Okay,

here we are moving right along into

lecture number five.

Five's going to be a little different

than the other ones insofar as

we're not introducing a broad range of

new material

or taking on a new text, but rather

we're looking at the text that we have,

or quite a few of them,

together to see the environmental

significance, or I should say two of them.

So Gilgamesh is going to kind of be

there, but really what we'll be doing

today

is looking at these two traditions, the

Judeo-Christian tradition

and the Greco-Roman tradition. But

we'll be looking at them together,

and regarding one thing in particular,

that's the idea of the metaphysical

in both, this realm beyond nature it's

metaphusical

in the sense of the Greek, beyond nature.

And what it means to posit that for
the environment, to be looking always at
another realm.
Now remember there are two different
traditions, you know coming out of
Judeo-Christian tradition it's a
religious idea,
but with Plato, it's a philosophical
notion that
there is a metaphysical realm. Now you
might think that this
lecture then is going to be entirely you
know
dealing with issues from 2500 years ago
or more,
and you know might be interesting in its
own right, but on the other hand
maybe not very interesting to us
today. But in the same way you know the
Christianity is alive and well
today, these notions, the notion of the
physical and the metaphysical is really
alive and well today.
So what we're really going to be doing

is a survey of
modern reflections, beliefs, and
expressions of the notion of the
physical and metaphysical.
So in that sense, it's very
important because even though these are
ancient ideas,
they've managed, in kind of you know on
an unlikely way, to actually have
survived till today.
Now the thing about this too
is that they actually merged up,
and you know many what were
considered pagan beliefs by Christians,
and this would include it classical
knowledge, you know some things were
discarded right off the bat.
But this tradition, the metaphysical
tradition coming out of Plato,
and subsequently, was found to be
so interesting and important that it was
merged up by you know generally
by scholastic philosophers
in the medieval period with Christianity.

So
they found a way because it was a
metaphysical- of the metaphysical belief
of merging this with Christianity, and
doing reasonably successful.
What all this means for us today is that
you have these two
massive traditions, that more than any
others informed western culture,
coming together on this idea of the
physical and metaphysical,
and really you know embedding it deeply
into our culture, so much so that it's
still alive and well today.
So let's jump right into the prezi and
see how all this is working.
Note that we're still hovering right
around here,
still hovering right around where the
Greeks are here.
So again, because we're not looking at
particularly
new material, but rather
going over what we have already. Whoops,

that was not the right thing to do.

Lecture five here. So this

is addressing that question that we

took up already with respect to

Andy Goldsworthy you know, what is nature?

And

to answer that for the West, we have

to sort of take the beyond nature, the

metaphysical, into account.

And we'll be bringing together three

things, the three three fields we've

already looked at:

ecocriticism, eco-theology, and

eco-philosophy.

But principally we're going to be

returning to the notion of dualism

because whenever we talk about the fact

that there's a physical world

and a metaphysical world, we have these

two things

together. Yup.

We can, and we have, and this is

why we

jump to a modern thinker, Martin

Heidegger, you know an understanding of
the physical-metaphysical dualism in
terms of Heidegger, and in some sense
Arendt, student, will be looking at her a
little detail
here. So now we can actually survey what
was happening,
survey dualism in the West.
The idea here, and it's an
overarching idea, that dualism
has been in the West you know ever since
the Epic of Gilgamesh,
this has existed in different ways, in a
variety of
registers. And we're going to be looking
at each of those registers such as place,
deity, and time.
In most of the manifestations of this
particular
dualism, this binary structure, the
metaphysical
is always privileged over the physical,
and at the cost, as I say here, of
marginalizing the physical.

So you know stop and think about that
just for a moment environmentally.
That means that because we've always
looked to this imagined realm beyond the
earth,
the earth is always seen as inferior, and
not as important, and
maybe not as our own true home. From an
environmental point of view,
that's a worrisome belief.
Yeah. If it were just an ancient belief,
it wouldn't be so
important, but it's actually being
enacted on a massive scale by
technological modernity
because of our privilege for the
metaphysical, and because of our
privilege for
constant presences. And again, this was
Heidegger's
contribution to this here
environmentally
with the notion of a dam, that we are
actually enacting

things technologically so that we can
have
constant presence, so that we don't allow
nature in this original Greek sense.
Since Andy Goldsworthy was working to
sort of reclaim
nature and it's temporal sense,
to be able to continue to unfold and
change and all, we want to stop
that, and that's been a big problem.
And as I've argued, our
preoccupation and love of fossil
fuels can be seen
in these terms, Heidegger's terms, as a
love of constant presence,
and that's a problem too. And I should
note, and I'll do it a couple times
maybe even in this lecture
just as kind of a spoiler, this is not
the only way of viewing this tradition.
By the way let me pop back on screen
here. We can-
I'm sorry not the only way of viewing
the relationship

of nature to us, we could
issue dualism altogether and not
be preoccupied with the metaphysical
realm, not be preoccupied with constant
presence.
If we did that, and we'll see that in
other cultures like
Buddhism and eastern cultures,
everything that I'm about to say doesn't
come into play,
and that's pretty extraordinary.
So,
we'll see that. You don't need to- we
don't need to take this poll, that one's
left over from when the course is
actually
in a room. Yeah.
So we're going to pull together
what we've been saying for this term so
far. Now I'm in the way, lemme get
out of the way.
So far regarding the realm of
phusis and metaphysical,
so that- we needed to do what we've done

already, to look at someone like
Goldsworthy to help us
understand phusis, nature, in a temporal
sense, we needed to see how the physical
and metaphysical have been seen as a
binary structure in opposition with
both Greco-Roman and Greek thinking-
Greco-Roman and Judeo-Christian thinking
to be able to do what we're doing here.
So I'll pop back in.
And this is a recap of metaphysical
dualism on a variety of registers.
And how this will work, this is a
little different than what we've done so
far.
So I've generally structured the prezis
visually, and prezis are like a mind map,
but to- so we can swing around the
information. But
here, there's a line, you can see it here,
and it'll be very obvious when we take a
close-up look,
and on the top here is the
metaphysical, and on the bottom

is the physical, and all these are
different
registers that we can look at. This will
become clearer in a moment, but just so you
know that's what's happening.
And it's not for nothing that I put the
metaphysical on top, because generally in
the western tradition,
the metaphysical has been seen as the
superior of the two.
So here's the general. That's the
register here, I'll have that for each
one of these lines.
Up here is what is beyond the earth,
change
and nature. So a couple of examples would
be the Judeo-Christian God,
Heaven, Platonic ideas, the idea they all
exist up here.
We'll go into these in
detail. And down here is nature,
phusis, in the sense of
Greek sense of process, but also the
realm of sense experience so. Everything

that you know is down here: plants
animals, the earth,
everything physical. And a good way
of thinking about that, and this was kind
of Plato's way and it's useful,
is that everything that you can
apprehend through sense experience,
everything that you can
see, hear, touch, smell.
And the things that are in that upper
realm, are things that you can apprehend
through
an act of intellectualization of
thinking.
So if you can imagine a realm where
things never change,
or something like Heaven, you cannot
experience that through
senses, you do not generally have access
to that on the earth, at least in
Judeo-Christian thinking.
Although interestingly with Plato,
Socrates believed that he was able to
access the realm of the idea through an

act of

great intellectualization.

But generally, what's down here is

the earth and everything that we know.

And

they often-, earlier thinkers, will call it

the earth and all, but

it still works in metaphysical thinking

to include everything in the physical

realms,

not on the earth, but you know every

other planet, our solar system, every

galaxy,

the universe, and presumably if there

is a multiverse, even that

too is here as part of the

physical.

So deity is one of the most conspicuous

separations here.

So you have deities that exist beyond

the earth, and Shamash

is sort of an early- sort of a prototype

almost of that.

And why is he beyond the earth?

Because he's not part of the earth, the
physical realm, he's up in the sky, he's
imagined somewhere else
as a sun god. But the Judeo-Christian God,
Jehovah, Yahweh, whatever you call him,
he is sort of a perfect metaphysical god
because again
philosophers and theologians
throughout Christian history will
constantly try to figure out where he is.
At one point, maybe in early Christian
thinking, it's you know
it's seen as like a three-part system
with you know
up there being where God is, and down
there
being where the devil is and all. And if you
don't believe in
you know around earth and all, maybe all
that works. But
you know in the early modern period, when
you know Galileo is beginning to realize
there are other planets and speculating
on other suns and all,

they have to imagine you know the
Christian God as being
somewhere else all together, maybe way
beyond that, maybe in another realm
altogether.
But anyhow, down here, we have entirely
different type of deities,
these are ones that are moored to the
earth, it's their part of it.
And we've seen some, so genius loci figure
like Humbaba in the Myth
of Gilgamesh, he's definitely moored to
the earth, he's not a metaphysical god,
he's described you know pretty much
like a tree, he's here with trees and
everything else.
And ancient goddesses, and I talked about
those
little stone carvings from tens of
thousands of years ago,
the trinity of a female god like
Persephone, Demeter, and Hecate,
those are all physical gods too, these
are you know pretty much most gods that

you will

encounter as part of earlier religions

are in fact

like that, being physical.

Shifting over to place. What kind of

places would be physical and

metaphysical?

Well the Judeo-Christian Heaven is

imagined as a metaphysical place, it is

not in any way

physical in the sense of part of nature.

And again,

where modern theologians would speculate,

it is kind of up in the air,

it's you know as the scientists are

figuring out the whole universe and then

talking about things like multiverses

and all. Where does Heaven fit into

that?

Well it doesn't in some sense in that

because all these things are physical, it

has to be kind of

almost like in another realm altogether.

Plato's realm of the ideas, and Plato

does talk about it as a realm,
that's imagined as a place too, place
free of change, free of time,
all that, the sticky messiness of the
real world.
In each case you know,
especially the case of Heaven, it's
imagined as the ultimate locus amoenus,
the ultimate pleasant place,
that's why people you know care so much
about getting into Heaven because it is
such a great place, it's the most
pleasant of all places. So even though
writers and all been talking about you
know pastoral places
as being really nice and they're
portrayed very nice, and even Eden is
portrayed you know- Eden is portrayed
especially
nicely, they all pale in comparison.
But again, these are kind of
paradoxically placeless places in so far
that they just don't exist anywhere
in the actual physical realm.

So down here you know.
After metaphysical philosophy and
Judeo-Christian
you know Bible, the earth is increasingly
going to be seen as an imperfect
place, not as a locus amoenus. And
what I mean by that after the Bible, I
mean specifically the passage
we read after the fall, after Adam and
Eve have lapsed and not followed God,
the earth is no longer a welcoming locus
amoenus,
Adam has to work hard with the sweat of
his brow all through labor
just to make his way here. So
it's definitely not a nice place anymore,
and generally- and
and furthermore, you know Christian
theologians especially
have times talked about the
physical realm being sort of the
you know the playground of evil of
Satan maybe.
And not by comparison,

especially comparison to Heaven,
very nice at all, all these places.
So let's shift over from places to time,
and the notion of time here. Up there
this is a changeless
realm, a realm of pure being,
things just are, not becoming, not “or this
will be,” but are, and always will be as
they are, they're immortal,
perfect, unchanged. So the Judeo-Christian
God is
changeless, Heaven is changeless, Platonic
ideas,
this is especially important for them
that they're changeless because
otherwise we'd risk falling into, with
respect to many of the
examples that
Plato gives, into some sort of cultural
relativism. In other words, if justice
were always
changing, regarding different situations,
different cultures, different times,
that would present a problem to this

thinking because justice
is imagined as perfect for that very
reason, so it's beyond
any sort of change, beauty is beyond any
sort of change as well.
You know this you know if you think of
this in modern terms, this creates
problems for our way of thinking because
Plato,
I think we are sort of cultural
relativists insofar as we would argue
that justice
isn't always the same, that it can vary
across culture.
And beauty is another great example, I
mean to Plato there was,
let's take an example of a human being, a
single image of what beauty is, you could
talk about
exactly what it would be. And you can see
he's not alone here,
he's representative of his culture,
the Greek culture had sort of a single
image of what beauty is.

Well you know in the 21st, we think
differently, right? We're
you know across different cultures,
they're all different kinds of ideas of
what constitutes beauties, all sorts of
features, all sorts of everything.
And who's to say one is more
beautiful than the other? Well
in this tradition, it has been the case
that they said well one is
the icon of beauty, and that's what it is.
And that lasted for a long time,
it's only
you know really in recent decades
that we've looked to you know
other forms of beauty. And by the way,
this can also be a racist issue, it has
been for a long time
because the image of beauty in western
culture,
especially in later decades, has been
principally an
image of white beauty. Problem, real
problem. So you can see why

people kind of want to free from this.
Anyhow, I'm slightly digressing because
we're just talking about the changeless
realm here.
This down here is what Heraclitus was
talking about when Andy Goldsworthy
draws attention to in his artwork,
the realm of gignomai, or the realm of
“becoming.”
So this isn't the realm where things
just are and always are,
this is where things are always changing,
where nothing really is in that sense,
right? Because
it's you know the river, you can't say
this is the river exactly like take a
snapshot of it,
you know you can take a snapshot of it,
but you take another one
and updating you know Heraclitus' you
know insight
or metaphor. You take another
you know snapshot an hour- a minute later,
a second later, a fraction of a second

later,
and it's very different because it's
always changing. This is the realm of
birth, life, and decay, the endless you
know
bringing forth and passing away of
phusis. Let me get out of here for a
second.
So this is example streaming stream,
human life, and so forth.
It has to be things that just
don't change up here,
you know free of time.
Oh I'm sorry, things down here that
do change were
caught up in the sort of the stream of
time, so to speak.
Now human beings are interesting, and I
note that as far as this
line goes, and remember everything up
here is metaphysical, everything down
here is physical.
You know we human beings in this way of
thinking are

straddling that line, that's what I mean
by that.
Oops, sorry. Up here is the realm of the
soul,
later philosophers will call this
the “mind,” sometimes it's referred to in
Christian thinking as the “spirit.”
Generally speaking, this is regarded as
the best part of a person,
the “true” human being.
And why it's a true human being because
you know if
you get into Heaven in this view, you
will spend eternity
as that form, you only spend a fraction
of an instant while alive is being
apart earthy too. The body will
pass away of course, but the metaphysical
soul will always
exist, it's conceived of as
being eternal,
and that's why it can be up here in the
changeless realm and all, because it
it doesn't change. Generally speaking,

the soul is privileged by metaphysical
thinkers, and the body
is marginalized, that includes not only
in Christian thinking,
but with Plato and all too. The body
is- it doesn't get quite as bad
a representation in Plato, because the
body can help you get
to the soul,
into this kind of knowledge. So for
example,
in Plato's example, if you see a
beautiful person, you look at that person
and you can kind of see beyond them and
see beauty, but they're sort of the
gateway
into seeing true beauty, which is you
know beyond all examples of beauty.
And that you know
shows that the body has a role to play,
but it sort of gets set aside
as we get to the real realm above it.
In this view, down here is the realm of
the body,

it's called the body, it's also called
the “flesh,” which is seen,
generally speaking, as inferior and as
potentially
leading us into trouble, being bad.
So in that sense, it's not only
inferior, but it's the source of
temptations, right? So
the soul is not like, for example,
in need of eating, or wanting to have sex,
or things like that,
the body is. So if you look at the sins
that we
have, whether it's a sin of gluttony,
or whether you know it's a sexual thing,
that is seen as a temptation of the
body,
and sin originates generally from-
or often from
the body, so evil is more of a bodily
thing. And again, you know we're
talking about the physical world here...so.
Troubling? Yeah.
Here's a question, and I ask it in terms

of this,
do you believe that you have a body and
a soul?
Now I ask that not only of people who
have a religious affiliation,
but I ask it of everyone, because
you know we- this would be an example of
how
all this, that we've been talking about,
is still alive and well
today. What I mean by that is,
you may not be a Christian, but you may
still believe that you have a soul,
that you know when you die that there is
something separate that pulls away
from the body, and it's not connected. In
post-Christian
thinking, this is still alive and well,
and popular American culture
as well. It's one of the first ‘Star
Wars’ movies I remember Yoda says
something like:
you know we are not this body, we are
luminous beings of light.

You know Yoda's not portrayed as
Christian in those stories,
that's not- I mean it's a distinctly
western idea, I mean other cultures have
it too.
But you can see why ‘Star Wars’ as a
western
film will play on that,
and have the same notion of dualism
presented,
even though it's not presented in a
Christian way.
Similarly there are many people who
are born into this culture,
and you know inculcated into its
thinking and all,
and as a consequence, they may well
believe it, you may well believe it.
And it's interesting to ask a question
“why.”
In other cultures, they do not believe
this. So in Buddhism,
yeah well it's a complicated religion,
different sex and all, but

it is arguably the case. I would argue,
probably will argue,
that the Buddha didn't believe that, that
it's
not the way it works, and honestly
the
principle texts of Buddhism all suggest
otherwise, that
this is it, here and now, and that's all there
is.
But you may subscribe to the notion that
there is, and if you do,
pause on this for a moment, there may be
a lot of other ideas coming out of this
tradition that you've subscribed to that
you're not familiar with
you know at all, and you may not know
where the beliefs come from.
And this class is going to make the
argument that for many of us,
our attitude toward nature, the
physical
environment, and what we think of it, has come
out of this ancient tradition- these

ancient traditions, and more recent ones

as well,

even though you may be completely

unaware of how that happened.

That's an intriguing notion, and

again, this is- I'm not saying this

is a litmus test in any way,

but it is an example of how these

beliefs

have made their way into popular culture,

even though you may not subscribe to you

know you may not have been even familiar

with any detail with Plato's theory of

ideas before we started talking about it,

and yet here it is you know 2500 years

later,

still having an influence, maybe even an

influence directly on you.

So shifting over. Plato's divided line,

Abernathy talks about that,

and it's worth noting. Again, we have

the same issue

here, that it exists up at the top

and at the bottom. So Plato likes to

break the world into what he calls the
“intelligible realm,”
which is known by way of reason, his word
for reason in Greece is
nous. According to Plato, as we've
suggested, this
is true reality, the nature we sense is
illusory.
So interestingly, this realm is
accessible to living human beings, and
and this is how
Plato- one of the ways in which Plato
differs from Christianity.
Insofar as Christians cannot get access
to Heaven when you're alive,
generally, I mean I guess there are
you know visionaries
and all, people have visions, dreamers. But,
generally, no one suggests you have
access
to that, so no one really knows what
Heaven is like because no one's actually
seen it and went back.
Plato argues, that Socrates, for example,

does have access to that realm.
And how do you get access to it? Well you
don't have to have sort of a mystical
ability,
you need this, you need reason,
nous, this is what gives you access to it
because you are able to,
through a sheer act of
intellectualization and a lot of hard
work and study,
you're able to be able to apprehend that
realm.
And that's, again, a significant
difference
in Christian thinking. So if we go down
here, you know the sensory
realm of earth and phusis, and Plato's cave
is an example
of this, and it's probably the clearest
one, where we're told that everything
that we see- I mean we're like living in
a dark cave, we just don't get it,
everything that we apprehend through our
sense experience, everything that you

know directly,

is illusory, it's a deception. And Plato,

as I've said before, at the end of ‘The

Republic’ book 10,

actually says it's an inferior copy,

so everything that you see like

beauty and all, it's yeah. You may

apprehend beauty in a person, fair enough,

but

that's a pretty you know poor

copy of the real beauty it partakes of,

beauty by virtue of the fact of this

real thing,

but it is not a beauty. Yeah, keep having

to

pop out here. Okay. And in that sense, you

know

Plato is really deconstructing reality,

which is pretty amazing because he's

saying that the

beauty that you see and the reality that

you see, isn't

real at all, it's just this cheap

copy for a better place. So

to answer the question we've been
working with here, what is nature,
true nature is metaphysical, the earth
and phusis, and by that I mean nature, are
an illusion. And that's an amazing
thing to say, and you see why that's a
deconstruction of reality, because it's
taken reality and turned it on its head.
So, there's the divided line.
Presence and absence. Will I fit here if I
pop in?
Yeah. Much of western philosophy,
after Plato, has been a quest for
constant presence,
these are things that never change, never
go away.
If they went away, they would be absent,
right? So
things, we'll get to the bottom here, you
know like a rose it's present, but then
absent.
But western philosophy has been so
intrigued by this notion, and again,
this is western philosophy, you could

argue that Buddhism has no such
preoccupation for example.
This has been you know in
all these philosophers I'm about to
articulate, in different languages,
still quest for it, so Plato's realm of
the idea-
the ideas. That's Idea, his student after
that, Aristotle, Substantia,
Substance, Subjectivity in French,
Descartes, Absolute Spirit, which is geist
in German,
Nietzsche, the villes are mocked, Power,
Presentia,
which is the Latin for Heidegger and
Derrida.
All of these philosophers, and Derrida by
the way isn't you know
the second half really- it is
the second half of the 20th century
where he does this work.
Through all this time, philosophers have
been
preoccupied with this, it's only when you

get to Heidegger and Derrida that you see
deconstruction at work, and the
reconsideration of it.
And with Derrida, the belief that- but we
don't cover him, but just so you
know that you know everything is an
endless play of absence and presence,
which is where we began with
pre-socratic philosophy, before we got to
Plato. And again,
more generally, pre-socratic world view
of the Greeks before we got to
Plato. Although, you could argue in their
art and preoccupations, they already were
leaning toward constant presence, but
the important thing to know here is that
it just preoccupied the West from
the very beginning, and it was alive and
well,
this preferencing and fascination with
substance- with
the constant presence for
pretty much the whole of our history.
But phusis is the endless play of

absence and presence, so it's a temporal
process
of emergence and falling away again.
So sometimes a stream, streams you know,
and sometimes it fails to stream during
a drought, and sometimes it floods with
overabundance.
I've kind of put this in a cute little
expression:
what is present is the present,
which is a present that will
soon be absent.
So what do I mean by that? Well if you I
break it down, what is present
in this sense spatially? So what's here
right now, what is present with this
is the present, and by that I am now
talking
temporally, not spatially, in the sense of
the now,
this moment. So what's present here? The
present, the now,
which is a present, a gift of the moment
that will soon be absent.

So what do I mean by that? Well you know
think of a
rose here, what is present in this place
right now, if I you know
actually had a rose here and I were
holding it in my
hand, you know we would say that's
the-
it's present here right now at this
moment.
And that's a gift of the moment, and
to other
thinkers they really- in other
traditions they will think that way.
You know not just Buddhism, Native
American spiritualism
often does for example, that it's a
wonderful
present of this process you know, you
wait and you wait and you wait and suddenly
you have a beautiful
rose, it's a gift of the moment, it's
a gift of-
that it exists at this particular

moment,

and you should cherish it because it

will soon be absent.

In this way of thinking, and again we'll

see it with Buddhism,

you wait for things to emerge, and

you appreciate things when they emerge,

because they soon will be gone.

And it's an entirely different

way than

if you think of something that's you

know always there, like a constant

presence.

Artifacts, so.

How Gilgamesh sought immortality of

course was by rebuilding the city of

Uruk, many ancient temples and cities

attempt, ultimately fail, to resist phusis.

And what I mean by that is,

these you know- even in Gilgamesh's time,

and certainly we see it

as well with Egypt, and

then we see it with the Greek thinking

as well. The temples, the buildings, the

artwork in the sense of the sculptures,
they're all made of stone,
they're meant to last for generations,
they're meant to give the impression of
immortality, that they last and
endure. And you can see,
you know yes the Sphinx would be another
example with the pyramids,
but also you know we have this
preoccupation and we'd like to
represent our institutions, especially as
enduring over time.
So if you go to the US capitol, you know
you're not going to see many wooden
buildings there,
they're all massive stone buildings
giving the impression, like the pyramids,
that they're going to be there for a
long time,
and it sort of metaphorically suggests
that the United States is going to
endure.
Corporate centers have been seen as sort
of

these massive icons that you know you
don't have to worry about them.
The World Trade Center would be the
greatest one, I mean
it was meant to be these two massive
buildings, but of course you can see why
the great symbolic gesture of having
destroyed it in 9/11 because
you know this should have been enduring.
This should have been this
icon that stood over the decades
for you know corporate America and
corporate American enterprises
across the planet,
and yet you know it could be taken down,
and that was what was so
striking about that event, one of the
things of course. Tombstones are meant
that too, so people come and go, your body
dies, your body's decaying. So under
that tombstone what's really happening
is your body is decaying,
but the tombstone is meant to be this
enduring thing that your body is

continuing and
going on. But you know really
anything made by a culture, and that can
be tools, material, culture,
so forth, anything that's meant to endure
for more than a single lifetime,
that's really what is sort of
trying to be
to represent the idea of
immortality.
It can never do it, right? I mean even
that if you look at the Sphinx today,
or even pyramids you know, these are
among the oldest massive things that
were built
with this thinking, but they're
not doing so well a few thousand years
later.
An example here
would be Japan's Jingu Shrine.
What's so fascinating about this? This is
not buildings that are made of stone,
but instead just the opposite, made of
wood, cedar wood,

and as a consequence, they are constantly

in

a state of decay. So you might wonder,

since this is-

they've been there since the seventh

century,

so for many hundreds of years, how are

they still around if they're

decaying and if they're wood, wouldn't

they completely have decayed away by now?

Well the original ones would have, but

what happens is

every 20 years they dismantle this

shrine,

and they rebuild it again, they use a

single

forest, I think they're still using the

same one where they get cedar. And

so this is not like Gilgamesh's you know

Cedar Forest where they

cut it all down, but they're very careful

and tending to this forest to make sure

that it can continue,

and has continued for many centuries to

supply the same wood.

So it's a temple, not

unlike the temples that Greeks made and

so far it has great religious

significance,

but it represents an entirely different

way of thinking about

time, in so far as it's decaying

all the time and it has to be rebuilt.

But I give that as- I thought it was a

nice counter example

to you know typical

Greek temples, but really anything, any

human work,

so just like you know anything you can

apprehend through sense experiences down

here in the physical realm,

anything that human beings create, even

if it's the great pyramids, is going to

decay.

But certainly things like food, and

clothing, and

things that you surround yourself with,

they're all

decaying and will all go away, even though
they may seem
like you know if it’s something out of
stone or metal, it’ll last forever.
Well metal might, I mean if you have an
object, it's metal, it may
outlast the pyramids, it may last for
quite a while, but it won't in any true
sense
continue on. You know the universe
is changing, maybe it won't happen
in decades, or hundreds of years, or
even thousands like the Great Pyramid,
but even metal objects will ultimately
you know succumb
to change because that is what this
realm
is. Artwork is another interesting
example.
Arguably a culture endorsed through its
art, perhaps even more than through its
artifacts,
and the Myth of Gilgamesh is a good
example.

The Myth of Gilgamesh itself, the
artwork,
the literary text that we read, is what
gave
Gilgamesh immortality. In other words, in
the epic as we saw in the opening,
Gilgamesh wanted to achieve immortality
through the creation
of the city, or he didn't create Uruk, but
he built it up more than anyone else and
made it
spectacular, and he thought that
would give him fame. And why not? It was
the greatest
city in the western world by a long shot,
that it ever happened,
and he wanted to connect his personal
you know actions
to that. Fair enough, but
it is the case that that city was
largely
buried, it was buried, and it was only
in
the previous century, before

the last one, that it was actually

re-found.

What Gilgamesh- where- how Gilgamesh got

true immortality

was through the work of literature

itself,

the work of literature endured, it's like

kind of improbably, but it did

for you know nearly 5000 years, that's

what makes him immortal, that's why we're

talking about him today. He would have

never shown up in this class if

you know just we had uncovered the city,

and saw a sculpture, and knew that the

guy who

you know helped build it up was

named Gilgamesh, that wouldn't have done

it.

It's the work of literature that has

lasted.

It is then representational, which is

why we call it that. And of course the

word representational is two words, it's

re-presents, so it presents Gilgamesh

again

to us, in this case in literary form, but

it can do it, a painting can re-present a

person,

sculpture re-presents a person. But it

holds an image across

time, and you can see where you know that

the young man

who was the subject of Michelangelo's

David,

you know he's long gone, but he's been

represented,

re-presented, in marvel by Michelangelo

and he will last-

he has lasted 500 years and will

continue

more than that, and continue onward so.

An example of how this can work in a

literary form,

kind of a pretty good example, is

Shakespeare's Sonnet number 18,

which you may have you know the opening

phrase, “Shall I compare thee to a

Summer's day?”

But ends at the the closing lines, the
couplet,
“So long as men can breathe, or eyes can
see,/
So long lives this & this gives life
to thee.”
So the principal part of the sonnet,
first 12 lines,
are talking about how the young man
you know is very beautiful, and
you know Shakespeare certainly finds
him such,
but he will not stay beautiful, he is
going to age and ultimately die.
Since Shakespeare wrote this around 400
years ago,
a little bit longer than that, that young
man
not only aged and all, but has been dead
for centuries.
But we can still talk about him, he's
still alive.
Why? “So long lives this,” and by that
Shakespeare means this sonnet, this

sonnet

gives life to thee. So he's still-, it’s like a

snapshot,

captured in time as being a beautiful

young man, and

Shakespeare's you know number of summits

about him

as a beautiful young man, and he will

always be a beautiful young man

in those sonnets, they live on. So he's

been given a kind of immortality by

Shakespeare with respect to you know his

life

in these sonnets themselves. And “so as long

as men can breathe and eyes can see,” as

long as people can pick up a book and

read it...

and hey you don't even need eyes to see,

you know if you just were listening to

what I’ve said, you

get the idea, you can hear it as well,

that

you know he is then kind of immortal. And

by the way,

kind of an aside, Shakespeare was pretty
confident of this fact because
he lived in a time where print culture
was emerging. So
the printing press had been around a
couple centuries before Shakespeare, but
now was really speeding up and you could
buy- a lot of people could buy books,
so his works were being printed right
very early, it's not like they're
being passed around in manuscript
tradition, or even before where it's an
oral tradition. Shakespeare knew that
there were going to be books that had
the sonnet in it, and
maybe a pretty confident guy, maybe
arrogant, I don’t know how you want to look at it.
He was pretty confident that his
work would endure through the centuries,
and who are we to criticize
Shakespeare because they did endure.
But an alternative form of art would be
Andy Goldsworthy's landscape
art, and that is art that

you know is designed to not only
not last, but draw attention to the fact
that it's not lasting, that it's
going to change.
So,
yeah. Virgil we're going to see, Virgil
is a Roman poet that we're going to be
getting to
in the next lecture, it sees art as
principally gestural, and it gestures
away from itself to the
ever-changing realm of phusis. And what I
mean by that is,
this is art that instead of, like
Shakespeare, trying to capture an image,
to represent an image that will last
over the centuries, this is art that is
less interested in representing things
on the page,
but rather looking out to the natural
world. So
you know what Shakespeare wants you to
do is close your eyes and imagine that
young man.

Well you know Plato would have loved
that right because that was his idea,
through an act of intellectualization
you can imagine something that you
can't experience in the real world
or the natural world.
But in this case, and we'll see, I'm
just throwing it out here, I'll explain
this in
detail when we get to Virgil. In
Virgil's case,
he doesn't want to represent anything, he
arguably doesn't you know he’s not that
preoccupied with representing in this
case.
But he wants you to instead of closing
your eyes and imagining what a
perfect you know tree or something would
look like,
he wants you to set down the book, walk
outside, and look at nature itself.
And that's a difference, and that's of
course what Andy Goldsworthy is kind of
embarked upon too,

which is this sort of looking at nature
thing.
Anyhow, art, we can now go to language.
Plato realized, Plato is preoccupied, obsessed
with language, this is word for the
recorded logos,
as this is where culture's ideas exist
over time.
So true, Shakespeare is writing- using
language and a book is
you know language, but a language
is what unites a people. So think about
the fact that human beings
come and go and die, and we die
you know it's an inevitable part of life,
but that a human
culture goes on, in some cases for
hundreds or even thousands of years.
Western culture is an example, the
individual
cultures of it have sometimes come and
gone,
so Mesopotamian culture with Gilgamesh
is gone. Greek culture, at least the one

that
created these stories, is now gone,
although you know there is modern Greek
as well, but
even comparing the languages, it's
different.
But language can unite a people
over generations, and you know you can
see English is doing that,
English has been around for over a
thousand years,
and it has united people in a way, and
we're going to actually
see that. So you know it's also
true that individual languages can
change, and they always do,
languages are always in the process of
emerging, and new meanings are being
ascribed to words, and whole new words
are coming on the scene,
and other words are being sort of you
know discarded or forgotten.
But you know it's also the case that-,
like in the western tradition is a good

example,

even though languages may die, like

classical Greek has died out

and Latin is pretty much died out as

well,

and so these are the languages of the

classical culture

of the Greco-Roman tradition, they still

echo, and they're still alive and well

today.

For example, Plato's word for this whole

complex

you know theory he has, or idea ideas,

these are intellectual things in the

mind,

it's sometimes called eidos depending on

the form of that word as an inflex in

Latin

in Greek. But that word, you can look at

it you know

right here, idea that's you know would

look different if we put it in the Greek

alphabet,

but that lives on today with our word

idea.

So whenever you think about having an idea, this thing popping up in your mind, which is different than something you've seen through sense experience or whatever, Plato is still lurking there. So in a way, what unites us with this Greco-Roman tradition, and I would argue the Judeo-Christian one as well, Hebrew is not a dead language quite either, and the people still you know are very interested in it and read it, in some places speak. It's the case nonetheless that it's still alive and well in our culture today in a general way, and there's no better example than like Plato's word idea, because ideas are still here. So this is what unites the people. And again, you know thinking about whether we're united

through language more generally, or
cultural practices, or
artworks, or artifacts, the main idea here
is that human beings, like a rose, are
caught up in the endless play of absence
and presence,
we're here and we will go away. But a
culture looks to things that can last
beyond that, so that the culture won't
exist for just
one lifetime, that it can exist for
multiple lifetimes.
And I raised the question, without you
know a language how does culture endure?
In part, you can endure through material
culture,
things like tools and artifacts,
which may last beyond a lifetime, and
certainly the artifacts that we've
looked at, like those stone
you know sculptures and all, do last
longer than that.
But it's a shared language that arguably
brings people together

more than anything else, people might
disagree with me on that, but I would
make that argument because
you know it unites people in the present
and across generations more than
anything else.
Language lives on and reproduces, is made
by artists constantly reinvented
and new. So what I mean by that is,
it's not that language is static,
language is constantly evolving, and
that's what artists are doing.
We're gonna look at people like John
Donne, I don't think we actually- we don't
look Donne in this particular regard. But
Donne for example,
what we mean by the word sex, in the
sense we're talking like a sex
act or something, John Donne is the person
who connected that word,
sex s-e-x, to that, before Donne it didn't
exist that way.
The whole notion we talked like having
like an ecstatic experience, and John

Donne was connecting that with sex. Donne
imbued that word, you know ecstatic, with
it, before it was meant to be this
religious
experience where medieval monks were
trying to connect up with God, and when
they felt that they finally
connected with God, they were
experiencing ecstasy.
John Donne takes that word and
makes it a sexual thing.
So you know these words are
constantly
changing and being infused in new ways,
and we
are heir to them. So Donne did this 400
years ago, and whenever we think of
ecstasy, like in a sexual way or
something,
we have John Donne to thank for that.
So
language is you know always changing,
and yet it endures too, it is the thing
that connects us,

and so far, as we're able to read John
Donne very easily, it
shows that language works. But on the
other hand, if you go back- keep going
back into
say a little earlier, Middle English,
and you're going to actually read that
with Chaucer,
it gets a little tougher because words
and meanings and other things have been
changing.
If you go back still further, like the
Epic
of Beowulf, yeah that's going to be
pretty much unintelligible to you
because it probably- that language, which
is Old English, that it's written
in, shares more with German, you know High
German, than it does with English.
So languages are
an unchanging thing, but even so like you
know the Great Pyramids, they
ultimately
change too. Modern technology, and

this is of course is Heidegger's
argument, that technology is sort of a
quest for constant presence. So you know
when you're unsatisfied with the way a
stream is always streaming, a river is
flowing and all, how do you
stop that? Well you create this
you know reservoir out of it that is
constantly present.
So that makes sense for-
I mean it's a good example and why we have
Heidegger, but if you think about the
more important example for us, in the
age of the climate crisis,
is fossil fuels because fossil fuels
gave us a way to have
energy whenever, wherever we want it,
even portable energy, and
the example of that of course is the
automobile. So fossil fuels in the form
of petroleum oil
gets refined and made into gasoline, and
we can carry it around.
In fact, we do, we have a little tank of

it in your car always around,
and that allows us to have power
whenever we want it,
and you know it's constantly present, you
don't have to worry about it being
absent. You don't have to worry about
when
you know night time comes and it gets
dark, your car won't go anywhere,
it'll always go somewhere if you have
your tank of gas, your house will always
be heated
if you have that stream of methane,
natural gas, coming into it.
So we've tended to very much like
that, and our culture is
built on it. We don't have a culture, for
example, where
factories would be powered by
windmill. So go back a few centuries, if
you were-
wanted to grind grain in many places, in
Northern Europe especially
you know like Holland where you have

these iconic windmills, well those
windmills what they were principally
doing,
they weren't making electricity going
back hundreds of years
the way modern wind turbines do, but
those large sail
windmills were turning massive stones
that ground
grain. So you have you know all the
farmers growing
wheat and things like that,
but then you know you want to convert
that wheat into
something very usable by people in their
kitchens,
which is flour. How do you do it? Well you
have to grind it. You do that by hand,
it's very laborious and time-consuming,
or you can go ahead to one of these,
for hundreds of years people have
gone to one of these windmills,
where you just the wind would be
providing all the energy to do it.

But here's the thing about that windmill,
it only worked when the wind was
turning. If it was a very you know
still day,
then no one got their grain ground into
flour.
They just accepted that, the culture
accepted that it was an intermittent
form of energy,
and built the culture around it. We don't
do that, we want our energy available all
the time, which is the great
preoccupation we now have with storage.
If it were different, we might think of
something like you know
drying our clothes, you know we'd have to
do it out on the line
when there was a sunny slightly
windy day.
Or maybe in a modern sense, we'd have an
electric dryer machine like
many of us have in our homes, but we'd
only use it when the sun was shining,
and you won't have to worry about

storage then. But anyhow,
yeah. But all the above here,
like fossil fuels, and it sounds like an
odd thing today,
is to say but they're kind of
like the Platonic ideas or the Christian
God,
insofar as they're an attempt to make
nature endure across
time. In this sense, they are
conveniences because they convene
the earth's resources. So in other words,
they allow us to not have to worry about
the intermittent source,
but have it again as
a constant presence, and we
just so much- very much like that
idea. If you think about it, I think
it's safe to say that modern culture is
sort of
built on the idea of conveniences.
But down here below, you know remember
Heraclitus's stream is a play of absence
and presence.

An example, we'll touch on this again, is
the slow
food movement. So you may know,
if you're from California, about the slow
food movement, but allow me to just
briefly
mention what it is. Starting really
kind of in the 1970s, but in the 1990s,
and partly starting in California, and
in Italy as well, people got interested
in a counter notion to
the Conventional Food System. So how does
our food system work?
Well use the example which I've given
before of bananas.
You can walk into a store and get a
banana any time of the year,
any time of the day if it's a 24-hour
store,
because we have this massive global
network
of food distribution so that the banana
that you're buying
you know is coming from another part of

the world where the
year is very different, you know you
can buy it in the middle of the winter
here in North America, but it may be
coming
from South America where it's the middle
of the summer.
We did that because we wanted to have
food constantly available all the time. And
if you go into your supermarket and you don’t
have any bananas, you can get apples and
all, even though they only grow
you know principally during the fall
season in most of North America.
So the slow food movement decided that
it would be better
to go back to a previous time where this
food system
didn't exist. And by the way this food
system, even though we take it for
granted and think of it as a
quote very natural thing, is actually
pretty recent,
didn't exist a couple hundred years

ago, there was nothing like refrigeration
you know until the end of the 19th
century.
So the slow food movement says: well
let's
just try to eat our food as if it were
entirely in the cycles of nature. So what
I mean by that is,
when you just get local food when it's
ripe. So
right now, here in California, when I'm
recording this, that means I wouldn't be
able to get apples because apples are
not yet in season,
I have to wait for that season. But
I'm not out of luck because
when it comes to consuming fruit, right
now we're firmly
in the stone fruit season, and that's
terrific because
you know you can get peaches, and plums,
and cherries, and all sorts of things
are growing in abundance now. The slow
food movement

suggests that, A, that's better
in the sense that you get to have all
these local ripe fruit-
food, which is better than food that's
been bouncing around for thousands of
miles. And
the fact is, most food, before it gets to
our table, in the United States now
travels 1500 miles, which is kind of
remarkable.
Given that, as the slow food movement
argues, you know you can often get
food- local food that only has to travel
a few miles to your table, and if you
live in a place
like I do, here in California, it doesn't
have- you know you can get those all
year long
at a local farmers' market. Local
farmers' market
are a way of enacting the slow food
movement. And
there are all sorts of things like this,
and you can see this as a

counter protest to
constant presence, I mean it's a
protest you know wanting better food,
tastier food, local food, sometimes
healthier food arguably so.
But it's also, in terms we've been
thinking, this is sort of
an undoing of the West's preoccupation
with constant presence,
and instead allowing the cycles of
nature to unfold
and throwing yourself you know into them,
and so far as your food,
getting food that's only available in
its time
and not elsewhere. Heidegger,
his student, Hannah Arendt, argued that this
doesn't begin in the second half of the
19th century,
which takes us to ancient technology.
Agriculture, which could be seen as a
technology of course, we don't always
think of it that way, but it is,
such as stored grains are a constant

presence. And I gave this example before,
if you look at you know Egypt, one of the
things that made it so successful
was that they were growing grains,
seeds, and restoring them for multiple
years,
and you know the idea of having to worry
about famines or
having to worry about sort of times
between
seasons you know so. Before using my
example,
not a good one in this case, but
you get the idea,
you know if we're in the stone fruit
season now where I am, and before we
shift to like apples and pears and that
season,
what if there's a little lapse
there where you you know presumably
would go without food, because
stone fruit doesn't really last
that long.
But the bigger example would be like

famines, where there's a drought or
something and you miss a whole season, or
a horrific storm
takes out a little bit of your field.
Well if you had these stored grains,
you should be okay.
And of course, the examples we give in
ancient temples and enduring artifacts
of all sorts,
are you know at least attempting to be a
constant presence. And
Hannah Arendt argued that most of
human culture
is an effort to endure over time,
certainly in material culture and
things that we've looked at, like art and
artifacts. Note that Heidegger says this is
all enacted in the modern period, but
you know we were looking at
art that's thousands of years old, or
talking about it, and looking at
buildings like the pyramids and the
Sphinx and all that are very very old.
Yeah. And you know

technologically that was enacted, but
of course it's
imagined that way you know, this is
a result of the fall, there was no need
for
agriculture in Eden. So I'm just
throwing this in to remind us that this
is the state of the world
that we you need to try to enact you
know constant presence technologically,
or build some temples, or do something,
but of course in Genesis everything is
constantly present. So you don't have to
worry about stone fruit not being
available
because in Eden there's all fruit all
the time, you can get everything,
so you don't have to worry about times
of absence, which human beings have
worried a great deal about
because of things like droughts and
famines, because of times of absence.
So pre-agricultural culture.
So Arendt argued that cultures that do

not see constant presence through their
artifacts
are not truly human, she calls them
animal laborans, or
just those cultures laboring animals.
By the way, that's a very nasty thing to
say about
other human beings incidentally,
that they're not really human
if they're not attempting to create
these lasting cultures.
But nearly every you know early locus
amoenus is imagined as having no need
for constant presence, I think that's-
they're better
representations there than Arendt’s
because you know Adam and Eve are
celebrated.
In many views like with pastoral
literature and all,
the way people lived at the time is seen
as a good thing, and the people living an
idyllic life, but Arednt’s take
on

this is yeah pretty nasty.

But in any event, you know

pre-agricultural

societies, you know cultures that

weren't

trying to create constant presence

through their agriculture by way of

grains and other storable foodstuffs,

you know they live in the cycles

of nature, so

it's not impossible to do so. And again,

we'll be looking at-

like thinking like Buddhist, thinking

that constantly prefers the cycles of

nature

rather than trying to get free of

them in some way.

So yeah. Let's go next to...

the end. Okay, so

that's it.

The big takeaway here, from all this, I

mean we looked at each of these things

individually,

but the big takeaway here is that

this metaphysical slash physical
thinking
has far-reaching implications that
impact everything from the way you think
about place, the kind of God you have,
to how what we think about food, and the
kind of food we have, and the way we want
to get our food.
And it's not just ancient ideas, it's not
just this Greco-Roman Judeo-Christian
tradition
you know existing thousands of years ago,
and being- like reading about the goddess
Ishtar. Oh isn't it interesting to think
about what people thought about way back
then.
But know it might be interesting in
its own right, but it's also the case,
this is alive and well today, it informs
something like our food system,
and you can see why people would be
dissatisfied and try
to counter it. What I mean by that is,
yeah walk into any supermarket get

anything you want, whatever you want,
everything is constantly present there,
there are no seasons in a supermarket.
There's really no light in the
supermarket because
it's not like you know it gets
darker at night and all, it's illuminated
through constant presence.
Alternately, you could go to a local
farmers' market that's open
only during the day, may not be very
well attended if it's a big rainstorm,
and you have to deal with the vagaries
of nature, and you have to deal with the
seasons, and you know you get what
you get when you get it.
Alternately, you could see that
as
you know the gift of the moment, that
what a wonderful thing is,
it is when stone fruit begin to come in.
That suddenly you've waited all year
for this, and you get to have all the
plums and peaches and all that

you want, and you can enjoy them for the
you know the month or two that they're
really in season,
and then they'd go away, and you'd let
yourself to be in
the cycles of nature. We'll talk about
this more,
and we'll talk about it more when we get to
Buddhism as well, but you can see
why someone like Heidegger would say
that the West is just preoccupied with
this way of thinking,
and it informs so much of our culture.
Something to think about, and something
to think about you know including
how you think of all this. But I keep
saying that this is the Greco-Roman
tradition that we're looking at, and
we've only been looking at the Greeks so
far.
So the next lecture we're going to take
up Romans, and Roman thinking, which is
similar to Greek, but not, and there are
significant innovations

that we will be looking at, especially in

the form of art.

Okay, I'll see you next time.