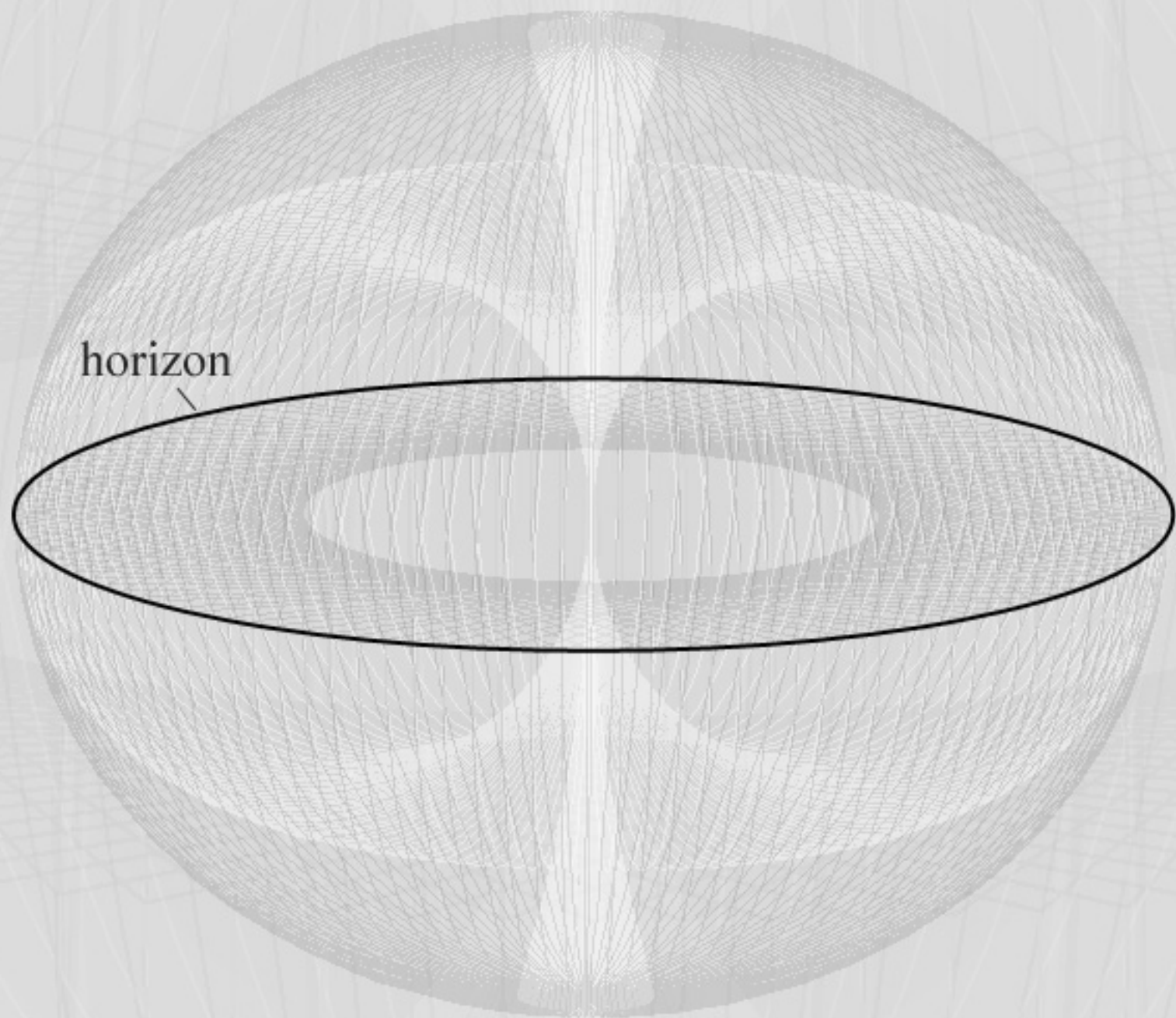


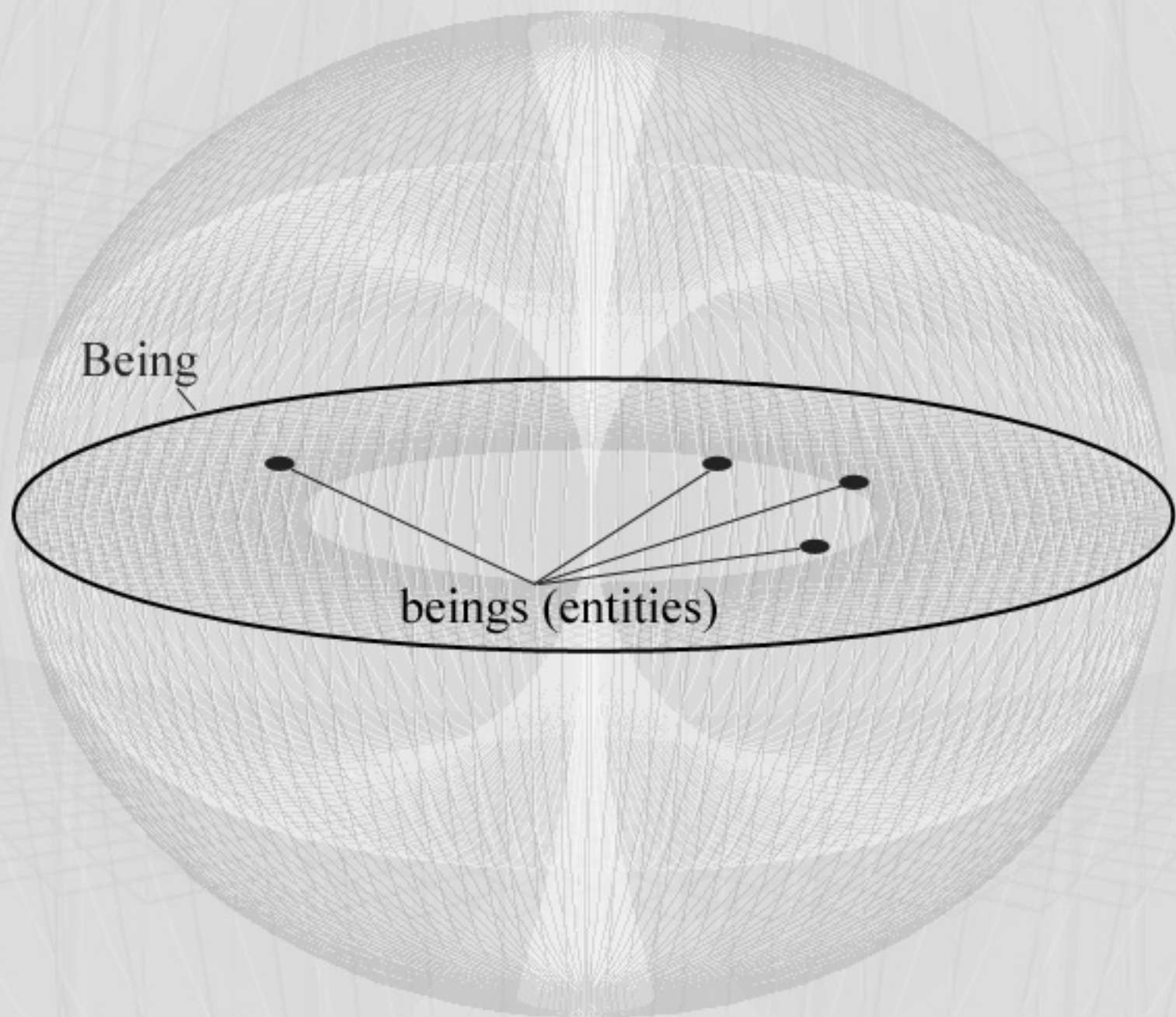
## Diagramming Dasein

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Martin Heidegger (1889-1976)

For Heidegger, as a phenomenologist, any experience that can be encountered presents itself as meaningful in a particular way *for* someone. The particular meaning of that which is experienced depends on the context in which it appears. This meaning-granting context (or frame of reference), Heidegger calls an *horizon*.

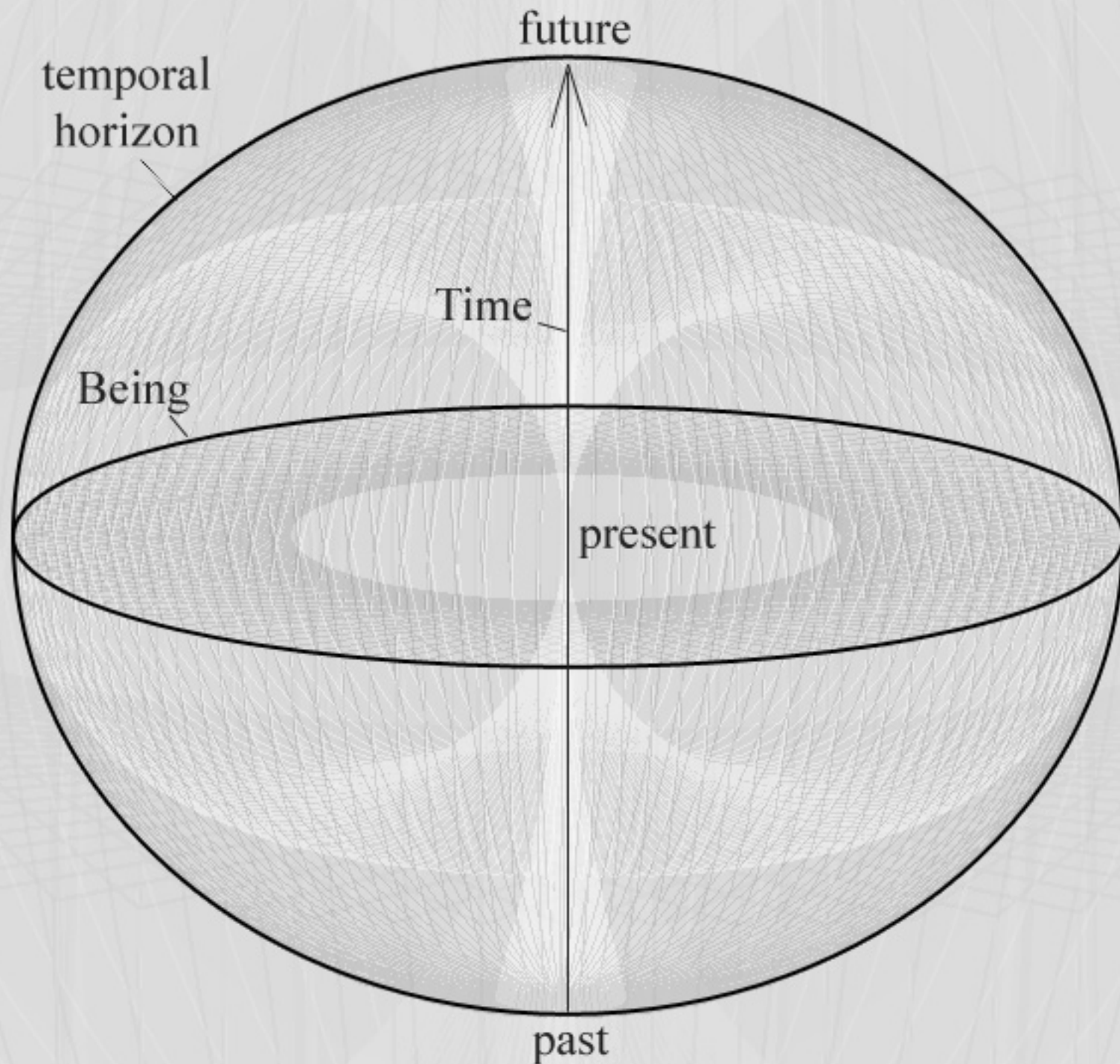


Any time something particular (an entity) is presented to us, it is in part meaningful as an entity – i.e., just insofar as it *is*. The meaning of entities *as such* is given by the context of Being.

Being is “that which determines entities as entities, that on the basis of which entities are already understood... The Being of entities ‘is’ not itself an entity” (25-26/6).

The difference between Being and beings (entities), Heidegger calls the *ontological difference*.

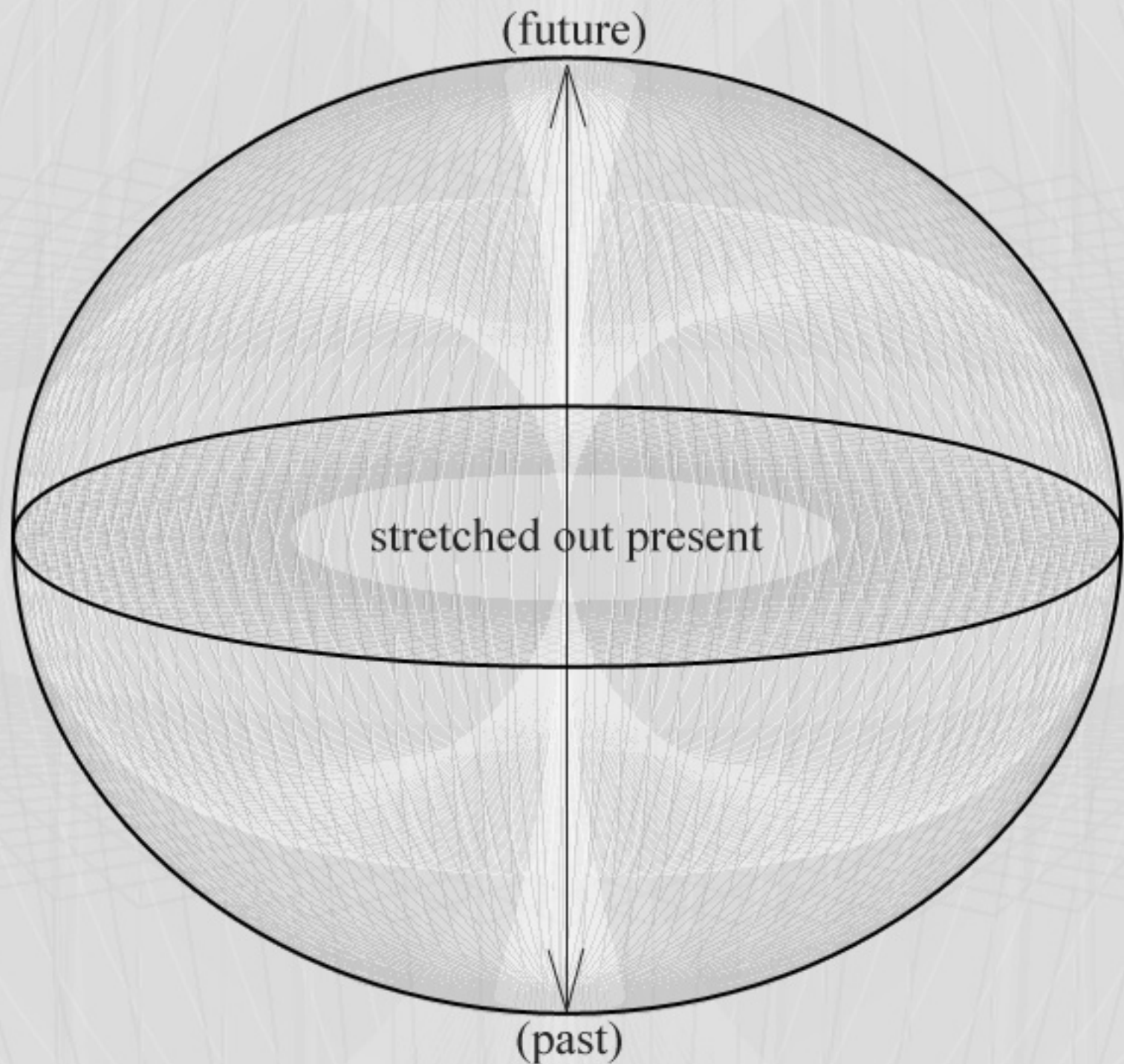
\*Parenthetical citations separated by a “/” refer to page numbers in the Macquarrie/Robinson translation of *Being and Time* and the pagination of the original text in German, respectively.



In *Being and Time* (1927), Heidegger asks “*the question of the meaning of Being*” (19/1).

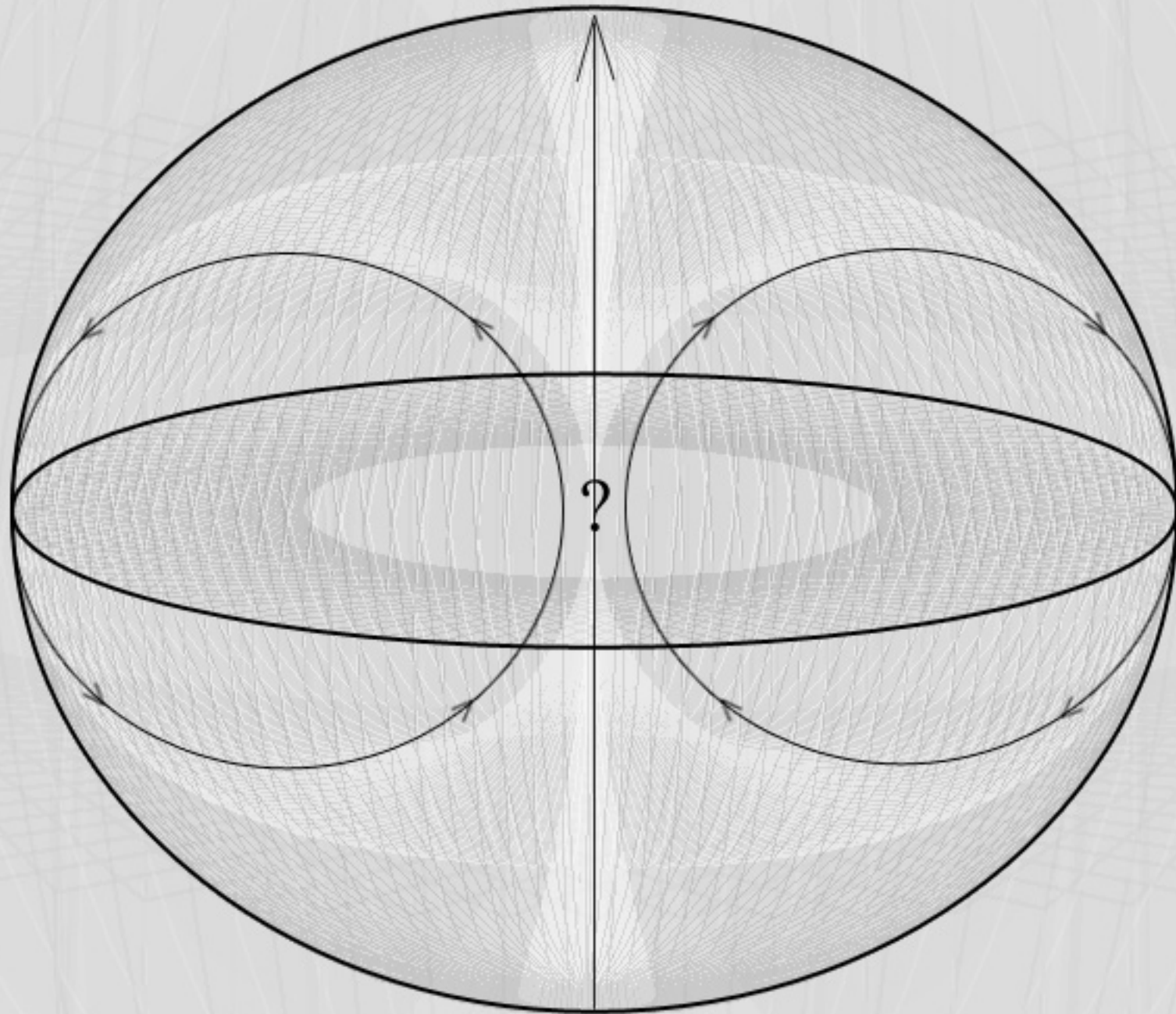
Being grants meaning to beings *as* beings, but what grants meaning to Being itself? To determine this, he needs to place Being in that context which can grant it meaning. (He needs to place the context in a context.) At the outset, he suspects that this larger context is time – that the meaning of Being is to be understood in terms of time:

“Our provisional aim is the Interpretation of *time* as the possible horizon for any understanding whatever of Being” (19/1).



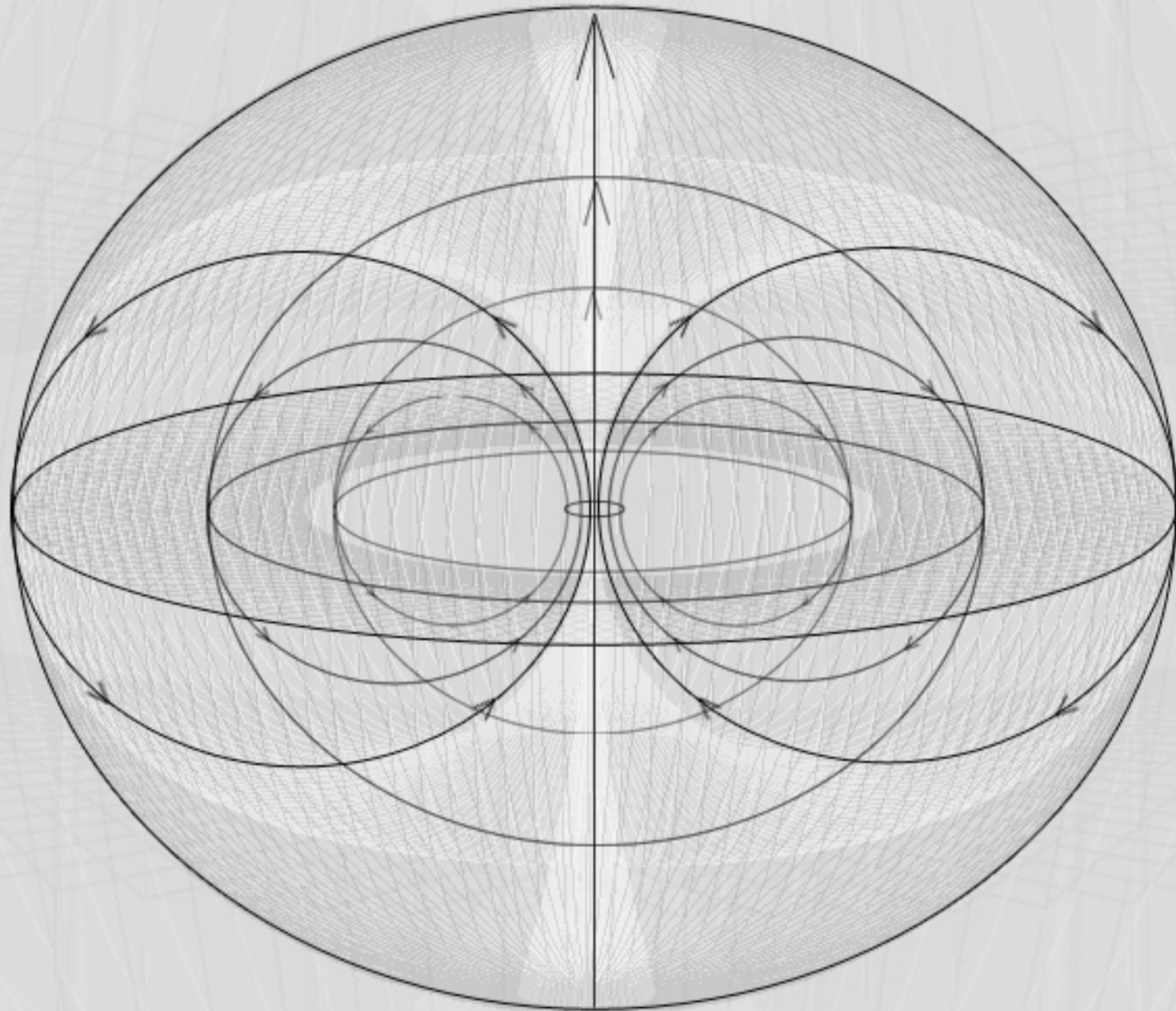
Phenomenologically, we must analyze time according to our experience of it. So, before analyzing time as such, it's important that we first analyze ourselves. That is, if we're going to ask the question, *what is the meaning of Being?* first we must understand the nature of that which is asking the question (ourselves) and how we experience time.

We experience time/temporality as a stretched out present. This temporal clearing Heidegger calls *Dasein*.



The central image in these diagrams is a wireframe torus (donut). This is meant to represent a reciprocal movement which characterizes the dynamic relationship between self and world. For Dasein, self and world go together as if two aspects of one dynamic event.

At the core of Dasein's 'self' is the ever-open question, *what does it mean to be?* Dasein continuously asks and answers that question by engaging with the world. Hence its mode of Being is necessarily *Being-in-the-world*.



A world is a domain of meaning.

More specifically, yet still “in non-Heideggerian terminology, a world is *a system of purposes and meanings that organizes our activities and our identity, and within which entities can make sense to us*” (Polt 54).\*

(Note: there can be worlds within worlds. For example, the world of the Episcopal Church occurs within the broader world of Christianity, which itself occurs within the broader world of Western Civilization.)

\*Polt, R. (1999) *Heidegger: An introduction*  
[Cornell UP]

*for-the-ultimate-sake-of*  
realizing (our) possibilities of Being  $x$

*for-the-sake-of* providing shelter

*in-order-to* build a classroom

construction site

'to-pound'  
(hammer)

'to-support'  
(lumber)

(builder) 'to-fasten'  
(nails)

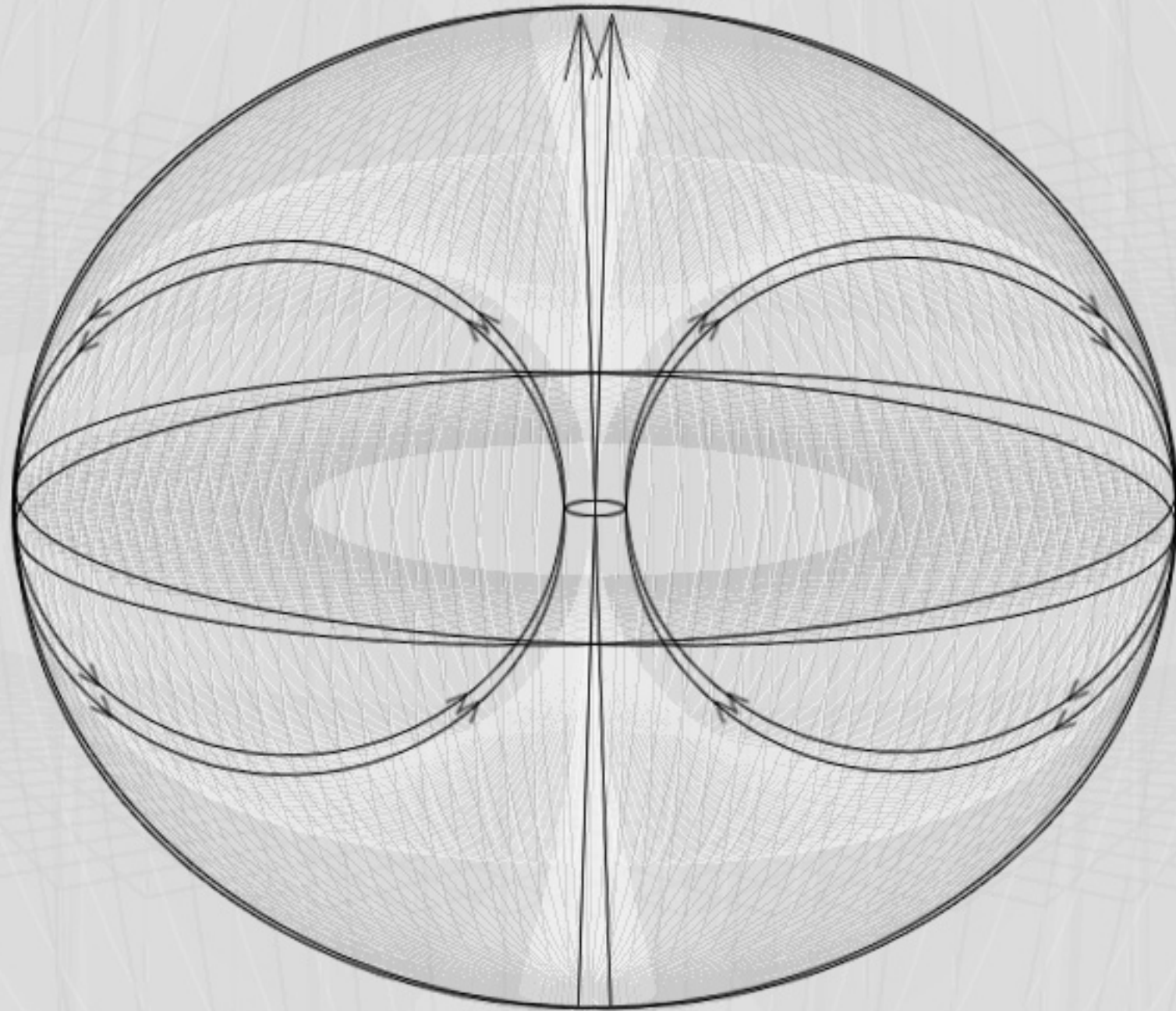
(various industries)

(culture that values education)

Dasein's *environment*, illustrating  
*worldhood*:

Dasein's most ordinary world is the world in which we are actively engaged in using and manipulating items of equipment (*ready-to-hand* entities), all of which are parts of an *equipmental totality* which is put to use *for-the-ultimate-sake-of* realizing Dasein's concrete possibilities of Being.



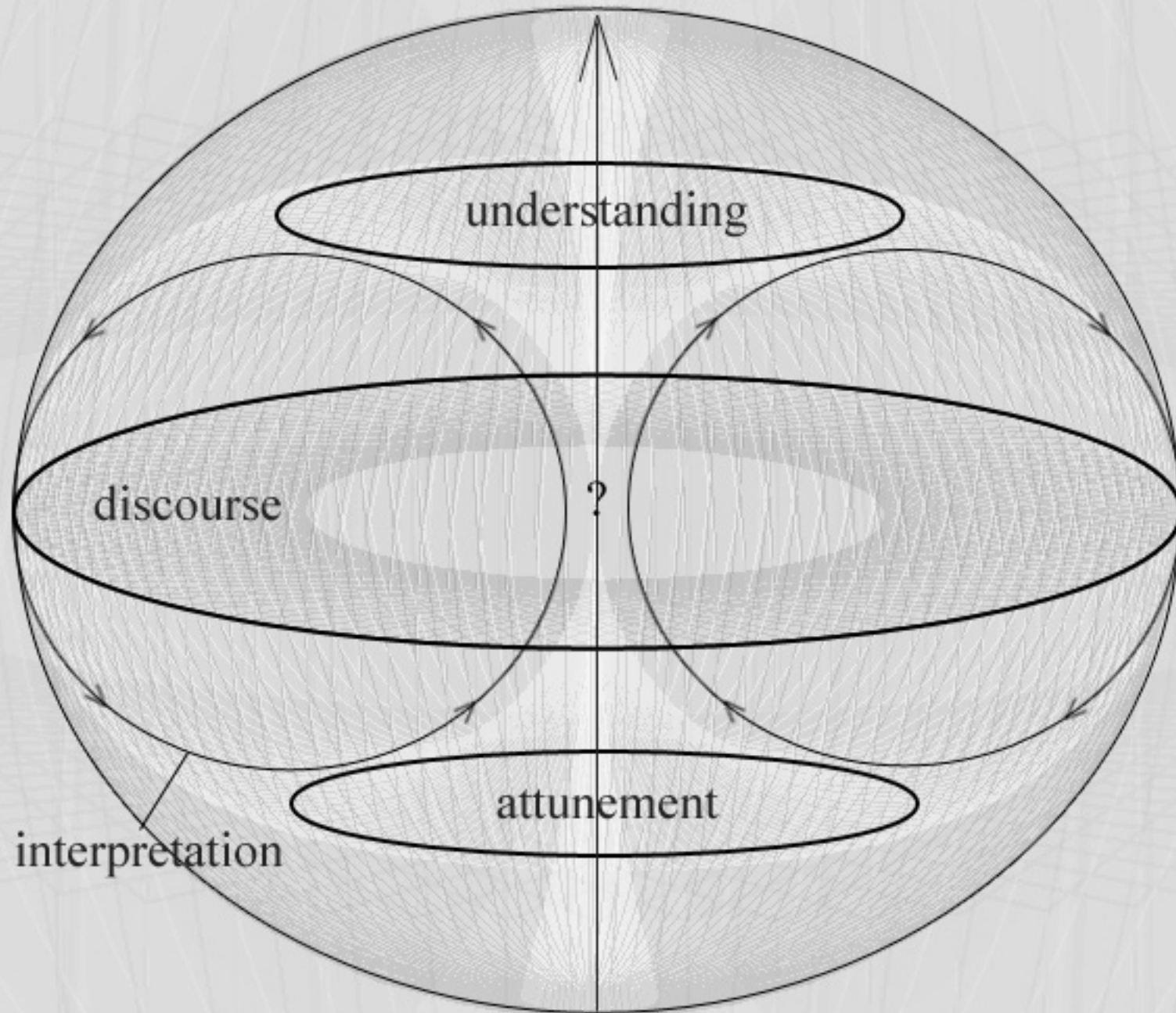


two Dasein with “overlapping” identities

*Das Man* (the they/one/anyone):

In our everyday mode of Being, we simply ‘do what one does’ – that is, we act in accordance with social norms and seek possibilities for ourselves which our culture expects us to seek. Heidegger calls this mode of Being *inauthentic*, as we are not choosing to choose our own path.

Inauthenticity is our default mode of Being, so while the horizons of individual Dasein will be slightly different, by and large they will overlap as the *they-self*, especially within a common culture with a common tradition.

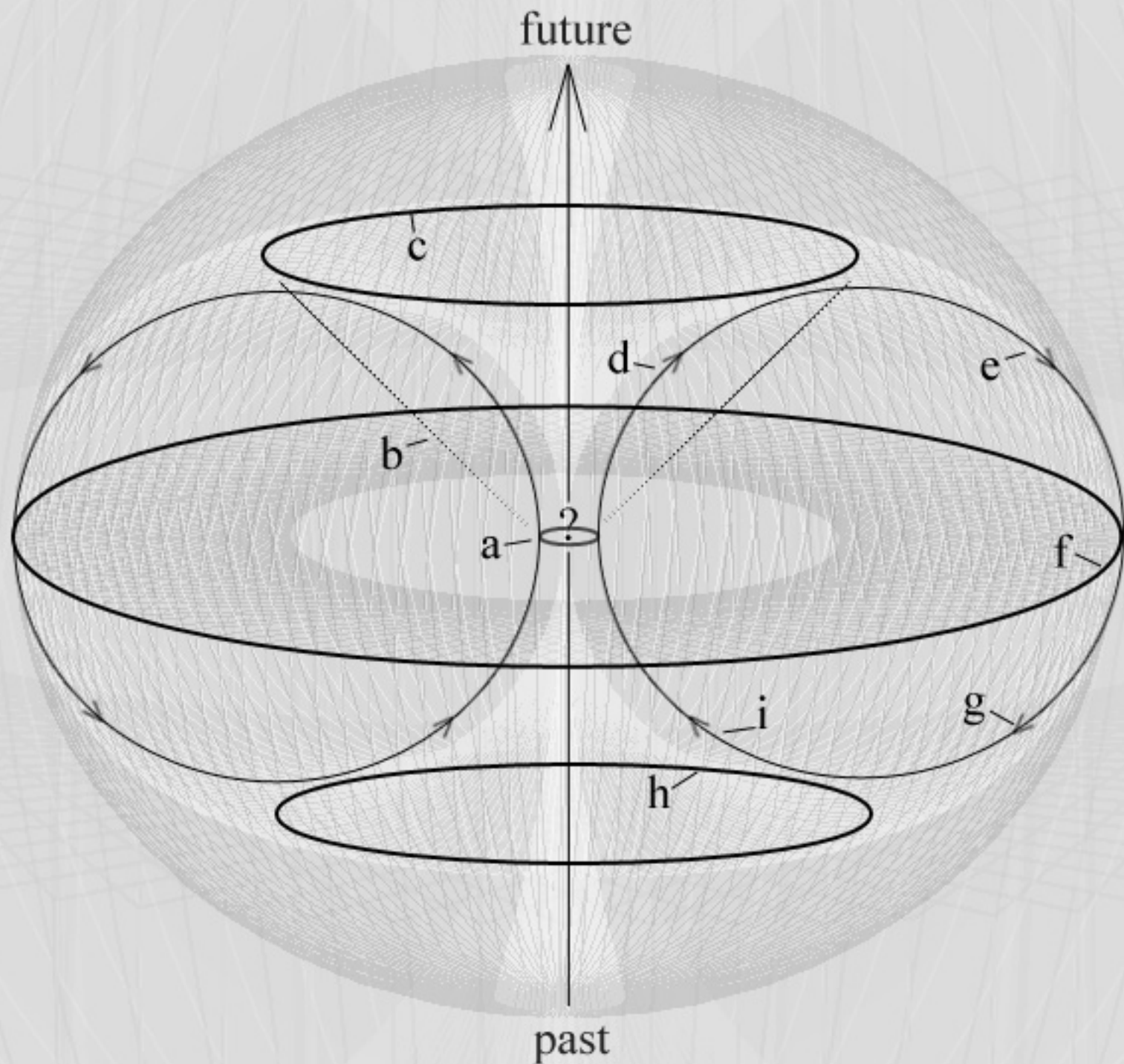


*Being-in as such* (existential hermeneutics):

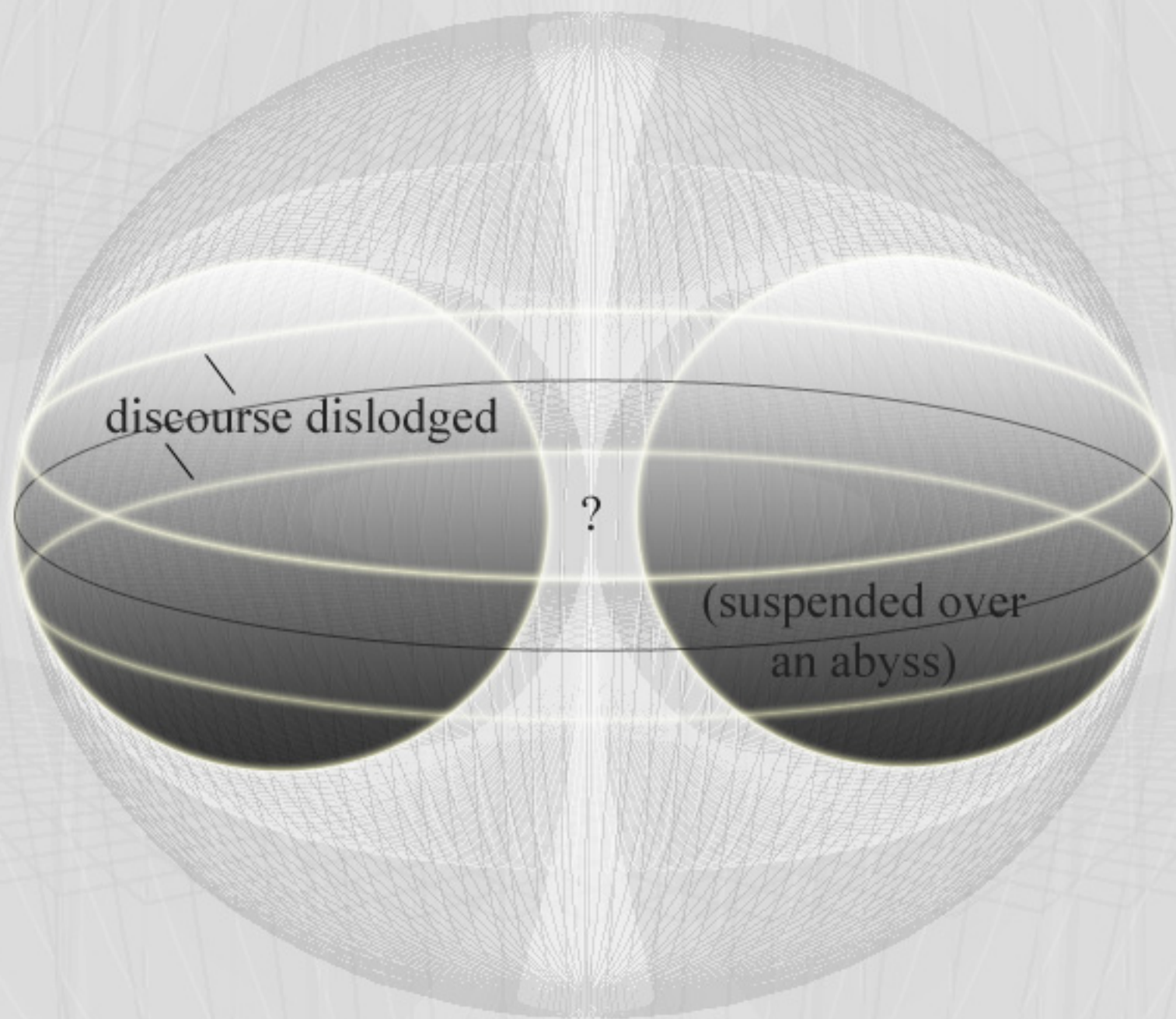
*Understanding.* We understand what it means to be in terms of the possibilities we project for ourselves and actively pursue. Knowledge is based in know-how.

*Discourse.* Our world is meaningfully articulated as it is according to our interpretive, engaged activities.

*Attunement.* We're continually being thrown into a world already in progress, and how we feel about that is conditioned by the 'givens' of our lives (our *facticity*). Our moods disclose how we're attuned to our Being-in-the-world as a whole.



The *hermeneutic circle*: We encounter something in our foreground (a), and on the basis of our background familiarity with the world (f), we project (b) an array of possibilities (c) regarding how we might understand what we're encountering. We then pursue those possibilities, actively engaging (d) with the world, aiming to find which possible understanding works best given the situation. This purposive engagement affords us knowledge and experience, updating (e) our background (f). This updated background changes (g) the way we're attuned/disposed (h) to the world such that, as we re-approach (i) our foreground (a), we encounter it differently.



Anxiety is a mood akin to fear, but without an object – like being afraid of *Nothing* in particular (death). Death is “*the possibility of the impossibility of any existence at all*” (307/262). Heidegger calls this our ‘ownmost’ possibility since we must all face our own death for ourselves.

Anxiety exposes "the naked truth that I find myself in a situation where I am forced to make something of myself. But this is precisely what I realize when I face up to mortality: when I accept the fact that my possibilities are neither unlimited nor guaranteed, I realize the importance of choosing a possibility and defining myself by it" (Polt 88).

care

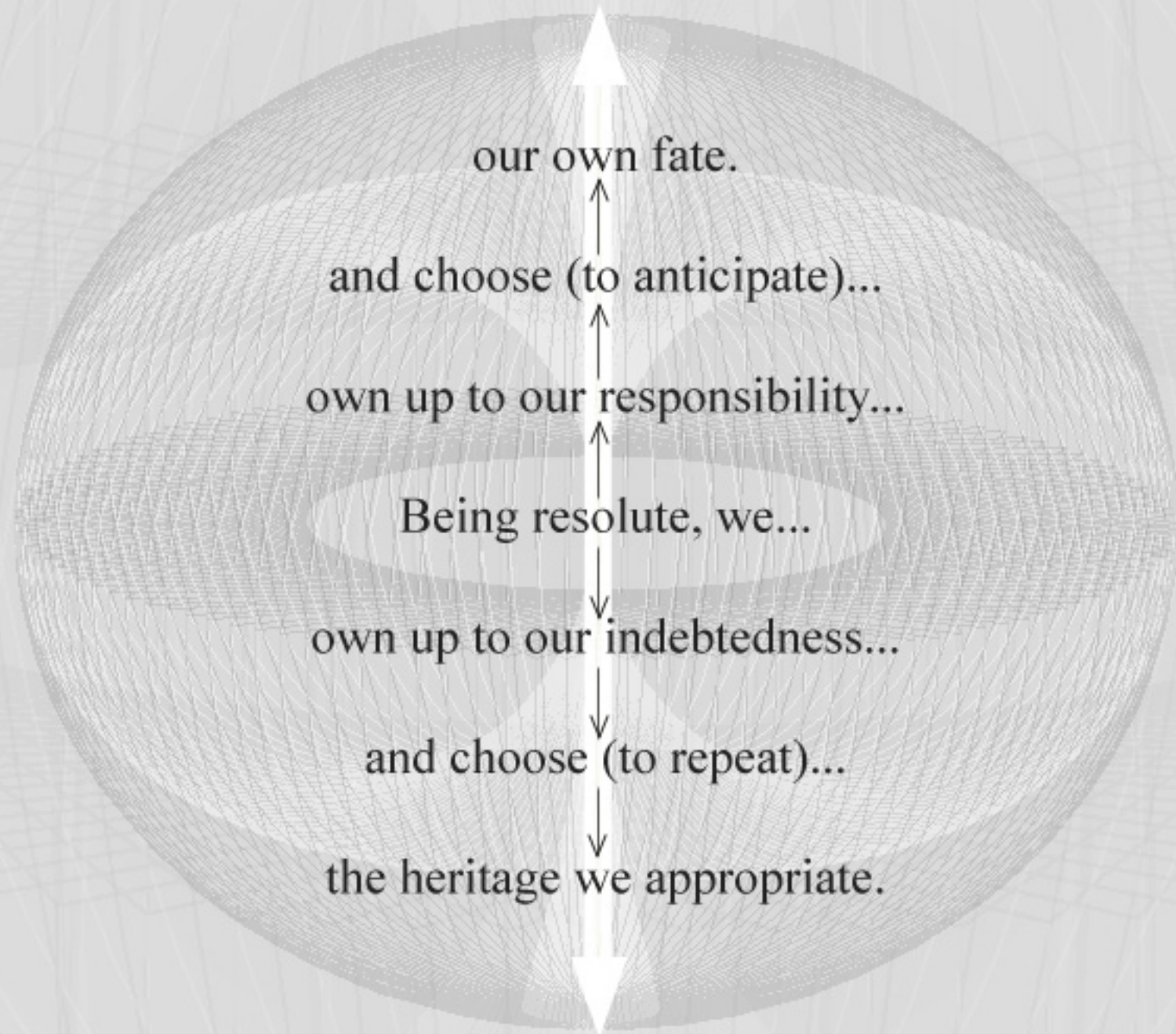
existentiality  
(ahead-of-itself)

fallenness  
(Being-alongside  
[entities encountered within-the-world])

facticity  
(Being-already-in-[the-world])

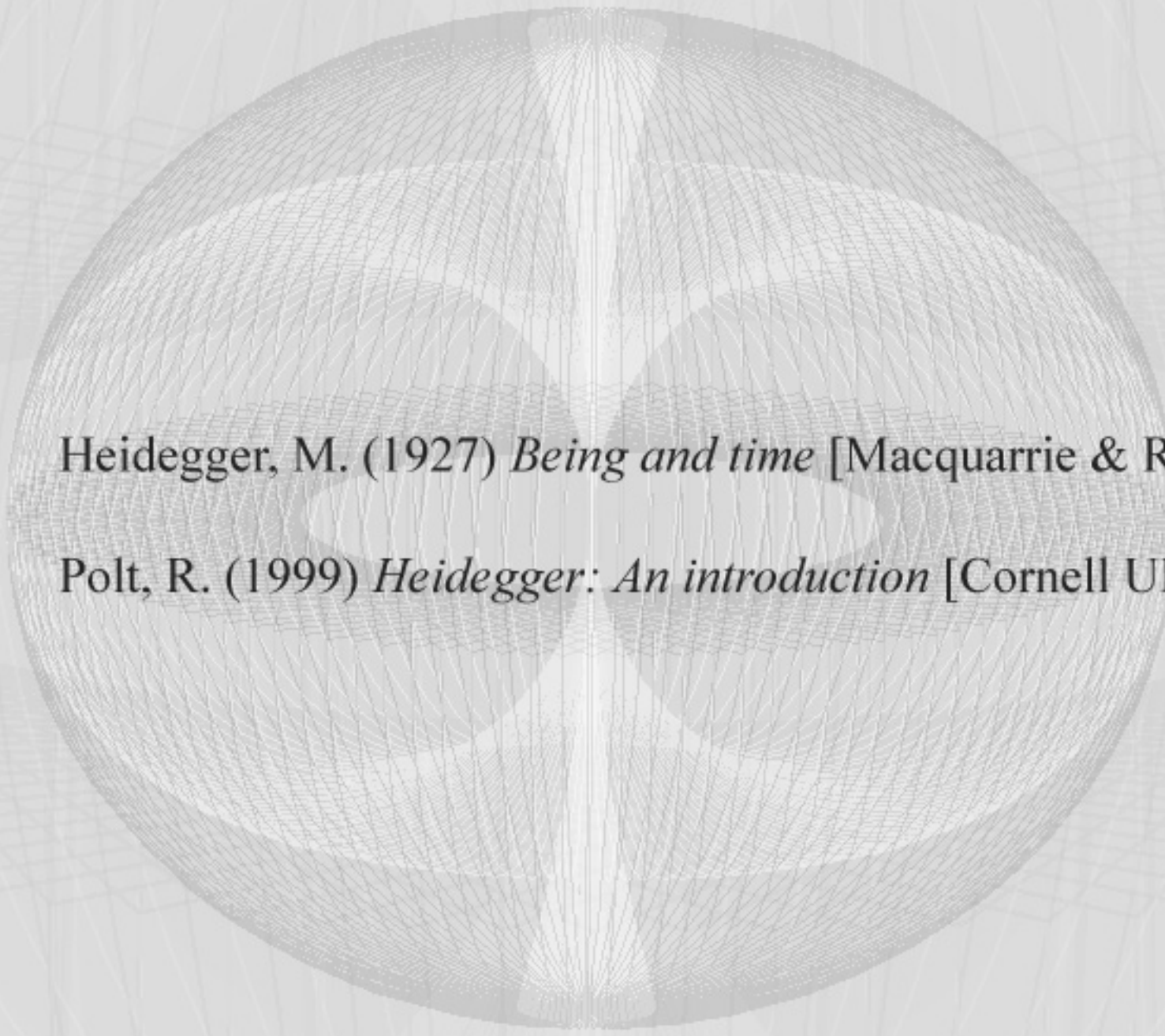
Anxiety reveals the meaning of Dasein's Being as care, when care means "ahead-of-itself-Being-already-in-(the-world) as Being-alongside (entities encountered within-the-world)" (237/192).

This 'care structure' involves Dasein's *existentiality*, *facticity*, and *fallenness* – i.e., Dasein is forced to confront the question of what it means to be and determine its own identity (existentiality), it must do so from a given situation it's always already in (facticity), but it tends to be oblivious to both its facticity and existentiality, as it's usually absorbed in dealing with the world as 'they' do (fallenness).



When we resolve to authentically face our mortality, conscience calls us to own up to our existential guilt – i.e., it calls us to own up to (as an explicit choice) our *indebtedness* and *responsibility* – our indebtedness to what we already are and cannot control, and our responsibility to project possibilities that are not other possibilities.

The world is most open to us (as a *moment of vision*) when, with resolute authenticity, we are carried to our *fate* as we *anticipate* our mortality, and are carried to our *heritage* as we *repeat* our choices, appropriating the past freely and creatively.



Heidegger, M. (1927) *Being and time* [Macquarrie & Robinson, trans. Harper & Row 1962]

Polt, R. (1999) *Heidegger: An introduction* [Cornell UP]