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ON THE QUESTION OF THINKING:
A STUDY OF HEIDEGGER'S LATER PHILOSOPHY

by

Shishir Budha

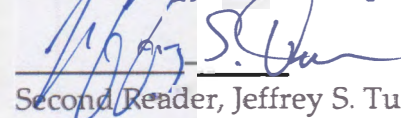
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For the Degree in Bachelor of Arts with Honors in Philosophy

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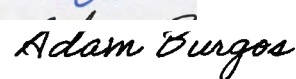
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Abstract

This thesis is an exploration of the writings of the 20th century German philosopher Martin Heidegger to understand what “thinking” is and how thinking needs to be undertaken. I examine Heidegger’s commitments to phenomenology in his early writings, his reevaluation of the meaning of truth in traditional Western metaphysics, his criticism of calculative thinking and scientific rationality, his diagnosis of the human alienation and homelessness, and his evocation of the redemptive power of art and poetry through which we can find our place in the world. By questioning through all these themes, I attempt to trace Heidegger’s path towards a deeper and a more original kind of thinking that remains largely ignored in traditional philosophical inquiry.

Introduction

Martin Heidegger delivered a number of lectures to his students in the summer and winter semesters of 1951 and 1952 at the University of Freiburg. The lectures were compiled into a volume titled *What is Called Thinking?* In it, Heidegger makes a peculiar statement: *Most thought-provoking in our thought-provoking time is that we are still not thinking.*¹ What does he mean by “we are still not thinking”? It sounds completely counterintuitive, especially because that decade saw a great many advances in thinking. For example, that very same year, the structure of the DNA molecule, which contained the genetic information of how organisms survive, grow, and reproduce, was discovered. Two years before, in 1950, Bertrand Russell was awarded the Nobel Prize for his great legacy in philosophy and his social activism. In 1957, the Soviet Union launched a first artificial satellite Sputnik 1 into Earth’s orbit; and in a little more than a decade later, in 1969, Americans landed on the moon. In the same decade, we saw great works such as Samuel Beckett’s *Waiting for Godot*, J.D. Salinger’s *The Catcher in the Rye*, Elie Wiesel’s *Night*, and many more. All of them are products of thinking. So, when Heidegger says that “we are still not thinking,” who is the “we” that he is talking about? Do the people that I listed above count as ones who were “still not thinking”?

¹ Martin Heidegger, *What is Called Thinking?*, trans. Fred D. Wieck and J. Glenn Gray (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1968), p. 6.

Does his assessment apply to 1950? More interesting is the question: does it apply seventy years later in 2020?

Moreover, why is the mid-20th century a “thought provoking time” for Heidegger? Could it be said that early 21st century is also thought-provoking? If so, the same could certainly be said about every decade, every year, and every moment in history. But if every moment in history has been thought-provoking and we have never been thinking in the way Heidegger qualifies as “thinking,” then Heidegger statement becomes an empty riddle purported to shock the reader rather than actually describe the state of affairs. This might be true. Nonetheless, he is making that statement carefully and deliberately. I do not think that he is saying that we are not thinking at all nor that we are no longer thinking. It is implicit in the statement that if something is “thought-provoking” or provokes our thought, it means that thinking *must* already be underway. Nothing would be thought-provoking if we were already not capable of thinking. Just as nothing would be sightworthy if we were already not capable of seeing. Therefore, Heidegger does believe that we *are* capable of thinking and we have been thinking, but we have not been doing it in the right way. Then the question remains: what does it mean to think, according to Heidegger?

The most direct hint is given in his essay “The Question Concerning Technology,” where he says, “Questioning is the piety of thought.”² How we ask questions determines how we think; and if we cannot ask questions, we cannot think. The institutions of science, economics, politics, psychology, sociology, etc. all ask questions and have been asking questions for generations, and thus, have *thought* throughout. But for Heidegger, the thinking that has prevailed in all of those disciplines, as well as in philosophy, has been led astray; thinking has forgotten its way along with its beginnings. My thesis is an attempt to understand *why* Heidegger thinks so and why this question of thinking applies to this decade just as it did to the previous ones. For this, I will focus mostly on Heidegger’s later writings as well as some of his early ones such as his seminal *Being and Time*, where he anticipates some of the thinking that becomes explicit in his later writings.

In Chapter 1, I will explore Heidegger’s early philosophy: commitment to truth as unconcealment as opposed to truth as correctness, the way of being in the world through understanding and interpreting that he sketches out in *Being and Time*, and the different levels in which we are involved in language, namely the *hermeneutic logos* and the *apophantic logos*. In Chapter 2, I will address his criticism of the view of nature defined by traditional metaphysics, his conjecture that science is inherently

² Heidegger, “The Question Concerning Technology,” in *The Question Concerning Technology, and Other Essays*, trans. William Lovitt (New York: Harper Perennial Modern Classics, 2013), p. 35.

“representational” and grounded in calculative objectivity, and his evaluation of the essence of technology. In Chapter 3, I will explore why he thinks metaphysical thinking, which gives rise to science, overlooks the fundamental relationship between humans and the world. That relationship is undermined by objectification and a calculative understanding of things in the world, and thus makes us alienated from our origins and leaves us homeless. But our sense of place can be reclaimed by what Heidegger calls “meditative” or “contemplative” thinking. In Chapter 4, I examine Heidegger’s attempt to reestablish our sense of place in the world by thinking poetically. Ultimately, this thesis is my attempt to understand Heidegger’s path towards thinking and also to give an answer to the question: how should we think?

Chapter 1: The Grounding of Heidegger's Early Philosophy

1. Truth and the Phenomenological Method

What do we mean when we talk about "truth"? Is it about whether a proposition is true or false? For Heidegger, we cannot ponder this question *objectively* for we do not have an objective and detached relationship with the world. But what about scientific objectivity? Does Heidegger believe that there can be no scientific truths? Not quite. Heidegger thinks that the abstractions in scientific objectivity skip over our more original and ordinary *subjective* relationship to the world—that any assertion of objectivity presupposes a subjectivity. Still, the kind of talk that relies on the subject-object distinction comes with a historical background that purposefully categorizes human beings as *subjects* and things in the world as *objects*. Thus, it separates lived experience into a two-fold artificial abstraction, which is why the question of truth is not adequately expressed in the metaphysical traditions of the West. Heidegger says, "Philosophy must perhaps start from the 'subject' and return to the 'subject' in its ultimate questions and yet for all that it may not pose its questions in a one-sidedly

subjectivistic manner.”¹ He was suspicious of the subjectivistic philosophies that put the ego-*subject* on the pedestal of knowledge and consciousness. Even his mentor Edmund Husserl, in developing the phenomenology that Heidegger champions, gave an “overemphasis on consciousness and ego-subject [which] were signs that Husserl remained with the Cartesians.”² For Heidegger, we are not first of all beings (as subjects) prior to the world (of objects). We are not distanced beings looking out into the world but we are already *in* it, feeling, breathing, walking, etc.; we are *worldly* creatures.³ This worldliness must come forth by pondering the meaning of *Da-sein*, which for Heidegger is the essential mode of our existence. *Dasein* [*Da* in German is “there” and *sein* is “being”] defies the metaphysical abstraction of the world as a detached subject and acknowledges the always already *being-there* of existence. In this way, the question of truth arrives at the question of *ontology*, our relationship to the world as existing beings, and these questions need to be approached in the right way — through being grounded in a *phenomenological* framework.

¹ Martin Heidegger, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, trans. Albert Hofstadter (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982), p. 155.

² Michael E. Zimmerman, *Eclipse of the Self: The Developments of Heidegger’s Concept of Authenticity*. Revised Edition. Athens: Ohio University Press, 1986, p. 23; also cf. Heidegger in *Basic Problems*, p. 125: “Husserl refers constantly to this distinction, and precisely in the form in which Descartes expressed it: *res cogitans — res extensa*.”

³ Cf. Karsten Harries: The difficulty with talk about subject and object is that it tends to take the self out of the world, placing it before the world as a spectator stands before a picture in which he has no place (in “Fundamental Ontology” in Michael Murray (ed.), *Heidegger and Modern Philosophy* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978], p. 88).

At its root, a *phenomenon* is a “showing-itself-in-itself [that] signifies a distinctive way in which something can be encountered.”⁴ It is a *subjective* mode of experiencing entities in the world through attending to *how* they reveal themselves to us. For instance, the feeling of melancholy about a profound loss shows itself the way it *is* as an experienced phenomenon within ourselves. It is not experienced as a mere neurochemical process within our body. *Phenomenon* is to be distinguished from *appearance*, which “does *not* mean showing-itself; it means rather the announcing itself by something which doesn’t show itself, but which announces itself through something which does show itself.”⁵ Appearance is a distancing of the experiencing subject from a more primordial way of encountering the world. When the human being becomes a detached subject, then the world appears; we are not *in* the world but *outside* of it.

The question of truth can be approached phenomenologically once we attend to how truth shows itself and gets encountered by subjects. For Heidegger, truth is not simply a thing that stands as a free-floating object that is to be grasped by knowing beings. The traditional definition of truth that starts with Plato has its bearings on the *correctness* [true and false] of the statements. Plato says, “And those that say of the things that are that they are, are true, while those that say of the things that are that they

⁴ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper Perennial Modern Classics, 2008), p. 54.

⁵ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 52.

are not, are false?"⁶ A statement is true if it corresponds to the state of affairs that it is supposed to describe. With Aquinas there is more standard metaphysical definition of truth: "*veritas est adaequatio rei et intellectus*. This can be taken to mean: truth is the correspondence of the matter to knowledge."⁷ This version presides even in the modern tradition throughout Descartes and Russell.⁸ The statement "A door is a rectangular aperture" is "true" because it correctly describes what we mean by the idea of a door; the statement is in accord with our knowledge of what a door is. This is truth as *correctness* (*Richtigkeit*), a truth that makes a naive assumption that things are just "there" waiting to be discovered. "The untruth of the proposition (incorrectness) is the nonaccordance of the statement with the matter."⁹ The statement "A door is a wall" is "untrue" because it is not in accord with the matter of what a door is. Truth here is a *relation* of "agreement."¹⁰ "The agreement of something with something has the formal

⁶ Plato, "Cratylus" in *The Complete Works of Plato*, ed. John M. Cooper and D.S. Hutchinson (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1997), 385b2, p. 105; cf. his statement in *Sophist* (263b, p. 287): "And the true one says *those that are*, as they are, about you... And the false one says things different from *those that are*." Aristotle also has a similar formulation in his *Metaphysics*, Book Gamma: "Well, falsity is the assertion that that which is is not or that that which is not is and truth is the assertion that that which is is and that that which is not is not" (Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, trans. Hugh Lawson-Tancred. London: Penguin Books, 1998, p. 107).

⁷ Martin Heidegger, "On the Essence of Truth," in *Pathmarks*, ed. by William H. McNeill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 138.

⁸ Rene Descartes, "Letter to Mersenne: 16 October 1639," in *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, vol. 3, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1991), pp. 139: "I have never had any doubts about truth, because it seems a notion so transcendently clear that nobody can be ignorant of it... that the word 'truth', in the strict sense, denotes the conformity of thought with its object"; and Bertrand Russell, *Problems of Philosophy*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 75: "Thus a belief is true when there is a corresponding fact, and is false when there is no corresponding fact."

⁹ Heidegger, "On the Essence of Truth," p. 139.

¹⁰ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 258.

character of a relation of something to something. Every agreement, and therefore 'truth' as well, is a relation."¹¹ But what lets this relation *be* in the first place?

Heidegger thinks that there needs to be something more primordial that lets this relational truth, that distinguishes truth and falsity in a proposition, *exist*. It is a process of revealing that needs to be encountered. "The proposition is not the place where truth first becomes possible, but the reverse. The proposition is possible only within truth."¹² Heidegger calls this "truth" that makes the propositional truth possible *unconcealment* (*Unverborgenheit*); unconcealment is "the ontological condition of truth conventionally understood, that is, as correctness or correspondence with entities."¹³ Heidegger uses the terms "unconcealment" and "truth" (*Wahrheit*) interchangeably in his early writings, but in his 1929 essay "On the Essence of Truth" he prefers to use the Greek term *aletheia* instead of "truth"; in much of his later writings "truth" is "reserved for the traditional notion of correctness, and Dasein's disclosedness and discursive articulation of beings are no longer considered to be 'true' but rather ground the possibility of the truth and falsity of assertions or representations."¹⁴ He says, "to translate this word [*aletheia*] as

¹¹ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 258.

¹² Martin Heidegger, *Logic: The Question of Truth*, trans. Thomas Sheehan (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010), p. 113.

¹³ Taylor Carman, *Heidegger's Analytic: Interpretation, Discourse, and Authenticity in Being and Time* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 259.

¹⁴ Gary Steiner, "Heidegger's Reflection of *Aletheia*" in *Auslegung: A Journal of Philosophy*, Volume 13, No.1, Winter 1986, pp. 38-50.

'truth'... is to cover up the meaning of what the Greeks made 'self-evidently' basic for the terminological use of *aletheia* as a pre-philosophical way of understanding it."¹⁵

Aletheia or *unconcealment* is the more primary form of disclosure of any "truth" of propositions, and it gives rise to the "directive to rethink the ordinary concept of truth in the sense of the correctness of statements and to think it back to that still uncomprehended disclosedness and disclosure of beings."¹⁶ In this formulation, "truth" is what gets *un*-concealed or disclosed and "untruth" is what gets concealed or covered-over. The hiddenness of things in the world is more primary than the unhiddenness for beings. Heidegger says, "the concealment of beings as a whole, untruth-proper, is older than every opened-ness of this or that being."¹⁷ For there to be any truth there needs to be the untruth of things that are not opened up yet. A grasping of truth from one perspective simultaneously keeps other truths hidden.¹⁸ Because we are finite beings there cannot be a total unconcealment and no philosophical questioning can lead to a transcendent knowledge. Yet, the more rigorous the questioning is, the more the

¹⁵ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 262; also cf. Heidegger's remark in "The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking," "[t]o raise the question of *aletheia*, of unconcealment as such, is not the same as raising the question of truth. For this reason, it was inadequate and misleading to call *aletheia* in the sense of opening, truth" (in *On Time and Being*, trans. Joan Stambaugh. [New York: Harper & Row, 1972], p. 70); also his essay "Hegel and the Greeks": "if the essence of truth that straightaway comes to reign as correctness and certainty can subsist only within the realm of unconcealment, then truth indeed has to do with *Aletheia*, but not *Aletheia* with truth" (in *Pathmarks*, ed. William H. McNeill [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998], p. 334).

¹⁶ Heidegger, "On the Essence of Truth," p. 144.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 148.

¹⁸ Cf. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good & Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage, 1989), where he bluntly rejects the idea of an objective standpoint towards the knowledge of truths and affirms that truth is always limited by a certain perspective.

unconcealment will let truth unfold. Ernst Tugendhat criticized Heidegger's use of "unconcealment" in talking about truth saying, "if one limits oneself to the two concepts un-concealment and concealment, there remains absolutely no possibility of determining the specific sense of falsehood, and therefore also of truth."¹⁹ However, Heidegger did not mean to supplant the idea of propositional truth that deals with the true and false the assertions with the idea of truth as unconcealment, but simply to inform that this underlying *unconcealment* or *aletheia*, is what allows propositional truth to take shape.²⁰ In the following remarks, I will discuss how the idea of truth as unconcealment comes to fore by exploring Heidegger's concepts of "understanding," "interpretation," and "discourse" to arrive at his description of *logos*, the sense-making of the world around us through language.

2. Understanding and Interpretation

A. Understanding

Heidegger says, "the act of making-sense or understanding is directed primarily not to individual things and to general concepts. Instead, it is alive in one's first hand

¹⁹ Ernst Tugendhat, "Heidegger's Idea of Truth" in *Martin Heidegger: Critical Assessments Volume 3*. Christopher Macann (ed.) (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 85.

²⁰ For a more detailed view on this phenomenon of unconcealment, see Mark Wrathall, "Unconcealment" in *A Companion to Heidegger*, Hubert L. Dreyfus and Mark A. Wrathall (eds.) (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2005); Daniel O. Dahlstrom, *Heidegger's Concept of Truth* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Gary Steiner, "Heidegger's Reflection of Aletheia" in *Auslegung: A Journal of Philosophy*, Volume 13, No.1, Winter 1986, pp. 38-50.

lived world and in one's world as a whole. In this act of sense-making, the world is opened up for existence."²¹ Understanding is not first of all "theoretical" or an alien entity with which we make sense of the world. It is an activity that is "lived" and encountered in the world that subjects find themselves in. It is taking hold of the world as it comes to the immediate experience of *practical* life and understanding "ourselves and our existence by way of the activities we pursue and the things we take care of."²² "Understanding is the way we make sense of entities by dealing with things available for use in everyday practical activity. Understanding means *knowing how*, and it precedes and makes possible cognition, or *knowing that*."²³ It is the *way* we interact with entities in the world. The ordinary objects in the world are not simply substances with properties, and we do not encounter them in the way that the traditional ontology might suggest. The fundamental ontology proposed by Heidegger attempts to overcome this deficiency by "giving more careful attention to the many different modes in which man exists and encounters things. Its goal is the exhibition of the structures constitutive of human being (*Dasein*)."²⁴ We do not simply perceive the world around us; as Heidegger says, "No matter how sharply we just *look* at the "outward appearance" of things in whatever form this takes, we cannot discover anything

²¹ Heidegger, *Logic*, p. 126.

²² Hubert L. Dreyfus, *Being-in-the-World: A Commentary on Heidegger's Being and Time, Division I*. (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1995), p. 61.

²³ Carman, *Heidegger's Analytic*, p. 207.

²⁴ Harries, "Fundamental Ontology," p. 67.

available.”²⁵ Our access to the world is not granted by staring at it but by being involved with it practically.

A hammer is not simply an object of perception with properties of hardness and rigidity. It is something to hit with, maybe to flatten a surface or to thrust a nail; it is a piece of *equipment* (*Zeug*), in a “broad enough sense to include whatever is useful: tools, materials, toys, clothing, dwellings, etc.”²⁶ Equipmentality is the most basic way of being involved with the world and understanding our context of existence in the web of meanings relating to the equipment.²⁷ “Equipment is ‘in order to.’”²⁸ It is directed towards accomplishing something; it is directed towards the *future*. The use of a plow is what gives the farmer a context to his mode of being in the world and accomplishing the task of harvesting crops and sustaining his livelihood. Equipment is something available to use or “ready-to-hand” (*zuhanden*) and not something theoretical that is potentially available to use or “present-at-hand” (*vorhanden*). When one makes sense of the hammer one sees the hammer as an object ready-to-hand. Carman adds, “even less is a human being a mere object with mental properties added on, but a doer and a

²⁵ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 98.

²⁶ Dreyfus, *Being-in-the-World*, p. 62.

²⁷ This notion of equipment is related to his discussion of technology in his later writings, where the form of equipment takes a new essence with more technical involvement with things. Harries says: “Heidegger later came to see that *technological* equipment cannot be understood as just another, perhaps more complex, tool. With technology the ontology of objectivity, which, on Heidegger's account, has to uproot and dislocate the individual, has entered everyday existence” (“Fundamental Ontology,” p. 73, emphasis added).

²⁸ Heidegger, *Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, p. 292.

sufferer, an agent and a patient, not a what but a who, not something with extra psychological features in addition but someone living a life, emerging from a history and plunging into a future."²⁹ For Heidegger, thinking of entities and beings as objects with properties is an impoverished way of experiencing the richness of the boundless phenomena surrounding us. However, this way of thinking is very useful whenever we are devising scientific theories about the world or when treating someone for disease or when there is an equipmental failure. In all of these cases, the object necessarily has to be present-at-hand and is no longer accessible as ready-to-hand but only theoretically. "In anything ready-to-hand the world is always [already] there."³⁰ In anything present-at-hand the world is there as a pure presence without any relation to beings and is not already there but needs to be processed theoretically to get hold of it. When nature, which "'stirs and strives', which assails us and enthralls us as landscape," is thought as present-at-hand in the metaphysical tradition, it remains essentially hidden from beings. We lose touch with its phenomenon and its essence remains concealed.³¹

B. Interpretation

When we engage with the world that is "ready-to-hand" by understanding it "in terms of a totality of involvements" we can then interpret it more explicitly and find

²⁹ Carman in "Foreword" to *Being and Time*, xv.

³⁰ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 114.

³¹ I will discuss more about the conception of nature in traditional metaphysics in Chapter 2.

meaning.³² Heidegger says, “all interpretation is grounded on understanding. That which has been articulated as such an interpretation and sketched out beforehand and understanding in general as something articulable, is the meaning.”³³ Interpretation [*Auslegung*] can occur only when there is already an understanding; and meaning emerges when interpretation, grounded in understanding, gets worked out or articulated. Only in interpretation can meaning become explicit and thematized in the *present*. It tries to make sense out of what was given in the *past* by our contingency or thrownness and what we seek to accomplish in the *future* as projected by our understanding. Interpretation is where choices are made on the basis of meanings that have previously been disclosed for us. As understanding takes hold of the past or the givenness of what was already there and seeks to actualize the possibilities in the future, interpretation grounds it in the present and makes sense of the possibilities of understanding. Interpretation does not change or skew the understanding but simply actualizes it in the present.

Heidegger adds, “that which is disclosed in understanding—that which is understood—is already accessible in such a way that its ‘as which’ can be made to stand out explicitly. The ‘as’ makes up the structure of the explicitness of something that is understood. It constitutes the interpretation.”³⁴ Interpretation has a “structure of

³² Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 191.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 195.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 189.

something as something."³⁵ But it is not a *representation* of the thing out there, waiting to be discovered and decoded. Because understanding itself isn't always explicit and thematic, the interpretation has to present it *as* something that is explicit. "In interpreting, we do not throw a 'signification' over some naked thing which is present-at-hand, we do not stick a value on it; but when something within-the-world is encountered as such, the thing in question already has an involvement which is disclosed in our understanding of the world, and this involvement is one which gets laid out by interpretation."³⁶ By the time we encounter the world, things are already suffused with values and nothing is neutral. In interpreting the world, we process those values surrounding us and attribute them to the things as they show themselves to us, as our Dasein sees them. Understanding provides context to interpretation.³⁷ If someone understands the hammer as something to hit a nail, then they can interpret the hammer in its different possibilities—namely, hitting a nail on a wall to put up a picture or to fix a broken cupboard, or to build a new doghouse, etc. But if someone understands it merely as something that is heavy and rigid and uses it as a paperweight or as a decoration in an aquarium, then they are simply thematizing it as a present-at-hand object that has no essential relationship to the lived world. Yet, this is not to say that the

³⁵ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 189.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 190-1.

³⁷ See Carman, *Heidegger's Analytic*, p. 210: "If understanding is *knowing how*, interpretation must be a kind of *showing how*."

present-at-hand properties of the hammer are irrelevant; its “objective” weight and form can inform us about how to use it in different contexts. There is a place for scientific objectivity but the problem is only when that objectivity takes precedence over our thinking about our more essential involvement with the world.³⁸

3. Discourse and Logos

Even though interpretation is how understanding becomes explicit, that explicitness can be shown and communicated only through language. Heidegger holds that “only because and insofar as things are revealed practically can they be revealed linguistically. Practical truth is a necessary condition for semantic truth, but not vice versa.”³⁹ Practical involvement precedes all linguistic articulation, but this is not to be misconstrued with the empiricist position where sense experience is theorized into linguistic abstractions; the empiricist still believed in objective sense perceptions that can be translated into concepts.⁴⁰ Moreover, the conception of language in the

³⁸ Dreyfus says, “In the natural sciences shared scientific background skills are necessary for deworlding nature and for testing theories, but these skills do not determine what is to count as the objects of the theory. The scientists’ background skills function precisely to free the science’s objects from dependence on *all* practices, including the practices that reveal them. They thus reveal incomprehensible nature... [and] deworlded relations between deworlded data” (*Being-in-the-World*, p. 207).

³⁹ Mark Okrent’s remark quoted in Dahlstrom, *Heidegger’s Concept of Truth*, p. 199.

⁴⁰ While empiricists such as Hume are right that one should not attempt to make assertions that go beyond the realm of experience, they are still misguided about how we encounter things. For Hume, things in the world are “nothing but a bundle or collection of different perceptions, which succeed each other with an inconceivable rapidity, and are in a perpetual flux and movement” (Hume, David. *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. Selby-Bigge [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978], p. 252). The bundles of perceptions are objectified in the empiricist tradition, which is not what phenomenologists like Heidegger conform to.

structuralist tradition is not adequate in capturing the way Heidegger thinks of it. When Saussure says, "The linguistic sign unites, not a thing and a name, but a concept and a sound-image,"⁴¹ Dasein disappears; the connection, the link between language and the world becomes completely abstracted. Looking through language becomes nothing other than looking into the mirror; language becomes limited as self-consciousness. This thinking once again highlights the subjectivist approach that Heidegger is trying to move away from. To have language is to *speak*.⁴² It is to convey and point things out; it is an act, a doing.

Heidegger uses the term "discourse" (*Rede*) to describe this underlying meaningful act of communication that is underway in interpretation. "Discourse is the Articulation of intelligibility. Discourse underlies interpretation and assertion. What can be articulated in interpretation, thus even more primordially in discourse, we have called meaning."⁴³ The communicability of understanding is the basis for things to make sense and be intelligible. For meaning to arise, it cannot rest in *understanding*; it has to be articulated through the discursive mode. Discourse is the condition of interpretation, and of linguistic acts generally. "Each discourse, all discursivity," says Heidegger, "has in itself the possibility of giving something meaningful, something that

⁴¹ Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, trans. Wade Baskin (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), p. 66.

⁴² Martin Heidegger, "Language" in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper Perennial Modern Classics, 2013), p. 188.

⁴³ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 205.

we understand... indeed, discourse and language constitutes precisely this dimension of understandability, of mutual expression, requesting, desiring, asking, telling."⁴⁴

Discourse in ordinary language facilitates a mutual understanding between different individuals.

For the ancient Greeks, the word "logos" signified meaningful discourse.

Heidegger says, "*logos*, as discourse means what we understand by language, yet it also means more than our vocabulary taken as a whole. It means the fundamental faculty of being able to talk discursively, and accordingly, to speak."⁴⁵ *Logos* is a discursive language that "make[s] manifest what one is 'talking about' in one's discourse... it lets something be seen, namely, what the discourse is about."⁴⁶ It is a vehicle for bringing things out of unconcealment, as it lets something be seen as something. It is not simply about producing sounds or symbols but rather as an engagement with things in a meaningful way. Heidegger, however, has a quite different approach to *logos* than the Greeks: "at its most fundamental level, the hermeneutic level, *logos* is a ready-to-hand articulation and sharing of meaning or significance, while [Heidegger] argues that the Greeks implicitly conceived the *logos* as a present-at-hand succession of words."⁴⁷ Any kind of revealing happens in *logos* and in communicative language; without it things

⁴⁴ Martin Heidegger, *Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics: World, Finitude, Solitude*, trans. William McNeill and Nicolas Walker (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), p. 306.

⁴⁵ Heidegger, *Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*, p. 305.

⁴⁶ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 56.

⁴⁷ Steiner, "Heidegger's Reflection of *Aletheia*," p. 43.

remained hidden. “Those who are lacking in understanding are contrasted with the *logos*, and also with him who speaks that *logos*, and understands it... But to those who are lacking in understanding, what they do remains hidden—*lethein*. They forget it; that is, for them it sinks back into hiddenness. Thus, to the *logos* belongs unhiddenness—*a-lethein*.”⁴⁸ Here one can once again see Heidegger’s commitment to the idea of truth as the phenomenon of unconcealment and untruth as that of concealment. The truth of *logos* brings entities to be encountered and uncovered in language; but untruth of *logos* covers it up by deception, by “putting something in front of something and thereby passing it off *as* something which it is *not*.”⁴⁹

Moreover, just as there are two distinct phenomena of sense-making, understanding and interpretation, *logos* also has two distinct structures that take part in unconcealment, namely the *hermeneutic ‘as’* and the *apophantic ‘as.’* The ‘as’ is a relational structure that cannot exist on its own and functions in a way that makes it possible to relate things in a meaningful way.⁵⁰ The *hermeneutic ‘as’* is the primary form of disclosure that has the fullness of meanings in the everyday practical context. This “‘as’ is the structure of understanding. The understood is a *hermeneia*, that-which-is-understood in an understanding” and “understanding is a basic comportment of

⁴⁸ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 262.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 57.

⁵⁰ Heidegger, *Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*, p. 288: Yet we immediately recognize that the ‘as’ signifies a ‘*relation*’ and that the ‘as’ is never given independently on its own. It points to *something* which stands in the ‘as’, and equally it points to *some other thing, as which it is*.

existence. Therefore, the structure of the 'as' is the fundamental hermeneutical structure of the being of that being which we call existence (human life)."⁵¹ This hermeneutic understanding is how we get acquainted to our own basic existence; our own ontology becomes accessible to us in the hermeneutic 'as'. Things are experienced as "ready-to-hand" in the totality of the context surrounding them. So, a door is first understood as "handy" or as "being used as an exit" in the *hermeneutic 'as'* before one can make an assertion "This door is an exit", which employs the *apophantic 'as'*.⁵² This *apophantic logos* is fundamentally derivative of *hermeneutic logos*.

The *apophantic 'as'* of assertion is essentially a "pointing out" of objects in the world that have already been disclosed in context in the *hermeneutic 'as'*. It is "letting what is at hand be seen as such" in theory through a propositional statement.⁵³ It brings things into view outside of their ordinary contexts as theoretical objects that are able to be grasped. Heidegger says, "The essence of a proposition is *apophainestai*—showing a thing *apo*: in terms of itself. The meaning of an assertion as a form of speech is to show (*deloun*) something as."⁵⁴ In the proposition "The door is an exit," what gets shown is the "door" as an "exit", a place that lets one leave the room. But a door could also be

⁵¹ Heidegger, *Logic*, p. 127. The word *hermeneia* was first introduced to philosophy in Aristotle's work *Peri Hermeneias* (translated as *De Interpretatione*) where Aristotle gives logical forms of categorical propositions. The word also has its roots in Hermes the messenger god in Greek mythology who was responsible for mediating communication between gods and humans and revealing as well as concealing truths.

⁵² Daniel O. Dahlstrom, *Heidegger's Concept of Truth* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 191.

⁵³ Heidegger, *Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*, p. 319.

⁵⁴ Heidegger, *Logic*, p. 112.

something that lets one enter the room. But the statement lets us see the door as an “exit” only by narrowing down the field of meanings provided by the more primordial hermeneutic involvement, which might be that the person uttering the proposition might be *inside* the room and not *outside*. It is the most explicit form of revealing, but it is limited in its scope. Heidegger adds, “*apophansis*, the fundamental accomplishment of the *logos*, is a bringing into view of beings in how and what they are as beings.”⁵⁵ It points out beings in the world as they show themselves in understanding through *assertions* but it “*never* brings us *primarily* and *in general* before those beings that are revealed. Rather the converse is the case: the blackboard must already have become manifest to us as such a being in order for us to assert something about it in pointing out.”⁵⁶ This way the interpretive hermeneutic ‘as’ precedes any sort of propositional understanding of the world and is grounded phenomenologically in discourse.

The hermeneutic disclosure has a similar dimension to the unconcealment of truth as *aletheia*. The propositional truth as correctness is always already dependent on the more primary disclosure in the phenomenon of unconcealment. We first experience objects in the world as ready-to-hand involvement rather than as a present-at-hand abstractions. These commitments are central to Heidegger’s understanding of our mode of being in the world and through this rethinking of the traditional conceptions of

⁵⁵ Heidegger, *Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*, p. 320.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 340.

Being, truth, understanding, interpretation, and *logos*, Heidegger hints us toward a new path of questioning about our relationship with the world.⁵⁷

⁵⁷ Cf. this remark by Holger Zaborowski about the role of hermeneutic understanding: “Moreover, insofar as this kind of hermeneutics is not concerned with “practical advice,” it is also prior to all practical philosophy (be it an ethics of virtue, an ethics of moral obligation, or any other kind of ethics) even though it is, in a much deeper and more “primordial” sense, a distinctive *practice* of one’s own life, that is, the practice of self-awakening which requires a certain independence from others in order freely to think – to interpret oneself – for oneself” (“Heidegger’s hermeneutics: towards a new practice of understanding” in *Interpreting Heidegger: Critical Essays*, ed. Daniel Dahlstrom [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011], p. 24).

Chapter 2: Against Technology

1. The Position of Nature in Modernity

In the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, Kant talks about the human: “as the sole being on earth who has reason, and thus the capacity to set voluntary ends [*telos*] for himself, he is certainly the titular lord of nature, and, if nature is regarded as a teleological system, then it is his vocation to be the ultimate end of nature.”¹ With the absence of God and religiosity in the modern philosophical approach, humans become the only ones remaining who are capable of creating values in nature—which is in itself a value-neutral mechanism. In the hierarchy of autonomous beings, apart from the gods and angels, humans reign the highest among all the animals, plants, and the rest of the embodiments in nature. So naturally, humans have to be the sovereigns of nature, those that govern and dictate all the ends suitable to an inert world. Kant is among many who idealized this anthropocentric understanding of our relationship to nature, where we are put on a pedestal as higher beings whose vocation, as it turns out, is really to pursue ends of nature at the service of humans but not necessarily ends of nature by itself. So,

¹ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, ed. Paul Guyer, translated by Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 298.

in a peculiar way, the *ends* of nature become means to the *ends* of humans. Hans Jonas highlights this point even more clearly as he says, “if nature is mere object and in no sense subject, if it is devoid of “will” then man remains the sole subject and the sole will... And the will, of course, is a will for power over things. The heavens no longer declare the glory of God; but the materials of nature are ready for the use of man.”² Thus, the world is always at our disposal.³

Hans Jonas is an important figure in discussing Heidegger’s philosophical commitments. Jonas studied under Heidegger at the University of Marburg in the 1920s and later became a prominent thinker in his own right. Much of his writings echo Heidegger’s thinking concerning the nature of being and technology. Like Heidegger, Jonas also believed that “modern science” created a concept of *theory* that grants access to the objective truths in nature.⁴ Jonas says, “The very conception of reality that underlay and was fostered by the rise of modern science, i.e., the new concept of *nature*,

² Hans Jonas. “Seventeenth Century and After: The Meaning of the Scientific and Technological Revolution,” in *Philosophical Essays: From Ancient Creed to Technological Man*, ed. L. E. Long (Atropos Press, 2010), p. 71.

³ Through the new philosophy of Descartes in his *Discourse on the Method* (trans. Ian Maclean [New York: Oxford University Press, 2006], p. 51), humans can be the “masters and possessors of nature,” a project set out by Francis Bacon in his *The New Organon*. Also cf. Bacon’s remark: “We intend at the end (like honest and faithful guardians) to hand men their fortunes when their understanding is freed from tutelage and comes of age, from which an improvement of the human condition must follow, and greater power over nature. For by the Fall man declined from the state of innocence and from his kingdom over the creatures. Both things can be repaired even in this life to some extent, the former by religion and faith, the latter by the arts and sciences.” (*The New Organon*, Lisa Jardine and Michael Silverthorne (eds.) [New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000] in Book II, Aphorism 52, p. 221).

⁴ Heidegger talks about science as *Wissenschaft*, something distinct from *episteme*, *doctrina* and *scientia*, in “Age of the World Picture,” in *The Question Concerning Technology*, trans. William Lovitt (New York: Harper Perennial Modern Classics, 2013), p. 117.

contained manipulability at its theoretical core and, in the form of experiment, involved actual manipulation in the investigative process.”⁵ Experimentation presupposes manipulability of variables acting in nature, thus providing hard truths about the mechanisms and structures behind everything. In scientific investigation, objects and processes in nature can be molded and transformed. But is this phenomenon unique to science? Isn't tool making, which we have always done throughout human history, also a kind of manipulation? Perhaps it is a matter of degree. Whereas it was the sharpening of a stone in the Stone Ages, now it is the splitting of atoms and the changing of our own genetic material. If the manipulation of natural objects in early humans was to hunt for food, manipulation in modern science is for comprehensive knowledge of nature as a whole. Jonas makes an interesting point here: “The very process of attaining knowledge leads through manipulation of the things to be known, and this origin fits of itself the theoretical results for an application whose possibility is irresistible—even to the theoretical interest, let alone the practical, whether or not it was contemplated in the first place.”⁶ Science does not simply view things *neutrally* but imposes an ordering of an interpretation that facilitates *control* over the object of its inquiry. Jonas poses a problem for any endeavour that sets out to pursue knowledge for its own sake, because he suspects that the fruits of the knowledge might be irresistible to pursue.

⁵ Jonas, “Seventeenth Century and After” in *Philosophical Essays*, p. 48.

⁶ Hans Jonas, “The Practical Uses of Theory,” in *The Phenomenon of Life: Toward a Philosophical Biological* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2001), p. 205.

Technological science is never simply contemplative and always geared towards the practical application of its knowledge.

Moreover, Jonas believes that the core conviction of modern science was the *universality* of laws behind the “one, neutral, quantitative world stuff” that could give one uniform notion of reality.⁷ Wherever one goes, one can deduce how anything works through particular laws discovered by modern science. Any phenomenon is reducible to a set of basic laws. “These laws are the laws of mechanics, and the idea of the world machine arises. It is to be noted that it preceded the machine age.”⁸ The world becomes a determinate mechanism guided by physical principles, and to our benefit it becomes predictable and convenient. However, this is not to say that through science everything is already determined or known. It might take a while, but it is likely that whatever can be represented through scientific principles will eventually be known. He adds that nature, “as a great automatism of indifferent forces,” is “devoid of even the most unconscious bias toward goals, and of the formative power to serve it—that final and formal causes are struck from its inventory and only efficient causes left.”⁹ There is only a movement from one moment to another guided by causes but there is no movement to anything in particular. There is no real intrinsic “end” to nature, but only the one that can be assigned to it by humans. If there is a certain direction that nature in its own

⁷ Jonas, “Seventeenth Century and After” in *Philosophical Essays*, p. 68.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid., pp. 70, 67.

right is heading towards, it has nothing to do with humans in that it does not have any grand goal or purpose related to the human. The universe might expand, collapse, or disintegrate, only because of cause-effect (efficient) relationships. Jonas effectively summarizes this point: "nature is not a place where one can look for ends. Efficient cause knows no preference of outcomes: the complete absence of final cause means that nature is indifferent to distinctions of value. It cannot be thwarted because it has nothing to achieve."¹⁰

So, what is the result of all this? For Heidegger, "the world now appears as an object open to the attacks of calculative thought, attacks that nothing is believed able any longer to resist. Nature becomes a gigantic gasoline station, an energy source for modern technology and industry."¹¹ There is nothing normative about nature and all norms are to be set by the titular lords who themselves have a vested interest in harnessing all the manipulable forces in nature. The instrumental rationality that drives science and technology views everything as means to an end and prioritizes the accomplishing of the desired ends above anything else.¹² Jonas says,

if nature sanctions nothing, then it permits everything. Whatever man does to it, he does not violate an immanent integrity, to which it and all its works have lost title. In a nature that is its own perpetual accident, each thing can as well be other than it is without being any the less natural. Nature is not a norm (which to

¹⁰ Jonas, "Seventeenth Century and After" in *Philosophical Essays*, p. 69.

¹¹ Heidegger, *Discourse on Thinking*, trans. by John M. Anderson and Hans Freund (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), p. 50.

¹² One can think of this in relation to the moral standpoint of Kant's "Kingdom of Ends" in *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, 4:433 where beings are ought to be treated as "ends" and not simply as means.

Aristotle it was), and a monstrosity is as natural as any “normal” growth.¹³ There is no guiding morality that directs what ought to be done and how we are to act; we are guided only by our own *agency*, which nature itself lacks. There is no responsibility that is demanded by natural forces; and in the absence of God, there is no one who can hold us accountable for what we do to nature. Nature doesn't owe us anything and we don't owe anything to nature.

2. The Grounding of Science

In much of the later writings of Heidegger, there is a push against the supposed goal of modern science to draw an objective map of reality. There are two important features of modern science that Heidegger highlights: the exactness of its research and its objectification of reality. He says, “the rigor of mathematical physical science is exactitude.”¹⁴ The rigor of scientific research has to be based on how much the result of the experiment adheres to what we already know about natural laws. Whatever is found in experimentation must correspond to what Heidegger calls the “ground plan of nature.”

No motion or direction of motion is superior to any other. Every place is equal to every other. No point in time has preference over any other. Every force is defined according to—i.e., *is* only—its consequences in motion, and that means in magnitude of change of place in the unity of time. Every event must be seen so as to be fitted into this ground plan of nature. This projected plan of nature finds

¹³ Jonas, “Seventeenth Century and After” in *Philosophical Essays*, p. 70.

¹⁴ Heidegger, “The Age of the World Picture,” in *The Question Concerning Technology, and Other Essays*, trans. William Lovitt (New York: Harper Perennial Modern Classics, 2013), p. 119.

its guarantee in the fact that physical research, in every one of its questioning steps, is bound in advance to adhere to it.¹⁵

This ground plan of nature does not allow any miracles in the physical world. The function of science is to find theories that accurately map this ground plan so as to denounce any "miracles." No event is inexplicable nor compatible with the ground plan as long as science strictly adheres to its rigorous research. However, Heidegger says this is not the case with humanistic sciences, which "must necessarily be inexact just in order to remain rigorous."¹⁶ This is because there is no ground plan that is already laid out about human life before the research is conducted. The research of humanistic sciences is to be inexact enough in a hope that one might stumble upon knowledge about human life. There is rarely a hierarchy about insights into humanity; as Heidegger says, "No one would presume to maintain that Shakespeare's poetry is more advanced than that of Aeschylus."¹⁷

Another feature of modern science is portrayed by the statement: "*Science is the theory of the real.*"¹⁸ Here, when Heidegger talks about the real he's talking about the real as something that is "representable" or "calculable." The real is an object that can be known through scientific theories; they are objects are present-at-hand. In the most straightforward way, science comes about from the real and is about the real; *objectness*

¹⁵ Heidegger, "The Age of the World Picture," p. 119.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 120.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 117.

¹⁸ "Science and Reflection," in *The Question Concerning Technology, and Other Essays*, trans. William Lovitt (New York: Harper Perennial Modern Classics, 2013), p. 157.

is the prerequisite for scientific investigation. Heidegger says, "The real thus becomes surveyable and capable of being followed out in its sequences. The real becomes secured in its objectness. From this, there results spheres or areas of objects that scientific observation can entrap after its fashion ... [It is this] through which modern science corresponds to the real."¹⁹ Reality becomes a collective ordering of objects according to the axioms of scientific truths. Any phenomenon that can be measured and calculated can essentially be said to be "real"; but if it can't be detected as an object, then it is not real.

Heidegger arrives at the conclusion that science becomes "representational" because of this focus on the objectness of reality. "We first arrive at science as research when and only when truth has been transformed into the certainty of representation. What it is to be is for the first time defined as the objectiveness of representing, and truth is first defined as the certainty of representing, in the metaphysics of Descartes."²⁰ The certainty that can be represented in a form of scientific objectivity is the hallmark of the modern conception of truth and knowledge; such certainty cannot be found in art, poetry, or in philosophical discourse. For science, the world is always there in its determinate objective existence which makes the world a "picture." Picture is a

¹⁹ Heidegger, "Science and Reflection," p. 168.

²⁰ Heidegger, "The Age of the World Picture," p. 127. This formulation of the mind's objective representation of the world is seen in Descartes' *Second Meditation*. He says that the object like wax is "merely something extended, flexible, and changeable" and the perception we have of it is "not of vision or touch or imagination" but of "purely mental scrutiny" (Descartes, *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes Vol. II*, pp. 20-1).

representation, a copy of something, so for Heidegger, the “world picture” means “the world conceived and grasped as picture.”²¹ When the world becomes picture it is set before us and we are set before it. The picture becomes a structural image that determines a specific kind of experience that humans have—namely, an experience through representation [*vorstellen*]. Heidegger adds,

... man contends for the position in which he can be that particular being who gives the measure and draws up the guidelines for everything that is. Because this position secures, organizes, and articulates itself as a world view, the modern relationship to that which is, is one that becomes, in its decisive unfolding, a confrontation of world views.²²

For Heidegger, we “give the measure” in the way we map out the reality in the Cartesian model and in the way we use the resulting knowledge for representing and ordering the reality. Because of this, the modern scientific research inevitably leads to a worldview where the human has conquered the world as picture. Ultimately, the science as the theory of the real gives a representational understanding of reality while at the same time revealing “objective” truths about the world as object.

But science is clearly *useful*, and one can provide countless examples of how it has been useful. What is it useful for? “The ultimate end of all use is the same as the end of all activity, and this is twofold: preservation of life, and betterment of life that is, promotion of the good life.”²³ Science is probably the best possible means for the

²¹ Heidegger, “The Age of the World Picture,” p. 129.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 134.

²³ Jonas, “The Practical Uses of Theory,” p. 191.

preservation of life but the latter depends on what one means by the “good” life. Does the good life mean a life that is more efficient, easier, or happier? There isn't really a clear conception about any of these human states and the notion of the good life remains vague, where the moral dimension of lived reality is left out. But if science is to be justifiably *useful* it cannot neglect the question about *ends*. Jonas says, “Faced with the threat of catastrophe we may feel excused from inquiring into ends, since averting catastrophe is a non-debatable first end, suspending all discussion of ultimate ends.”²⁴ Technological science is obviously the most immediate rescue that is most likely to succeed in preserving human life in a massive scale. But this is not always the normal state of human existence. Even though we might face periods of emergency, there's almost always room for reflection, time for assessing our possibilities, goals, and values. “The anticipation of success,” says Jonas, “inherent in all struggle against danger, misery, and injustice must face the question of what life befits man when the emergency virtues of courage, charity, and justice have done their work.”²⁵ If the questions about ultimate ends are not appropriate during catastrophe, then, at the very least, they should be reflected upon during periods of leisure and good health.

²⁴ Jonas, “The Practical Uses of Theory,” p. 208.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 209.

3. The Technological Understanding

Throughout his later writings, there is burgeoning anxiety about technology in Heidegger. At first glance, reading his criticism of technology feels like coming from a disgruntled romantic who idolizes the simple non-technological lives of previous generations. But a more sympathetic reading shows a deep concern on Heidegger's part for understanding this new phenomenon of machine technology. Technology is conventionally understood as "means to an end." Even though this instrumental definition of technology is quite plausible, for Heidegger, this could not be further from the truth. He says, "wherever ends are pursued and means are employed, wherever instrumentality reigns, there reigns causality."²⁶ If technology has to pursue an end, then it has to be instrumental and hence be able to create effects through causes. The fourfold causality [material, formal, final, and efficient] is the basis on which objects can appear in the world. The making of a hammer requires the working of all the causes: first, the *materials* required, then the *form* it needs to take, then determining for what *purpose* it is being made for, and the *effect* of bringing forth the finished hammer. This bringing-forth [*Her-vor-bringen*] is "grounded in revealing. Bringing-forth, indeed, gathers within itself the four modes of occasioning—causality—and rules them

²⁶ Heidegger, "The Question Concerning Technology," in *The Question Concerning Technology, and Other Essays*, trans. William Lovitt (New York: Harper Perennial Modern Classics, 2013), p. 6.

throughout. Within its domain belong end and means, belongs instrumentality. Instrumentality is considered to be the fundamental characteristic of technology."²⁷ But instrumental technology forgets the question of *final causes (telos)* and thus does not have the sense of where it is going; it simply moves from one thing to the other so long as the process yields *useful* results. The domain of instrumentality lacks a moral dimension that guides and informs any kind of action. Equipment, as discussed in Chapter 1, is a mode of revealing; but technological instruments no longer facilitate the same way of relating to the world. The instruments have a dislocating effect on the user where the user or the practitioner is no longer simply accomplishing the task at hand but get swept away by the demands of what Heidegger calls "enframing" (*Gestell*). The oil rig is a technological *instrument*, and not simply an equipment, that demands specific actions from users—that it extract the oil, refine it, and distribute it to the buyer.

Heidegger contextualizes this understanding of technology as a mode of revealing in terms of the Greek origins from the word *technikon*, which belongs to the root word *techne*. "Techne is the name not only for the activities and skills of the craftsman," says Heidegger, "but also for the arts of the mind and the fine arts. *Techne* belongs to bringing-forth, to *poiesis*; it is something poietic. From earliest times until Plato the word *techne* is linked with the word *episteme*. Both words are names for

²⁷ Ibid., p. 12.

knowing in the widest sense."²⁸ It meant an active engagement in creating art and revealing objects and truths through theory and practice. This conception of *techne* had little to do with the manipulability of the objects and acts as a means to particular ends. It was a mode of un-concealing where one could be in touch with truth of the *physis* (nature); it was an activity of knowledge. But what about modern technology?

Heidegger says that this, too, is a way of revealing but one of "challenging [*Herausfordern*] which puts to nature the unreasonable demand that it supply energy that can be extracted and stored as such."²⁹ This modern revealing challenges, provokes, and demands the objects in nature and is no longer looking for an epistemic or poietic engagement; it has no final ends that directs its actions.

"That challenging happens in that the energy concealed in nature is unlocked, what is unlocked is transformed, what is transformed is stored up, what is stored up is, in turn, distributed, and what is distributed is switched about ever anew."³⁰ This transformation of nature makes nature handy, and always ready to be harnessed according to our will. Nature becomes "standing-reserve"; "the earth now reveals itself as a coal mining district, the soil as a mineral deposit."³¹ When nature endures as standing-reserve it is no longer seen as an object even; it is simply a congregation of

²⁸ Heidegger, "The Question Concerning Technology," p. 13.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

forces that can be ordered, calculated, and used up as system of value-neutral information. Standing-reserve is the way things get revealed when the mode of revealing is *enframing*. Heidegger says, "The essence of modern technology shows itself in what we call Enframing [*Gestell*]," which is a "gathering together that belongs to that setting-upon which sets upon man and puts him in position to reveal the real, in the mode of ordering, as standing-reserve."³² Enframing is the revealing of whatever can be challenged-forth and ordered in nature. It restricts our whole way of understanding nature and its constituent parts and allows to become visible only those things that are already conditioned as standing-reserve.

Heidegger says, "The world of science becomes a cybernetic world. The cybernetic blueprint of the world presupposes that steering or regulating is the most fundamental characteristic of all calculable world-events."³³ The world of machines dominates us, not in a literal way as apocalyptic science fiction novels would have us believe, but in a way that is more corrosive to our human nature. It does not annihilate; it festers. Nowadays, "each competing worldview declares that its system of values best promotes human life; that is, the life of the people of the nation promoting the particular worldview. Values become nothing more than the 'objectification of needs as

³² Ibid., pp. 23-4.

³³ Heidegger, "The Provenance of Art and the Destination of Thinking," trans. Dimitrios Latsis in *Journal of the British Society of Phenomenology*, 44:2, 119-128, p. 123. (Originally translated from "Die Herkunft Der Kunst und die Bestimmung des Denkens." Vortrag in Der Akademie der Wissenschaften und Künste in Athen 4. April 1967).

goals.”³⁴ Even though our quality of life might be improving through this process of need-based value formation, there is no moral direction that tells how we are to relate to nature. Heidegger gives a biting remark on this matter: “The devastation of the earth can easily go hand in hand with a guaranteed supreme living standard for man, and just as easily with the organized establishment of a uniform state of happiness for all men.”³⁵

It is not only things and places in nature but also people that can be revealed as standing-reserve. The coal miners themselves could be just as standing-reserve as the coal mining factory; thus, they could become alienated. It might be useful to think of this phenomenon in relation to Karl Marx’s essay “Alienated Labor,” where Marx examines the reason why the human species is alienated in two folds: from *nature* and from *itself*.³⁶ Behind this alienation, he believes, is the process of *political economy* that objectifies the product of the labor as well as the laborer. The laborer is subjected to being a commodity that produces commodities, which then surpass the value of the laborer that created it. The product as well as the activity stand completely foreign to

³⁴ Zimmerman, Michael E, *Eclipse of the Self: The Developments of Heidegger’s Concept of Authenticity* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1986), Zimmerman, p. 221; also cf. his remark on p. 222: “‘industrial society as an authoritative subject—and thinking as ‘politics’.’ World wars are ways of shoring up faltering economies; wars provide ‘the stability of a constant form of using things up.’ Leaders of power-hungry nations are not merely individuals caught up in the “blind rage of a selfish egoism,” but are instruments of world destiny.”

³⁵ Heidegger, *What is Called Thinking?*, trans. Fred D. Wieck and J. Glenn Gray (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1968), p. 30.

³⁶ Karl Marx, *Marx: Selected Writings*, Lawrence H. Simon (ed.) (Indianapolis, Indiana: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 1994), p. 63.

the worker and if this detachment from the activity itself pervades the majority of the workers' time and place, the worker is reduced to a mere machine. The self is wasted in a production and the relationship of the worker with his own being is severed. The whole process of distancing the humans from *nature*, by classifying it as an object, as well as from *each other*, like in the case of the rich and the working class, becomes a barrier to the realization of human progress. Marx makes a compelling argument about the "present fact" of the political economy that inevitably leads to the degradation of the human spirit through alienation. Marx says, "alienated labor hence turns the *species-existence of man* into an existence *alien* to him, into the *means* of his *individual* existence. It alienates his spiritual nature, his *human essence*, from his own body and likewise from nature outside him."³⁷ The process of political economy that employs the human agents to an object production results in the split between the worker's own inner and outer life. As the workers expend their energy and commitment to fulfilling the desires of the capitalist, the reconciliation with their own freedom and their intimate connection with the natural world becomes impossible. Marx's critique of the political economy resonates with Heidegger's critique of instrumental rationality of technology. This is the technological understanding of beings that both Marx and Heidegger think is so pernicious about modernity, as it conveniently facilitates the exploitation and reduction of everything in the world.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 64.

Nevertheless, Heidegger contends that “it would be foolish to attack technology blindly. It would be shortsighted to condemn it as the work of the devil... But suddenly and unaware we find ourselves so firmly shackled to these technical devices that we fall into bondage to them.”³⁸ Heidegger is not blatantly anti-technology nor does he believe that doing away with technology or keeping it under a total control and directing it to our rational ends would solve all the problems.³⁹ He says, “we can use technical devices, and yet with proper use also keep ourselves so free of them, that we may let go of them any time.”⁴⁰ He thinks that our relationship to technology should be free and independent, and should not gain total precedence over human life and human relationships.⁴¹ Our comportment towards technology should be that of “releasement towards things” which grants an openness for contemplation that is free from Enframing. Heidegger was inspired by idea of “releasement” (*Gelassenheit*) in the Medieval German theologian Meister Eckhart which means to forgo willing and let the divine be present in one’s soul. Heidegger says, “So far as we can wean ourselves from willing, we contribute to the awakening of releasement... [or] rather, to keeping awake for releasement.”⁴² So long as we do not aim to impose the metaphysical structuring

³⁸ Heidegger, *Discourse on Thinking*, p. 53-4.

³⁹ Cf. Dreyfus, Hubert L., “Heidegger on Gaining a Free Relation to Technology” in *Heidegger Reexamined Vol. 3* (London: Routledge, 2002), p. 163 on the discussion about the approaches of different philosophers concerning this issue of rebelling or controlling technology.

⁴⁰ Heidegger, *Discourse on Thinking*, p. 54.

⁴¹ I will talk more about this idea of freedom in Chapter 3 and 4.

⁴² Heidegger, *Discourse on Thinking*, pp. 60-1.

through a technological interpretation of the world, we become readier, or more awake, for releasement, for suspending our willing.⁴³ The real crisis would be when no such releasement from technology can be accomplished – when technological thinking takes over to “bewitch, dazzle, and beguile” us so much that “calculative thinking may someday come to be accepted and practiced *as the only* way of thinking.”⁴⁴ The danger does not just lie in technology itself; it lies in the complete subsumption of calculative thought in the totality of human societies, which might completely shift our way of thinking irreversibly.

⁴³ This also resonates Schopenhauer’s conception of the experience of art, which entails the suspension of willing. Art “plucks the object of its contemplation from the stream of the world’s course, and holds it isolated before it... It therefore pauses at this particular thing; it stops the wheel of time; for it, the relations vanish; its object is only the essential, the Idea” (Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*. Vol. I, trans. E. F. J. Payne [New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1969], §36, 185). In the experience of the world of Ideas we get a consolation for a brief moment and are lifted away from the “thralldom of the will” (Ibid., 196). The art object prompts the subject of pure knowing to no longer be conscious of its individuality and to attend to the Idea, and in doing so suspends the subject from the tyranny of world will. I will also develop this idea of releasement as freedom and letting beings be in Chapter 3 and 4.

⁴⁴ Heidegger, *Discourse on Thinking*, p. 56.

Chapter 3: A Thinking that Overcomes Metaphysics

1. The Critique of Metaphysical thinking

Heidegger traces the problem concerning technology and modern scientific research to an underlying metaphysical understanding in Western philosophy. He embraces Nietzsche's pronouncement, "It is not the victory of science that distinguishes our nineteenth century, but the victory of scientific method over science."¹ These advocates of method are primarily Bacon, Descartes, Comte, and even Hegel, whose methods were grounded in a predilection to put reality in order and concrete objectivity. Nietzsche adds, "One should not understand this compulsion to construct concepts, species, forms, purposes, laws as if they enabled us to fix the *real world*; but as a compulsion to arrange a world for ourselves in which our existence is made possible—we thereby create a world which is calculable, simplified, comprehensible, etc., for us."² In the pursuit of scientific objectivity, there is no such innocence, no neutrality that aims to authentically understand our place in the universe. It is a self-certain method of inquiry that does not want to examine its grounding assumptions and its fundamental groundedness in lived phenomena. Heidegger says,

¹ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will To Power*, trans. Walter Kaufmann and R.J. Hollingdale (New York: Vintage Books, 1968) Aphorism 466.

² *Ibid.*, Aphorism 521.

'Method' here does not signify the tool, with the aid of which scientific research elaborates the thematically delimited domain of its objects. Method rather means the manner in which any domain of objects to be researched has been delimited in advance according to its objectivity. The method is the anticipatory blueprint of the world [with a] thoroughgoing calculability of everything, susceptible to experimentation and controllable by it."³

Technological instrumentation remains the core of all such methods and *enframing*, the challenging-forth of nature, is the result of the generation of thinkers who believed in this manner of research. The method is not an open field of questioning and inquiry because it already contains a "blueprint" for what it wants to find or accomplish.

Analytic philosophers such as Rudolf Carnap did champion scientific thinking in philosophy and yet had their own misgivings about traditional metaphysics.⁴

Metaphysics purports to say something meaningful by neither asserting any "analytic propositions" nor falling within the domain of "empirical science" but fails because "it is compelled to employ words for which no criteria of application are specified and which are therefore devoid of sense, or else to combine meaningful words in such a way that neither an analytic (or contradictory) statement nor an empirical statement is produced."⁵ Any kind of talk outside the logic of language will inevitably lead to

³ Heidegger, "The Provenance of At and the Destination of Thinking," p. 122-3.

⁴ For the sake of brevity, I will limit my discussion to Carnap. For more discussion on the analytic reaction to Heidegger, cf. Gilbert Ryle, "Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit*" in *Heidegger and Modern Philosophy: Critical Essays*, ed. Michael Murray (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978), 58-64; Mark A. Wrathall, "The Conditions of Truth in Heidegger and Davidson," *The Monist*, Vol. 82, No. 2, Continental Philosophy: For & Against (April 1999), pp. 304-323; and Charles Guignon, "Philosophy after Wittgenstein and Heidegger," *Heidegger Reexamined* Volume 4, eds. Hubert L. Dreyfus and Mark Wrathall (London: Routledge, 2002), pp. 227-250.

⁵ Rudolf Carnap, "Overcoming Metaphysics," in *The Linguistic Turn: Essays in Philosophical Method*, ed. Richard M. Rorty (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), p. 30.

senseless speculation that fails to say anything meaningful.⁶ Carnap adds, "The (pseudo)statements of metaphysics do not serve for the *description of states of affairs*, either existing ones (in that case they would be true statements) or nonexisting ones (in that case they would be at least false statements). They serve for the *expression of the general attitude of a person toward life*."⁷ His criticism is targeted towards traditional metaphysics since Plato and also towards someone like Heidegger, who himself was going against metaphysics. Carnap would classify Heidegger's attempt to think more primordially than the explicit of *apophantic logos* as an excuse to delve into metaphysical musings about language and the later writings about poetic thinking as a justification for a way of life disguised as philosophy.⁸ Whether or not Carnap's criticism applies to Heidegger, we confront the question: what does philosophizing mean? For Heidegger, it is a way we find our place in the world and to have a bearing on our own existence. For Carnap, and ironically also the metaphysicians that Carnap criticizes, it is a system of correct "description of the state of affairs," whether it be realism, idealism, or logical

⁶ Cf. Lee Braver comment: "logic eliminates meaningless words and pseudo-statements; positively, it clarifies the proper use of concepts and sentences. Ignoring tautologies and contradictions, proper language consists in empirically verifiable assertions about the world" ("Analyzing Heidegger: A History of Analytic Reactions to Heidegger" in *Interpreting Heidegger: Critical Essays*, ed. Daniel Dahlstrom [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011], p. 241).

⁷ Carnap, "Overcoming Metaphysics," p. 32.

⁸ Cf. Carnap's remark: "Here we confront personifications of natural phenomena, which are the quasipoetic expression of man's emotional relationship to his environment. The heritage of mythology is bequeathed on the one hand to poetry, which produces and intensifies the effects of mythology on life in a deliberate way; on the other hand, it is handed down to theology, which develops mythology into a system... we find that metaphysics also arises from the need to give expression to a man's attitude in life" (Ibid.).

positivism. Carnap argues that “the acceptance or rejection of ... linguistic forms in any branch of science, will finally be decided by their efficiency as instruments.”⁹

Heidegger’s whole project is an attempt to overcome this way of instrumental philosophy, the method that wants to “subjugate all thinking and speaking to a sign-system which can be constructed logically or technically, that is, to secure them as an instrument of science.”¹⁰ Even though I agree with Carnap that much of metaphysics could be a justification for an “attitude toward life” rather than truth telling, I disagree that the primary task of philosophy is to construct a clear and distinct grid-like system of scientific knowledge.¹¹

Heidegger says, “All metaphysics including its opponent positivism speaks the language of Plato. The basic word of its thinking, that is, of his presentation of the Being of beings, is *eidos, idea*: the outward appearance in which beings as such show themselves. Outward appearance, however, is a manner of presence.”¹² The outward appearance that is in a manner of “presence” can be thought of in terms of the “present-

⁹ Rudolf Carnap, “Empiricism, Semantics, and Ontology” in *The Linguistic Turn: Essays in Philosophical Method*, ed. Richard M. Rorty (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), p. 83.

¹⁰ Martin Heidegger, “Phenomenology and Theology,” in *Pathmarks*, ed. William H. McNeill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 56.

¹¹ Cf. Rorty’s comment on Heidegger and the pragmatist philosopher John Dewey: “When they discuss the relation between philosophy and science, both men see Cartesian, Husserlian, and positivistic attempts to “make philosophy scientific” as a disastrous abandonment of philosophy’s proper function... Both see philosophy, at its best, as clearing away what impedes our delight, not as the discovery of a correct representation of reality. Both men insist on the goal of philosophy as the reattainment of innocence and the divestiture of the culture of our time” (“Overcoming: Heidegger and Dewey” in Michael Murray (ed.), *Heidegger and Modern Philosophy* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978], p. 248).

¹² Martin Heidegger, “The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking” in *On Time and Being*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), p. 67.

at-hand” abstraction of the object, which anticipates the modern notions of objectivity.

For Heidegger, Plato positions humans as detached observers who have a claim to

knowledge with the means of abstract unchanging forms.¹³ Heidegger says,

“throughout the whole history of philosophy, Plato's thinking remains decisive in

changing forms. Metaphysics is Platonism.”¹⁴ In this framework, all of reality and

phenomena in nature could be represented through theories and abstractions. Even

though he believes that theory can be useful, he thinks that it is limited and ultimately it

masks the more originary encounter with the world around us.¹⁵ This sentiment is

reiterated by Levinas: “Metaphysical desire does not long for a return, for it is the desire

of a land not of our birth, for a land foreign to every nature.”¹⁶ When the world becomes

a picture, we are removed from nature, a place of our essential dwelling. Heidegger's

turning away from metaphysics takes him back home to the question of human

dwelling.¹⁷ Technological thinking is always looking for the next big thing, the next

breakthrough, and rarely bothers to look back to where it started. Its self-certainty takes

¹³ Recall the first section in Chapter 1 where I briefly discussed the limitations of metaphysical distinction between a detached ego and objects.

¹⁴ Martin Heidegger, “The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking,” p. 57.

¹⁵ Hubert L. Dreyfus, *Being-in-the-World: A Commentary on Heidegger's Being and Time: Division I* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1995), p. 1-2: “But Plato and our tradition got off on the wrong track by thinking that one could have a theory of everything—even human beings and their world—and that the way human beings relate to things is to have an implicit theory about them... Heidegger is not against theory. He thinks it is powerful and important—but limited.”

¹⁶ Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburg: Duquesne University Press, 1969), pp. 33-4.

¹⁷ I will discuss the Heidegger's notion of *dwelling* more thoroughly in Chapter 4.

itself to new places and new objects of use. Both Levinas and Heidegger are aware of its aim to take us away from our authentic dwelling in the world.

Another problem for Heidegger was the “separation of essence and existence—of the eternal realm of idea and the transient realm of becoming—implicit in Plato's thought.”¹⁸ The distinction between *being*, which is associated with permanence and reality, and *becoming*, which is associated with transitoriness and a lesser kind of reality, or namely “representational” reality, is the product of the metaphysics heralded by Plato. For Heidegger, this is not an adequate explanation of our being in the world and it tries to put “reality” outside the world we encounter, in the world of pure “forms” or *eidos*. Reality turns into “stable, permanent, unchanging presences” and being and essences are conceived in “static, present terms rather than in active terms.”¹⁹ The phenomenon of how those they can even come to presence is overlooked, if not completely ignored as the being who gets thought of as “the essent [*das Wesende*] becomes an object, either to be beheld . . . or to be acted upon. . . . The original world-making power, *physis*, degenerates into a prototype to be copied and imitated.”²⁰ How the world emerges is not understood but only that the world *is* as represented in objective *forms*.

¹⁸ Joan Stambaugh, *Thoughts on Heidegger* (Washington: University Press of America, 1991), pp. 10-1.

¹⁹ Gary Steiner, *Animals and the Limits of Postmodernism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), p. 52.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 53.

Heidegger says, “due to the manner in which it thinks of beings, metaphysics almost seems to be, without knowing it, the barrier that refuses human beings the primordial relation of Being to the human essence.”²¹ Thinking in terms of metaphysics denies the acknowledgement of what is *essential* about human beings—namely the engaged lived experience of human Dasein. For Heidegger, the essence of *being* lies in existence. But in metaphysics, “existence” has its conceptual roots in *existentia*, which is used interchangeably with actuality, reality, or presence, and he believed that philosophers ever since Plato have not really escaped from this conception of being.²² “Medieval philosophy conceives the latter as *actualitas*. Kant represents *existentia* as actuality in the sense of the objectivity of experience. Hegel defines *existentia* as the self-knowing Idea of absolute subjectivity. Nietzsche grasps *existentia* as the eternal recurrence of the same.”²³ All of these versions of the definition of “existence” force an interpretation on phenomena in the world where the meaning of *being* human is reduced to *how we, as beings or entities, appear or show ourselves; they forget how things emerge out of unconcealment into presence and as something available.*

For Heidegger, metaphysics is concerned only with understanding *beings*, as they show themselves, but not *being*, the true essence of human existence. Metaphysics “says

²¹ Martin Heidegger, “Introduction to ‘What is Metaphysics?’” in *Pathmarks*, ed. William H. McNeill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 281.

²² *Ibid*, p. 283.

²³ Martin Heidegger, “Letter on Humanism,” in *Pathmarks*, ed. William H. McNeill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 248.

what beings are in bringing to a concept the *beingness* [*ousia*] of *beings* [*entities*]. In the beingness of beings, metaphysics thinks *being*, yet without being able to ponder the truth of *being* in the manner of its own thinking."²⁴ Metaphysics determines what kind of being the human is by pointing out the objective and timeless features of the human *subject*.²⁵ Here, it thinks *existence* or *being* through a predicative assignment of *properties* to humans as well as other objects in the world. It can say, for example, "water boils" but it cannot say, "water exists" because "boiling" is a property but "existence" it is not, as Kant had already observed in the *Critique of Pure Reason* that "existence can be a *linguistic* predicate, but it is not a 'real predicate.'"²⁶ Through the knowledge of "properties" metaphysics can ultimately only point out the "being-ness" or "entity-ness" of beings or entities but not *being*, as *existence*, itself; it cannot explain Dasein's comportment and the practical access to things in the world. Not just that, it obscures the question of being by trying to order it and setting demands on *how* being should manifest itself. Therefore, Heidegger declares: "Metaphysics does not ask about the

²⁴ Martin Heidegger, "Postscript to 'What is Metaphysics,'" in *Pathmarks*, ed. William H. McNeill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 232 (emphasis added).

²⁵ Charles Kahn makes an interesting point that the idea of "existing," the way it is used by Anselm and by Descartes (as in his "I think, therefore I am"), is not realized in the ontology of Plato and Aristotle. For the Greeks, existence was determined by their concept of predicative truth; "X exists" always meant "X is something." Kahn says that "it is naturally the theory of predication, and not the concept of existence, that becomes the central and explicit theme of Aristotle's metaphysics, as it was the implicit theme of Plato's discussion of Being in the *Sophist*" ("Why Existence Does Not Emerge as a Distinct Concept in Greek Philosophy?" in *Essay on Being* [New York: Oxford University Press, 2009], p. 73).

²⁶ Taylor Carman, "Foreword," to *Being and Time* by Martin Heidegger, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper Perennial Modern Classics, 2008), p. xiv.

truth of being itself. Nor does it therefore ask in what way the essence of the human being belongs to the truth of being. Metaphysics has not only failed up to now to ask this question, the question is inaccessible to metaphysics as such."²⁷

Now if metaphysics fails to capture the essence of *being*, what is the alternative? For Heidegger, it is a change in our conception of human existence: a move away from viewing it as *existentia*, which is fixed and permanent towards viewing it as *essentia*, which is open to the *possibilities* and change. He says, "to characterize with a single term both the relation of Being to the essence of man and the essential relation of man to the openness ("there" ["*Da*"]) of Being [*Sein*] as such, the name of "Dasein" [there-being] was chosen for the essential realm in which man stands as man."²⁸ *Dasein*, as briefly discussed in Chapter 1, poses a challenge to the metaphysical abstraction of the world as a detached subject and acknowledges the always already being-there of existence. *Dasein*, the being there of the human, is a more originary relationship to the world, as a unified phenomenology, than the metaphysics of the Platonic forms or the Cartesian ego. It is a standing out into the open possibility of "there" and "being" where our existence makes *sense* to us. *Dasein* is our understanding of existence, our making sense of our own place in the world; the world is not separate from our own existence but is

²⁷ Heidegger, "Letter on Humanism" in *Pathmarks*, p. 246. Heidegger also suggests that metaphysics also fails to recognize the "ontological difference" between *being* and *beings* and puts them together and conflates the two.

²⁸ Heidegger, "Introduction to 'What is Metaphysics?'" in *Pathmarks*, p. 283.

always already accessible in a meaningful way. This phenomenon of standing-out in existence is what Heidegger calls “ek-sistence.”

Heidegger says, “ek-sistence, thought in terms of ecstasis, does not coincide with *existentia* in either form or content. In terms of content, ek-sistence means standing out into the truth of being” and that the “the ecstatic essence of the human being consists in ek-sistence, which is different from the metaphysically conceived *existentia*.”²⁹ The root of both the words “ecstatic” and “ek-sistence” originates from the Greek “ekstasis” which literally means to “stand out of oneself.” Here, Heidegger uses this way of phrasing existence because he wants to connote the idea of standing or being *in* the world by staying *outside* of the ego or the subjective self. To ek-sist is to be aware not just of the self but also outside of the self, the world; it is always already being beyond one’s current situation by anticipating other possibilities in the future. Because humans can have this kind of consciousness, Heidegger thinks we have a unique relationship to Being. Moreover, Heidegger warns against a potential misconstrual of this essence of existence as a Platonic form that exists outside of the conscious world. He says,

The ecstatic essence of existence is therefore still understood inadequately as long as one thinks of it as merely a “standing out,” while interpreting the “out” as meaning “away from” the interior of an immanence of consciousness or spirit. For in this manner, existence would still be represented in terms of “subjectivity” and “substance”; while, in fact, the “out” ought to be understood in terms of the “outside itself” of the openness of Being itself.³⁰

²⁹ Heidegger, “Letter on Humanism” in *Pathmarks*, pp. 249, 248.

³⁰ Heidegger, “Introduction to ‘What is Metaphysics?’” in *Pathmarks*, p. 283.

In one sense, the “standing out” can easily be thought of as standing objectively as a detached subject looking out into the world of appearances. But this would be a misguided understanding of ek-sisting, and this formulation of the essence of existence would be nothing different than the one already dominant one, namely *existentia*.

Nevertheless, Heidegger thinks that it is possible to rework our predilection for metaphysical thinking towards a freer and a more open understanding of essence, which will grant us more intimacy to Dasein. Stambaugh quotes an example by Heidegger: “a desk can never touch a wall. The desk might be physically smack up against the wall, but it can never touch that wall in the way a person can touch it.”³¹ But this does not mean that because a desk cannot “touch” the wall and cannot be aware of itself being in the world, it is not “real” and does not exist. The desk exists as *existentia*, with its extended properties, but it cannot exist as *essentia*, as a thing that can realize and contemplate possible futures. Therefore, humans are the only entities that exist *essentially* in the world.³² Here, it is quite easy to see Heidegger’s obsession for pointing out the specialty of humans over the rest of the sentient world. However, he wants to distinguish his position from *humanism*, the system of thought that places an important value on human rationality and autonomy.

³¹ Stambaugh, *Thoughts on Heidegger*, p. 61.

³² Cf. Heidegger’s discussion of this issue in “Introduction to ‘What is Metaphysics?’” in *Pathmarks*, p. 283: “The proposition ‘the human being alone exist’ does not at all mean that the human being alone is a real being while all other beings are unreal and mere appearances or human representations... [it means] the human being is that being whose Being is distinguished by an open standing that stands in the unconcealedness of Being, proceeding from Being, in Being.”

He says that every humanism after the first Roman humanism has “presupposed the most universal ‘essence’ of the human being to be obvious” that the human being is the “*animal rationale*.”³³ This is already a predicative interpretation of beings that has not yet pondered the question of what it is to *be* essentially. Humanism is “either grounded in a metaphysics or is itself made to be the ground of one.”³⁴ It is not concerned about the truth of *being* but only about a certain kind of metaphysics of beings. It is certainly grounded in metaphysical thinking and it would not be a surprise if it was itself a ground of a metaphysics that aims to claim “mastery over nature” through superior human rationality. Heidegger says, “every humanism remains metaphysical. In defining the humanity of the human being, humanism not only does not ask about the relation of being to the essence of the human being; because of its metaphysical origin humanism even impedes the question by neither recognizing nor understanding it.”³⁵ Just like the original critique of metaphysics, Heidegger lays the same kind of accusation to humanism, that it is not concerned with our primordial encounter but only with a secondary one.

2. From Calculative Thinking to Meditative Thinking

Heidegger thinks there is a natural extension of metaphysics that takes over our

³³ Heidegger, “Letter on Humanism” in *Pathmarks*, p. 245.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

whole approach to scientific research called “calculative thinking.” “Calculative thinking computes. It computes ever new, ever more promising and at the same time more economical possibilities. Calculative thinking races from one prospect to the next. Calculative thinking never stops, never collects itself.”³⁶ This kind of thinking does not just imply its use in machines or computers, but something more ominous — that it overtakes our very way of interacting with the world. It thinks in computation of entities and theorizes their properties and creates a reality of its own. As Nietzsche says, “Calculability exists precisely because things are unable to be other than they are.”³⁷ In metaphysical thinking, things can appear only as calculable and determinable and are unable to appear *as* they would if we *let* them.³⁸

But calculative thinking, as discussed in the Chapter 2, is not neutral, and values that are attached to this thinking is self-serving as it always moves towards efficiency and mastery over the objects. This kind of thinking doesn't bother to wait and ask about its own commitments and *why* it is underway; efficiency becomes an end in itself.

Heidegger says, “calculation refuses to let anything appear except what is countable.

Everything is only whatever it counts... The calculative process of resolving beings into

³⁶ Martin Heidegger, *Discourse on Thinking*, trans. John M. Anderson and Hans Freund (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), p. 46.

³⁷ Nietzsche, *The Will To Power*, Aphorism 634.

³⁸ However, this letting things appear should not be thought of as trying to grasp the *in-itself* [noumenal] essences of things as Nietzsche says in his discussion of truth and falsity: “There is no ‘essence-in-itself’ (it is only relations that constitute an essence—), just as there can be no ‘knowledge-in-itself’” (*The Will To Power*, Aphorism 625).

what has been counted counts as the explanation of their being. Calculation uses all beings in advance as that which is countable, and uses up what is counted for the purpose of counting."³⁹ The only way beings manifest themselves is under the categories of whether they are countable or not. This eventually becomes a reductionist mode of dealing with existence and in doing so existence is interpreted in the same vein. Perhaps it is a metaphysical cycle that explains nothing but itself and is preoccupied with serving its own efficient ends, which Bacon and Descartes valorized. Heidegger adds, "thanks to this calculability, the world becomes always and everywhere subject to human dominance. Method signifies the victorious challenging of the world for its thoroughgoing availability to humankind."⁴⁰ The mastery of nature and other beings is the hallmark of calculative thinking, which is inherently technological in its essence.

Heidegger says, "calculative thinking compels itself into a compulsion to master everything on the basis of the consequential correctness of its procedure."⁴¹ The two ideas of "mastery" and truth as "correctness" form the centerpiece of this sort of thinking. As discussed in Chapter 2, this impulse of mastery over things comes from a long tradition in Western philosophy where the world is thought as *being* at our disposal, ready to be manipulated. In the very conception of the world's existence,

³⁹ Heidegger, "Postscript to 'What is Metaphysics,'" in *Pathmarks*, p. 235.

⁴⁰ Heidegger, "The Provenance of At and the Destination of Thinking," p. 123.

⁴¹ Heidegger, "Postscript to 'What is Metaphysics,'" in *Pathmarks*, p. 235.

calculability and manipulability are revealed as *presence* or as *actual*, which gives rise to the standing-reserve of nature in technological instrumentality. Mastery in thinking suggests a possibility of an absolute representation of all reality in theory or axioms. Reality, then, is nothing but a mechanism that can be encountered in calculations and can be assessed in terms of correctness. The hope is that so far as the procedure of experimentation and counting is correct, or corresponds to the already theorized system of facts, the result can be quantified and truth about things could be encountered. But it is so bound up on its own metaphysics for the sake of controlling nature that it fails to point to any truth outside of itself, and simply ends up with more calculation and more exactness.

Heidegger says, "exact thinking is never the most rigorous thinking, if rigor indeed receives its essence from the kind of rigorous effort whereby knowledge in each case maintains itself within a relation to what is essential in beings. Exact thinking merely binds itself to the calculation of beings and serves this end exclusively."⁴² If the aim of knowledge is to inquire into essential relation between us and the world, exact thinking becomes directionless. This kind of thinking is rigorous only insofar as rigor is assessed in terms of correspondence to the axioms and that it counts; anything else, exactness loses its relevance. With this Heidegger wants to point towards what he believes to be a more promising kind of thinking, one whose rigor has nothing to do

⁴² Heidegger, "Postscript to 'What is Metaphysics,'" in *Pathmarks*, p. 235.

with counting or metaphysical abstractness. The rigor of this other kind of thinking “does not consist merely in an artificial, that is, technical-theoretical exactness of concepts. It lies in the fact that saying remains purely in the element of the truth of being and lets the simplicity of its manifold dimensions rule.”⁴³ This thinking is a participation in truth-telling of Dasein and our relationship to it, and not a theorizing of objective and timeless concepts. Heidegger uses the terms “essential thinking” and “meditative thinking” to convey this formulation of thinking that seeks to amend the legacy of metaphysical thinking.

In his “Letter on Humanism” Heidegger recounts a story of the Pre-Socratic thinker Heraclitus, who once gets visited by foreigners who are curious about how he is living as a thinker. “The foreigners who wish to visit the thinker expect to catch sight of him perchance at that very moment when, sunk in profound meditation, he is thinking... Instead of this the sightseers find Heraclitus by a stove.”⁴⁴ Obviously, they were disappointed at the sight of the great thinker doing a mundane task of lighting a fire like anybody else. What they did not realize that is that the practical life of the thinker and his comportment in his dwelling gives meaning to his existence. Heraclitus is engaging in *understanding* of his place by lighting a fire in order to anticipate a near future that gives warmth to his dwelling. He did not make his way of being *explicit*

⁴³ Heidegger, “Letter on Humanism” in *Pathmarks*, p. 241.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 270.

through *apophantic* assertion to the sightseers. A kind of meditation that does not feel the need to express itself explicitly is anticipated by Heidegger's early work *Being and Time* and is realized more fully in his later writings such as the "Letter on 'Humanism'" and "Discourse on Thinking." Whenever one thinks of meditation, one expects that it constitutes *inactivity*, that it may be palliative but is nevertheless, a state of doing nothing. But "thinking does not become action only because some effect issues from it or because it is applied," says Heidegger, "thinking acts insofar as it thinks."⁴⁵ It is not a phenomenon that is separate from the rest of the world. So long as we are thinking and questioning concerning our relationship to the world and our Dasein, we are already acting, *being* in the world in a certain way. He says, "thinking is *l'engagement par l'Etre pour l'Etre* [engagement by being for being]" and this can be accomplished only if we can free ourselves from a technical interpretation of thinking as in the case of metaphysics.⁴⁶ Even the distinction of the two modes of *theoria* and *praxis* in thinking is already "within a technical interpretation."

Heidegger adds, "This meditative thinking is what we have in mind when we say that contemporary man is in flight-from-thinking. Yet you may protest: mere meditative thinking finds itself floating unaware above reality. It loses touch. It is

⁴⁵ Heidegger, "Letter on Humanism" in *Pathmarks*, p. 239.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

worthless for dealing with current business.”⁴⁷ It is probably true that meditative thinking has no practical value, if that value depends on the immediacy of tangible use. This is where calculative thinking has no problems showing its results as every major technological breakthrough has been made in the realm of calculation. But this mysterious meditative thinking seems like it has nothing else to offer. This is because either this thinking is complete nonsense, an artificial concoction by an ascetic, or this thinking is quite difficult and has not been attempted often enough in philosophy. Aristotle’s idea of the contemplative life is helpful in informing what Heidegger means by meditation. Aristotle thought that contemplation (*theōria*) satisfies the essential criteria for happiness (*eudaimonia*) done for the *sake of itself*. He says that unlike the virtues of pleasures and justice, contemplation is the only activity which “alone would seem to be loved for its own sake; for nothing arises from it apart from the contemplating, while from practical activities we gain more or less apart from the action.”⁴⁸ Contemplation does not demand any action but it is not the same a passive

⁴⁷ Heidegger, *Discourse on Thinking*, p. 46; also see his remark: “Because man is a *thinking*, that is, a *meditating* being. Thus meditative thinking need by no means be ‘high-flown.’ It is enough if we dwell on what lies close and meditate on what is closest; upon that which concerns us, each one of us, here and now; here, on this patch of home ground; now, in the present hour of history” (p. 47).

⁴⁸ Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. David Ross (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), Book X, 1177b, p. 194. However, it is to be noted that Aristotle’s *theoria* was the contemplation of unchanging and necessary truths, which is something that Heidegger would characterize as metaphysical thinking. But this characterization of Aristotle is not entirely tenable because Aristotle himself has a more varied notion of what contemplation means, especially in Book VI: “Intellectual Virtue,” where he distinguishes contemplating of “variable” and “invariable” things as well as “scientific” and “calculative” knowledge (Ibid., 1139a, p. 103).

imagination or wishful thinking. It is an exercise of the intellect but not for any specific purpose. Heidegger, as the proponent of this kind of thinking, obviously claims the latter as he says, "at times it requires a greater effort. It demands more practice. It is in need of even more delicate care than any other genuine craft. But it must also be able to bide its time, to await as does the farmer, whether the seed will come up and ripen."⁴⁹ One requires waiting, patience, and diligence on their part to even attempt this sort of thinking, but given that the world of calculation is so much efficient and faster, it is easy to brush it off out of inconvenience. Yet, this does not mean that such a thinking cannot be attempted.

Heidegger says, "Such thinking responds to the claim of being, through the human being letting historical essence be responsible to the simplicity of a singular necessity, one that does not necessitate by way of compulsion, but creates the need that fulfills itself in the freedom of sacrifice."⁵⁰ It does not impose any preconceived structure on its path towards thinking but situates itself within an open of possibilities of meaning; it is a thinking that sets beings free, responds to being, without wanting to force an interpretation.⁵¹ But this notion of freedom "is not mere absence of constraint with respect to what we can or cannot do. Nor is it on the other hand mere readiness for

⁴⁹ Heidegger, *Discourse on Thinking*, pp. 46-7.

⁵⁰ Heidegger, "Postscript to 'What is Metaphysics,'" in *Pathmarks*, p. 236.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 237: "The thinking of being seeks no hold in beings. Essential thinking heeds the measured signs of the incalculable and recognizes in the latter the un-foreseeable arrival of the unavoidable."

what is required and necessary (and so somehow a being)."⁵² It is not a faculty possessed by humans but is a ground for the possibility of unconcealment, of encountering truth as in its fundamental form as well as in correctness. "Freedom for what is opened up in an open region lets beings be the beings they are. Freedom now reveals itself as letting beings be."⁵³ Truth as correctness does not allow this sort of freedom to pervade as it forces a pre-given interpretation on things. In modernity, this imposition took the form of subject-object representation of the world. But for Heidegger, we are beings that are able participate in the freedom of letting things be and can situate ourselves in the thrownness of the past and the projection towards the future. Only insofar as we take heed of this open region of freedom can we be more attuned to *be* authentically. The thinking of contemplation dwells on this region.

We *err* in our thinking if we forget this realm of freedom and unconcealment.

"Errancy is the essential counteressence to the originary essence of truth. Errancy opens itself up as the open region for every counterplay to essential truth. Errancy is the open site for and ground of *error*. Error is not merely an isolated mistake but the kingdom (the dominion) of the history of those entanglements in which all kinds of erring get interwoven."⁵⁴ Thinking must not forget that beings are first concealed and if essential

⁵² Heidegger, "On the Essence of Truth" in *Pathmarks*, p. 145.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 144. I will talk more about this in Chapter 4.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 150. This is a hint that we cannot assure ourselves that we can establish a complete control over being and truth. The confidence in this assurance is why traditional metaphysics is mistaken.

truth is the letting be of unhiddenness, the essential error is the letting be of hiddenness.

The erring that is commonly conceived as the “incorrectness of judgments and falsity of knowledge, is only one mode of erring and, moreover, the most superficial one.”⁵⁵

Erring leads us astray into a muddling of our place in the world and leads to a forgetting of being, because of which we usually find refuge in the thinking of clear and distinct ideas of metaphysics. But thinking in an originary manner listens to the voice of being, and “obedient to the voice of being, seeks from being the word through which the truth of being comes to language.”⁵⁶ Thinking in this way grants a path for truth to come to language. Heidegger makes an interesting statement: “All refutation in the field of essential thinking is foolish. Strife among thinkers is the “lovers’ quarrel” concerning the matter itself. It assists them mutually toward a simple belonging to the Same, from which they find what is fitting for them in the destiny of being.”⁵⁷

Any kind of thinking that attends to the word of being and lets the truth unfold will not find a difference in what it encounters. The encounter of unconcealment of one essential thinker is necessarily the same as that of the other; thinking before calculation thinks the same. This notion in Heidegger is inspired by Heraclitus, who said (in Fragment DK. 50): “Listening not to me, but to the *logos* [the Saying], it is wise [*to*

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 151.

⁵⁶ Heidegger, “Postscript to ‘What is Metaphysics,’” p. 237.

⁵⁷ Heidegger, “Letter on Humanism” in *Pathmarks*, p. 256.

sophon] to agree [*homo-logein*] that all things are one [*hen panta einai*].”⁵⁸ In saying “listening not to me, but to the *logos*,” Heraclitus denounces his subjectivity and attempts to *listen* to the more primordial phenomena happening around him and thinks of what appears before him as the one and the same. In his essential thinking, he overcomes confusion that arises in the explicit form of *logos* [*apophansis*]. Charles Kahn says, “The reference to a *logos* somehow independent of Heraclitus will be immediately clear if he has just spoken of the ‘deep *logos*’ of the soul. The thought will be: listen not to *me* but to the discourse within your soul, and it will tell you all.”⁵⁹ This deep *logos* is anticipated by Heidegger’s *hermeneutic logos*, which engages in disclosing meanings in practical contexts. But Kahn’s understanding of *logos* is not quite the same as that of Heidegger; nevertheless, both speak of a pervasiveness of disclosure that is neither confined within an ego-subject nor disassociated into a universal objectivity. Also, there is a unity, an agreement (*homologeîn*) in the thinkers when they heed this deeper *logos*. Heraclitus also says, “An unapparent [*aphanēs*] connection [*harmonia*] is stronger [*kreittōn*] than an apparent [*phaneros*] one.”⁶⁰ This suggests that the hidden connection with the world is much stronger than any connection that is made explicit thereafter.

⁵⁸ Patricia Curd (ed.), *A Presocratics Reader: Selected Fragments and Testimonia* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 2011), p. 42.

⁵⁹ Charles Kahn, *Art and Thought of Heraclitus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), p. 130; also cf. my discussion of discourse and *logos* in Chapter 1.

⁶⁰ Curd, *A Presocratics Reader*, p. 45; Kahn translates it as “The hidden attunement [*harmonia*] is better than the obvious one” (Kahn, *Art and Thought of Heraclitus*, p. 65).

Once we make a harmony apparent, harmony becomes weaker.⁶¹ Our hermeneutic involvement in the world becomes weaker and becomes something other than itself in the mode of assertion. Essential thinking, whether or not it is actually possible to accomplish, is this attempt to ponder these unapparent connections and allow for a venturing into the unknown hiddenness of existence. It is the attempt to be at home in the world.⁶²

⁶¹ This particular way of formulation was suggested by Prof. Jeffrey Turner; also cf. Kahn's commentary: "And it is no accident that the same title may describe his mode of expression, where the immediate 'surface' meaning is often less significant than the latent intention carried by allusion, enigma, and resonance" (Kahn, *Art and Thought of Heraclitus*, p. 203).

⁶² Eva Brann in her *Logos of Heraclitus* (Philadelphia: Paul Dry Books Inc., 2011) appropriately quotes Charles Baudelaire: "Nature is a temple whose living pillars / Sometimes allow confused words to emerge; / Man passes there through forests of symbols / Which observe him with familiar looks" (p. 134).

Chapter 4: Dwelling and the Path to Poetic Thinking

1. Thinking in the Destitute Time

Essential thinking becomes absolutely crucial in finding our place in the world. But have we found our place, our dwelling? Have we become alienated? Heidegger poses these two questions: "What is the state of dwelling in our precarious age?" and ". . . and what are poets for in a destitute time?"¹ Before these questions can be dealt with, we must first understand what this "destitute" or "precarious" time is. What emerges as the primary object of this destitution is the "homelessness" of human beings, the lack of a dwelling, and the fleeing of gods, all of which are intimately related. "Homelessness so understood consists in the abandonment of beings by being. Homelessness is the symptom of the oblivion of being. Because of it the truth of being remains unthought."² This homelessness is the consequence of our detachment from our understanding of our own essence, the way we are in the world. Our destitution is a product of hiddenness of essences and meanings and concealment of truth as well as

¹ Martin Heidegger, "What are Poets For?" in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper Perennial Modern Classics, 2013), p. 89; "Building, Dwelling, Thinking" in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, p. 158.

² Martin Heidegger, "Letter on Humanism," in *Pathmarks*, p. 258. This is reminiscent of the Early German Romantic poet Novalis who said, "Philosophy is really homesickness — *the desire to be everywhere at home*" (in Novalis, *Notes for a Romantic Encyclopaedia: Das Allgemeine Brouillon*, translated and edited by David W. Wood [Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007] entry 857, p. 155).

the path towards it. It occurs when our calculated ordering of nature gives rise to the illusion about the prosperity and the abundance of our time. When metaphysical thinking becomes too enamored with itself, it loses the trace of the essential path. It becomes destitute by losing the path that leads away from this destitution. When the “destitute time is no longer able even to experience its own destitution” then appears the “time's absolutely destitute character.”³ This destitution of homelessness is the forgetting of Being by human beings.

Heidegger says that the “human being is the being whose being as ek-sistence consists in his dwelling in the nearness of being. The human being is the neighbor of being.”⁴ As noted previously, Heidegger uses “ek-” to talk about the thrownness of our existence into the world. We do not simply exist as objects in the world. Heidegger thinks that our existence is a thrown existence; we are hurled into existence without our say in the matter. “What throws in such projection is not the human being but being itself, which sends the human being into the ek-sistence of Da-sein that is his essence.”⁵ Thrownness means that we exist historically and have a surplus of meaningful connectedness to our past. But in our thrownness, we are not chained to the past; we are also *projected* towards the future. This *projection* is the condition for the possibility of actualizing what we seek to actualize. *Understanding*, our sense-making activity of

³ Heidegger, “What are Poets For?” in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, p. 91.

⁴ Heidegger, “Letter on Humanism,” *Pathmarks*, p. 261.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 257.

Being, is what projects us to this future, to the possibility of revealing the meaning of our being. "Understanding is thought at the same time from out of the unconcealedness of Being. Understanding is ecstatic, thrown projection, where ecstatic means: standing in the realm of the open."⁶ We exist "essentially" in this thrownness of the past and the open projection to the future. We are faced with making choices and *willing*. We are faced with the predicament of actualizing multiple possibilities.

Moreover, Heidegger says, "this destiny [of thrown projection] propriates as the clearing of being — which it is. The clearing grants nearness to being."⁷ The *clearing* is the realm of freedom that lets human beings participate in a more fundamental encountering of the world. We are free to the possibility of being in touch with our own essence. As long as there is no such clearing, we cannot recognize or even begin to encounter the essence of existence, our Dasein. Thus, the "clearing of being" is to be understood in terms of this "thrown projection"; it is the open space of meaning. "'World' is the clearing of being into which the human being stands out on the basis of his thrown essence."⁸ The world is always primarily the basis of our existence. Our thrownness cannot be anywhere but "in" the world as manifested openness. It is the ground in which beings like us occur and emerge in time. This is why Heidegger thinks

⁶ Martin Heidegger, "Introduction to 'What is Metaphysics?'" in *Pathmarks*, ed. William H. McNeill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 286.

⁷ Heidegger, "Letter on Humanism," *Pathmarks*, p. 257.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 266.

that human Dasein has a unique relationship with existence. One aspect of the uniqueness of humans that is denied to entities such as animals and plants is the *nearness* to the truth of existence; as Heidegger says, “man's being open is a being held toward . . . , whereas the animal's being open is a being taken by . . . and thereby a being absorbed in its encircling ring.”⁹ Humans have the freedom to exist in the openness and thus make sense of their existence in this freedom. Animals are essentially unfree in that they are *within* the open realm that remains before the human. This leads Heidegger to say that humans are “world-forming” and animals are “world-poor.”¹⁰

But this does not lead to the conclusion that the human being is “the lord of beings”; instead the human being is the “shepherd of being.”¹¹ Human beings as entities in the world do not have precedence over other entities. Being, as an essential clearing, is not one of the faculties that is at our disposal and is not something that we have mastery over. At best we are “shepherds” of Being; we are the caretakers of Being. We respond to Being with a responsibility to preserve our essential relation to it. The lordship of nature is a residue of the metaphysical thinking that has dominated our present discourse, whereas the “thinking that thinks from the question concerning the truth of being questions more primordially than metaphysics can. Only from the truth

⁹ Heidegger, *Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics: World, Finitude, Solitude*, p. 343.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 177.

¹¹ Heidegger, “Letter on Humanism,” *Pathmarks*, p. 260.

of being can the essence of the holy be thought."¹² Only this kind of thinking can think more primordially and rigorously than the thinking of metaphysics. When Heidegger talks about the holy, it is not clear if he is suggesting it as religious practice.

Nonetheless, there is a religious dimension to the idea of the holy in Heidegger, as it is thought of as a place of ritual practice, our comportment towards a way of being in the world. "Insofar as thinking limits itself to its task it directs the human being at the present moment of the world's destiny into the primordial dimension of his historical abode."¹³ Thinking about the truth of our being directs our attention to the manner in which we inhabit the earth, our *dwelling*, our "historical abode." But what is this dwelling?

Heidegger says that "dwelling is the manner in which mortals are on the earth."¹⁴ This idea of dwelling is quite contrary to how we conventionally understand dwelling, which is a "mere occupying of a lodging."¹⁵ Heidegger thinks of dwelling as a place of freedom as he says that "to dwell, to be set at peace, means to remain at peace within the free, the preserve, the free sphere that safeguards each thing in its nature. *The fundamental character of dwelling is this sparing and preserving.*"¹⁶ In this formulation, dwelling sets at peace this open region of freedom for beings to be close to their Being,

¹² Ibid., p. 267.

¹³ Heidegger, "Letter on Humanism," *Pathmarks*, p. 267.

¹⁴ Heidegger, "Building, Dwelling, Thinking," *Poetry, Language, Thought*, p. 146.

¹⁵ Heidegger, "...Poetically Man Dwells..." *Poetry, Language, Thought*, p. 213.

¹⁶ Heidegger, "Building, Dwelling, Thinking," *Poetry, Language, Thought*, p. 147.

as freedom here is revealed as “letting beings be.”¹⁷ Letting beings be is not to be understood in a “negative sense of letting alone, of renouncing it, of indifference and even neglect”; it is the “heeding” and preserving of Being.¹⁸ Thus, “letting be” is a being at home with our own existence and taking care of the home, the dwelling place. It is what saves us from the danger of losing ourselves, of being homeless, of losing our relationship to Being. Heidegger quotes Hölderlin: “*But where danger is, grows / The saving power also.*”¹⁹ In this danger of losing ourselves and our bearing in the world, if we are able to recognize where we have *erred* and what is wrong with our condition, we are also able to save ourselves from the very danger. But this “saving does not only snatch something from a danger. To save really means to set something free into its own presencing.”²⁰ Just as dwelling lets beings be, human beings must also let dwelling, the earth, *be*; human beings must save the earth. But by saving the earth, the mortal “does not master the earth and does not subjugate it” but becomes a caretaker, a “shepherd” of the Being of beings.²¹ In saving the earth, we mortals do not become *saviors* because a savior traditionally understood as a detached being intervening on the matter at hand; but for Heidegger, it is rather to be understood as an engaged being

¹⁷ Heidegger, “Letter on Humanism,” *Pathmarks*, p. 248.

¹⁸ Martin Heidegger, “On the Essence of Truth,” in *Pathmarks*, ed. William H. McNeill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 144.

¹⁹ Heidegger, “The Question Concerning Technology,” p. 34.

²⁰ Heidegger, “Building, Dwelling, Thinking,” *Poetry, Language, Thought*, p. 148; “Letter on Humanism,” *Pathmarks*, p. 252.

²¹ Heidegger, “Building, Dwelling, Thinking,” *Poetry, Language, Thought*, p. 146.

who has just as much of a stake on nature as nature itself.

Heidegger recalls the saying of Heraclitus (Fragment 119) which goes: “*ethos anthropoi daimon*,” usually translated as “A man’s character is his daimon.”²² “Ethics,” which is rooted in the Greek word “ethos,” bears the weight of the meaning of the word “abode.” An “ethical life” is a dwelling in the nearness of divinity, of *daimon*. Heidegger further interprets this saying: “The (familiar) abode for humans is the open region for the presencing of god (the unfamiliar one).”²³ This suggests that only by dwelling can we exist in the openness to the unfamiliar realm of the holy, which demands our ethical attention and care. Only by being situated in the familiar realm of our dwelling can we then venture towards the unfamiliar realm of the holy. Our destitution occurs when our dwelling, our “*ethos*” itself, becomes unfamiliar to us. To dwell means to be in the presence of the holy. However, the kind of thinking that truly ponders the truth of our being and “so defines the human being’s essential abode” is set out neither by ethics nor by ontology.²⁴ If philosophy is to overcome its grounding in metaphysics, it has to think more rigorously, as discussed in Chapter 3, and ponder our essential way of being in the world. It cannot simply satisfy itself with the truths created by *apophantic logos*. It has to dwell on our more originary relationship with the world through *hermeneutic logos*. This thinking has to care about the “ethical bond” in the time of “technological

²² Heidegger, “Letter on Humanism,” *Pathmarks*, p. 269.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 271.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 271.

human beings.”²⁵ Our ethical bonds become even more important, become more threatened, once there is a calculated ordering by a metaphysical thinking that creates a separation between us and other entities, nature, and Being itself. A calculated gathering is not a poetic gathering fostered by art and safeguarded by our dwelling. We might be able to *live* in technology but not *dwell* in it.

We measure deeds of “scientific knowledge and its research projects” by the “impressive and successful achievements of *praxis*.”²⁶ But the deed of thinking is “neither theoretical nor practical, nor is it the conjunction of these two forms of comportment,” and yet it is a deed, a deed that “surpasses all *praxis*”; “thinking permeates action and production, not through the grandeur of its achievement and not as a consequence of its effect, but through the humbleness of its inconsequential accomplishment.”²⁷ The thinking that Heidegger wants us to participate in is not subservient to practical use. For Heidegger, “questioning is the piety of thought.”²⁸ Thinking, as discussed in Chapter 3, is the same as questioning; it is an opening up of a horizon of possibilities in order to recognize our ends and well as being in tune with our origins. It attends to the clearing of being, the thrown projection of our existence. Hans Jonas gave an interesting insight into this matter. He says that in Aristotle’s

²⁵ Ibid., p. 268.

²⁶ Heidegger, “Letter on Humanism,” *Pathmarks*, p. 257.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 274.

²⁸ Heidegger, “The Question Concerning Technology,” p. 35.

thinking, “speculative (theoretical) sciences” were concerned with “unchangeable and eternal—first causes and intelligible forms of being” without an action of their own and the “practical sciences” were concerned with experiential knowledge by the “planned changing of the changeable.”²⁹ The practical sciences are valuable because they are engaged in producing results that are applicable, whereas the theoretical sciences were done for their own sake. But as Descartes gave birth to a theory with “inherently technological potential,” it resulted in a “fusion of theory and practice.”³⁰ Theory became transformed to serve the function of knowledge and *praxis*. It was no longer an activity done for its own sake. It was no longer a deed but became a means for all deeds; theory became an instrument.

Now, one asks the question: what is the *use* for this new kind of theory that has “technological potential”? Jonas says, “The ultimate end of all use is the same as the end of all activity, and this is twofold: preservation of life, and betterment of life that is, promotion of the good life.”³¹ As I had mentioned in Chapter 2, as far as the preservation of life is concerned, this new scientific theory has proven extremely useful with the modern technology of medicine, health services, and increase in the overall longevity of human life. It has also given rise to new technologies in architecture that

²⁹ Hans Jonas, “The Practical Uses of Theory,” in *The Phenomenon of Life: Toward a Philosophical Biological*, p. 189.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 190.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 191.

can sufficiently cope with the effects of earthquakes and tsunamis. The list of the achievements of this scientific theory is inexhaustible and there is no denying the inherent goodness of these acts. However, only inquiring about how the preservation of life can be accomplished and how catastrophes can be averted might make us “feel excused from inquiring into ends.”³² It would be ridiculous to think about how to save for a retirement plan when one is inside a burning house. Obviously, averting catastrophe is an urgent matter and there is nothing more competent than technological science to resolve these issues of emergencies. But Jonas says, “the anticipation of success inherent in all struggle against danger, misery, and injustice must face the question of what life befits man when the emergency virtues of courage, charity, and justice have done their work.”³³ For Heidegger, thinking of a new kind that is “neither practical or theoretical” has this responsibility to inquire into the truth of our existence, our ultimate end. Thinking of this kind is a deed that denies this metaphysical distinction of theory and practice. It not only thinks about the *ends* but also the *origins*; thinking about the *end* of being is ultimately thinking about the *origin*. In the conventional use of the word “origin,” there is no suggestion towards ends and has a connotation of being more “primitive” than *ends* temporally, as well as in terms of sophistication. But for Heidegger, the question about ends is intimately bound up with

³² Jonas, “The Practical Uses of Theory,” p. 208.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 208.

the question about origins. Thinking of this sort is circular in that it ends up where it begins, something that is echoes in the Heraclitus Fragment 79 (B103): "The beginning and the end are common in the circumference of a circle" and Parmenides Fragment 5: "... for me, it is indifferent from where I am to begin: for that is where I will arrive back again." But the "destitution of our time" is such that what must already be familiar to us, our origin, remains concealed. As long as we cannot situate ourselves in our origins, we cannot think about our ultimate ends. As long as we cannot dwell, we cannot encounter the holy. Origin is what takes us back to our being, which something that modern thought has forgotten.

However, in pursuing our origin and philosophizing about the primordial human essence, isn't Heidegger committing an error that Nietzsche dreaded in his *Genealogy of the Morals*? That was the error that permeated philosophy since Plato to Hegel, that in its "pursuit of the origin (*Ursprung*)" it aimed to "capture the exact essence of things, their purest possibilities, and their carefully protected identities."³⁴ The origin was thought of as a pure, untarnished essence that can somehow be captured through methods that are also pure, transcendent, or absolute. Someone like Kant did not simply venture to pinpoint the exact essence of reason but also the essence of morality, the practical sphere of human life. Whenever someone speaks of human

³⁴ Michel Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rainbow (New York: Pantheon, 1984), p. 78.

nature as so and so or talks about the nature or essence of things, one is attempting to point at an immobile time or space that precedes all events. Foucault says that the fixation on origins is “a metaphysical extension which arises from the belief that things are most precious and essential at the moment of birth.”³⁵ But when dealing with Heidegger’s approach, one should not think of “origin” as these independent entities that precede all contingencies; the origin is grounded in the temporality as an admixture of countless meanings surrounding it. Therefore, Heidegger’s pursuit of origins is the kind of pursuit that Nietzsche, in fact, thinks is the task of the thinker, which is to trace the origin as *genealogy* (*Herkunft*) and not as *Ursprung*. Foucault says, “an examination of descent (*Herkunft*) also permits the discovery, under the unique aspect of a trait or a concept, of the myriad events through which they were formed. Genealogy does not pretend to go back in time to restore an unbroken continuity that operates beyond the dispersion of forgotten things.”³⁶ The approach of the genealogist is very much attentive to the historical details that a traditional metaphysical historian might count as insignificant, and addresses the chains that were broken, replaced, abused, trampled with, or valorized. The genealogist carefully traces the Heraclitean circle but does not attempt to skip it or completely abandon it, thus “dispel[s] the chimeras of the origin.”³⁷ Heidegger, arguably, is such a genealogist in his endeavor to

³⁵ Foucault, “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History,” p. 79.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 81.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 80.

find the path to this historical dwelling of human beings. Heidegger is not looking for a romantic revival of the origins of our questioning of being, but is working towards unfolding the historical traces that distorted the meaning of Being in order to rethink being by a deeper understanding of its genealogy.

2. On the Nature of Poetic Dwelling

“Full of merit, yet poetically, man dwells on this earth.”³⁸ So is the saying by Hölderlin that Heidegger wants to interrogate. This attempt to be in conversation with Hölderlin is not a mere philosophizing through poetry, if philosophizing entails bringing the revealing of poetry into concepts as he says, “There would then be no moment in which to make a contrived myth out of the figure of the poet. There would then be no occasion to misuse his poetry as a rich source for a philosophy.”³⁹ Instead, if philosophy thinks, it must think poetically. It must not be enchanted by poetry but instead learn to think “soberly into what poetry says” and learn to hear what was previously unspoken.⁴⁰ Yet what is the essence of poetry?

Ever since Socrates in Plato’s *Republic* declared poetry as neither containing knowledge nor the “mastery” of truth, the philosophical understanding of poetry has not entirely lost this connotation. Poets have more of an accidental relationship to truth

³⁸ Heidegger, “...Poetically Man Dwells...,” *Poetry, Language, Thought*, p. 214.

³⁹ Heidegger, “What are Poets For?” in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, p. 93.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

than an essential relation. "Poetry is either rejected as a frivolous mooning and vaporizing into the unknown, and a flight into dreamland, or is counted as a part of literature... poetry cannot appear otherwise than as literature."⁴¹ Whereas Plato's Socrates thought poetry was an unsatisfactory *imitation* of the world, Aristotle was more sympathetic as he thought that poetry, as independent outside of philosophy, is worthwhile insofar as it corresponds to the philosopher's "real" conception of the world. Nonetheless, both thought that philosophy with its metaphysics and concepts had a more original relationship to the truth than the poets. The poets poetized vicariously, yet inadequately, through philosophy's true concept of the world. But for Heidegger, poetry is not a mere musing or imagination. Nor is its value to be assessed in terms of how much it corresponds to the "real" world defined by metaphysical concepts. Furthermore, poetic thinking is not an ornamentation that fulfills the "limited" worldview of metaphysical thinking; its nature and disposition are fundamentally different. No matter how sophisticated our *technē* [craft and knowledge] and our art is, it "does not fly above and surmount the earth in order to escape it and hover over it. Poetry is what first brings man onto the earth, making him belong to it, and thus brings him into dwelling."⁴² Poetry is an undertaking in humility. It is waiting, listening, and pondering by being situated in an earthly existence.

⁴¹ Heidegger, "...Poetically Man Dwells..." *Poetry, Language, Thought*, p. 211-2.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 216.

In the phrase “poetically man dwells” Heidegger says that “poetry first causes dwelling to be dwelling. Poetry is what really lets us dwell.”⁴³ In dealing with beings, poetry “lets beings be” and preserves and pays heed to the nature of beings.⁴⁴ The creation of poetry is a “kind of building” of a saving place that preserves the essence of human existence.⁴⁵ It is an act of freedom, a letting of language to hold sway over the poet, so the poet can utter the holy. It is a standing in the clearing of being where the poet is able access the depths of their human, their mortal, essence. “The more poetic a poet is—the freer (that is, the more open and ready for the unforeseen) his saying—the greater is the purity with which he submits what he says to an ever more painstaking listening.”⁴⁶ The poets cannot indulge with themselves; they have to dwell on the clearing of being and their thrownness in language. “The thinking of being protects the word, and in such protectiveness fulfills its vocation. It is a care for our use of language. The thinker says being. The poet names the holy.”⁴⁷ Poetizing is a “care for the use of language” and it is an act of proclaiming what is sacred about the word. It is a respect for the proclaimed and a thanking that looks outwards by projecting itself out from the mere subjectivity of the poet. The poet does not proclaim the holy in order to subjugate and gain mastery of the holy the way a colonizer declares dominance over a land by

⁴³ Ibid., p. 213.

⁴⁴ See my discussion about letting beings be in Chapter 3.

⁴⁵ Heidegger, “...Poetically Man Dwells...,” *Poetry, Language, Thought*, p. 213.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 214.

⁴⁷ Heidegger, “Postscript to ‘What is Metaphysics,’” in *Pathmarks*, p. 237.

naming it. The poets nurse and nurture in the essential realm of holy; they *listen*. Thus, in poetizing, the poet names the holy.⁴⁸ But isn't this poet just a secular version of the religious prophet who claims to have heard the holy word of God, or of divinity? Is the poet a secular prophet? This is more likely than not, because Heidegger himself had a religious upbringing and had also demanded a religious funeral. Perhaps we can use the word "prophet" interchangeably with "poet," as long as the notion of prophet does not involve any sort of commanding or ordering.

"This naming does not consist merely in something already known being supplied with a name; it is rather that when the poet speaks the essential word, the existent is by this naming nominated as what it is. So, it becomes known as existent."⁴⁹ The poet does not name what was already present but in naming it, it presences into existence. The poetic creation has an intimate relationship to the void, a non-place, a non-existence. It is not a representation of what was already there but an act of creating meaning out of non-meaning. It is a venturing into the "unfamiliar" *daimon* that is not yet present in poetic language. But in this venturing in language also lies the danger and Heidegger says "it is language which first creates the manifest conditions for

⁴⁸ A similar idea of poetry was also pronounced by Percy Bysshe Shelley: "Poets are the hierophants of an unapprehended inspiration, the mirrors of the gigantic shadows which futurity casts upon the present, the words which express what they understand not... *Poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the World*" (in *The Prose Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, Vol. III, Harry Buxton Forman (ed.) [London: Reeves and Turner, 1880], p. 144, emphasis added).

⁴⁹ Martin Heidegger, "Hölderlin and the Essence of Poetry" in *Existence and Being*, (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1949), p. 304.

menace and confusion to existence, and thus the possibility of the loss of existence, that is to say — danger.”⁵⁰ As discussed in the first section of this chapter, the danger is also where there lies the saving power; we cannot be saved if the thinkers and the poets are complacent and do not dare to venture into danger, into the confusion of existence, with rigor and care.

Language is the condition for the art of poetry that lets things reveal themselves. So long as the language of poetry deals with the *apophantic* “as” of assertion rather than the *hermeneutic* “as” of understanding, there are bound to be confusions about existence and our place in the world, thus bringing the danger close to us. Language is not simply a “stock of words and syntactical rules” but a conversation where beings speak and hear from one another.⁵¹ If the question being is pondered only propositionally, the real essence of Dasein remains in the dark. But Heidegger thinks that in the *hermeneutic* way of relating to the world, there is no confusion or repudiation; as he said that the conflict between essential thinkers is the “‘lovers’ quarrel.”⁵² A conversation between thinkers will always be a conversation of the same thing, if such conversation is possible.

Hölderlin’s poetic text which ends with the phrase “on this earth” is not “superfluous” because our dwelling “already means man’s stay on earth — on ‘this’

⁵⁰ Heidegger, “Hölderlin and the Essence of Poetry,” p. 298.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 301.

⁵² Heidegger, “Letter on Humanism,” *Pathmarks*, p. 256. I discuss this at the end of Chapter 3 in relation to Heraclitus fragments.

earth" and not anywhere else.⁵³ Being on the earth does not simply mean material existence. It is not simply a totality of substances and mechanisms. Earth is our primordial grounding and a place where beings like us emerge. Having an earthly existence does not simply mean existing as a mere *substantia* or extension (a material entity with extended properties) as in Cartesian metaphysics. It is existing within the surplus of meanings and entities, and being close to our dwelling, a place that preserves and protects us. But one could ask: if the earth is truly our dwelling that preserves and protects, why are there hurricanes, droughts, and other natural disasters that ruthlessly take the lives of countless beings every day? The same version of this question comes up in the religious dilemma of the benevolent God. The answer to this question has serious repercussions for Heidegger's thinking and is a challenge to Heidegger's criticism of metaphysics. It becomes quite a relevant question: how can nature be anything other than a mechanism? Just as God is no longer relevant in the present humanism, neither God nor nature is sacred or holy.⁵⁴ By declaring nature to be a sacred ground of dwelling, is Heidegger artificially creating a version of nature that is contrary its "true" version, which is a neutral, valueless mechanism? Aren't we the ones who bring values to the "valueless" nature, perhaps because of our proclivity to create values where there are none? What about someone like the popularizer of scientific

⁵³ Heidegger, "...Poetically Man Dwells..." *Poetry, Language, Thought*, p. 215.

⁵⁴ Cf. Heidegger's discussion in "The Word of Nietzsche: 'God Is Dead'" in *Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, pp. 53-112.

thinking Carl Sagan, who championed space exploration with a conviction that “We began as wanderers and we are wanderers still”?⁵⁵ What about Nietzsche’s observation in *Human, All Too Human*, that “He who has attained to only some degree of freedom of mind cannot feel other than a wanderer on the earth—though not as a traveler to a final destination: for this destination does not exist. But he will watch and observe and keep his eyes open to see what is really going on in the world; for this reason he may not let his heart adhere too firmly to any individual thing; within him too there must be something wander-ing that takes pleasure in change and transience”?⁵⁶ We now know through science that in a few billion years Earth is going to be swallowed up by our expanding sun and every life on earth will evaporate. And eventually everything that ever was will be gone with a bang or a whimper. What are we to make of such knowledge? Sagan believes that this gives us a reason to say that we are wanderers because eventually we have to leave the earth to survive. But this also equally gives us a reason to believe that we are dwellers, settlers, because if we need to wander to *survive*, we need to settle to *be*—to rest and contemplate our own existence. Heidegger might respond to this by saying that Dasein is ultimately situated in time and completely detached from the objective knowledge of the universe offered by science. But is this not a myopic thinking of Heidegger that cannot inquire beyond lived experience?

⁵⁵ Carl Sagan, *Cosmos* (New York: Random House, 1980), p. 193.

⁵⁶ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005) § 638, p. 203.

Maybe. But insofar as we *experience* the earth phenomenologically, we will never experience it in a timeless objective realm. No matter what its fate is in objective time, we will only be acquainted with it within our horizon in time and place.

Heidegger's notion of Nature that echoes the meaning of the Greek word *physis*—"that which arises"—is a more adequate way of understanding his talk about the earth.⁵⁷ The earth as Nature is "life," a place where beings emerge, and not simply a ball of rock floating around the sun. Heidegger says that Nature "means the Being of beings" and a *will* that gathers "every *ens* [entity] into itself."⁵⁸ It is where things come together and entities come to life. Nature as "Being lets beings loose into the daring venture... Being is the venture pure and simple. It ventures us, us humans. It ventures the living beings."⁵⁹ It is this essential ground of Being that has the originary source of the meaning of existence; it is a ground for a poetic creation. It is no surprise so many of the poets seem to turn to nature in order to be ventured by it, and thus inspire the revealing of poetry. Heidegger says that it is "in this way, that mortals nurse and nurture the things that grow, and specially construct things that do not grow."⁶⁰ This nursing and nurturing is an essential relationship that ties us to our progenitors more originally than any kind of *logos apophantikos* or rationality. Loving and caring become

⁵⁷ Heidegger, "What are Poets For?" in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, p. 98.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 99.

⁶⁰ Heidegger, "Building, Dwelling, Thinking," *Poetry, Language, Thought*, p. 149.

more primary than logic and concepts. We also engage ourselves in art, a special mode of *techne*, to reveal and create things that do not grow in nature. But metaphysical thinking has long privileged thoughts that grow out of the products of the *techne* than those that grow out of *physis*; it favors a hydroelectric plant as achieved by technology more than the Rhine river as shown by nature.

Heidegger says that "Hölderlin, in the act of establishing the essence of poetry, first determines a new time. It is the time of the gods that have fled *and* of the god that is coming."⁶¹ The godheads that had gathered beings to a *dwelling* had fled and had torn apart the beings into destitution. "The default of God means that no god any longer gathers men and things unto himself, visibly and unequivocally, and by such gathering disposes the world's history and man's sojourn in it."⁶² What is the appropriate response to this destitution? Reviving a belief in God, worshipping God, or practicing religion? Maybe. But the problem with this destitution is not really the irrelevance of God in the present secular age; it is the lack of a dwelling that was at first protected by the gods. Whereas the gods of the religions are protected by the authority of the religious institutions, the new gods that are yet to come, are protected by the careful naming of the poet. "To be a poet in a destitute time means: to attend, singing, to the trace of the fugitive gods. This is why the poet in the time of the world's night utters the

⁶¹ Heidegger, "Hölderlin and the Essence of Poetry" in *Existence and Being*, p. 313.

⁶² Heidegger, "What are Poets For?" in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, p. 89.

holy. This is why, in Hölderlin's language, the world's night is the holy night."⁶³ In venturing out into the unfamiliar night of the holy, the poets bring a way to be close to our *ethos* and circle us back to our originary character of existence. The poets leave us with a diagnosis of our dwelling that is uttered by the thinkers as to honestly say:

However hard and bitter, however hampering and threatening the lack of houses remains, the *real plight of dwelling* does not lie merely in a lack of houses. The real plight of dwelling is indeed older than the world wars with their destruction, older also than the increase of the earth's population and the condition of the industrial workers. The real dwelling plight lies in this, that mortals ever search anew for the nature of dwelling, that they *must ever learn to dwell*.⁶⁴

⁶³ Ibid., p. 92.

⁶⁴ Heidegger, "Building, Dwelling, Thinking," *Poetry, Language, Thought*, p. 159.

Conclusion

Here we arrive at the question that I presented at the outset: what is thinking? Are we able to answer it yet? Somewhat. Even though we cannot see the full extent of what thinking means, Heidegger *prepares* us to understand what that would mean. By now it is quite clear that thinking is not about having an opinion or representing the state of affairs through predetermined concepts, because these conform to the model of truth as correctness, which purports to correspond to reality. Thinking is not mere truth-telling, if truth exists only in the distinction of “true” and “false.” Thinking is not about deriving the meaning of our involvement with the world only through assertion and premises. It is not about thematizing the world into a determinate objective existence; it is not about making the world as “picture.” It is not about denying mysteries and uncertainties. It is not about finding efficiency and control of objects and phenomena. It is not about absolute certainty. It is not about collecting “facts” and keeping them at our disposal. It is not about governing and dictating all the ends suitable to an “inert” nature. It is not a lordship. It is not an act of detached observation. It is not a counting or estimating. It is not a demanding and challenging-forth. It is not a building of things as standing-reserve, ready for use. It is not an erring and a forgetting of the past. It is not what alienates and uproots us. Now that we have exhausted the list of what thinking *is not*, we are more prepared to see what thinking *is*.

Thinking is about having an openness to the mysteries of meaning and ways of understanding our place. It is a dwelling that lets thought *be* without an imposition of grid-like structures. It is about poetizing and venturing into the danger of non-meaning in order to understand Being. It is about truth-telling, if truth exists as *emergence* from hiddenness. It is about letting beings be in finite truths without any grand goal of unlocking infinite and absolute knowledge. It is about deriving meaning about our place in the world through Dasein's hermeneutic involvement with things. It is about finding our *telos*. It is about releasement—a suspending of willing and the desire for control. It is about letting nature be meaningful. It is being a shepherd. It is an act of engaged practice. It is a meditating, waiting, and pondering. It is a building of a dwelling that merits reverence and piety. It is hearing the voice of being. It is a caution from erring. It is a humility about our finitude of knowledge. It is what grounds us and gives us a sense of being at home. It is a dwelling, if not a sojourn, in *aporia*. It is a questioning. Yet in calling all these things “thinking,” are we not calling “thinking” nothing at all? Maybe. But at the very least, for Heidegger, all of these are the preparatory elements of thinking before essential thinking occurs. Perhaps this is the best that we in our time can hope for.

Heidegger once made a curious remark: “In this dawning atomic age a far greater danger threatens—precisely when the danger of a third world war has been

removed.”¹ What could be a greater danger than a third world war? Global pandemic? Climate change? Meteorites? Killer robots? All of them threaten the same kind of annihilation of life, if not merely of the human race. And it is a strange assertion for Heidegger to make, thought-provoking at its best and ostentatious nonsense at its worst, that death is not even the worst thing. The worst thing for Heidegger is when calculation is believed to be the only way of thinking. But how is there going to be any thinking if there are no beings left to think? Perhaps Heidegger would not have hesitated to say: if there are no beings left to think, it is mostly likely that those beings did not think. Certainly, a curious assertion. It is perhaps opportune to recall Nietzsche: “Our highest insights must—and should—sound like follies and sometimes like crimes when they are heard without permission by those who are not predisposed and predestined for them.”²

¹ Heidegger, *Discourse on Thinking*, trans. by John M. Anderson and Hans Freund (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), p. 50.

² Nietzsche, *Beyond Good & Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future*, §30, p. 42.

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