dim this light down. Thel only leaves the vale, the world of lostness in the "they," to get a glimpse of what might be beyond, and then "Fle[es] back" (6: 22; E 6) in order to prepare for another such venture which will, in turn, hopefully, lead her to authentic existence.

Blake, then, provides, as a clarification of Heidegger, an account of the struggle for authenticity in the existence of a particular Dasein within its with-world in the form of a narrative which the reader must work to construct. As Heidegger describes it, the struggle appears, for instance, as follows: "[i]n ['idle talk'], out of it, and against it, all genuine understanding, interpreting, and communicating, all re-discovering and appropriating anew, are performed" (H. 169). Eventually, for Heidegger, this struggle will "result" in "a modified way in which such everydayness is seized upon" (H. 179). What Blake argues is that Dasein must, in order to exist authentically, carry out this "genuine understanding," this "interpreting, and communicating," this "re-discovering and
appropriating anew" over and over again, it must repeat it once unsettled by anxiety, and do so successfully. Blake's narrative, the narrativity of which he points up by leaving motivational connections implicit and therefore partially up to the reader, expresses this struggle itself.

Before I go on to discuss Thel's success and/or failure to 'hold on to' the nullity of her existence, however, we need to know what brings about her first disclosure of her 'Being-in-the-world as such.' Indeed, even if the above interpretation of the poem is valid, it still does not account for the initial 'source' of Thel's anxiety which discloses her Being-in-the-world the first time.

Since it is a state-of-mind, anxiety is both anxious in the face of, and about, its 'Being-in-the-world as such' (H. 187). In other words, Dasein's 'Being-in-the-world as such' is both the 'that about which' of anxiety and 'that which is revealed by it.' We can see, then, that Dasein's very structure is that which is both the 'object' of its anxiety and that which is revealed by it. Heidegger also says that this structure, which is revealed in anxiety and about which anxiety is anxious, is "nothing" (H. 186) in the common sense of having a definite significance or importance to Dasein. It is indeed the nothingness of Dasein's 'Being-in-the-world as such,' which involves the nullity of Dasein's Being-the-basis for its own Being, which I have clarified above with respect to the groundlessness of those thrown possibilities which the 'they' bestows upon it, and to Dasein's not having any of its own possibilities respectively. But, as I have also said, the 'they' functions to cover this nothing over. What we have on the final plate of The Book of Thel, then, is a portrayal of a Dasein's anxiety about the nullity which characterizes
its authentic existence, and a disclosure of this same nullity.

But, we might ask, since this nothingness and nullity is covered over by the 'they,' a 'society' of which Dasein becomes a member in its being a Dasein, how is Dasein ever prompted to disclose the nothingness of Being-in-the-world and its own null basis? Indeed, if, as we saw in chapter one, Dasein qua Dasein is completely 'set upon' by the thrown for-the-sake-of-whichs of its with-world in its disclosure of its 'there' and in its interpretations which are built upon that disclosure, and if, in falling, Dasein constantly flees into its absorption in the world of its concern, how can Dasein ever realize that its meanings are not its own, and that, as such, they are never absolute? Blake never tells us explicitly what prompts Thel to listen to the nullity of her Being-in-the-world and thereby to disclose her anxious world.

The answer which Heidegger provides is that Dasein's conscience calls Dasein back to itself from its lostness in the 'they' as the call of "care" (H. 278). "Dasein's Being reveals itself as care" (H. 182) in Dasein's existence. Indeed, "care" is the very structure of Dasein's existence which may be expressed in the following phrase: "ahead-of-itself-Being-already-in-(the-world)" (H. 192). In this expression, we can see the temporal basis of Dasein's structure: it projects possibilities it finds in its having-been ahead of itself into the future and is, proximally and for the most part, absorbed in its present world. It is 'factual' in its orientation toward the past (having been), it is characterized by 'existence' which projects into the future, and it is always 'falling' into its absorption in its present world. But, of course, "[c]are itself, in its very essence, is permeated with nullity through and through" (H. 285); that is, as the existence of
Dasein's Being-in-the-world, it is a null structure. "It is null in advance of [vor] any of the things which it can project and which it mostly attains" (H. 285) by virtue of its having-been-already-in-(the-world). The 'care' which Dasein is in its existence is "like a watry bow, and like a parting cloud."

Consequently, the call of care itself communicates the "nothing" which 'care' is to Dasein in its discoursing and thereby "passes over both the 'they' and the manner in which Dasein has been publicly interpreted" (H. 273), which function to cover over Dasein's primordial nullity through 'idle talk.' This structure which characterizes all human Being is that which calls Dasein back to itself from its lostness in the 'they,' and calls Dasein to the null basis of its Being-the-basis which is involved in Being-in-the-world. Care, since it is existence, calls as long as Dasein exists.

But since Dasein, as I have said, proximally and for the most part, 'listens away' to the 'they' which constantly tempts Dasein to flee the call of conscience into the noise of 'idle talk' which discloses a public world. Dasein can, however, accept the call of conscience by Being reticent:

...the call comes from the soundlessness of uncanniness, and the Dasein which it summons is called back into the stillness of itself, and called back as something that is to become still. Only in reticence, therefore, is the silent discourse understood appropriately in wanting to have a conscience. (H. 296)

In reticence, then, Dasein `un-closes' (from Ent-schlossenheit (Dreyfus 318)) itself to the call of care; that is, it ceases to "listen away" (H. 271) from itself and into the 'they' through 'idle talk.' It is in this state-of-Being that Dasein can understand the call of care which is constantly calling:
The authentic understanding which 'follows' the call is not a mere addition which attaches itself to the phenomenon of conscience by a process which may or may not be forthcoming. Only from an understanding of the appeal and together with such an understanding does the full Experience of conscience let itself be grasped. (H. 279)

It is this understanding, an understanding projection of the essential nullity of Dasein's 'Being-in-the-world as such,' to which Thel has started on the way at the outset of the poem, and it is this understanding that she is trying to come to fully in her conversation with the 'they.'

But we still do not know what brings this reticence about in the first place; that is, we do not know what causes Dasein to break off from `idle talk' when `idle talk' is the mode of discourse into which Dasein is always already thrown and out of and against which all "genuine understanding, interpreting, and communicating, all re-discovering and appropriating anew, are performed" (H. 169). Since Dasein is "at-home" (H. 189) in `idle talk,' one would think that what is needed is an extraordinary rupture in the everyday scheme of things indeed: something to shock Dasein out of its public chatter and to force it to listen to what has always been silently calling. We can find the answer where Heidegger says, "Being-towards-death is essentially anxiety" (H. 266). With this in mind, I will again need to use what happens later in the narrative sequence of the poem as an explanation for Thel's state-of-mind at the poem's outset.

As Pearce notes, the speaking characters, the Lilly, the Cloud, and the Clod of Clay, voice their counsels in images which mirror those of commonplace, late eighteenth-century explanations for the universe and for the presence of death within it. The Lilly is a disciple of an old testament God (Pearce 30-1) who tells the Lilly that she will
"flourish in eternal vales" (T2: 25; E 4) after she has `died,' the Cloud espouses comfort in the eternal, Natural cycle (Pearce 31) of `neo-Newtonian' philosophy, and the Clod of Clay returns Thel to the `Noboddady' of deism (Pearce 32) who gives His subjects a "crown that none can take away" (T 5: 4; E 5). In this way, all of these characters attempt to `explain death away' and to lull Thel into the `easiness' of Being-at-home in the `they.' When Thel meets the Worm, however, that is, when she encounters her own `death,' she is "astonish'd" (4: 1; E 5): she is effectively speechless in the `idle talk' which has, after her initial lament and up to now, except for her repetition of her initial concern, characterized most of her conversation with the `they' in its reiteration of received doctrine. As Thel had been when voicing her own concern, she is now `reduced' to actively figurative language usage, and to `anxious questions' to describe what is undescrivable in the `public talk' of received, religious doctrine:

Art thou a Worm? image of weakness, art thou but a
Worm?
I see thee like an infant wrapped in the Lillys leaf:
Ah weep not little voice, thou can' st not speak. but thou can' st weep;
Is this a Worm? I see thee lay helpless & naked: weeping,
And none to answer, none to cherish thee with mothers smiles.

(4: 4-6; E 5)

It seems that the thought of death is something which, for a time, unsettles even received religion's comfort and thereby, temporarily, silences its `idle talk.' Indeed, as I have shown before with respect to Thel's conversation with the Cloud, this thought keeps `breaking-in' on Thel's listening away. And, if we accept Heidegger's characterization of death as that which is in every case not-yet, as that which is a certain but indefinite, immanent possibility of the impossibility of any particular, meaningful disclosure, we can
see how it functions as the silencer of all-knowing 'idle talk' for the purposes of the reticence of resoluteness. The possibility of death which obtrudes itself in Dasein's 'there' from time to time, and which the 'they' cannot cover over completely, then, according to Blake and Heidegger, acts as a reminder for Dasein of the death which Dasein always carries within its Being. This not-yet, in turn, reminds Dasein of the nullity of its Being and causes Thel to break off from 'idle talk.' This 'breaking off' from 'idle talk' facilitates an understanding of the call of care but, as Blake claims, does not guarantee it.

So, in her motto, from the outset of her poem proper, Thel is beginning to develop her 'intuition' that meaning is not something which can be solidly grounded in the sense that metaphysics proposes: in rods and bowls. Her journey, which takes the form of a conversation with the 'they,' then, is an attempt to prepare herself for another disclosure of her 'Being-in-the-world as such,' one which will allow her to take its nullity and nothingness into her everyday existence— that is, into the projection of her understanding of having-been—and which will thereby cause her to exist in an authentic manner.

Finally, we can determine the success of Thel's venture by examining her reaction to her state-of-mind's disclosure of her 'Being-in-the-world as such':

The Virgin started from her seat, & with a shriek.
   Fled back unhinderd till she came into the vales of Har.
(6: 21-22; E 6)

Thel's return "back ... into the vales of Har" (which is, of course, "unhinderd" since the 'they' must certainly welcome it) cannot provide justification for a negative judgement
of the outcome of her quest in itself. Indeed, as I have shown, Dasein must return to its absorption in the with-world of its concern if it is going to exist in a meaningful way. What does support a negative verdict, however, is the state-of-mind in which Thel returns.

Surely a "shriek" indicates fear in a context which includes the line: "Nostril[s] wide inhaling terror trembling & affright" (18). As Heidegger says, fear is always afraid in the face of "some thing which we encounter within-the-world and which may have either readiness-to-hand, presence-at-hand, or Dasein-with as its kind of Being" (H. 140); that is, fear must be afraid of something which is a definite entity in the sense of having significance in an involvement in a particular projection of for-the-sake-of-which. One cannot, for Heidegger, be afraid of one's `Being-in-the-world as such' because that structure is not something definite in its significance: it is precisely the insignificance of any world of involvement to Dasein. Thel must, therefore, in the end, have disclosed a fearsome entity rather than her `Being-in-the-world as such' for that structure would have caused anxiety, not fear. Indeed, she must have taken the figurative `grave' (which participates in the `is/is not' ontology of metaphor) as something `literal' (or lexical) in the `idle talk' of the `they'--as a "grave." Any such lexical disclosure is necessarily something definite within-the-world. That which is definite within-the-world must be metaphysical in nature since its representation grounds meaning in the entity rather than in the historically encountered, and in-itself indeterminate Being which supports it.

To reconnect to my initial discussion of the Seinsfrage, metaphysics discloses only `simply substantial' beings, such as rods and bowls, and thereby passes over Thel's
guiding question: the question of Being. In the end, then, Thel, not having broken off from `idle talk' for long enough to understand the call of care, discloses a metaphysical world and thereby, herself, passes over the issue of Being and flees in fear. Her only hope is to return to the beginning of the poem and begin her struggle again.
Conclusion

If *The Book of Thel* can be read so as to engage Heidegger's phrasing of the *Seinsfrage* in *Being and Time*, the conversation must, by definition, go two ways: Heidegger must speak to Blake, and Blake must speak to Heidegger. In the course of this thesis, I have shown that Heidegger provides us as readers of *The Book of Thel* with an opening of the way towards the language necessary for interpreting Blake's poem as one character's "anxious questioning" of the metaphysical assumption that Being is expressed fully and easily by metaphysical representations of "simply substantial" beings. What I must now ask, in keeping with the purpose of the fundamental ontological project, is how Blake, in turn, allows us to hold the way to this questioning open even further as we read Heidegger's *Being and Time* through him.

I have already noted that Blake shows that certain modes of Being-with-Others can be helpful in exposing the groundlessness of everyday, public meaning, and that he characterizes the struggle for authentic existence in such a way as to propose that it might often involve a number of "semi-successful" disclosures of the nullity of Dasein's "Being-in-the-world as such." I think I can add to this list the suggestion that Blake emphasizes the struggle involved in escaping the domination of the "they" of one's "they'-self even for long enough to disclose the nullity of one's own "Being-in-the-world as such" for a second time. But what is most important in all of these insights, and that on which I will focus as a conclusion to my study, is the single source from which these insights spring—the narrativity of *The Book of Thel*.

The most obvious of these illuminations in terms of its narrative source is the last
of those mentioned above: the difficulty involved in Thel's 'holding on' to what is disclosed in anxiety in the face of the 'they' of her 'they'-self. Indeed, we as readers gather this difficulty from the repeated temptation which the public characters offer Thel, from Thel's occasional falling into this temptation, from her repetition of her initial question which follows each falling, and from her final fleeing in the face of what should be the nullity of her existence but turns out to be that which she discloses as an object of fear. We do not, however, understand this struggle as an odd assortment of these elements; rather, we perceive it as the way in which these events go together to express the sense of a story of a difficult undertaking: a story of a journey with a goal, with obstacles which stand in the way of that goal and which result in a final failure to reach it. To be sure, the struggle is not in any one of these elements, or in two or more of them 'added together.' It comes, rather, in the way we as readers fit these elements together into a meaningful story. In short, we as readers gather this difficulty from these events in their narrative organization.¹

Further, we can turn this insight into our own narrative comprehension around to suggest that this narrativity is probably the way in which Blake has come to his understanding of his own existence, which he develops and works through as he writes the poem. We can say with David Carr (who follows the later Heidegger) that human

¹ The Book of Thel does not have a narrative structure in the strictest of definitions of this term inasmuch as many of the poem's narrative connections must be supplied by the reader. The genre in which Blake writes, however, ensures that the reader will take this role up and feel justified in doing so. Blake encourages this function further by making the narrative gaps of the poem obvious and obviously in need of filling. I think, moreover, that this 'supplementary' role of the reader foregrounds the need for narrative understanding—in reading poems, and in existence. In this sense, the gaps in the narrative of The Book of Thel function as indicators, and, indeed, as demonstrators, of the narrativity of human understanding.
"life already has the quality of telling stories—to oneself and others—and of acting them out" (121), and with Ricoeur (who also follows Heidegger), that written narratives are imitations of the narratives in which we already live. In other words, we understand our lives in terms of the stories we tell to ourselves and to others while in the everyday stream of living; and we write written narratives as a 'step back' (or, a swim to the side of the stream) in which we seek to understand our everyday living better—and thereby to change it. We do not, therefore, according to Carr and Ricoeur, experience 'life' as an assemblage of existential and ontological concepts. Indeed, if we were to attempt to do so, we would prevent our use of narrative understanding and the individual 'parts' of life would thereby become meaningless. Following these ideas, we can say that Blake is letting the everyday narrativity of his human 'existence' (in Heidegger's sense) guide his 'analysis,' his written narration, of Thel's struggle to disclose fully her question about the nature of Being. At no 'point' does he leave the narrative 'region.' To be sure, the 'events' which he 'sees' around him make no 'sense,' have no meaning, until he tells himself a story. He sees and hears them in their meaning, then, as a living narrative; and he develops and writes this narrative while remaining in this narrative 'region.' He therefore performs no analytic abstraction in his writing process.

The same might be said for Blake's insight that everyday Being-with-Others in conversation can eventually bring Dasein to a disclosure of the nullity of its own 'Being-

2 By "life" Carr means something like Heidegger's 'existence.'

3 In Ricoeur's words, "[t]he intelligibility engendered by emplotment finds a first anchorage in our competence to utilize in a significant manner the conceptual network that structurally distinguishes the domain of action from that of physical movement" (TN 54-55). For Ricoeur these narratives in which we live are themselves products of written narratives in their structures.
in-the-world as such,' and for his notion that the way to authentic existence might often involve many anxious disclosures. Indeed, while Heidegger tells us in *Being and Time* that, in situations of common concern, Daseins might "become authentically" bound together, and this makes possible the right kind of objectivity, which frees the Other in his freedom for himself" (H. 163), he does not tell us explicitly that this might also happen in the stream of everyday, verbal conversation. Why, then, does Blake come to this insight, and not Heidegger for whom the *Seinsfrage* has been, and will continue to be, an all-consuming concern?

I do not think I would be unjustified in answering this query by saying that Blake makes this discovery because, rather than performing a systematic analysis, he sets up an everyday narrative in which various characters converse, and then allows the everyday narrative logic of these conversations to carry his poem along. Indeed, these characters even 'arise' directly out of this narrative flow. Since, in having his poem structured by such an interchange, he is claiming that most of Thel's life is carried out in a public conversation, once Thel meets the inArticulatable meaning of death, Blake must have the narrative continue in a similar vein or he must explain a rupture. Since he sees little evidence for this rupture in the everyday flow of narrativity, that is, since he sees little indication of it forming in his 'life' or in his written narrative, he depicts Thel's negotiation of this disclosure as being carried out from within this conversation. Furthermore, we can surmise that Blake, as necessarily, in part, a public thinker and author (for even poetry uses 'idle talk' as material), has told himself stories of 'near authentic' existence from within his life-narrative, in which he and other people are

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4 Indeed, Heidegger has shown us that life likes to stay within the constancy of a 'flow.'
always already, at least in part, caught in a public conversation as Daseins. Narrative understanding does not give him any justification for the abstraction involved in taking Dasein out of this flow—even for the purpose of explanation. There is no precedent in the narrative of life which allows for this. Blake, therefore, has Thel start on the way to an understanding of the finitude involved in death from within this conversation because that is what his written, and indeed his lived, narrative calls for. Otherwise, The Book of Thel would not make sense as a story; that is, according to Carr and Ricoeur, Blake's poem would not resemble life, and the reader would consequently reject it as nonsense.

One might give a similar explanation for Blake's insight into the need for multiple, anxious disclosures before Dasein's existence can be authentic. In order to have Thel leave her family at the outset of the poem proper, and in order to have her ask the questions she does in her lament which immediately follows this leaving, the narrativity of his poem demands that Blake (and his reader) provide Thel with motivation for making this break with constant, lost everydayness. According to Carr and Ricoeur, this demand for motivational explanation comes from the narrative that we call "life" itself—and which finds a 'home' in Blake's and his reader's 'lives.' Indeed, in order for individual 'events' to have meaning in a narrative, they must follow causally from others; and if they are elements of human action, they must make sense in terms of human motivation. The reader must, therefore, encouraged by Blake's description of Thel's "paleness" (T 1: 2; E 3), use the anxious disclosure at the end of the poem as an explanation for Thel's asking the questions from which she starts on her quest for understanding.

Indeed, to want to understand her Being, Thel must have a glimpse of that understanding as something which can be understood: Dasein's desired understanding
must be something in Dasein's existential projection. Blake's reader will not let Blake start Thel on her way to her understanding without something of this nature to explain her initial questioning. And, since Thel is asking a question which stands outside of everyday understanding, she must have an idea that there is something outside of everydayness to be understood; to have this idea, she must have been outside of everyday understanding in her 'having been.' To get outside everydayness, Dasein must struggle. Together, this leads to the notion that, since such an extraordinary understanding involves a struggle, one cannot attain this understanding in full in one attempt; that is, as a narrative sequence in which Thel sees the potential understanding, and, upon this sight, arrives at it as fully resolved.

Once Blake makes the above narrative assertions in his poem, life's narrative logic, which Blake uses to write his poem and which the reader brings to the text, requires that Blake express the need for multiple 'semi-successful' disclosures of Being in order for the poem's narrative to make sense as a character's quest for an understanding of Being. With this need satisfied, it does make sense. So, again, it is the very narrativity of the poem, the poet, and the reader, which explains this insight. What is more, in this case, Blake leaves his poem explicitly open to the reader's own need for motivational explanation by leaving these motivational connections implicit, and thereby points up the narrativity of existential understanding.

All of these illuminations lead, finally, to the notion that the form of Being and Time itself is inadequate for asking the Seinsfrage.\(^5\) Indeed, Heidegger's magnum opus

\(^5\) ...or at least they lead to the notion that Being and Time cannot stand on its own as an analysis—that is, without narrative application, whether that application comes in the form of a reader's life or that of a written narrative.

Zimmerman offers the possibility for this criticism in his assertion that "the
presents an analytic movement through issues in Dasein's struggle for an understanding of its own Being, in terms of closed, metaphysical categories: that is, in terms of posited, meaningful expressions --such as the section heading "Being-in-the-world in General as the basic state of Dasein" (H. 52) --which are, as such, relatively inflexible in meaning throughout the work. Meanwhile, these terms have themselves, of course, been gleaned from everyday narrative living. Since they have been abstracted from this `region,' however, they necessarily cause Heidegger's study to miss elements of Dasein's struggle (whether these be actual structural elements, or one's of relative significance). In an abstract analysis such as Heidegger's in *Being and Time*, one can neglect to say, for instance, that Dasein needs a number of semi-successful disclosures of its Being in order to come to an understanding of that Being without realizing that this oversight is existentially inaccurate--that is, until one tells a story about Dasein's struggle for this understanding.

Indeed, Heidegger's ontological categories in *Being and Time*, which are elements of his method, are "not mere instrument[s] serving the sciences [of his understanding]; rather, [they have] pressed the[se] sciences into [their] own service" (Heidegger "Language" 74) in their organization of the `grammar' of his discussion. When speaking of *Being and Time*, then, I think I can say with the later Heidegger that, "not only is the theme drafted, called up by the method, it is also set up within the method and remains within the framework of the method, subordinated to it" (74). As it stands, then, *Being and Time* is seen [by Heidegger] as a way in which the participant (reader) can reveal his own Being, but in a way guided by Being" (47). Regardless of this point, the reader will probably find inaccuracies in Heidegger's analytic characterization of the struggle for an understanding of Being since this characterization has been formulated in a way which involves abstraction.
and Time does not allow the narrativity of `life' to interrogate its theme. This methodological "entangle[ment]" (75) thereby causes Heidegger to `cover over' that which he is talking about in the first place--Being. This in turn causes inaccuracies in his abstract characterization of Dasein's quest for fundamental understanding.

To be sure, "[t]his tangle debars us from the matters that are to make themselves known to our thinking" (75), that is, from the matters of the narrativity of `life.' Thinking about Being, meanwhile, should properly abide in the "region" of "what thinking is given to think" (74; my emphasis), that is, in the region of the initial disclosure of what is thought about. Since we are `living' (existing) human beings, what is thought about is disclosed in `life' (existence). `Life' itself makes sense to us as we understand stories we tell about it. Indeed, `life' gives narrative to thinking, and what is thought about makes sense in this region only.

All of Blake's identifications of Heidegger's oversights in Being and Time come as a result of the very narrativity of The Book of Thel, which is precisely the articulation of this work's thoughtful abiding in the region in which life gives to thought. Again, if we follow Carr, human "life already has the quality of telling stories--to oneself and others--and of acting them out." It is this quality, this `region,' this giving, which continually informs Blake's thinking: from his initial identification of his theme in the stream of everyday `life,' to his working out of its possibilities and writing them into a written narrative. Indeed, rather than forcing the struggle to think Being into the categories of an abstract, analytic method as Heidegger does in Being and Time, Blake lets this existential struggle itself create his poem's form in his own narrative thinking, and, in part, in the narrative thinking of his reader. In this way, The Book of Thel serves
as a thoughtful reading of *Being and Time*. As such, it shows that, in the end, *Being and Time*, like Thel, gets caught up in the metaphysical "idle talk" of the "they" and thereby forgets the way to Being: "life."
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