

# Heidegger: Technology, Truth and Language

by

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Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements  
for the degree of

**Magister Artium (Philosophy)**

in the

**FACULTY OF HUMANITIES  
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA  
PRETORIA**

2001

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## Foreward

I extend a sincere thank you to the following persons and institutions for their assistance and support during the preparation of this study:

- My promoter Mr. M.J. Schoeman, for his critical eye, support and encouragement.
- The personnel of the Academic Information Service at the University of Pretoria, especially Mrs. Annemarie Bezuidenhout who was always willing to help.
- My family, and Andrew Salomon.
- I acknowledge and thank the National Research Foundation, as well as the University of Pretoria for their financial support.

The financial support of the National Research Foundation towards this research is hereby acknowledged. Opinions expressed and conclusions arrived at, are those of the author and are not necessarily to be attributed to the National Research Foundation.

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## **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

## CHAPTER 1: AN INTRODUCTION.

*For as you begin, so you shall remain.*<sup>1</sup>

### 1.1 Aims and Approaches

Martin Heidegger is one of the most significant philosophers to have made the age of technology central to his thought. The aim of this study is to gain a critical perspective on how Heidegger viewed man's forgetfulness of Being and the concomitant erosion of responsiveness in language and thinking induced by technology. An in-depth investigation of Heidegger's ideas on technology is irrevocably linked to his ideas on truth and language. One issue I will investigate in this study is whether this linkage is fruitful and tenable.

According to Heidegger, the major epochs in Western history are actually stages in the steady decline in Western man's understanding of what it means to 'be'. In the technological age, for something to 'be' means for it to be raw material - part of the endless process of production and consumption. For Heidegger, the horror of the technological age is that man is also seen as raw material. Thus, the 'question concerning technology' is ultimately a question about human dignity.

My main concern is whether Heidegger's ideas regarding technology, truth and language have any meaning or relevance for modern man. Are there not other, more plausible accounts of the origins of modern technology and of how to limit its destructive features? I explore Heidegger's ideas in this regard and contrast them with the ideas of his critics.

A focal point in this study will be Heidegger's notion of technology as *Gestell* (Enframing). According to Heidegger, Enframing is the mode in which Being manifests itself in the age of technology. Enframing allows man to reveal reality as standing reserve (*Bestand*). It reduces the metaphorical expressive powers of language and thinking, in order to make reality calculable and manipulable. For Heidegger, enframing is the supreme danger, because it causes the event of revealing (Being itself) to slip into oblivion. As a result, man is no longer Dasein as an open possibility, but rather a grounded actuality, a fixed identity. A human being fully adapted to the technological world would no longer be human, because of his

complete forgetfulness of Being. Heidegger claims that the *Heimatlosigkeit* (homelessness) of contemporary man is related to the 'dis-essencing' of language and thinking. The fixating of truth within the *Gestell* exiles man from his essence, namely to be Dasein. There is no longer a relation to the openness of Being, for the possible becomes identical to the real.

To counter this, Heidegger suggests an attitude of *Gelassenheit* (releasement), whereby thinking listens to language and allows it to move back into its element (Being). In the modern era, dominated by an increasingly technologised use of language, the caring for the word requires us to reach back into the abyss of silence, in search of a language capable of speaking Being in all its otherness and unpredictability. Heidegger suggests that by means of poetic thinking, the priority of logos over logic can be reaffirmed, in a time when the reign of a purely instrumental logic has reached dangerous proportions.

In this study, I investigate whether Heidegger's conclusion that all human activity is reduced to *Gestell* is plausible. Is this perhaps not just another form of totalising thinking? Even if one agrees with Heidegger, the question remains whether an attitude of *Gelassenheit* is an 'adequate solution' to this conclusion. Can one still retain ideas like human freedom and moral agency in terms of his philosophy? Many critics have voiced doubts as to whether Heidegger's thought concerning technology provides the resources for a genuine rethinking of action. I will investigate these and related questions drawing on the works of various critics, in the final chapter of this study.

## **1.2 Did Heidegger 'turn' far enough?**

For the purposes of this study, I have aimed to concentrate on those works which I feel bear most closely upon my investigation, in order to open up fruitful avenues of enquiry. However, I presuppose an underlying unity and consistency of outlook in Heidegger's works, even if there are changes that are noticeable in his modes of characterisation, thought and insight. It is for this reason that I have felt it to be necessary to include references to works from both the so-called early and later Heidegger, in order to gain perspective on the basic tenets and the ruling orientation of mind out of which Heidegger thinks. According to David Farrell Krell:

Whether we subdivide Heidegger into two or three or even more parts, the problem remains that the moment we begin to think about any element of any part that element itself turns back and forth to all the remaining elements in Heidegger's thought.<sup>2</sup>

W.J. Richardson is well known for having first made the distinction between a Heidegger I and a Heidegger II, and ever since there has been controversy about what has been called the 'turn' (*Kehre*) in Heidegger's thinking. Heidegger himself speaks of a turn (*Kehre*) in his thought, which begins with the 1930 essay *On the Essence of Truth*. Several Heidegger scholars have debated various understandings of what this 'turn' is, and exactly at which point in Heidegger's work it occurs.

Many commentators have argued that in *Being and Time*, Heidegger remains wholly confined within the language and methods of traditional ontology, which the later Heidegger overcomes. They suggest that Dasein is simply another word for man, and that man is simply another being, whose pre-eminence in *Being and Time* derives from the tradition of Cartesian subjectivity which Heidegger has not yet overcome. They argue that the later Heidegger's pursuit of Being itself, abandons Dasein along with all other mundane things. As David Farrell Krell<sup>3</sup> notes, the problem with such interpretations is whether they understand the difference that makes Dasein more than an artefact or a thing of nature. In Heidegger's view, Dasein is the very openness that allows the questioning of Being (*Sein*). I would therefore agree with David Farrell Krell when he states that claiming that the later Heidegger abandons Dasein is incoherent<sup>4</sup>.

Unquestionably, the perspective governing Heidegger's work did change after *Being and Time*, but during all the years of his later work, he never repudiated the fundamental formulations that he had given in this work. In *The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking*, for example, Heidegger tells us that this text belongs to a larger context, that is, 'It is the attempt undertaken again and again ever since 1930 to shape the question of *Being and Time* in a more primordial fashion.'<sup>5</sup>

Waterhouse<sup>6</sup> claims that Heidegger's later work does presuppose the analysis of human existence in *Being and Time*, and the themes that emerge most predominantly are entirely consonant with the earlier text. In Heidegger's own words, the distinction drawn between the so-called early and late periods is '...justified only on the condition that this is kept constantly in mind: only by way of what Heidegger I

has thought does one gain access to what is to-be-thought by Heidegger II.<sup>7</sup> The ostensible *Kehre* therefore did not constitute a rejection of the concerns identified in *Being and Time*, but rather a progression and deepening of Heidegger's thinking about them. Perhaps, then, we can rather regard Heidegger's later thinking as a 'step back' to the fundamental experience of *Being and Time*.

John Sallis tells us that:

His questions offer a "contribution", not by asking new questions – Heidegger asks always only one question – but rather by giving directives for gaining access to and moving within the sphere of that essential thinking which thrives on its "limitation to one thought".<sup>8</sup>

Although the unity of Heidegger's thought remains striking, this is not to say that this unity is one-dimensional. Each element of Heidegger's thought turns, showing itself in various perspectives throughout his various works.

What does this mean for a study on Heidegger's conception of technology, truth and language? Hubert Dreyfus discusses to what extent the account of the being of equipment in *Being and Time* is a critique of the ontology of technology, and to what extent it is a contribution to the development of a technological understanding of Being.<sup>9</sup> He concludes that 'Seen in the light of the relation of nature and technology revealed by later Heidegger, *Being and Time* appears in the history of the being of equipment not just as a transition but as *the* decisive step towards technology.'<sup>10</sup>

W.B. Macomber, in his investigation of Heidegger's ideas on truth also asserts that Heidegger's 'aim and method always remains the same', and claims that the two 'parts' of Heidegger's philosophy are 'unthinkable *except* in conjunction'<sup>11</sup>.

In asserting the unity of Heidegger's thought, I am not, therefore, denying that such a reorientation took place. What I am saying is that the discontinuity that this reorientation involves can be understood only against the background of an even deeper continuity that runs through all the periods of Heidegger's thought. I will also try to show that the central concepts of *Being and Time* survive that reorientation instead of simply being replaced, as is now often assumed, and that it is the way the



relationship between certain of these concepts is reconstrued that accounts for the sharply different tonalities of the later writings.<sup>12</sup>

Olafson<sup>13</sup>, in his discussion of Heidegger's conception of language, also sees Heidegger's philosophy in this manner. Likewise, according to Sefler:

Heidegger's main philosophical purpose is to grasp ... Being. As a result, his approach to language centers around this concern; his encounters with language are always through ontological (and etymological) investigations; his expositions on language are always done for the sake of and subjugated to the primary task of revealing Being – or more properly, of allowing Being to reveal itself.<sup>14</sup>

I will therefore approach my investigation of Heidegger's ideas on technology, truth and language in a manner that presupposes the underlying unity of thought in Heidegger's works, and works from the assumption that there is no radical break among the plurality of ways traversed by Heidegger's long career of thought. Even the detours, false starts and dead ends (*Holzwege*) are all part of a single path from the very beginning of his first ways.

Of course, seeing Heidegger's work in this way does open the way for a radical critique of his ideas, following Lyotard. Lyotard's indictment of Heidegger has to do with what he thinks is the inadequacy of Heidegger's 'turn', in other words, with the implications of the persistence of the question of Being in his thinking. Lyotard implies that Heidegger has not 'turned' far enough from Being and by implication, from the confines of the Western philosophical tradition. I will discuss this issue in more detail in Chapter 6.

Seeing Heidegger's work in this way also has major implications for a discussion on the relationship between Heidegger's philosophy and his involvement with National Socialism, since the attempt by some commentators to indict or 'save' Heidegger in this context depends on a division of his thought into separate periods. I will discuss this issue in detail in the section that follows.

### 1.3 Who was Martin Heidegger?<sup>15</sup>

Martin Heidegger was born in the little Catholic town of Messkirch in 1889, the first child of Friedrich and Johanna Heidegger. Heidegger grew up with his sister Marie and brother Fritz. At fourteen, he completed elementary school in Messkirch, and entered the 'Untertertia' (seventh or eighth year classes) at the grammar school in Constance. As a boarder at the archiepiscopal seminary, the Konradihaus, Heidegger was befriended by Dr Conrad Gröber, a man who would become an important figure in the young Heidegger's life. Their close personal relationship endured, even after Gröber took charge of a city parish in Constance and Heidegger moved to Freiburg in 1906.

Heidegger was deeply influenced by Gröber since he gave Heidegger a copy of Franz Bretano's *On the Manifold Meaning of Being according to Aristotle* (1862), which Heidegger identified as the enduring inspiration for *Being and Time*.

At the end of the *Untersekunda* (the tenth school year), Heidegger began attending the highly prestigious Betholdgymnasium at Freiburg, and became a boarder at the archiepiscopal seminary of St. George. The intended aim of his studies was a theological career. In 1909, he began his studies in Catholic theology at the University of Freiburg. Heidegger later stated: 'Without this theological background I should never have come upon the path of thinking.'<sup>16</sup>

In the winter semester of 1910/11, Heidegger's health deteriorated and so was given a leave of absence for the whole summer semester of 1911. Later, on the advice of his superiors, he abandoned the study of theology completely. This was one of the most difficult periods in Heidegger's life, since he would lose the academic support he had been receiving if he discontinued his theological studies, and he would also have to choose a new path for his life. Heidegger decided to begin a study of mathematics at the University of Freiburg, starting in the winter semester of 1911/12. He attended classes in mathematics, physics and chemistry, but did not write final examinations in any of these subjects. His chief interest turned out to be philosophy, with Heidegger attending lectures by Arthur Schneider and Heinrich Rickert. He read widely in philosophy and the natural and human sciences and studied Hölderlin, Rilke, Trakl, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche and Dostoevsky.

On 26 July 1913, Heidegger took his doctoral examination before the Faculty of Philosophy and passed 'summa cum laude'.<sup>17</sup> In his habilitation thesis, *The Categories of Meaning in Duns Scotus*, which he started working on from 1914 onwards, he laid the foundations of a particular interpretative approach, whereby scholastic patterns of thought were subjected to a phenomenological interpretation inspired by the work of Husserl. At the same time, this work also contains allusions to the thought of Rickert, who was in charge of the habilitation procedure. The First World War did not interrupt Heidegger's work on his habilitation thesis, because his heart condition excluded him from active service. In August 1915, the now qualified lecturer was called up, but after being treated for neurasthenia and heart disease, he was assigned to censorship duties at the Postal Control Office in Freiburg. From December 1913, Heidegger had been secretly engaged to 'Margaret', a young woman from Strasbourg. This engagement was beset with difficulties and was broken off in November 1915.

At this time, the faculty of Philosophy at Freiburg appointed the phenomenologist Edmund Husserl as a successor to Rickert. The young Heidegger had already encountered some of Husserl's work, but had had no personal contact with him. Heidegger was aiming towards the second chair of philosophy at Freiburg, but was not successful. The board declined even to recommend him for an associate professorship. Heidegger was crushed by these developments and felt that Husserl was prejudiced against him and failed to recognise his true merits.

In the summer of 1916, while Heidegger was still on military service at the Freiburg Postal control Office, he met Elfride Petri, a student of economics at Freiburg University. She came from the family of a high-ranking Prussian officer and belonged to the Lutheran faith. This undoubtedly had an important influence on Heidegger's progressive estrangement from Catholic circles. They were married on 21 March 1917 in the university chapel of the Cathedral of Our Lady in Freiburg. Two sons were born to the couple, in 1919 and 1920.

During the winter of 1917/18, the relationship between Heidegger and Husserl improved. They began to discuss philosophy on an informal, personal basis. Heidegger's thinking began to undergo a fundamental change under the influence of Husserl, which culminated in his decision to abandon the faith of his birth. He did, however, remain within the tradition of Christianity, but felt that he could no longer remain within the system of Catholicism. Protestant thinkers, most notably

Schleiermacher, had opened up new perspectives for him. In 1920, Husserl succeeded in obtaining a regular teaching post for Heidegger as an *Assistent*, until 1923 when Heidegger departed for Marburg, where he had finally succeeded in attaining a professorship. Husserl played a role here too, in his strong recommendation of Heidegger for this position.

Heidegger never felt at home in Marburg, and was drawn to his mountain cabin which his wife had had built for him in Todtnauberg<sup>18</sup> at every possible opportunity. It was here that *Being and Time* was written. Heidegger found an excellent discussion partner in the person of Rudolf Bultmann during this time, and was also corresponding with Karl Jaspers. *Being and Time* appeared in the spring of 1927. Heidegger was appointed to a permanent chair at Marburg in October 1927, but it was only a matter of weeks before planning had begun in Freiburg, once again at Husserl's instigation, to offer him the chair there.

Heidegger's relationship with Husserl, the 'father of phenomenology', is a complex one. In the early stages of their acquaintance, Heidegger felt that Husserl was prejudiced against him, and failed to appreciate his true merits. Yet, even though their relationship was not particularly close to begin with, after 1918 their correspondence increased to a great extent, and Heidegger found himself turning to a greater extent to Husserl. As has been previously mentioned, it was Husserl who wrote a glowing testimonial for Heidegger in order to secure a professional post in philosophy at Marburg, as well as his efforts that aided Heidegger in attaining the post at Freiburg.

Despite the close friendship that developed between mentor and student, this relationship deteriorated to such an extent that Heidegger would later make a statement regarding his conduct towards Husserl to the chairman of the denazification commission:

The allegation that as rector I banned Husserl from the University and the library is a particularly vile calumny. I never ceased to look upon Husserl with gratitude and respect as my teacher and mentor. It is true that my philosophical studies moved away from his position in many respects, with the result that Husserl himself attacked me publicly in 1931 in his great speech in the Berlin Sportpalast. So the ties of friendship had begun to slacken long before 1933. When the first law against the Jews was passed in 1933, which deeply shocked both me and many others who

were favourably disposed towards the National Socialist movement, my wife sent a bouquet of flowers to Frau Husserl, together with a letter – in both our names – that expressed our undiminished respect and gratitude, and condemned the harsh measures against the Jews. When a later edition of *Being and Time* was in preparation, my publisher wrote to tell me that it could only be published if the formal dedication to Husserl was dropped. I agreed to this, on condition that the substantive dedication to Husserl on page 38 of the text was retained – which is what happened. When Husserl died I was ill in bed. When I recovered, however, I did not write to Frau Husserl; and in that I was undoubtedly remiss. The reason for this omission was the bitter sense of shame I felt about what was now being done to the Jews – far beyond the scope of that first law – and which one was powerless to prevent.<sup>19</sup>

Husserl, who took Heidegger under his wing in a fatherly fashion, was devastated by the increasing distance Heidegger put between them, especially after Heidegger was appointed as Rector of Freiburg. He writes:

Before this he broke off all relations with me (and very soon after his appointment) and in recent years has allowed his anti-Semitism to come increasingly to the fore, even in his dealings with his group of devoted Jewish students and his Faculty colleagues. That was hard to swallow. What was also hard to take was the way Heidegger and the other proponents of 'Eksistenz' philosophy – largely derived from caricatured versions of the ideas contained in my writings, lectures and personal teachings – twisted the radical scientific purport of my life's work into its very opposite, damming that work by praising it fulsomely as something that had been entirely superseded, something that was quite unnecessary to study any more...But the events of the past few weeks and months have struck at the deepest roots of my existence.<sup>20</sup>

Husserl's mention of Heidegger's 'anti-Semitism' in the above quotation, points us towards an investigation of Heidegger's involvement with National Socialism.

## 1.4 Heidegger and National Socialism

Heidegger's life is indelibly marked by his involvement with National Socialism, which he vigorously supported while serving a year as rector of Freiburg University, beginning in 1933. The ambivalence that seems to lie at the heart of Heidegger's life and work has triggered many heated writings, which, 'whatever the motivations on either side, the resulting debate has proven intense and generally less illuminating than one might wish.'<sup>21</sup>

The questions that I consider regarding this topic are: How are we to reconcile the man and the works? Is it possible to separate Martin Heidegger, the philosopher, from Martin Heidegger, the man of political action? If so, how and to what extent? Is the 'Heidegger affair', in the end, a philosophically worthwhile topic to pursue?

According to what has been called the 'official story'<sup>22</sup>; Heidegger's involvement with National Socialism was a short-lived and hesitant response to the demands of the times in which he lived. Heidegger realised that Hitler's movement contained intolerable elements, but believed that these could be neutralised once a new political order had been established. He saw it to be vital that the German universities be reformed in order to play a revitalising role in the cultural life of the community as a whole. Heidegger also believed in the importance of protecting the university from political control by the Nazi state. He later claimed that he was obliged to take on the position of rector to protect the university from external control.<sup>23</sup> Thus, Heidegger accepted the unanimous vote of his colleagues and became the Rector of Freiburg University in 1933. He later wrote: 'With regard to 1933, I looked to National Socialism to bring a complete spiritual renewal of life, the healing of social differences and the salvation of Western culture from the dangers of communism.'<sup>24</sup>

Heidegger's belief in the Führer's skilful ability to instantiate the people's historical destiny did not, however, last much beyond the rectorate. He resigned the rectorate in 1934, less than a year after assuming the position. Apparently, during his time as rector, Heidegger aimed to protect Jewish and anti-Nazi faculty members from oppression by the new regime. It seemed that his acceptance of this role at the university within the Nazi regime was an manifestation of his hope to 'lead the leader' - '*den Führer führen*', as Otto Pöggeler has put it.

Heidegger was later prevented from publishing, his lectures were shut down by the Gestapo, he was forbidden to travel abroad, and, in 1944, he was sent to work on the Rhine dykes as one of the university's most 'expendable' professors.

During the past decade, this 'official story' has been exposed as sometimes untrue, and as sometimes only a small part of the 'truth'. Due to the investigative work of scholars like Hugo Ott, we now know, for example, that Heidegger actually manoeuvred beforehand to acquire the post as Rector, and that the election was not unanimous, since Jewish professors were no longer allowed to vote. As Rector, Heidegger produced a large number of speeches and newspaper articles in support of the Nazi cause<sup>25</sup>, which many commentators, after a correlation of the early Heideggerian philosophy with the political speeches of the 1930s, believe leave no doubt that Heidegger himself viewed his National Socialist activities as a concrete illustration of authentic existence. I will discuss this issue in more detail presently.

Heidegger also used his power as Rector in attempts to destroy the academic careers of colleagues of whom he disapproved (Herman Staudinger is the oft-quoted example). Heidegger was never forbidden to travel abroad, and in spite of his claim to have become an opponent of the regime in 1934, he remained a member of the party until 1945, and appeared in Rome in 1936 wearing a swastika in his lapel.

#### **1.4.1 Heidegger's Silence**

The controversy surrounding this period has been heightened by Heidegger's post-war reluctance to express remorse for his involvement with Nazism. Admitting only that his allegiance to Nazism constituted the greatest 'stupidity' of his life, Heidegger showed only remorse for an intellectual miscalculation and not for a moral or political transgression.

Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe<sup>26</sup> has concluded that the 'crime' of Heidegger's politics rests not so much in Heidegger's embrace of National Socialism as rector of Freiburg, as in his silence on the extermination of the Jews. Jean-François Lyotard too refuses in any way to excuse Heidegger's 'leaden' silence, because what it forecludes is for him immemorial and thus essential to all thinking<sup>27</sup>.

Lyotard's reading of Heidegger is decisive, provocative and at times angry and harsh. He clearly wants thought to have nothing more to do

with what in Heidegger makes possible or authorises a geopolitics, a geolinguistics, or a geophilosophy, whether it be Greco-Germanic or Eurocentric in form. He wants thought to move beyond and outside a philosophy that repeatedly turns back to the question of Being and its languages and traditions and turns short on questions that in Lévinas's terms are 'otherwise than being'.<sup>28</sup>

Heidegger's silence was not, however, total. In the Club of Bremen lectures in 1949, he twice announced the equivalence of the extermination camps and the motorised food industry, the blockades of East Germany and the starvation of millions of people in China. The result of these comparisons was to diminish the significance of the Nazi atrocities. Heidegger was trying to say that fascism was really indistinguishable from modern democracy. Although Heidegger's comparisons do have some merit, since Nazism and his examples are all cases in which technological mastery overwhelms the relations that human beings might establish with the earth and each other, there is an important difference: one which comes down to intentions - between the pitiless, genocidal intentions of the Nazis and the negligent, profit-lusting intentions of the motorised food industry. Otto Pöggeler and others find Heidegger's comparison deeply disturbing because of the fact that Heidegger mourned the death of those German soldiers 'sacrificed before their time through two world wars', yet could not bring himself to utter a word of regret concerning the millions who died in the Nazi concentration camps.<sup>29</sup>

Even at his hearing before the Verification Commission, Heidegger's statement was unrepentant:

The *apologia pro vita sua*, running to almost six single-spaced pages, is a masterpiece. By presenting himself as a victim, Heidegger included himself among the countless millions the Nazis had destroyed. He was always attuned to the mood of his people: when he joined the ranks of the Nazis and when he passed himself off as a victim – of the Nazis *and* the Allies. In each case he emerged triumphant, unrepentant, unyielding, unremorseful. He did not recant, he did not retract, nor did he ever publicly (or privately, as to Hannah Arendt or Karl Jaspers) condemn Nazi atrocities.<sup>30</sup>

Emmanuel Levinas observes:



Does not this silence, even in peace-time, about the gas chambers and the death camps – something beyond the realm of ‘bad excuses’ – attest to a soul that is in its depths impervious to compassion, is it not a tacit approval of the horrifying.<sup>31</sup>

We know that Heidegger dissociated himself throughout his involvement with the National Socialist movement from the racist and biologist line, which became dominant at the time. For this reason, Gadamer and Harries readily accept that Heidegger understood himself to have no involvement in the persecution of the Jews, and so experienced no moral responsibility to say anything in this regard. Yet, Heidegger’s rejection of the Nazi’s biologically based racism has been downplayed because of his belief that Nazism would foster a national revival. According to Lacoue-Labarthe, for Heidegger, ‘...it was worth putting up with a little bit of racism to see the movement victorious: anti-Semitism was simply regarded as an incidental cost.’<sup>32</sup> Lacoue-Labarthe notes that on the basis of this ‘compromise’ alone, Heidegger should have felt himself obliged to say something to the Jews.

#### **1.4.2 Heidegger the Nazi vs. Heidegger the philosopher**

If we accept the preceding, we must then ask, to what extent is Heidegger’s philosophy implicated in his ignominious life-choice of the early 1930s? Must we conclude that:

This theory of the ‘two Heideggers’ - the good philosopher and the bad politician - no longer seems tenable or adequate in the light of a contemporary sense of the entwinement of thinking and action and of knowledge and power.<sup>33</sup>

Heidegger’s political involvement raises troubling questions about the connection between his philosophical thought and his political commitment. We can agree that Heidegger was far from being a ‘Nazi philosopher’, but it is very difficult to make a clear distinction and separation between his philosophical and political beliefs.

The debate of the ‘two Heideggers’ has so far been conducted in a divisive spirit, with Heidegger’s critics using the historical record to tear at the fabric of his philosophy,

and his defenders attempting to shield his philosophy from his 'unfortunate political engagement'.

Can we justify rereading Heidegger's philosophical texts in light of his political beliefs, as Thomas Sheehan admonishes us to do? Do such interpretive practices not risk attributing to Heidegger's philosophy a political content that only becomes clear later? Is there not a risk that we would judge the contributions of a great thinker exclusively on the basis of political motifs that are, strictly speaking, 'extrinsic to thought'?

It is true that to reject Heidegger's philosophy in its entirety as a result of his political choices would indeed be an act of bad faith, but we must take into account the evidence that Heidegger himself viewed his political commitments of the early 1930s as complementary to his philosophy, that he considered his engagement with National Socialism as a kind of political actualisation of the 'existentials' of *Being and Time*. In Heidegger's opinion, his 'existential decision' for National Socialism in 1933 signified a decision for authenticity. In the 1936 conversation with Karl Löwith, Heidegger agrees without reservation that 'his partisanship for National Socialism lay in the essence of his philosophy.'<sup>34</sup> Löwith's meditations on the philosophical bases of Heidegger's politics<sup>35</sup> has inspired rebuttals by Eric Weil and Alphons de Waelens, with both contending that Heidegger's Nazism had nothing to do with his philosophy.

From the mid-1930s Heidegger progressively more distanced himself from the realities of Nazism as a contemporary political movement. In his view, the 'inner truth and greatness' of its historical potential was perverted by usurpers and pretenders. This criticism of the movement notwithstanding, Heidegger continued to maintain his earlier conviction that the dawn of the movement itself contained the seeds of true greatness. Even after the German collapse of 1945, he continued to insist that if only the right pressures had been brought to bear on the movement in its early stages, everything might have turned out for the better.<sup>36</sup>

Contemporary interest in Heidegger's association with Nazism was perhaps spurred on by the publication of Victor Farías's *Heidegger and Nazism* in 1987. Farías attempts to substantiate the rootedness of Heidegger's thought in Nazism using a twofold strategy. Firstly, he expounds upon Heidegger's dealings with the Nazi regime. Secondly, he argues that long before the Nazis came into power, Heidegger had exhibited a long-standing philosophic relation to fascist ideology. Farías' book, oft referred to as a 'bombshell' or a 'literary sensation', is, however, regarded by many

scholars as containing many errors and fallacies. In the words of Richard Wolin, 'The book is profoundly unjust and I even consider it - and I am weighing my words carefully here - dishonest.'<sup>37</sup> The strategy of unnuanced, wholesale condemnation leaves Fariás vulnerable to attacks from the Heideggerian faithful, who have been able to use the prejudicial character of his inquiry as a clever way of de-legitimizing his efforts.

Yet, despite the fact that Fariás' book has been largely discredited, there are others who agree that Heidegger's philosophy can be proven to be related to fascist ideology. Theodor Adorno, for example, claims that Heidegger's philosophy was fascist to the core<sup>38</sup> and Richard Wolin asserts that Heidegger's involvement with National Socialism was 'rooted in the innermost tendencies of his thought.'<sup>39</sup>

On the other hand, Jean-François Lyotard claims that the deduction of Heidegger's Nazism from *Being and Time* is impossible. However, he notes that the claim that the work is apolitical is equally absurd, given the project that is associated with Dasein. He says:

It is difficult to attribute an apolitical quality to a work like *Sein und Zeit*, of which the entire second section is devoted to the *power* that *Dasein*, and notably that destiny called *Volk*, has to escape from inauthenticity and to open itself to the future-as-coming-toward of its fate by giving (delivering) to itself the knowledge of its "having-been" - what is called *historicality*.<sup>40</sup>

In the end, Lyotard feels that in attempting to deduce Heidegger's Nazism from the text of *Sein und Zeit*, one succumbs to as sinister an antic as the 'investigations' at the Moscow trials.

Some commentators, like Karsten Harries<sup>41</sup>, feel that Heidegger's own notion of authenticity makes the separation of his politics from his philosophy impossible. Indeed, authenticity does require a holistic self-understanding and self-accounting which demands the integration of one's philosophic and political insights. Yet, the nature of authenticity is such that this integration will always remain plagued by uncertainty.

Two of the leading French Heideggerians, Jacques Derrida and Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe have been at the head of the debate concerning the impact of the Farías controversy on Heidegger's philosophy. I believe that their contributions are significant, since both have been willing to confront Heidegger's troubling biography directly, and so will discuss them in some detail.

In his book, *De l'esprit: Heidegger et la question (Of Spirit: Heidegger and the Question)*, Derrida attempts to overturn and reinscribe an inherited binary opposition – the binary opposition between Nazism and non-Nazism. This foundational deconstructive gesture ends up threatening to efface many of the essential differences between Nazism and non-Nazism. As a result, the specificity and the extent of Heidegger's commitment to National Socialism is severely relativised. Derrida criticises Heidegger's discourse for its logocentric fixation on 'spirit'. His strategy is to show that Heidegger's enthusiasm for Nazism is predicated on a discourse on spirit that Heidegger shares with many other contemporary European intellectuals. Heidegger's commitment to National Socialism is, according to Derrida, predicated on a metaphysical and voluntarist frame of reference. It is a part of the discourse of Western metaphysics and its logocentric reign.

Contrary to Derrida, Wolin asserts that it was not a combination of metaphysics and voluntarism that seduced the 'sage of Freiburg' into wearing the Nazi insignia and a brown uniform in 1933, but rather the reverse: insofar as Heidegger remained committed to the discourse on humanism and the heritage of Western philosophy, he was prevented from identifying wholesale with Nazi ideology as it was historically constituted – as a discourse of biology and race.

It was that very discourse on spirit, therefore, that allowed him to preserve an element of philosophical autonomy vis-à-vis the brutish apostles of racial-biological thinking with whom he had entered into a temporary, ill-fated, ignominious alliance.<sup>42</sup>

Derrida argues that the frequent allusions to 'spirit' in the political speeches of 1933 indicate a sharp departure from *Being and Time*, where this category is systematically criticized. In Derrida's view, the utilisation of this outmoded philosophical rhetoric is by definition discontinuous with the philosophy of *Being and Time*.

I believe that Baudrillard is mistaken in relegating the 'Heidegger affair' to the realm of the insignificant, the futile, a feeble convulsive reaction. I agree to an extent with his thesis that today there is the tendency to scrutinise past events, to the detriment of imaginative discourse, but I think that an attempt to understand the past is a necessary part of the evolution of ideas. If we do not look to the past, how can we ever develop on those ideas and avoid the 'errors' that were made in the past? If we cannot know our history, are we not forever condemned to repeating it?

What I do find significant in Baudrillard's article is his mention of the 'media-led' character of the reconstruction of these past events. It is often said that today we live in the 'Information Age' where, by means of the Internet, satellite television, increased mobility of people due to transportation technology, and so on, human being's ability to access information has been greatly facilitated. There is an interesting paradox that emerges here - even though our technologies are designed to speed up and aid the transmission of information, today we have become so mired in the vast amount of information that is available to us, it seems that we know very little indeed.

According to Baudrillard, we are living in the era of the 'code'. The code is the binary code of computer technology: the DNA code in biology, or the digital code in television and in sound recording, as it is the code in information technology. The era of the code supersedes the era of the sign. This means that the natural object has become no longer credible, and the code has raised simulation to an unprecedented importance in social life. Baudrillard notes that the era of the code begins to permeate the whole of the social fabric and one of the symptoms of this is that opposites begin to collapse and 'everything becomes undecidable': the beautiful and the ugly in fashion, the left and the right in politics, the true and the false in the media - all these become interchangeable in the era of reproduction and simulation.

Much of what Baudrillard has written has raised heated debate - no more so when he wrote articles in the French daily newspaper *Libération*, apparently claiming that the 1991 Gulf War did not take place. The debate is often unproductive because people are talking past one another - Baudrillard starting from his position in relation to the implications of the code and developments in modern science and technology, and his opponents often from the humanist position of nineteenth century science. What Baudrillard does is demonstrate the very real costs of changes in symbolic and material forms, and this is crucial in a world increasingly dominated by media hype and obfuscation.

It is true that we are no longer part of the same 'mental universe' as the people involved in the Holocaust (or any other historical event, for that matter), and that we are living in a time when the clear distinction between opposites has collapsed, but does this necessarily make issues completely unintelligible? I think not. Of course, to gain access to these events, we are necessarily working from a particular perspective, one of situatedness in the present, and this will necessarily have an effect upon our understanding of those events, but I do not think that this should result in an abandonment of the attempt to understand the past. In line with Gadamer, I think that we necessarily begin with a pre-understanding of a certain matter, in order to gain an understanding of it (the hermeneutical circle). We cannot relegate our history to the realm of the insignificant, merely because we weren't there. In other words, I do think that raising the question of Heidegger's involvement with National Socialism is justified because in our attempt to understand the past, we are attempting to understand our time and ourselves a little better. Given Heidegger's actions, and his own belief that those actions followed from his philosophy, there is no way to subscribe to his philosophy without reflecting upon its moral and political implications.

In treating Heidegger as a product of his times, we do run the risk of trivialising his thought by reducing it to its socio-historical causes or explaining away his actions as 'what everyone did.' Certainly, everyone did not do what he did in the thirties. Sluga, however, reminds us that Heidegger was by no means the only German philosopher who allied himself to the Nazis.<sup>45</sup>

Hugo Ott's claims that '...the time has not come yet, I think, to pass final judgement on these matters. Only when everything that Heidegger wrote in those crucial years has finally been published will we be in a position to draw valid conclusions.'<sup>46</sup> Derrida too concludes that he prefers waiting, let us say, for another moment, before speaking about Heidegger's silence. This is one of the main differences in approach between Derrida and Lyotard, since Lyotard (like Lacoue-Labarthe) believes that the moment to address the issue directly cannot be deferred any longer. He says:

There is a pressing need to think the Heidegger affair. There are several states of urgency, and thus the affair is not the exclusive province of the political or of politics. There is an urgency of thought.<sup>47</sup>

Hans Sluga perhaps gives us a hint of how perhaps to broach this issue:

Partisan bickering, anxious moralising, strenuous interpretation of texts and doubtful assumptions about the necessary unity of thought and person are of no use in this discussion. What is needed is a readiness to weigh the historical facts in a dispassionate manner, to bracket the tendency to pass judgement, to look not for hidden meanings but for manifest relations and structures, to acknowledge the possibility of fissures, boundaries, and disconnections in human living and thinking as well as distinctive linkages and relations.<sup>48</sup>

Although there is no way to sweep the moral uncertainties that are raised by Heidegger's thought under the carpet, there is also no way to deny the massive impact his writings have had on philosophers that have followed in the lines of questioning that were opened up in his works. There are no straightforward political ramifications to a philosophy like his. We do a great disservice to philosophy and ourselves, if our horror for the Heidegger of National Socialism prevents us from exploring the full dimensions of his work.

Read Heidegger no more, or maintain faith in and admiration for him? Such options are false. The most rigorous interpreters have gone beyond them. The issue is rather to propose a reading of Heidegger from the perspective of the political question, which would bring the lancet onto the most sensitive points – those where truth and error, errancy and perhaps a certain greatness are at play.<sup>49</sup>

What does all this mean for the reader of Heidegger's work? It would be shortsighted to insist that as a result of Heidegger's engagement on behalf of the Nazi regime that he should lose his standing as one of the most important contributors to Western philosophy. But, Heidegger's allegiance to the Nazis does always already force us to read his work *differently* - differently from the way in which we would read Heidegger's work if we had no inkling of his involvement with National Socialism.

After the war, Heidegger was banned from teaching at universities until 1951. During the 1950's and 1960's, Heidegger published much, especially on technology and language. He spent most of his time at Freiburg, Messkirch or at his cabin in

Todtnauberg during these years. Heidegger died at his home in Freiburg on 26 May 1976.

#### 1.4.4 Philosophy and Politics

A discussion of the Heidegger 'affair' necessarily raises questions about the relation between philosophy and politics. Since Greek times, this connection has always been complex and precarious.

Philosophy cannot be said to be independent of politics, since, like all other disciplines, it is necessarily located within a political field. Politics determines, for example, which texts will be read in schools. In post-Apartheid South Africa, it is particularly interesting to observe that the 'rewriting' of set work history textbooks for scholars has become an urgent enterprise. It can also be said that politics affects philosophical thinking, since public opinion, manipulated by political forces affect the philosophical discourse both directly and indirectly. It is for this reason that authors like Hans Sluga<sup>50</sup> assert that it is crucial to investigate German philosophy in the 1930s in its political context, since we will not understand what philosophers said about politics unless we investigate how their ideas were shaped by the political conditions in which they arose.

Yet, despite the intimate connections that have been presupposed between philosophy and politics by many authors, Hannah Arendt has pointed out the gulf separating philosophy and politics.<sup>51</sup> She claims that this separation was due to the death of Socrates at the hands of his fellow Athenians. In Arendt's view, the relation of politics and philosophy was intimate for Socrates, but that Plato steered philosophy away from politics as a result of his disillusionment over the death of Socrates. For Plato, according to Arendt, if politics were to be a concern for the philosopher in any way, it would have to be measured by absolute philosophical standards. Arendt believed that she saw the same apolitical condition in Heidegger, and that because of their separation from the actual world of men, both Plato and Heidegger proved vulnerable when they turned back to politics.<sup>52</sup>

The relation between politics and philosophy cannot be described by means of any grand scheme which purports to be valid for all time, since that relation is intrinsically historical and can only be understood in its narrative uniqueness. The relation between philosophy and politics is fluid and unstable over time.



## 1.5 Overview

In this chapter, I have given a summary of the basic research questions to be addressed in this study. I then proceeded to give a brief exposition on Heidegger's biography, in order to introduce the issue of his allegiance to National Socialism. My aim in this section was neither to defend nor indict Heidegger, but rather to provide a brief overview of the polemic that has arisen as a result of this allegiance. I pointed out that on the basis of the 'Heidegger affair' we would always read Heidegger's works differently to the way we would read them had he had no involvement with National Socialism.

Chapter 2 of this study is devoted to a brief summary of the main insights of *Being and Time*, in order to prepare the way for an examination of the themes of technology, truth and language. In this context, I discuss Heidegger's conception of man as Dasein, as well as what he means by Being. Chapter 3 is an elucidation of Heidegger's thought on truth, tracing the development of Heidegger's thinking of this concept using various texts including *Being and Time*. Chapter 4 deals with Heidegger's ideas on language and Chapter 5 examines his views on technology. In each of these chapters, I will aim to show the development of Heidegger's thought through *Being and Time* into his 'later' works, in order to support my contention that his early and later works display a remarkable unity. I reserve Chapter 6 for a critical appreciation of the ideas expounded upon in the preceding chapters on technology, truth and language.

- <sup>1</sup> F. Hölderlin. Rhine Hymn in *Selected poems / Friedrich Holderlin*, E. Morike (trans.) (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1972).
- <sup>2</sup> D.F. Krell, *Intimations of Mortality: Time, Truth and Finitude in Heidegger's Thinking of Being* (Pennsylvania, Pennsylvania State University Press, 1986), p. 105.
- <sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 98.
- <sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>5</sup> M. Heidegger, *The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking in Basic Writings: Martin Heidegger. Revised and Expanded Edition*. D. F. Krell (ed.) (London, Routledge, 1993), p. 431.
- <sup>6</sup> R. Waterhouse, *A Heidegger Critique: A Critical Examination of the Existential Phenomenology of Martin Heidegger* (New Jersey, Humanities Press, 1981).
- <sup>7</sup> M. Heidegger, preface to *Heidegger: Through Phenomenology to Thought* by W. Richardson (The Hague, Martinus Nijhoff, 1963), p. xxii.
- <sup>8</sup> J. Sallis, Towards the Movement of Reversal: Science, Technology and the Language of Homecoming in J. Sallis (ed.), *Heidegger and the Path of Thinking* (Pittsburgh, Duquesne University Press, 1970), p. 139.
- <sup>9</sup> H. Dreyfus, Heidegger's History of the Being of Equipment in H. Dreyfus & H. Hall (eds), *Heidegger: A Critical Reader* (Cambridge, Blackwell Publishers, 1992), p. 173.
- <sup>10</sup> *Op. cit.* p. 182.
- <sup>11</sup> W.B. Macomber, *The Anatomy of Disillusion: Martin Heidegger's Notion of Truth* (Evanston, Northwestern University Press, 1967), p. 8.
- <sup>12</sup> F.A. Olafson, The Unity of Heidegger's Thought in C.B. Guignon (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 98.
- <sup>13</sup> Olafson illustrates his claim using the example of language in Heidegger's thought. I will return to this idea in Chapter 4.
- <sup>14</sup> G.F. Sefer, *Language and the World: A Methodological Synthesis within the Writings of Martin Heidegger and Ludwig Wittgenstein* (Atlantic Highlands, N.J., Humanities Press, 1974), p. 132
- <sup>15</sup> This concise summary of Heidegger's life is based on information contained in H. Ott, *Martin Heidegger: A Political Life* (London, Fontana Press, 1994).
- <sup>16</sup> M. Heidegger, A Dialogue on Language in *On the Way to Language* P. D. Hertz (trans.) (London, Harper and Row, 1971), p. 10.
- <sup>17</sup> H. Ott, *Martin Heidegger: A Political Life* (London, Fontana Press, 1994), p. 74.
- <sup>18</sup> E. Ettinger, *Hannah Arendt / Martin Heidegger* (London, Yale University Press, 1995), p. 13.
- <sup>19</sup> H. Ott, *Martin Heidegger: A Political Life* (London, Fontana Press, 1994), p. 172.
- <sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 185.
- <sup>21</sup> H. Sluga, *Heidegger's Crisis: Philosophy and Politics in Nazi Germany* (Cambridge/Massachusetts, Harvard University Press, 1995), p. 5.
- <sup>22</sup> M. Zimmerman, The Thorn in Heidegger's side: The Question of National Socialism, *Philosophical Forum* 20(4), 1989, p. 326-365.
- <sup>23</sup> M. Heidegger. Only a god can save us: Der Spiegel's Interview with Martin Heidegger, *Philosophy Today* 20 (4/4), 1976, p. 268.
- <sup>24</sup> H. Ott, *Martin Heidegger: A Political Life* (London, Fontana Press, 1994), p. 138.
- <sup>25</sup> See for example: M. Heidegger, The Self-Assertion of the German University in R. Wolin (ed.), *The Heidegger Controversy: A Critical Reader* (Cambridge/Massachusetts, The MIT Press, 1993).
- <sup>26</sup> See P. Lacoue-Labarthe, *Heidegger, Art and Politics: The Fiction of the Political* (Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1990).
- <sup>27</sup> Lyotard's contribution to the debate is significant in that it establishes a paramount relationship between Heideggerian thought and 'the Jews'. In the history of the West, the Jews represent 'the other' – the dissimilar, which in its difference remains forever unassimilable to the prevailing *logos*.
- <sup>28</sup> D. Carroll in J. Lyotard, *Heidegger and 'the Jews'* (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1990), p. xxiv.
- <sup>29</sup> See O. Pöggeler, Heidegger's Political Self-understanding in R. Wolin (ed.), *The Heidegger Controversy: A Critical Reader* (Cambridge/ Massachusetts, The MIT Press, 1993).

- <sup>30</sup> E. Ettinger, *Hannah Arendt / Martin Heidegger* (London, Yale University Press, 1995), p. 64.
- <sup>31</sup> E. Levinas, As if consenting to horror, *Critical Enquiry* 15(2), 1989, p. 485-488.
- <sup>32</sup> P. Lacoue-Labarthe, *Heidegger, Art and Politics: The Fiction of the Political* (Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1990), p. 33.
- <sup>33</sup> F. Dallmayr, *The Other Heidegger* (London, Cornell University Press, 1993), p. 2.
- <sup>34</sup> K. Löwith, My Last Meeting with Heidegger in Rome, 1936 in R. Wolin (ed.), *The Heidegger Controversy: A Critical Reader* (Cambridge/Massachusetts, The MIT Press, 1993), p. 142.
- <sup>35</sup> K. Löwith, The Political Implications of Heidegger's Existentialism in R. Wolin (ed.), *The Heidegger Controversy: A Critical Reader* (Cambridge/Massachusetts, The MIT Press, 1993), p. 167-185.
- <sup>36</sup> O. Pöggeler, Den Führer führen? Heidegger und kein Ende, *Philosophische Rundschau* 32, 1985, p. 56.
- <sup>37</sup> R. Wolin (ed.), *The Heidegger Controversy: A Critical Reader* (Cambridge/Massachusetts, The MIT Press, 1993), p. 127.
- <sup>38</sup> R. Bernstein, *The New Constellation: The Ethical-Political Horizons of Modernity/Postmodernity* (Cambridge/Massachusetts, MIT Press, 1991), p. 81.
- <sup>39</sup> R. Wolin, as quoted in L.P. Thiele, *Timely Meditations: Martin Heidegger and Postmodern Politics* (New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1995), p. 140.
- <sup>40</sup> J-F Lyotard, *Heidegger and the 'Jews'* (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1990), p. 67.
- <sup>41</sup> K. Harries, Heidegger as a political thinker in M. Murray (ed.), *Heidegger and Modern Philosophy* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1978), p. 305.
- <sup>42</sup> R. Wolin (ed.), *The Heidegger Controversy: A Critical Reader* (Cambridge/Massachusetts, The MIT Press, 1993), p. xvii.
- <sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 288
- <sup>44</sup> J. Baudrillard, *The Transparency of Evil: Essays on Extreme Phenomena* (London, Verso 1993), p. 89.
- <sup>45</sup> H. Sluga, *Heidegger's Crisis: Philosophy and Politics in Nazi Germany* (Cambridge/Massachusetts, Harvard University Press, 1995), p. 7.
- <sup>46</sup> H. Ott, *Martin Heidegger: A Political Life* (London, Fontana Press, 1994), p. 293.
- <sup>47</sup> J-F Lyotard, *Heidegger and the 'Jews'* (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1990), p. 51.
- <sup>48</sup> H. Sluga, *Heidegger's Crisis: Philosophy and Politics in Nazi Germany* (Cambridge/Massachusetts, Harvard University Press, 1995), p. 6.
- <sup>49</sup> D. Janicaud, *The Shadow of That Thought: Heidegger and the Question of Politics* (Evanston, Northwestern University Press, 1996), p. 11.
- <sup>50</sup> H. Sluga, *Heidegger's Crisis: Philosophy and Politics in Nazi Germany* (Cambridge/Massachusetts, Harvard University Press, 1995), p. 246.
- <sup>51</sup> See H. Arendt, Philosophy and Politics, *Social Research* 57, 1990.
- <sup>52</sup> Despite the complex relationship between Heidegger and Arendt, she remained one of his most ardent 'goodwill ambassadors'. See E. Ettinger, *Hannah Arendt / Martin Heidegger* (London, Yale University Press, 1995) for a discussion of their relationship.

## CHAPTER 2: BEING AND DASEIN

*It is said that Being is the most universal and the emptiest concept<sup>1</sup>*

### 2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I analyse selected sections of the text of *Being and Time*<sup>2</sup> with a specific focus on gaining a thorough understanding of Heidegger's ideas on Being and human being. This chapter is then a preparation for a comprehensive conception of Heidegger's ideas on truth, language and technology. In this context, I introduce Heidegger's understanding of the distinction between Being and beings. I will address problems and criticisms that arise from Heidegger's analysis of human being and Being in Chapter 6.

### 2.2 *Being and Time*: An Overview

*Being and Time* (1927) is considered to be Heidegger's most significant work. It was supposed to have two major parts, each divided into three major subdivisions. The first part was intended to present an analytic of Dasein in the light of temporality, in order to show how time forms the horizon for the question of Being. In the second part, the destruction of the history of ontology was to be carried out and illustrated in respect to the question of temporality. The first part was planned in three divisions: (1) the preparatory fundamental analysis of Dasein; (2) Dasein and Temporality; (3) time and Being. The second part was intended to contain: (1) Kant's doctrine of schematism in the context of the problematic of temporality; (2) the ontological foundation of the *cogito sum* of Descartes and the taking over of medieval ontology within the problematic of *res cogitans*; (3) a discussion of Aristotle's treatise on time, in order to show the limits of ancient ontology.

In 1927, the work was published in an incomplete form. In its present form, the book contains only the first two major subdivisions of the first part. The portion containing the interpretation of Kant, which was meant to form part of the second division, was published separately in the volume *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*.

Heidegger's insight in *Being and Time* is that many of the problems in thinking, that are distinctive of philosophy, are due to a particular way of understanding the nature

of reality, a view that arose at the beginning of Western history and continues today. This traditional ontology is called the 'metaphysics of presence', because of its emphasis on the enduring presence of that which is ultimately real. In this view, that which is ultimately real is that which underlies properties – that which remains continuously present throughout all change. For Heidegger, this traditional ontology is apparent in Plato's notion of the Ideas, Aristotle's primary substances, the Christian creator, Descartes' *res extensa* and *res cogitans*, Kant's noumena and the physical stuff presupposed by scientific naturalism.<sup>3</sup>

Heidegger rejects the 'metaphysics of presence' by challenging the idea that reality must be thought of in terms of the idea of substance at all. He hopes to recover a more fundamental sense of things by setting aside the view of reality we get from theorising and rather focusing on the way things appear in the flux of our everyday, prereflective activities.

Heidegger's investigation in *Being and Time* starts with an enquiry into our own being, insofar we are the entities who have some understanding of Being, and he does so in order to lay the foundation for an enquiry into Being as such. The question of Being is therefore reformulated as a question about the conditions for the accessibility or intelligibility of things. In order to underline his rejection of the traditional ways of speaking about human being in terms of consciousness, Heidegger uses the term *Dasein* – literally translated as being-there – instead. The use of the term *Dasein* is meant to signify that Heidegger regards human being from a specific point of view – as a being who is distinguished by his relationship to Being<sup>4</sup>.

Heidegger tells us that there is no pure, external vantage point from which we can have a disinterested, presuppositionless angle on things. It is only because we are always already involved in a way of life, engaged with daily dealings with things in a known life-world, that we can have some understanding of what things are all about. It is our being as participants in a collective world that first allows us a way of seeing reality and ourselves<sup>5</sup>. Thus, Heidegger's existential analytic starts out from a description of our average-everydayness as agents in practical concerns. Insofar as past theorising pervades our commonsense outlook, especially the Cartesian ontology of modernity, Heidegger's fundamental ontology will entail a confrontation with the assumptions of common sense. This challenge to common sense is most apparent in Heidegger's description of *Dasein*. His description is in sharp opposition to that of Descartes<sup>6</sup>, who saw human being as a mind located in a material body.

Heidegger subverts this binary opposition, and instead describes human existence as a happening. Heidegger tells us that ‘... subject and object are not the same as Dasein and the world’.<sup>7</sup>

In *Being and Time*, Heidegger attempts to apply a ‘hermeneutic phenomenology’ to an analytic of man’s mode of being. Heidegger sees the main problem underlying philosophy’s main concern as the question about the meaning of Being. This question is to be dealt with in ontology; yet such an ontology is to be prepared by a fundamental ontology which must take the form of an ek-sistential analytic of man’s mode of being: being-in-the-world. From the outset, Heidegger makes it clear that what is to be understood as hermeneutic phenomenology in *Being and Time* is not the same as Husserl’s transcendental phenomenology<sup>8</sup>. Heidegger develops phenomenology in his own way, beyond the stage that it had been brought to by Husserl himself, although Heidegger sees in Husserl’s phenomenology the indispensable foundation for such further development. What is the relationship between Heidegger and Husserl’s conception of phenomenology in this regard? How does Heidegger develop Husserl’s phenomenology in a new direction?

### **2.3 Heidegger and Husserl**

Following Husserl, Heidegger aims to recall philosophy to its basics, alerting it to the danger of an era, which had lost its power to question deeply. In Heidegger’s philosophy, we encounter a fundamental critique of the foundations of Western metaphysical thinking that subverts the concept of the transcendental ego as completely as it does the traditional notion of Being as substance. In *Being and Time*, Heidegger reworks Husserl’s ‘unphenomenological phenomenology’<sup>9</sup> and points phenomenology in a new ‘existentialist’ direction.

For Heidegger, phenomenology (*lesein ta phainomena*: to let what shows itself be seen from itself) is that method by means of which we let that which of its own accord manifests itself, reveal itself as it is<sup>10</sup>. Thus, Heidegger revises Husserl’s phenomenological method so that it might properly respond to the question of Being. He ‘reopens the brackets’ (Husserl’s phenomenological epochē) to let existence back in. Existence is to be understood as neither mere subjectivity nor objectivity, but as an essential openness to the Being of beings.

Husserlian phenomenology operates largely at the level of epistemology. Husserl believed that this required a suspension of the ontological question of Being, in order to focus on the workings of consciousness<sup>11</sup>. Heidegger now shifts the emphasis from the meaning of consciousness to the meaning of Being. He accepts the conviction of phenomenology that an analysis of the essential structures of meaning requires a movement beyond subject-object dualism, leading us back to our originary experience of the world, that is, to the 'things themselves'. Whereas Husserl identified this originary experience as a consciousness-of-the-world, Heidegger interprets it as a being-in-the-world. Husserl's epistemological question 'What does it mean to know?' is transformed into the question 'What does it mean to be?' in Heidegger's conception<sup>12</sup>.

## 2.4 The Question of Being

Heidegger proposes to recover the original question of Being, which founded Greek metaphysics, and by extension, Western culture as a whole. The search for a fundamental ontology is not easy because, according to Heidegger, the entire history of metaphysics, from Plato to Kant has developed in forgetfulness of its own original questioning<sup>13</sup>. This forgetfulness is most evident in the modern age.

Man's primordial experience of Being, in terms of his temporal being-in-the-world has been obscured in elaborate metaphysical systems. As a result, for us today the question of Being has become the emptiest of all questions. Metaphysics has replaced our temporally and existentially lived experience of Being (*Sein*), with objectified abstractions of timeless beings (*Seiendes*). Most important of these is 'On', the most generalised abstraction of Being, and 'Theon', the most elevated abstraction of Being. Metaphysics has thus become, according to Heidegger, an onto-theology that ignores the originally phenomenological character of our existence as being-in-the-world<sup>14</sup>. Onto-theology favours a divisive dualism of subject and object, expressing itself either as idealism (being as a worldless subject), or as realism (being as a subjectless world). The original ontological difference between *Sein* and *Seiende* is forgotten.

The ontological difference can be thought of metaphysically as well as phenomenologically. In metaphysics, the 'Being of beings is thought of in advance as the grounding ground'<sup>15</sup>. On the other hand, phenomenologically, the difference between Being and beings appears as the preservation of both in a process of

unconcealment that keeps in concealment.<sup>16</sup> To think of the ontological difference in a metaphysical context precludes any historical perspective. To step back from metaphysical constructions to their phenomenological destruction allows us to think of the ontological difference in its historical process (*Austrag*). Phenomenologically, it is impossible to represent Being as the general characteristic of particular things. Being is given a thoroughly historic character. 'Physis, Logos, Hen, Idea, Energeia, Substantiality, Objectivity, Subjectivity, the Will, the Will to Power, the Will to Will'<sup>17</sup> and Technology are names for a mode of self-disclosure of Being by which it shows and hides itself at the same time.

Heidegger champions phenomenology as a means of recovering the fundamental question of Being - 'Why is there something rather than nothing?' This question restores a sense of wonder that things should be at all rather than not be. Heidegger proclaims the necessity of reviving this question by 'deconstructing' Western metaphysics and thereby 'retrieving' the original experience of Being. What exactly does Heidegger mean when he speaks of Being?

At first glance, it seems that the question of Being is a question regarding an abstruse philosophical concept, but, in fact, this question is one that, in the ordinary course of events, concerns every human being. It does matter to us whether a thing or a state of affairs is or is not. The word 'being' serves in one of its uses as a designation for ourselves as human being, and can be used to refer to other sorts of realities as well. Being is, however, most characteristically, thought of as a property belonging (or not belonging) to something, in other words, as a condition possessed by it.

This understanding of Being serves only as a point of departure from which we can begin to understand Heidegger's concept of Being, since his conception of it is radical and unique. To speak the word 'Being' in the manner of the preceding paragraphs is misleading for Heidegger. For him, 'Unlike beings, Being cannot be represented or brought forth in the manner of an object. As that which is altogether other than all beings, Being is that which is not.'<sup>18</sup> Being should not be seen as an abstraction that belongs to the sphere of philosophical thinking, since for Heidegger, it is '...nearer to man than every being, be it a rock, a beast, a work of art, a machine, be it an angel or God.'<sup>19</sup> Being is in no sense an entity beside all the entities that human beings know. It is utterly unique. We can at best say that in Heidegger's conception, Being is a pure Happening that reveals itself immediately in everything that in any way is – 'Appearing is the very essence of being'<sup>20</sup>.



In order to speak of the Being of what-is in a manner that evinces its immediacy, Heidegger uses the word *anwesen* – presencing.<sup>21</sup> In Heidegger's view, anything that is truly present encounters us powerfully precisely from within itself. Anything that presences has its own 'in-itselfness', which we cannot penetrate. Whatever presences, remains inviolable in its centeredness. Thus, Heidegger explains that the Being of what-is is self-maintaining self-concealing, as well as self-maintaining self-revealing. This is necessarily so, since a pure self-concealing could not maintain itself.

Being is the pure Happening that meets human being in whatever is. But Being and what-is are not two separate 'somethings' that are externally related to one another – '...Being is not a thing...'<sup>22</sup>. Also, Being should not be thought of as the 'ground' of what is, since this kind of thinking only remains caught up in the sphere of the what-is.

As I have mentioned, Heidegger differentiates between Being and what-is by identifying what he calls the 'ontological difference'. 'The ontological difference is the 'not' between beings and Being.'<sup>23</sup> Recognition of this difference is obligatory for the safeguarding of the uniqueness of Being, as well as for the understanding of the interrelation between Being and what-is.

For Heidegger, Being and beings are related to each other as a Twofold (*Zwiefalt*). 'What-is' does not mean any particular entity or being, or even the mere sum of intrinsically separate entities. Rather, what-is is a unitary manifold of particulars, within whose totality every entity belongs as a participant in what is a single, intricate happening.

The pure Happening that Heidegger calls Being is intricately nuanced in its bringing of itself to pass. It is a self-concealing that opens itself and comes to self-manifestation as the being of what-is. Being and what-is happen separately from each other, precisely in their happening toward one another in coming upon and arriving. As the uniting-separating same that in holding apart achieves this happening toward, pure Happening is, with respect to both Being and what-is in their happening, thus distinctively a 'Difference that transpires as an accomplishing carrying out that at once reveals, in preservingly harbouring forth, and preserves, in harbouring protectingly.'<sup>24</sup> In that carrying out, there rules a clearing – a light permitting opening

(*Lichtung*) as which the happening that is intrinsically self-closing brings itself to pass unconcealingly. This self-opening permits the Two-fold unitary happening as which Being and what-is come reciprocally to pass as one. Via it, pure self-closing Happening brings into play its own self-differentiating self-relating.

At the same time, that happening as Difference likewise permits pure happening to manifest and maintain itself in happening as the manifold which the Twofold of Being and what-is brings itself to light; for the differentiating thus brought into play ever ramifies throughout the happening forth of the Two-fold.

Disclosure of what-is is the disclosure of what-is in its particularity. Precisely there the differentiating that permits disclosure at all fulfils itself in the distinctiveness that we ever find to pertain to whatever is.

In *Identity and Difference*<sup>25</sup>, Heidegger uses the word *anwähren* to describe the Happening in terms of the enduring quality of the Happening of Being. As this enduring, being, accomplishing pure Happening, comes initiatingly upon what-is, allowing the latter to present itself as unconcealed. This enduring is nothing other than pure Happening as the latter brings itself to bear as presencing (*Anwesen*). The being of what-is is the enduring - the constituting enduring - of what endures, an enduring that is inherently directed towards man. The word enduring suggests to us 'time' more than 'being', and thus Heidegger's thinking on Being immediately opens up his thinking on time, since for him, the two are intrinsically related.

For Heidegger, time is not a sequence of hours, days and years, but rather, genuine time is the opening clearing of self-concealing by way of which Being, happening as self-unconcealing, in accomplishing the uniting intrinsic to it as self-differentiating, brings itself to pass as the presencing of what presences. Heidegger tells us that: 'Being and time determine each other reciprocally, but in such a manner that neither can the former – Being – be addressed as something temporal nor can the latter – time – be addressed as a being.'<sup>26</sup> Heidegger calls time the first name of the truth of Being where truth, with a meaning drawn from the Greek *alētheia*, means unconcealment.<sup>27</sup> There is no simple identity between Being and Time in Heidegger's view, but time is Being seen as ongoingly opening itself that it may, as the Being of what-is, bring itself to pass as unconcealing.

As the title of the book suggests, the concept of time occupies an important place in *Being and Time*. As was previously mentioned, Heidegger's main task in *Being and Time* is to work out the question concerning the meaning of Being. It is from this perspective that time becomes a central theme in *Being and Time*. Already in the preface, Heidegger indicates how Being and time are related:

...We must show, on the basis of the question of the meaning of being which shall have been worked out, *that - and in what way - the central range of problems of all ontology is rooted in the phenomenon of time correctly viewed and correctly explained.*<sup>28</sup>

According to Heidegger, the horizon against which Being is disclosed is temporality. Temporality should be seen as transcendental time/movement - transcendental in that it is not the movement of any particular thing. Transcendental time establishes the condition for any particular thing to move within time. Temporality is the background against which Being can appear and be apprehended. Time is thus intrinsic to Being and to everything appearing within the world.

The world is a complex of involvements. Worlds are historical for Heidegger, in the sense of having actual pasts and real futures that delimit and define the world as an existential matrix of possible things and activities. World is the place where all things are shaped<sup>29</sup>.

Being is intimately connected with time in that each world has its own peculiar temporalisation of things. This is the way that historical worlds differ profoundly from one another. The way things come to presence vis-à-vis time defines a given historical world and holds its projects together in a distinctive whole.

World in the existential sense, then, admits of a plurality of ways in which transcendental time can be contracted into a determinate presencing of beings. We therefore speak of time as seen with respect to Being in its happening as an initiatory providing that, as a surmounting of evasive self-withdrawing, governs inclusively throughout vast ranges of the manifold of what-is, by way of extensive openings-up of time. This means that we speak of time as the milieu of the historical.

For Heidegger, history (*Geschichte*) is not a mere succession of events understood in a causal fashion. Reality as history is far more complex than this. It is that transpiring

complex as humanly lived out and understood always according to some identifying mode of happening that renders it meaningful to those who take their way via its course<sup>30</sup>. History is a transpiring of happening that is accomplished through a human questioning into reality and through a resolute confronting of the latter that brings it to light. '...It is only because Dasein's existence is historical that it can engage in historical questioning.'<sup>31</sup>

It is this portrayal of being as the being of what-is, i.e. as a self-differentiating, single happening that, in its maintaining of itself as itself, through happening as time, opens itself disclosively and unfolds itself via ever-changeful self-particularisation, which stands central to Heidegger's thinking. The Being of what-is, happening by way of time as a self-concealing self-unconcealing, meets human being as the presencing of what presences. Human being belongs to the great manifold of what-is, and 'is' among the entities as which the twofold unfolds by way of time. In fact, Heidegger announces that 'The meaning of the being of that being we call Da-sein proves to be temporality [*Zeitlichkeit*].'<sup>32</sup> How does Heidegger view human being in this sense?

## 2.5 Human being as Dasein

Heidegger tells us that 'Truth happens by the simple fact that Dasein exists, i.e., is there at all.'<sup>33</sup> In this sense, truth is a presupposition that has already been made for us, by the very being which we ourselves are. Before we can investigate truth, then, we need to investigate what Heidegger means by Dasein. What does Heidegger tell us about this being which we are?

Human being, Heidegger maintains, is a Being-in-the-world (*In-der-Welt-sein*)<sup>34</sup>. On hearing the phrase 'being-in', we immediately think of a spatially-containing relationship, like 'The water is in the glass'. This notion of 'in' refers to things related by juxtaposition. This, however, is not what Heidegger means when he speaks of the relation Dasein has to the world.

...Being-in designates a constitution of being of Dasein, and is an *existential*. But we cannot understand by this the objective presence of a material thing (the human body) 'in' a being objectively present. Nor does the term being-in designate a spatial 'in one another' of two things objectively present, any more than the word 'in' primordially means a spatial relation of this kind.<sup>35</sup>

As I have mentioned, the first division of *Being and Time* is a preparatory fundamental analysis of Dasein. Heidegger does not aim to list all of Dasein's existentiell modes, or to analyse each one of them, or to rely on assumptions about human nature that have hitherto guided anthropologists, psychologists or philosophers<sup>36</sup>. Instead, he offers a critical evaluation of those assumptions by developing an existential analytic of Dasein that allows Dasein's being to show itself in itself and for itself. The analytic is preparatory in that its conclusions provide a starting point from which the analysis can be deepened, revealing the fundamental relationship between the Being of Dasein and temporality. In this way, the first division prepares the way for the second. The analytic of Dasein in the first division is thus preliminary and is intended as an elaboration of the question of Being. In the second division, Heidegger repeats the analytic of Dasein, by grasping the existentialia (the basic structures of the mode of being of the enquirer) afresh in the context of temporality. This is because as was previously mentioned, Heidegger sees temporality as the horizon for understanding the being of Dasein.

Heidegger begins with the fact that the essence of man consists in his ek-sistence; that toward which man stands out is the world<sup>37</sup>; thus, one can say that the essence of man is being-in-the-world. The main task of the first division, then, is to reveal the precise meaning of this compound expression. The hyphenated form of this phrase is intentional, since it is meant to be indicative of the 'primordial unity of the terms'.<sup>38</sup> This is in preparation for an answer to the question concerning the meaning of Being. Heidegger justifies this approach to the question of Being by pointing out that human being taken as being-in-the-world is the only being who can make himself understandable in his own mode of being<sup>39</sup>.

Being is an unconcealedness or disclosiveness for Heidegger. Human being, or Dasein (being there) is the place of Being's disclosure. Human being is the worldly opening (*Offene*) in which Being's truth is revealed. In the words of Bernard Dauenhauer, man is essentially the 'musician of Being'.<sup>40</sup>

Heidegger is not suggesting that human beings must exist for there to be a universe of extant things, but human being is the only place where the Beingness of beings comes to presence, revealing a contextual world of meaning. Only through human being does Being come to presence. Heidegger is not saying that human being is itself necessary, that human being always already was, or is destined to forever

persist. Indeed, to be human means to live with expectation of death<sup>41</sup>. However, if and whenever human being exists, it does so embedded in and revealing of a world. Human being does not exist in any 'neutral' sense apart from its concrete, embedded reality. Dasein is not a substance, but a relation, a disclosive weddedness to the world. In this way, Heidegger's Dasein introduces the beginnings of a decentering of human being's position – Heidegger's point was to avoid retaining the idea of human being as the subject of modern metaphysics. Heidegger's phenomenology developed as a reaction against the Cartesian conception of the subject as essentially a worldless *res cogitans*. He does not, however, see human being simply as an object in a mechanistic universe. According to Overenget,

'...Heidegger rejects the Cartesian subject-object dichotomy in both its subjective and objective garb. He does not see the modern shift in emphasis away from *res cogitans* to *res extensa* as any more tenable, or less Cartesian, for that matter, than the traditional emphasis on a mental reality. Thus, Heidegger seeks to get beyond the entire dichotomy, and aims at rehabilitating the subjective perspective without resorting to the *res cogitans*'.<sup>42</sup>

Just as Heidegger insists that we do not have bodies, rather we are 'bodily', he insists that we do not *have* a world, we are 'worldly'. He realised that it was a mistake to epistemologically separate the perceiving and knowing subject from its concrete worldliness. Our concrete, spatial existence is not separate from our perceiving, mental existence. A structural unity exists. Knowledge, therefore, is not something gleaned by a mind from a separate, external reality, but something absorbed in the midst of worldly existence. Heidegger's understanding of being-in-the-world thus allows him to avoid both radical individualism and Cartesian dualism.

A way to understand the unified structure of Being-in-the-world is to visualise human being as a diffused radius of disclosure<sup>43</sup>. The world of beings is disclosed as it comes to presence in the diffusely illuminated 'there' of human being. What comes to presence always stands within this populated clearing (*Lichtung*) – the clearing opened up by Dasein<sup>44</sup>. There are horizons to an individual's world and so not everything will be revealed at once. Certain features within the lighted area will be obscured by shadows. The clearing symbolises not simply the visual perceptions of human being, nor even simply its complete sensory field, but importantly, also its comportment, demeanour and mood.

Before anything can be discovered as an entity in itself, unrelated to and apart from its surroundings, it must already be given as related to Dasein. In such a state, an entity is ready to hand. Things ready-to-hand can be encountered only as 'un-ready-to-hand'. This consists in a disruption of the referentiation between an entity that is ready-to-hand and Dasein. Such a disruption can come about in three ways: the entity that should be ready-to-hand is unready-to-hand because the entity is damaged, or the entity is missing, or another presence or absence disrupts the relation between the entity and Dasein<sup>45</sup>.

When an entity that is ready-to-hand is unusable, it becomes conspicuous. Dasein is disrupted from the activity with which it was concerned and its attention is drawn to the item of equipment as something there, something apart from all else. When an item of equipment that is ready to hand is missing, it too becomes obtrusive. Its absence created a 'hole' in the matrix of relationships directed towards Dasein. When an entity blocks an item of equipment from Dasein's view, it becomes obstinate. This blocking entity confronts Dasein as the unusable and as such becomes unrelatable to Dasein. These three deficient modes of Being - obtrusiveness, conspicuousness and obstinacy are the three ways in which an entity ready-to-hand manifests itself to Dasein<sup>46</sup>.

Human being illuminates its world in various ways. Dasein may reveal things as part of an instrumental assemblage or system, as things *ready-to-hand* (*zuhanden*). Much of what we encounter in our daily lives constitutes such equipment. Being ready-to-hand means being part of a network of things that relate to each other with functional interdependence. The ready-to-hand is thus less a what (object) than a how (form of coming to presence). The ready-to-hand is revealed as an integrated, functional part of a navigated world<sup>47</sup>.

Things can also be revealed not as parts of a functional whole made ready for use, but also as isolated objects that permit focused observation or contemplation. Heidegger calls this the 'present-at-hand' (*Vorhanden*). The present-at-hand comes into focus for abstract consideration only with its context already established and usually taken for granted. The narrower, concentrated light illuminating the present-at-hand causes the surroundings to be temporarily obscured. The obscurity of the surroundings serves to define the object of attention.

We call the act of focusing attention and giving meaning to particular objects interpretation. Heidegger insists that interpretation is not a matter of imposing meaning on a passive world lying before us. Rather, the things that we interpret already have an involvement, which is disclosed in our understanding of the world, and the involvement is one that gets laid out by the interpretation. A hammer, for example, is revealed as ready-to-hand when used for hammering nails. It may also, for example, be revealed as present-at-hand if it is scientifically investigated as to its weight or durability. In each case, the question is less what the thing is than how it comes to be revealed<sup>48</sup>.

Human beings always already exist in a ready-to-hand world<sup>49</sup>. Only then do they engage in interpretations that carry them beyond their preontological understandings. Thus, formal interpretation, whether scientific or philosophical, arises from the foundation of primordial interpretative activity.

Apart from the ready-to-hand and the present-at-hand, there is another way that things are in the world. Human being may reveal itself or another human being as Dasein (literally, being-there), as a self-interpreting being. To reveal a human being as Dasein is to reveal a being sharing one's world in a self-interpreting manner. To understand Dasein as self-interpreting does not mean that human being is defined by a solely inward-looking comportment. Self-interpretation is as much a reaching outward as a turning inward.

The world of Da-sein is a *with-world*. Being-in is *being-with* others. The innerworldly being-in-itself of others is *Mitda-sein*. The others are not encountered by grasping and previously discriminating one's own subject, initially objectively present, from other subjects also present. They are not encountered by first looking at oneself and then ascertaining the opposite pole of a distinction. They are encountered from a *world* in which Da-sein, heedful and circumspect, essentially dwells.<sup>50</sup>

The horizon of the individual Dasein is always in fusion with the horizons of others<sup>51</sup>. Thus, communication among self-interpreting beings is not the mere transference of information or knowledge from one formerly isolated subject to another. Rather, it is the co-discovery of meaning. Meaning is always discovered in the context of a world - it is the bringing to light of a worldly context. Communication, interpretation and the



discovery of meaning originate from and continually evidence the embeddedness of human being in a shared world<sup>52</sup>.

To discover meaning is to uncover an aspect of one's Being-in-the-world, and to communicate this to others. As an interpretative being, human being is always involved with language and communication, and so is inherently a social being. Heidegger says: 'The world of Dasein is a *with-world (Mitwelt)*. Being-in is a *Being-with* others.'<sup>53</sup> Human being exists structurally as a Being-with-others, even in the midst of physical solitude. Physical, emotional, moral or cognitive solitude always takes place in the context of an original and continuing relation to the with-world. In fact, solitude sharpens our sense of the with-world, so that we may better distance ourselves from its effects. According to Heidegger: 'Being-with existentially determines Da-sein even when an other is not factually present and perceived. The being-alone of Da-sein too, is being-with in the world'<sup>54</sup>.

Therefore, Heidegger responds to the metaphysical quandary of the isolated subject seeking communicative and moral access to other human beings in the same way that he responds to the metaphysical quandary of the isolated subject seeking epistemological access to the external world: he simply denies the atomistic presuppositions. Philosophers like Husserl and Sartre begin with *my* world and then try to account for how an isolated subject can give meaning to other minds and to the shared intersubjective world. On the contrary, Heidegger thinks that the very idea of a world indicates that it can be shared, and so *the* world is always prior to *my* world. The decentering of the subject, which Heidegger accomplishes by asserting that Dasein is being-in-the-world, receives further impetus from his insistence that being-in-the-world is always a being-with-others<sup>55</sup>.

For Heidegger, human being's essence lies in his existence<sup>56</sup>. From a phenomenological point of view, there is no essential self before there are intentional acts. Only human being can ask the question of Being because we are the only beings who can stand back from the objective condition of things and put ourselves into question. Only human being can ex-sist in this reflective manner. Human being is the only being whose existence is an issue for him<sup>57</sup>. He is a being who is perpetually reaching beyond himself towards the world, towards horizons of meaning beyond his present condition. Human existence is an activity of endless transcendence.

The essence of human being is temporality<sup>58</sup>, for we can only understand ourselves in the present by referring to the temporal horizons of our existence, that is, by recollecting our past and projecting our future. Man is temporality, because what he is always presupposes what he has been and what he will be. Thus, Heidegger describes Dasein as a mode of being which is always projecting itself beyond its possibilities. Human existence cannot be seen as a determined fact - it must be seen as a project of possibility.

Human being is defined by its 'thrownness' (*Geworfenheit*) or 'facticity' (*Faktizität*)<sup>59</sup>. Being-in-the-world means being always already situated. Human being is a being that exists as part of the world, and most importantly, by way of its worldliness.

Dasein always finds himself in a given situation. Thus, our self-understanding is always limited by certain environmental, cultural, social, psychological and economic conditions - our facticity. Our existence is always conditioned by a certain state of mind, which is governed by actual historical circumstances. This historical situatedness never predetermines Dasein to be this or that particular thing, however. Dasein understands his own facticity in terms of possibility, because he reinterprets his given circumstances in terms of the open horizon of his future<sup>60</sup>.

Traditional Western thinking conceives freedom as the autonomous subject's most valued asset, as its capacity to comprehend and control what it confronts. Heidegger understands freedom as that which exposes human being to the incomprehensible and intractable: to Being<sup>61</sup>. Heidegger realises that once freedom becomes a value, it ceases to identify that which enables us to partake of the mystery of Being. Freedom is the 'gift'<sup>62</sup> that allows human being to glance beyond himself, beyond beings, and beyond his possession and mastery in thought, word, or deed.

Dasein is freedom to the extent that his existence as temporal transcendence towards the possible is irreducible to the sum of his conditioning circumstances in the present<sup>63</sup>. Human being is a being-in-the-world-alongside-entities, not some intangible 'cogito'. Human being finds himself thrown into a world which is not his own, and yet, while he is bound by this finite condition of thrownness, he is still free to choose how he will reappropriate the meanings of this world for himself in order to project them into the open horizon of future possibilities. Thus, Dasein is free to re-determine the pre-determined.

Human being finds his freedom in care taking, as a shepherd of Being, in concernfully letting the Being of beings be. Freedom is not so much a property of human being's will as it is a reflection of his worldliness<sup>64</sup>. In stark contrast with the Western metaphysical tradition, freedom is not a value for Heidegger, but beyond valuation; it is not evidenced in willfulness, but in a waitfulness; it is not an unbounded power of choice, but a discovery and acknowledgement of one's place within bounds; it is not an obtaining and controlling, but a letting-be.

Resoluteness means 'unclosedness', and so is an opening of the self to the questioning, not the controlling, of Being<sup>65</sup>. Resolute openness manifests human freedom: to be resolutely occupied with the question of one's own being is to understand one's own freedom. In making his own being an issue, human being opens himself to the question of beings as a whole. Only in the midst of and as a concern for this world is freedom found.

Dasein is free according to the resoluteness of his decisions. His past acts can be reinterpreted in different possible ways in the light of his future projects. His understanding of himself in terms of the future does not have to be the same as his understanding of himself in terms of the past. He may be born into a certain family, religion, nationality, language, political system and so on, but nothing prevents him from deciding to respond to these conditioning circumstances in a new way. Human being's understanding of the world always involves a decision of self-understanding.

For Heidegger, understanding refers primarily to those 'pre-reflective' moods of our lived experience<sup>66</sup>, for example, anguish, guilt and fear. Heidegger identifies these not simply as psychological emotions, but as ontological acts of pre-understanding. He argues, for example, that our common experience of anguish, which we call depression, is irreducible to the sum of its ostensible causes. We are not simply depressed because of an event in our lives. These events are no more than occasions, which disrupt our normal patterns of behaviour. At its deepest level, according to Heidegger, anguish is an ontological 'mood', which expresses being-in-the-world as an experience of non-being. Unlike fear, anguish lacks any identifiable object - it occurs precisely when nothing is the matter<sup>67</sup>.

Dasein's understanding is existential before it is philosophical, it is lived before it is conceptualised. Human existence constitutes what Heidegger calls a 'hermeneutic circle', to the extent that it implicitly interprets Being in terms of its everyday moods

and projects, before it raises this interpretation to the level of explicit philosophical questioning<sup>68</sup>. We already know, however vaguely, what we are looking for when we ask the question of Being<sup>69</sup>.

Heidegger highlights the fact that human being is a being-towards-death in that his/her existence ultimately culminates in death<sup>70</sup>. Death represents the end<sup>71</sup> - in the sense of conclusion and goal - of all our possibilities. Death is the final and sovereign possibility, the impossibility of any further possibilities. Our experience of Being is thus radically finite. All human being's existence is preoccupied by an awareness of his/her own ultimate nothingness – his/her being-towards-death. This awareness is experienced as anguish, which, for Heidegger, is the most fundamental of all human being's existential moods<sup>72</sup>.

Death is experienced as anguish (*Angst*) to the extent that it reveals itself as a nothingness within human being. This experience makes human being realise that nothingness lies concealed as the groundless ground of his/her being-in-the-world. This realisation does not involve an objective observation of death – 'Death is the *ownmost* possibility of Da-sein'<sup>73</sup>. Human being cannot have a detached representation of nothingness, for it is the realisation of the self itself and of all objective entities as ultimately groundless. The self discovers that it is nothingness<sup>74</sup>. It breaks through the field of normal consciousness, which separates existence into purely subjective thought and purely objective beings. In anguish, the being of the self and all other things is nullified and becomes a question mark. Human being reaches down into an ontological mode of existence that goes deeper than mere psychology<sup>75</sup>.

Anguish is not an end in itself, but rather serves as an openness to Being. The anguish of Dasein can become a clearing for a more fundamental manifestation of *Sein* itself. Anguish dispossesses human being of the illusion of being a timeless self-contained entity and prepares him for the question of Being - 'Why is there something rather than nothing?' This question expresses itself ultimately in an existential attitude of care<sup>76</sup>. Anguish is the call of conscience that reminds human being that the meaning of the world is not simply invented out of private subjectivity, but is given to it by Being itself. Human being no longer takes its being-in-the-world for granted, but questions its ultimate meaning<sup>77</sup>. As the word 'call' suggests, Heidegger sees the voice of conscience as a mode of discourse that attempts to disrupt the idle talk of the they to which Dasein is ordinarily attuned<sup>78</sup>.

Heidegger defines human being's shared Being-in-the-world as *care (Sorge)*<sup>79</sup>. Human being cares to the extent that it concerns itself with its worldly nature. This involves a concern for its Being-with-other, as well as a concern for the meaning of this ontological structure. For Heidegger, care is the always-already-interpretative comportment of human being. Human beings care because they are involved with the world and its meanings. To care is to be concerned with the meaning of oneself *in* the world, and so is not the same as being self-absorbed.

Care is the 'primary totality of the constitution of Dasein, which as this totality always adopts this or that particular way of its can-be.'<sup>80</sup> The particular 'can-be' of a Dasein refers to its ontic possibilities, which, though always founded on the ontological structure of care, remain distinct from it. Ontic means that which does not directly address the ontological fundamentals of human being, but rather pertains to concrete possibilities<sup>81</sup>.

In using this distinction, Heidegger attempts to distinguish between ontological descriptions and ethical dictates. Human being always already exists as an embodied, social, worldly relation, and this ontological description is neither more nor less valid, simply because certain human beings deny or obscure their social or worldly nature, or repudiate its practical extension to an explicitly moral realm. To be altruistic is to choose to channel one's thought, feeling and actions into one's capacities for empathy. Empathy is an emotional and ethical disposition. To be empathetic is to extend a self *already embedded* in a social world in a way such that emotional and ethical connections come to the fore<sup>82</sup>. To be egoistic means to route this energy elsewhere. Neither activity changes the fundamental structure of human being as care, a Being-in-the-world-with-others, fundamentally concerned with the meaning of its being.

Heidegger is not suggesting that we discard our moral predispositions in order to engage in ontological questioning. But neither should we attempt to escape ontological investigation behind the alleged security of ethical concepts and formulae. We should not abandon morality, but neither should we subordinate ontology to it. Before we determine the principles and rules by which we ought to live with others, we need to understand who we are, and what our Being-in-the world-with-others means.

One of the most well known distinctions made by Heidegger with regards to Dasein is that between authentic and inauthentic Dasein. Dasein is authentic when he ceases to take the world for granted as some objective entity 'present-at-hand', recognising it as an open horizon of possibilities 'ready-to-hand'. Being is revealed authentically through the temporal horizon of Dasein as it is lived towards its final possibility of death and so remains open to the otherness of Being. Dasein can only accede to an authentic awareness of Being as other by first acknowledging its own existence as its own. To open himself to Being, Dasein must first assume responsibility for his being-towards-death as his own-most possibility. To choose resolutely to live towards his death and appropriating the experience of his ultimate nothingness is to live his freedom authentically<sup>83</sup>. In other words, the fundamental possibilities of Dasein (authenticity and inauthenticity) show themselves in *Angst*<sup>84</sup>.

Inauthenticity is a refusal of Dasein's being-towards-death. It is also a refusal of the revelation of Being. Human being exists inauthentically to the extent that he flees from his awareness of freedom, responsibility and death, seeking refuge in the security of the anonymous 'They', who make sure of a constant tranquillization about death<sup>85</sup>. The 'They' define human being as a fixed actuality, rather than a free possibility. They ward off anguish by concealing the experience of death and lulling human being into a passive conformity. To experience anguish is to return to the authentic awareness that he is a displaced person, out of joint with the 'They' and with himself. It is to recognise that nobody can die for him. Death can never be made into an 'object' external to him. He experiences death in his deepest interiority, as the very texture of his existence. In other word, his being-towards-death is inalienably his own. By retrieving the authentic self from the inauthentic crowd, Dasein confronts his own ontological condition of homelessness. He begins to care for Being. The authentic attitude leads naturally to reflection, recalling that our existence is an issue for us and so doing breathes life into the forgotten question of Being.

To be authentic is to resist the perspective of the 'they' (*das Man*), which is the predominant mode of human being in its 'everydayness' (*Alltäglichkeit*). The everyday refers to the customary mode of human being. It is the realm of coping with everyday existence, its banalities, perversions, its necessities and its passions. For Heidegger, inauthenticity is characterised as a 'falling' (*Verfallen*), a way of routinely 'Being-alongside' entities without bringing their or one's own being into question. Inauthenticity is a losing of the self into a way of being that is primarily 'social'. It is a regression into the habits and conformities of routine social existence. On the other

hand, authenticity is a resolute maintenance of the self out of this stream of unselfconscious habituation that brings about ontological questioning.

Heidegger's notion of authenticity in no way signals a retreat from his fundamental understanding of human being as a being-with-others. Social life is indeed rooted in convention, and Heidegger readily acknowledges its ever-presentness and indispensable utility. But, social convention is simply an unavoidable game soliciting participation, not an unremitting master demanding thoughtless fidelity. To be authentic is neither to deprecate nor to escape social life, but simply to experience it in a particular manner. The authentic individual is characterised by this recognition and acceptance of his inevitable thrownness in the with-world. Authenticity solicits one to inhabit this world self-consciously, to acknowledge the social constitution of human being, while at the same time refusing to become lost in the customary modes of coping that inhibit his ontological reflection. Only through being-with-others do we come to know ourselves as individuals.

## 2.6 Summary

In this chapter, I have attempted to give as thorough as possible an account of Heidegger's conception of human being as Dasein, as well as of his revival of the question of Being in a manner completely different from that of traditional ontology by looking at selected sections of *Being and Time*. I have discussed Heidegger's decentering of the subject by means of his vision of Dasein as being-in-the-world and being-with-others. In this context I have briefly discussed his view of freedom, as well as his ideas on authentic and inauthentic existence. Although I have not dealt with criticisms of this vision of human being as the being whose being is an issue for it, I will explore this in the final chapter.

As was asserted in my first chapter, I believe it is essential to review Heidegger's work as a whole in order to understand the essential linkages between the so-called 'earlier' and 'later' Heideggers. This discussion of *Being and Time* and some of its central themes is therefore meant as an introduction to the central concepts in Heidegger's philosophy, in order to prepare for the forthcoming discussion on truth. In the discussion of his ideas on truth, I trace the development of the concept from the earlier works, through to the later expositions.

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- <sup>1</sup> M. Heidegger, *Being and Time: A Translation of Sein und Zeit* (Albany, State University of New York Press, 1996), p. 1.
- <sup>2</sup> The translation I will use throughout is *Being and Time: A Translation of Sein und Zeit* (Albany, State University of New York Press, 1996). I do alter the quotations by using the capitalised 'Being' when Heidegger refers to the German *Sein*, and the uncapitalised 'beings' when he speaks of *Seiendes*, to avoid confusion.
- <sup>3</sup> See O. Pöggeler, *Metaphysics and Topology of Being in Heidegger* in J.J. Kockelmans (ed.) *A Companion to Martin Heidegger's "Being and Time"* (Lanham, University Press of America, 1986), p. 231.
- <sup>4</sup> M. Heidegger, *Being and Time: A Translation of Sein und Zeit* (Albany, State University of New York Press, 1996), p. 6.
- <sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 41.
- <sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 83.
- <sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.
- <sup>8</sup> At the very end of his introduction to *Being and Time* (p. 34), Heidegger takes the word 'phenomenology' to describe his work, and acknowledges Husserl's influence. Yet, he fails to provide any detailed analysis of the Husserlian project. Instead, he offers an etymological analysis of the term, and then proceeds to derive his own project from this analysis.
- <sup>9</sup> J-L Marion. *Reduction and Givenness: Investigations of Husserl, Heidegger and Phenomenology*. T.A. Carlson (Trans.) (Evanston, Illinois, Northwestern University Press, 1998), p. 48.
- <sup>10</sup> M. Heidegger, *Being and Time: A Translation of Sein und Zeit* (Albany, State University of New York Press, 1996), p. 30.
- <sup>11</sup> See J-L Marion. *Reduction and Givenness: Investigations of Husserl, Heidegger and Phenomenology*. T.A. Carlson (Trans.) (Evanston, Illinois, Northwestern University Press, 1998), p. 40.
- <sup>12</sup> For a discussion on the difference in approaches used by Heidegger and Husserl, see J-L Marion. *Reduction and Givenness: Investigations of Husserl, Heidegger and Phenomenology*. T.A. Carlson (Trans.) (Evanston, Illinois, Northwestern University Press, 1998), p. 84
- <sup>13</sup> M. Heidegger, *Being and Time: A Translation of Sein und Zeit* (Albany, State University of New York Press, 1996), p. 2.
- <sup>14</sup> O. Pöggeler, *Metaphysics and Topology of Being in Heidegger* in J.J. Kockelmans (ed.), *A Companion to Martin Heidegger's "Being and Time"* (U.S.A., University Press of America, 1986). p. 236.
- <sup>15</sup> M. Heidegger, *Identität und Differenz* (Pfullingen, Neske 1957, 1986), p. 49. 'So wird das Sein des Seienden als der gründende Grund vorausgedacht'.
- <sup>16</sup> See R. Mulhall, *Heidegger and Being and Time* (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 98.
- <sup>17</sup> M. Heidegger, *Identität und Differenz* (Pfullingen, Neske 1957, 1986), p. 58.
- <sup>18</sup> M. Heidegger, *Postscript to "What is Metaphysics?"* in *Pathmarks* W. McNeill (ed.), (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 233.
- <sup>19</sup> M. Heidegger, Letter on Humanism in *Basic Writings: Martin Heidegger* D.F. Krell (trans.) (London, Routledge, 1993), p. 234.
- <sup>20</sup> M. Heidegger, *An Introduction to Metaphysics* (U.S.A., Yale University Press, 1964), p. 101.
- <sup>21</sup> M. Heidegger, *On Time and Being* (New York, Harper and Row, 1972), p. 2.
- <sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.
- <sup>23</sup> M. Heidegger, On the Essence of Ground in *Pathmarks* W. McNeill (ed.) (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 97.
- <sup>24</sup> M. Heidegger, *Identität und Differenz* (Gunther Neske, Pfullingen, 1986), p. 57; 'Die Differenz van Sein und Seiendem ist als der Unter-Schied von Überkommnis und Ankunft der entbergend-bergende Austrag beider.'
- <sup>25</sup> M. Heidegger, *Identität und Differenz* (Gunther Neske, Pfullingen, 1986).
- <sup>26</sup> M. Heidegger, *On Time and Being* (New York, Harper and Row, 1972), p. 3.
- <sup>27</sup> Like time, Being's happening as unconcealment, i.e. as truth, is identified with the clearing (Lichtung) that preservingly opens Being's happening as self-concealing. See M. Heidegger, On the Essence of Truth in *Basic Writings: Martin Heidegger Revised and Expanded Edition* D.F. Krell (trans.) (London, Routledge, 1993), p. 127.





- <sup>28</sup> M. Heidegger, *Being and Time: A Translation of Sein und Zeit* (Albany, State University of New York Press, 1996), p. 16.
- <sup>29</sup> See R. Mulhall, *Heidegger and Being and Time* (London: Routledge, 1996), p.46, 47.
- <sup>30</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 168.
- <sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 175.
- <sup>32</sup> M. Heidegger, *Being and Time: A Translation of Sein und Zeit* (Albany, State University of New York Press, 1996), p. 15.
- <sup>33</sup> J.D. Caputo, On Being Inside/Outside Truth in J.L. Marsh, J.D. Caputo and M. Westphal (eds), *Modernity and its Discontents* (New York, Fordham University Press, 1992), p. 46.
- <sup>34</sup> M. Heidegger, *Being and Time: A Translation of Sein und Zeit* (Albany, State University of New York Press, 1996), p. 49.
- <sup>35</sup> M. Heidegger, *Being and Time: A Translation of Sein und Zeit* (Albany, State University of New York Press, 1996), pp. 50, 51.
- <sup>36</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 42-46.
- <sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 59.
- <sup>38</sup> G.F. Sefer, *Language and the World: A Methodological Synthesis within the writings of Martin Heidegger and Ludwig Wittgenstein* (Atlantic Highlands, N.J., Humanities Press, 1974), p. 30.
- <sup>39</sup> M. Heidegger, *Being and Time: A Translation of Sein und Zeit* (Albany, State University of New York Press, 1996), p. 67.
- <sup>40</sup> B.P. Dauenhauer, An Approach to Heidegger's Way of Philosophizing, *Southern Journal of Philosophy*, 1971, p. 272.
- <sup>41</sup> M. Heidegger, *Being and Time: A Translation of Sein und Zeit* (Albany, State University of New York Press, 1996), p. 216.
- <sup>42</sup> E. Overenget. Heidegger and Arendt: Against the Imperialism of Privacy, *Philosophy Today*, 1995, p. 432.
- <sup>43</sup> M. Heidegger, *Being and Time: A Translation of Sein und Zeit* (Albany, State University of New York Press, 1996), p. 125.
- <sup>44</sup> E. Overenget. Heidegger and Arendt: Against the Imperialism of Privacy, *Philosophy Today*, 1995, p. 439
- <sup>45</sup> M. Heidegger, *Being and Time: A Translation of Sein und Zeit* (Albany, State University of New York Press, 1996), p. 69.
- <sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 69.
- <sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 64.
- <sup>48</sup> Heidegger's famous hammer example deals with objects revealed as ready-to-hand rather than present-to-hand. See M. Heidegger, *Being and Time: A Translation of Sein und Zeit* (Albany, State University of New York Press, 1996), p. 64, 65.
- <sup>49</sup> M. Heidegger, *Being and Time: A Translation of Sein und Zeit* (Albany, State University of New York Press, 1996), p. 77.
- <sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 112.
- <sup>51</sup> This concept of understanding as a fusion of horizons is adopted and developed by Gadamer. See H-G. Gadamer, *Philosophical Hermeneutics*. Translated and edited by David E. Linge. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), p. xi-xxxiii.
- <sup>52</sup> M. Heidegger, *Being and Time: A Translation of Sein und Zeit* (Albany, State University of New York Press, 1996), p. 111. See also Mulhall, R. *Heidegger and Being and Time* (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 171.
- <sup>53</sup> M. Heidegger, *Being and Time: A Translation of Sein und Zeit* (Albany, State University of New York Press, 1996), p. 112.
- <sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 113.
- <sup>55</sup> D.R. Villa, *Arendt and Heidegger: The fate of the Political*. (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1996), p. 213.
- <sup>56</sup> M. Heidegger, *Being and Time: A Translation of Sein und Zeit* (Albany, State University of New York Press, 1996), p. 39
- <sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 213.
- <sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 216.
- <sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 169.
- <sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 350, 351.
- <sup>61</sup> J.J. Kockelmans, Being-true as the basic determination of Being. In J.J. Kockelmans (ed.), *A Companion to Martin Heidegger's 'Being and Time'* (U.S.A., University Press of America, 1986), p. 149, 150.



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- <sup>62</sup> W.J. Richardson. Heidegger and the Quest of Freedom in Kockelmans, J.J. (ed.), *A Companion to Martin Heidegger's 'Being and Time'* (U.S.A., University Press of America, 1986), p. 178.
- <sup>63</sup> R. Kearney. *Modern Movements in European Philosophy*. (Wolfeboro: Manchester University Press, 1987) p. 33.
- <sup>64</sup> D.R. Villa, *Arendt and Heidegger: The Fate of the Political*. (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1996), p. 120.
- <sup>65</sup> M. Heidegger, *Being and Time: A Translation of Sein und Zeit* (Albany, State University of New York Press, 1996), p. 275.
- <sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 134.
- <sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 174.
- <sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 143.
- <sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.
- <sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 232.
- <sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 227, 228.
- <sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 232.
- <sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 243.
- <sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 245.
- <sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 222.
- <sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 256.
- <sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 283.
- <sup>78</sup> R. Mulhall, *Heidegger and Being and Time* (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 125.
- <sup>79</sup> M. Heidegger, *Being and Time: A Translation of Sein und Zeit* (Albany, State University of New York Press, 1996), p. 322.
- <sup>80</sup> M. Heidegger, *History of the Concept of Time: Prolegomena* (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1985), p. 306.
- <sup>81</sup> R. Mulhall, *Heidegger and Being and Time* (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 58.
- <sup>82</sup> M. Heidegger, *Being and Time: A Translation of Sein und Zeit* (Albany, State University of New York Press, 1996), p. 117, 118.
- <sup>83</sup> W.J. Richardson. Heidegger and the Quest of Freedom in Kockelmans, J.J. (ed.), *A Companion to Martin Heidegger's 'Being and Time'* (U.S.A., University Press of America, 1986), p. 170.
- <sup>84</sup> M. Heidegger, *Being and Time: A Translation of Sein und Zeit* (Albany, State University of New York Press, 1996), p. 178.
- <sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 235.

## CHAPTER 3: HEIDEGGER'S CONCEPT OF TRUTH

*Technology comes to presence in the realm where revealing and unconcealment take place, where alētheia, truth, happens.<sup>1</sup>*

In this chapter, I move on to an elucidation of Heidegger's conception of truth in *Being and Time* (§ 44), *On the Essence of Truth*, *The Origin of the Work of Art*, *The Question concerning Technology*, *The Nature of Language* from *On the Way to Language* and *The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking*. I do this in order to trace the development of Heidegger's thought on truth, and to indicate the links between his conception of truth to those on technology and language. It is only in this chapter that I examine a theme in Heidegger's corpus by looking at texts in isolation. I do this since I believe that his conception of truth opens a way to understanding the themes of technology and language. In other word, I believe that truth is the point around which his ideas on technology and language turn. This will then form the basis for exploring the question of whether his intimate linkage of these three themes is fruitful and tenable.

### 3.1 An Introduction to Heidegger's Conception of Truth

Western philosophy has been preoccupied with the notion of truth since its very beginnings, and yet 'it is paradoxical that, whereas philosophy is regarded as the search for truth, few philosophers have inquired deeply into the question of what truth is.'<sup>2</sup>

The question of truth lies at the centre of Heidegger's philosophical reflections. According to Walter Biemel, the core of Heidegger's questioning is twofold: It is an inquiry into Being, and at the same time, it is an inquiry into *alētheia*.<sup>3</sup> In this section I will discuss Heidegger's conception of truth as it appears in *Being and Time*, *On the Essence of Truth*, *The Origin of the Work of Art*, *The Question concerning Technology*, *The Nature of Language* and *The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking*. I do this in order to trace the development of his thought regarding truth, to show the intrinsic unity of his thought, and to begin to shed light on the significance of the fact that that technology, truth and language are intimately connected in Heidegger's vision.

The hermeneutical interpretation of the word 'truth' forced Heidegger to rethink and question the modern experience of truth. He claimed that there was an essential difference between viewing truth as correctness, and truth as unconcealment - the hermeneutical meaning he saw hidden in the more common meaning of the word. For Plato, and those that followed, *alētheia* meant correctness, a correspondence between knowledge and the object.

According to Heidegger, ever since Plato, we have been asking what ourselves and the universe must be like if we are going to have the sort of certainty and clarity that Plato felt we ought to have. Thus, Heidegger says: ' All metaphysics, including its opponent, positivism, speaks the language of Plato.'<sup>4</sup>

Heidegger argues that the history of the discourse on truth has ignored the experience of truth as an opening that lets unconcealment occur<sup>5</sup>. He claims that the primordial phenomenon of truth has been concealed by Dasein's forgetfulness of Being - its reduction of the Being of beings to the ready-to-hand. Heidegger does note, however, that although the Greeks may have thought of truth in terms of correctness, they at least continued to call truth by a word with etymological traces that allude to a primordial experience with unconcealment. He says:

At the same time, we must not overlook the fact that for the Greeks, who were the first to develop this initial understanding of being as a branch of knowledge and to bring it to dominance, this primordial understanding of truth was also alive, even if pre-ontologically, and it even held its own against the concealment implicit in their ontology - at least in Aristotle.<sup>6</sup>

Modernity, however, is permeated by the correspondence theory of truth - correctness, or agreement with the matter at hand. This view of truth implies that the experience of truth is necessarily structured in terms of the relationship between a subject and an object. As we have seen in the previous chapter, one of Heidegger's aims was to decentre the subject, and I believe that his conception of truth extends this task. Thus, Heidegger's interpretation of *alētheia* as unconcealment opens up a dimension of truth that was not visible to the philosophers of modernity.

### 3.2 Heidegger's Concept of Truth in *Being and Time*. (§ 44)

The exposition of care as the being of Dasein culminates in the enquiry into the connection between Being and truth. This section of *Being and Time* is the point at which the pre-temporal analysis of Dasein ends. Now, Heidegger shows how philosophical thought centres on the connection between Being and truth since its very beginnings. His investigation begins with a discussion of the traditional concept of truth and its ontological foundations. Heidegger then moves on to an investigation into the primordial phenomenon of truth and an account of how the traditional concept was derived from this view. Lastly, he discusses the mode of being of truth and the presupposition of truth.

The customary concept of truth takes a statement as the true locus of truth and sees its essence as being situated in the correspondence of a judgement with its object. Thus, Heidegger distinguishes between the truth ascribed to judgements and a more fundamental sense that should be attached to the term 'truth'.<sup>7</sup> The truth of judgements may be described as the agreement of the thing and the intellect, in the Aristotelian tradition. The statement of Aristotle that the 'experiences' of the soul are in the likeness of things, which is not meant to be taken as a definition of the essential nature of truth, led in the Middle Ages to the definition of *veritas* as *adaequatio intellectus et rei*, a definition which maintained its popularity beyond Kant.

For Heidegger, in addition to the truth of judgment there exists a more essential form of truth that lies not largely in a judgement, but in the human ek-sistence itself, insofar as it is a revealing. The agreement of the judgment with the real thing presupposes that reality has already been drawn from concealedness in a more fundamental way<sup>8</sup>. To draw real things from concealedness to unconcealedness (*alētheia*) requires a certain 'light'. This light is Dasein's ek-sistence itself, its being-in-the-world from which originally all meaning draws its light.<sup>9</sup>

The expression Dasein is 'in the truth'<sup>10</sup>, does not mean that Dasein is in possession of all truth. It means that because of its overtness or open stance (*Offenständigkeit*), which includes its to-be-discovering, Dasein is able to 'disclose'.

Heidegger tells us that 'Dasein is equiprimordially in truth and untruth'.<sup>11</sup> What does he mean here? Heidegger conceives Dasein as being-in-the-world. This means that the openness of Dasein involves the articulated structure of care as a whole,

including the factor of projection (the temporalisation of the future). In other words, Dasein projects itself on its possibilities, opening up its world for itself. Also included is the factor of thrownness – the fact that Dasein always finds itself in a particular world.

In projecting, Dasein may understand himself on the basis of his very own possibilities (authenticity). When this happens, we have the ‘truth of existence’<sup>12</sup>. Or, Dasein may understand himself in terms of the world, to which he has ever already forfeited itself (inauthenticity). Dasein is then in untruth. In this way, Heidegger can say that Dasein is in truth and untruth. When Parmenides places the goddess of truth in front of two paths<sup>13</sup>, those of discovering and concealing, this marks for Heidegger an early insight into the fact that Dasein stands in truth, as well as in untruth.

It is important to remember that by saying that Dasein is in truth does not mean that truths are planted in him by some mysterious power, but that by virtue of being-in-the-world, he is always open for all that is part of his world.

We find the continuation of Heidegger’s enquiry into truth in the lecture *On the Essence of Truth*. How does it differ from the preceding conception in *Being and Time*, where Heidegger has located truth, in an essential sense, in human ek-sistence insofar that this ek-sistence is a revealing?

### **3.3 Heidegger’s Concept of Truth in *On the Essence of Truth***

In the introduction to this lecture, Heidegger reminds us that he is investigating the *essence* of truth, and not the various kinds of truth with which we are familiar. In a manner similar to that of *Being and Time*, Heidegger begins with explaining the common sense concept of truth, namely, truth in the sense of correspondence, and inquires into what is assumed in this concept of truth. He then moves on to allow the problem of truth to emerge in a new light. Here it becomes evident that the nature of human being himself must be thought anew as a result of this questioning. We are provided with an exposition of the nature of Dasein as it must be understood in terms of the nature of truth, and this exposition leads to a new determination of the nature of philosophy itself.

Heidegger notes that the common concept of truth takes correspondence as its basic feature. In the discussion of §44 of *Being and Time*, Heidegger contrasted truth as

correspondence and truth as unconcealedness, and explained how truth can be equated with correspondence and judgement be taken to be the locus of truth. Here Heidegger proceeds in a different way, without rejecting the conclusions arrived at in *Being and Time*.

He tells us that we do not only call judgements true. We ordinarily speak of a true state of affairs. When here, in the thing, we thus equate true and real, this means that when we have a certain concept of the thing, and when the thing corresponds with this concept, we say that it is true – it is as it should be<sup>14</sup>.

Statements are also usually called true or false. 'A statement is true if what it means and says is in accordance with the matter about which the statement is made.'<sup>15</sup> Thus, being right or corresponding is itself capable of being understood in two ways, namely the correspondence of a thing with the idea of it as conceived in advance, as well as the correspondence of that which is intended by a statement with the thing itself.

The traditional definition of truth, *veritas est adaequatio rei et intellectus*, is normally understood in the sense of propositional truth (the approximation of a statement to what it is about), but for propositional truth to be possible at all, it is necessary that we have a definite conception of the thing. In both cases, truth is conceived of as 'conforming with', and is equated with rightness or correctness (*Richtigkeit*)<sup>16</sup>.

To better understand the fact that the traditional concept of truth can be understood in both ways indicated above, Heidegger points us to the medieval understanding of it. He notes that in this interpretation, each version of conformity contains two meanings of *intellectus*. The conformity of the thing with the intellect refers to the divine intellect. In this view, as created by God, things are created in accordance with His ideas, and so they necessarily conform to his ideas. The human intellect is also created by God, and so must also satisfy the divine idea. Heidegger explains:

The *intellectus humanus* too is an *ens creatum*. As a capacity bestowed upon man by God, it must satisfy its *idea*. But the understanding measures up to the idea only in accomplishing in its propositions the correspondence of what is thought to the matter, which in its turn must be in conformity with the *idea*. If all beings are 'created', the possibility of the truth of human knowledge is grounded in the fact that matter and

proposition measure up to the idea in the same way and therefore are fitted to each other on the basis of the unity of the divine plan of creation.<sup>17</sup>

Heidegger goes on to show how this interpretation of truth as correspondence is retained even when the medieval position is abandoned. The rationality of the world (*Weltvernunft*) now replaces God as creator. He says:

The theologically conceived order of creation is replaced by the capacity of all objects to be planned by means of a worldly reason (*Weltvernunft*) which supplies the law for itself and thus also claims that its procedure is immediately intelligible (what is considered 'logical').<sup>18</sup>

Even when this position is abandoned, the interpretation of truth as the correctness of correspondence survives, acquiring an almost absolute validity, and it is forgotten how this interpretation was originally justified.

Heidegger now continues to discuss what correspondence really means. We may speak of correspondence between two things when they have the same appearance. (He uses the example of two five Mark coins). They are not one, but what is common to them is the sameness of appearance. In the context of the problem of truth, however, a different kind of correspondence is meant – namely the correspondence between a thing /matter and a statement. How is it possible that two such disparate things can correspond?

Let us explore Heidegger's example in this regard: This coin is round. Here, the statement is in accordance with the thing. But how are the thing and the statement supposed to be in accordance, considering that the relata are manifestly different in their outward appearance? The coin is made of metal, but the statement is not material at all. The coin is round, but the statement has nothing spatial about it. One can purchase something with the coin, but the statement has no purchasing power. How can the sentence, so unlike a coin, correspond to the coin when it says something about the coin? The approximation of a sentence (statement) to some matter (thing) must mean some special kind of relation. Heidegger calls it a representative (*vor-stellende*) relation, in which the statement is keyed to the thing and says something about how it is in any particular respect.



Heidegger thinks of re-presenting (*Vor-stellen*) not in the psychological sense, but rather as to 'let the thing stand opposed as object'<sup>19</sup>. The thing so opposed, according to Heidegger, must traverse an open field of opposedness (*Entgegen*), and nevertheless maintain its stand as a thing and show itself as something withstanding (*ein Ständiges*).

Thus, for Heidegger, in order that the person who states something may represent anything as an object (*Gegen-stand*), the thing must show itself – it must enter into a realm which Heidegger calls the 'open region'. Heidegger rejects the idea that the representing subject creates this region – rather, the representing subject must place himself within this sphere. A relationship between the presenter and the represented occurs, which Heidegger conceives of as a comportment (*Verhalten*), which is distinguished by the fact that, standing in the open region, it adheres to something opened up as such.

Heidegger tells us that if the correctness (truth) of statements becomes possible only through this openness of comportment, then what first makes correctness possible must be taken as the essence of truth. He says:

Thus the traditional assignment of truth exclusively to statements as the sole essential locus of truth falls away. Truth does not originally reside in the proposition. But at the same time the question arises as to the ground of the inner possibility of the open comportment that pre-gives a standard, which possibility alone lends to propositional correctness the appearance of fulfilling the essence of truth at all.<sup>20</sup>

In the next section of the essay, entitled *The Ground of the Possibility of Correctness*, Heidegger's reflections on truth are given an unanticipated turn, for now it becomes evident that 'the essence of truth is freedom'.<sup>21</sup> This is quite contrary to the traditional concept of truth, and Heidegger goes about discussing how freedom is to be conceived in his view in the section on *The Essence of Freedom*.

So far, freedom has been exhibited as man's open stance (*Offenständigkeit*). Standing in the open region, he is able to subject himself to what is manifest and shows itself in it, and commit himself to it. With this commitment, there takes place a letting-be (*Sein-lassen*). For Heidegger, this letting-be does not refer to neglect or

indifference, but rather means to 'engage oneself with beings'<sup>22</sup>. To let beings be as the beings which they are, means for Heidegger to engage oneself with the open region and its openness into which every being comes to stand, bringing that openness along with itself. Letting-be is not just any activity of man, but is that by virtue of which he becomes Dasein, an entity that is defined by its relationship to the open. It now becomes clear once again why from *Being and Time* onwards, Heidegger speaks of Dasein instead of man. For, man is man only by virtue of being in the open, standing in the open and letting-be what is manifested.

Unconcealment is experienced at the moment when '... the first thinker takes a questioning stand with regard to the unconcealment of beings by asking: what are beings?'<sup>23</sup>. This signifies a great moment for Heidegger, since it also signifies the beginning of historical existence, of the history of the West. What is ordinarily called history is only something secondary compared with the openness in which humankind stands at a particular time – the openness which it guards and which is the basis of its entire relationship to what-is.

Heidegger cautions that man does not possess freedom as a property. Rather, the opposite is true: 'Freedom, *ek-sistent* disclosive Dasein possesses man – so originally that only *it* secures for humanity that distinctive relatedness to being as a whole as such which first founds all history.'<sup>24</sup>

In the act of representing, human being can let an entity itself lay its claim upon him and become representable. In this way, human being establishes a bond with beings. But, Heidegger tells us, it is just this characteristic (the essence of truth as freedom) that makes it possible for human being not to let what-is be as it is, but to cover up and misrepresent it. Semblance comes to power and the non-essence of truth comes to the fore. But if freedom is not an attribute of human being, then untruth also should not simply be attributed to human being as a kind of failure. In other words, 'If the essence of truth is not exhausted by the correctness of statements, then neither can untruth be equated with the incorrectness of judgements.'<sup>25</sup>

Heidegger now continues his enquiry into the connection between truth and untruth on the basis of a discussion of the meaning of attunement or mood (*Stimmung*). I have already discussed the concept of mood as an existential from *Being and Time*, where it was analysed in connection with the movement of thrownness and also as a primordial mode of disclosure of the world. In this lecture, however, the concept of

mood is developed as a manifestation of the primordial openness, which corresponds with our relationship to what-is in its totality and is based on it. Heidegger seeks a fundamental attunement and finds it in the primordial relationship with beings in their totality. 'Man's comportment is brought into definite accord throughout by the openedness of being as a whole.'<sup>26</sup> Usually we stick to the particular entity that is at that moment manifest, and what is whole is just that which does not become thematic. This means that that to which we are attuned actually conceals itself. Thus Heidegger can state: 'In the ek-sistent freedom of Da-sein a concealing of being as a whole propriates (*ereignet sich*). Here there *is* concealment.'<sup>27</sup>

Disclosure of any kind can only take place on the basis of concealedness. While letting an entity be, Dasein relates itself to this hiddenness or un-revealedness (*Un-entborgenheit*), but purely in such a way that the hiddenness itself remains concealed from it. According to Heidegger, this is 'the mystery'<sup>28</sup>.

A thinking that seeks to reach out to beings in their totality encounters hiddenness and experiences it as the distinctive nature of truth, which means, as untruth. It is true that concealedness is the basis of all disclosure, but traditionally, we are so thoroughly gripped by the thing that is revealed that concealedness itself (the mystery) falls into oblivion. Oblivion of the mystery does not make it lose its power, but rather the consequence of this forgetting expresses itself in the fact that human being clutches onto what is 'readily available'<sup>29</sup>. Human being mistakenly takes himself, as subject, to be the standard for all beings, and so *in-sists* rather than *ex-sists*. In other words, human being holds fast to what is offered by beings, as if they were open of and in themselves. Here, once again, we see how Heidegger attempts to decentre human being from his privileged position as subject.

As insistent, human being is turned towards the most readily available beings, and in insisting human being errs. 'Man's flight from the mystery towards what is readily available, onward from one current thing to the next, passing the mystery by – this is *erring*.'<sup>30</sup> It is because error stems from the essence of truth that human being is able to advance from error to this essence. This takes place in the course of thinking that reflects on Being itself. In this lecture, Heidegger calls it philosophy, although later, he will expressly set philosophy off against thinking.

Heidegger concludes:

The present undertaking takes the question of the essence of truth beyond the confines of the ordinary definition provided in the usual concept of essence and helps us to consider whether the question of the essence of truth must not be, at the same time and even first of all, the question concerning the truth of essence. But in the concept of 'essence' philosophy thinks Being. In tracing the inner possibility of statements back to the ek-sistent freedom of letting-be as its 'ground', likewise in pointing to the essential commencement of this ground in concealing and in errancy, we want to show that the essence of truth is not the empty 'generality' of an 'abstract' universality but rather that which, self-concealing, is unique in the unremitting history of the disclosure of the 'meaning' of what we call Being – what we for a long time have been accustomed to considering only as being as a whole.<sup>31</sup>

The lecture *On the Essence of Truth* was to have been completed by a second lecture *On the Truth of Essence*. The latter failed for reasons cited in the *Letter on Humanism*. Here Heidegger explained that this division was withheld because the available language of metaphysics was inadequate to express the turn from *Being and Time* to *Time and Being*. He tells us that:

The adequate execution and completion of this other thinking that abandons subjectivity is surely made more difficult by the fact that in the publication of *Being and Time* the third division of the first part, 'Time and Being' was held back...The division in question was held back because thinking failed in the adequate saying of this turning (*Kehre*) and did not succeed with the help of the language of metaphysics. The lecture 'On the Essence' of Truth'...provides a certain insight into the thinking of the turning from 'Being and Time' to 'Time and Being'.<sup>32</sup>

When we compare the above lecture to *Being and Time*, we note how Heidegger's thought has been extended. In *Being and Time*, the traditional concept of truth is put into question, as is the traditional view that truth has its locus in judgement. In the context of Dasein as being-in-the-world, truth is seen as the truth of existence – i.e. as resoluteness. Resoluteness in the sense of unclosedness is the presupposition of man's relation to entities, in which relation entities show themselves to be true. In this lecture, the situation is altered. Thinking does not start from Dasein and proceed in the direction of truth, but rather, Dasein and its relation to what-is is seen from the

point of view of truth. The relation of human being to beings is characterised as an open stance, which in turn is thought of as freedom.

In its decisive steps, which lead from truth as correctness to ek-sistent freedom, and from the latter to truth as concealing and errancy, Heidegger's lecture accomplishes a change in questioning that belongs to the overcoming of metaphysics. Every kind of anthropology and all subjectivity of human being as subject is not merely left behind, as it was already in *Being and Time*, but rather, the movement of the lecture is such that it sets out to think *from Dasein*.

### **3.4 Heidegger's Concept of Truth in *The Origin of the Work of Art***

This text begins with the announcement of its central concern, namely, discovering the origin from which a work of art becomes a work of art. Heidegger avoids the simple answer that the origin of the artwork is the artist himself, and tells us that the question of origin (*der Ursprung*) relates the work of art to truth as *alētheia* or unconcealment. What does this mean?

When we try to understand a work of art, we find that we can consider it by way of the fact that it is a thing. Heidegger analyses the various familiar attempts at defining a thing: a thing as the bearer of traits, a thing as a unity of a manifold of sensations, a thing as formed matter<sup>33</sup>. He goes on to distinguish between a thing that is naturally there (for example, a clod of earth); a thing that is meant for use (a hammer); and the work (in the sense of a work of art). When we try to see what is essential in these distinctions, we find that the aforementioned interpretations do not take us very far. This view of things is exhibited in the history of metaphysics with its attempts at thinking about beings. Heidegger is engaged in a continuing questioning of metaphysics, and so is concerned with finding another path, which represents a turning away from metaphysics. In this essay, his path proceeds as follows:

In order to find out what a utensil is, Heidegger begins with an examination of an artistic representation – Van Gogh's picture of a peasant's shoes. From this picture we learn something of the world of the peasant – his work and exertions, his worries and hardships. Now, we have a new definition of a utensil – reliability. In other words, the artwork has shown us the shoes (utensil) in terms of their serviceability (reliability). Can we justify this definition? The concept of a utensil solely in terms of its serviceability grasps it merely from the point of view of its utility. If we do not move

beyond this obvious way of understanding a utensil, we get to know the utensil only as pure instrument. In Heidegger's example, there is present, along with the shoes, the realm of labour as the world of the peasant.

The essence of the exposition on utensils is that by way of a work of art (van Gogh's picture) we have learned that what makes a utensil what it is, is its reliability. The utensil character has become apparent through being represented in a work of art. The work makes manifest what a certain entity is. 'The artwork lets us know what the shoes are in truth.'<sup>34</sup> In the work of art, then, something makes its appearance. This stepping-into-appearance is the first allusion we find in this essay to the realm of *alētheia* as unhiddenness. Disclosure of a particular being means that an entity becomes accessible in its essential nature. In the case of the peasant shoes, they become familiar in terms of their reliability. When this occurs, it is a happening of truth, where truth means letting beings become accessible in their essence.

From the work, we come to know what the thing really is as a utensil. At the same time, we come to know what the work is, namely, what happens in and through the work - the becoming accessible of an entity with regard to what it is.

If we wish to understand the special feature of the work, as compared with the utensil and the mere thing, we must investigate the phenomenon of the work showing-itself. In other words, if the work of art is 'truth setting itself to work'<sup>35</sup>, we must examine how truth is to be considered in its connection with the nature of the work. To do this, Heidegger carries out an analysis of a Greek temple. In the previous example, it was possible to understand art in terms of a depiction and to think that the work fulfils its function by representing something. In this case, the temple represents or copies nothing. And yet: 'It is the temple work that first fits together and at the same time gathers around itself the unity of those paths and relations in which birth and death, disaster and blessing, victory and disgrace, endurance and decline acquire the shape of destiny for human being'<sup>36</sup>. The temple thus brings to light the world in which it exists. The temple is also erected at a particular site, and so by standing there, the temple brings the site itself to light. The site is not just another place, but is that on which all locations are grounded, what the Greeks called *physis*, and what Heidegger calls the 'earth'.

The world is not the mere collection of the countable or uncountable, familiar or unfamiliar things that are at hand. But neither is it a merely

imagined framework added by our representation to the sum of such given things. The *world worlds*, and is more fully in being than the tangible and perceptible realm in which we believe ourselves to be at home. World is never an object that stands before us and can be seen. World is the ever-non-objective to which we are subject as long as the paths of birth and death, blessing and curse keep us transported into Being.<sup>37</sup>

We typically understand the world as the sum of objects known to us, or those that we could possibly know. Heidegger rejects this view. We cannot know the world of the Middle Ages by adducing the objects known in that period. We can only arrive at a conception of the world when we come to know the manner in which entities become accessible to human being in a particular epoch, or, to put it differently, the kind of openness in which human being stands, so that entities may be encountered in a corresponding fashion.

Because the world consists, for Heidegger, in the happening of openness, and because the work of art 'sets up the world'<sup>38</sup>, Heidegger can say that 'The work holds open the open region of the world'.<sup>39</sup>

Setting up (*Aufstellen*) a world is one main attribute of a work. The other characteristic is setting or putting forth (*Herstellen*). This suggests the practical idea of mechanical production, but this is not what Heidegger has in mind when he speaks of putting forth. In the usual sense of producing (*Herstellen*), it is a question of working up some material for the purpose of preparing some equipment or tool. The stuff of which the tool is made is subsumed entirely in the function that it is meant to perform. This disappearance of the stuff in favour of its utility in the production of a utensil is contrasted with the way in which the stuff stands out in a work of art. This is not a making in which something new is produced, but one that frees us for that on which we ever stand or dwell. The earth makes its appearance because the work sets itself back into it.

Heidegger points out that although the scientific-calculating mode of experience can objectify the earth and thus have it available for control, this way of dealing with it does not make the earth comprehensible as the earth, i.e. our dwelling place.

Earth thus shatters every attempt to penetrate it. It causes every merely calculating importunity upon it to turn into a destruction. This destruction may herald itself under the appearance of mastery and of progress in the form of the technical-scientific objectification of nature, but this mastery nevertheless remains an impotence of will.<sup>40</sup>

Thus, for Heidegger, 'The setting up of a world and the setting forth of earth are two essential features in the work-being of the work.'<sup>41</sup> It is by virtue of setting up a world and setting forth the earth that the work is a work. The repose of the work, which distinguishes it from the mere thing and the utensil, happens in both these modes of setting. But is rest something that can happen?

Only what is in motion can rest. The mode of rest varies with the kind of motion. In motion as the mere displacement of the physical body, rest is, to be sure, only the limiting case of motion. Where rest includes motion, there can exist a repose which is an inner concentration of motion, hence supreme agitation, assuming that the mode of motion requires such a rest.<sup>42</sup>

Heidegger now continues to discuss the op-position of world and earth, in order to highlight the agitation mentioned above and to bring us to a better understanding of repose.

The strife between world and earth first exhibits itself as the opposition between what opens itself up and something that shuts itself in. In the world, we have the realm of openness, in which our decisions can unfold. Historical worlds can therefore be differentiated from one another on the basis of the modes of openness characterising them. The earth, on the other hand, is the 'spontaneous forthcoming of that which is continually self-secluding and to that extent sheltering and concealing.'<sup>43</sup>

There is no world without earth, no openness that cannot settle down on the earth. 'The world grounds itself on the earth, and earth juts through the world.'<sup>44</sup> The earth is that which exhibits itself in the open and that which we come to see as the place where world grounds itself, where it installs itself. Heidegger tells us that the opposition of the world and earth is strife, and that it is in the work where this strife is brought to a head.



Heidegger now continues with *alētheia* – the unconcealment of beings - as the principal theme of the essay. He reminds us that truth as correctness or rightness presupposes that entities stand in the open. Thus, unhidderness as clearing is the presupposition for the idea of truth as correctness. Yet, unhidderness is also not a supposition expressly made by human being, but one in which he is transposed, though without actually noticing it because we always cling to entities which are manifest to us. Heidegger explains:

But it is not we who presuppose the unconcealment of beings (Being) puts us into such a condition of being that in our representation we always remain installed within and in attendance upon unconcealment. With all our correct representations we would get nowhere, we could not even presuppose that there already is manifest something to which we can conform ourselves, unless the unconcealment of beings had already exposed us to, placed us in that cleared realm in which every being stands for us and from which it withdraws.<sup>45</sup>

Because this clearing is not thought of or noticed as a clearing, Heidegger can say that it withdraws itself, that it is a concealment. This character of concealment exhibits itself in two ways, namely, as a refusal and a dissembling. When we say of an entity only that it is, we seem to dispense with everything else. The present entity seems to defy further dissemination. This is what Heidegger means by refusal. When an entity places itself before another, when we take the one for the other, when a being appears but presents itself as other than it is, this concealment is dissembling. Here we have an indication of the possibility of error, deception or oversight.

Refusal has a certain priority, while dissembling is a secondary mode of concealing. Concealment is not something to be abolished or overcome since we do not have concealment under our control. We are always exposed to it. Being exposed to concealment is described by Heidegger as the denial-permeated, denial-dominated nature of truth that he formulates as follows: 'Truth, in its essence, is untruth.'<sup>46</sup> Unconcealedness as clearing involves denial in the mode of concealing. This points to the fact that in truth itself, strife prevails. In this strife, the clearing is what is contended for. Truth is a happening – a happening of the conflict between unconcealedness and concealment. 'The essence of truth is, in itself, the primal strife in which that open centre is won within which beings stand and from which they set themselves back into themselves.'<sup>47</sup>

Heidegger reminds us that the world is not simply the open region that corresponds to clearing, and the earth is not simply the closed region that corresponds to concealment<sup>48</sup>. By thinking of world as a specific openness, the opposition between openness and concealment is not eradicated. The openness, in which decisions are made, does not make these decisions less significant. The openness is not some kind of controlling power, but rather generates a relationality with entities. What occurs in it is altogether undetermined. In this indeterminateness lies also that which remains unmastered in the sense of the concealed.

One of the ways in which truth happens as the primal strife between clearing and concealing is in the work of art. Heidegger is not saying that by representing something the work gives expression to what is true. Heidegger says: 'Thus in the work it is truth, not merely something true, that is at work.'<sup>49</sup>

Heidegger tells us that 'beauty is one way in which truth essentially occurs as unconcealment'<sup>50</sup>. For him, the beautiful is not explained in terms of subjective experience, of how the work affects the subject, but in terms of the openness that becomes manifest in a work of art. How an entity makes its appearance within unconcealedness can be grasped, and it is by way of this stepping into appearance that we gain an indication of the sway of unconcealedness itself, that is to say, of Being. In the work, the sway of unconcealedness gives to the work its beauty, i.e. its character of shining forth. In it, this shining itself makes its appearance, though in such a peculiar way that we do not notice it at all. It is important to note here that Heidegger is not saying that beauty is the only mode of experiencing truth, but only that it is one possible way.

In the next section of the essay, entitled 'Truth and Art', a change takes place in Heidegger's approach to the problem. Previously, the inquiry proceeded from art to truth. Now, he seeks to gain insight into art from the point of view of truth.

Heidegger notes that 'Truth is untruth, insofar as there belongs to it the reservoir of the not-yet-revealed, the uncovered, in the sense of concealment. In unconcealment, as truth, there occurs also the other 'un-' of a double restraint or refusal.'<sup>51</sup> The strife going on within truth leads to the contest for such a thing as openness, in which what is manifest makes its appearance. The work of art is an entity in which the openness takes its stand and attains its constancy. Heidegger names several other ways in

which truth establishes itself, namely in deeds that found a political state, in the essential sacrifice, and in thinking itself. In contrast, Heidegger sees science as standing in a realm that is already opened up.

Heidegger returns to a discussion on the tension between world and earth. In the earth, there is gathered together for Heidegger what we so inadequately seek to conceive of as material, and what is necessarily part of the work of art, although in different ways in the plastic and graphic arts as opposed to music and poetry. The place of the concept of form is taken by figure or shape (*Gestalt*), which at first seems to be similar to it. But figure is not the look of what is pictured in the work, it is rather the way in which truth is fitted together in its appearing, which Heidegger calls the 'rift' (*Riss*) – the coming into view of the strife of world and earth. Strife is not a rift, as a mere cleft is ripped open, rather it is, in Heidegger's sense of the word, the intimacy with which opponents belong to each other.

Through the work, our ties with the world and earth are changed. In the work we are torn out of the accustomed and the familiar ceases to be so. Expressly experiencing this change in our relation the world and earth is for Heidegger the preserving (*Bewahren*) of the work.' Preserving the work means standing within the openness of beings that happens in the work. This 'standing –within' of preservation, however, is a knowing.<sup>152</sup> This standing-within requires a special attitude in the one who experiences it. Standing-within means closeness in the sense of familiarity. This idea is elucidated in the text in the context of knowing and willing. Heidegger says that he who truly knows beings knows what he wills to do in the midst of them. In other words, the knowing that Heidegger refers to here is not a knowing in the sense of merely getting to know something and representing it. It is rather a knowing that opens up to us what we have to do – what we want.

Heidegger now turns his questioning back to art, the initial subject of the enquiry. 'If art is the origin of the work, this means that art lets those who essentially belong together at work, the creator and the preserver, originate, each in his own essence.'<sup>153</sup> But art itself was originally defined as the setting-into-work of truth. Setting into work is thought of in a twofold sense – as the establishment of truth itself in the figure; and as the preserving of the truth that happens in the work. Letting truth, in the sense of openness, happen, Heidegger calls poetry (*Dichtung*). He states that: 'All art, as the letting happen of the advent of truth of beings, is as such, in essence, poetry.'<sup>154</sup>

This definition of art in terms of poetry does not mean reducing all arts to poesy, but rather that in all art, what is composed (*gedichtet*) is truth in the sense of unconcealedness. Language is that through which entities are brought into the open, and so Heidegger can call language itself poetry in the essential sense. In this essay, then, we can now see the intimate entwining of Heidegger's thought on truth and language. The disclosure of entities that occurs in language is presupposed in all possible dealings we have with entities.

Heidegger now continues to elucidate the determination of poetry as the founding of truth. This founding is understood in a threefold sense – as bestowing, as grounding and as beginning. Through the transformation that occurs within the work of art, something out of the ordinary is created. This something is an overflow, a surplus – the granting of this surplus is bestowing.

In the bestowing of art there occurs a projecting, which makes possible for man that within which he stands – his abode. This is the grounding that occurs in art. For Heidegger, the early thinking of the Greeks, which precedes metaphysical thinking, laid the ground on which we stand today. At each time in the history of the West, a new and essential world arose. At each time, the openness of what is had to be established in beings themselves, by the fixing in place of truth in figure. At each time, unconcealment of what is took place.

In conclusion then, Heidegger thinks the original nature of art in terms of the nature of truth. In this essay, he questions the concept of *alētheia* more radically. To enquire into art is at the same time, in this essay, to enquire into world and earth (Being), as well as into *alētheia*.

In both *Being and Time*, as well as *The Origin of the Work of Art*, truth and un-truth are intimately related. It is Dasein's temporal articulation that constitutes its Being as a dialectic of truth and untruth. This means that the ontology of an artwork, i.e. the winning of truth within a context that involves both truth and untruth, is not an isolated ontology, but lies, instead, at the heart of Dasein's being. The link between art and truth is justified in that both are grounded in the same primordial existential phenomenon and share the same dialectical subtlety.

### 3.5 Heidegger's Concept of Truth in *The Question Concerning Technology*

In 1949, Heidegger delivered four lectures to the Bremen Club under the general title *Insight into What Is*. Each lecture had its own title, namely, *The Thing*, *The Enframing*, *The Danger* and *The Turning*. *The Enframing* was completely revised as *The Question Concerning Technology* in 1953. It is this essay that I will discuss in detail in this section, firstly to come to grips with how Heidegger views truth in it, and secondly to prepare the way for Chapter 4 which deals specifically with Heidegger's conception of technology.

The starting point of the essay is provided by the common conception of technology as an instrument. Heidegger proceeds to demolish this conception in the course of his presentation. He tells us at the beginning of the essay that 'The essence of technology is by no means anything technological.'<sup>55</sup>

Heidegger admits that the concept of technology as instrument is 'uncannily correct', but he draws a distinction between the correct and the true, indicating that his course of thought is intended to advance from representing the right to the apprehension of the true. Thus, already in the first few pages of this essay, Heidegger hints at the intimate connection he will draw between technology and truth.

In order to traverse this path leading from the correct to the true, it is important to understand what is meant by the instrumental. It is a means. A means is that whereby something is effected and something is attained. This points us in the direction of the question of causality. For centuries, philosophy has taught that there are four causes: *causa materialis* (matter), *causa formalis* (form), *causa efficiens* (efficient cause) and *causa finalis* (final cause). In doing so, it appeals to the authority of Aristotle. But Heidegger reminds us that in Greek thought, causality had nothing to do with effectuating and causing. What we call cause (*Ursache*) and what the Romans called *causa*, was called *aition* by the Greeks, which means being indebted to or responsible for.

What is owed in this being-responsible-for, this involving in debt? Heidegger tells us that it is the being-responsible-for that lets 'what is not yet present arrive into presencing.'<sup>56</sup> This occasioning in the sense of bringing forth is called *poiēsis*.

*Poiēsis* is not limited to the agency of man, since *physis* (nature) too is *poiēsis*. Constantly, and by itself, nature brings things into presence – lets entities be present. There is, however, a difference between a bringing forth by man and natural production. The latter does not need any other agency to let something become present. Nature is by itself and in itself, a bringing forth. Heidegger tells us that:

Bringing forth brings out of concealment into unconcealment. Bringing forth propriates only insofar as something concealed comes into unconcealment. This coming rests and moves freely within what we call revealing [*das Entbergen*]. The Greeks have the word *alētheia* for revealing. The Romans translate this with *veritas*. We say truth and usually understand it as correctness of representation

Bringing technology into relation with *alētheia*, which at first seemed to be strange, now seems plausible. If we think of *alētheia* as disclosure, which makes something unhidden in the sense of letting something appear and of attaining presence, then we can see that what is produced in every bringing forth is indeed a presence. If we admit that technology is a kind of bringing-forth, then technology also belongs to the realm of *alētheia*.

In Greek thought, from which the concept of *techne* derives – *techne* and *episteme* belong together, since both are modes of knowing. Heidegger cites Aristotle's *Nichomachean Ethics*, Book VI, Chapters 3 and 4, as evidence in this regard. Here *techne* and *episteme* are explicitly regarded as modes of disclosing. Aristotle viewed *techne* with specific regard to the fact that it reveals whatever 'does not bring itself forth and does not yet lie here before us, whatever can look and turn out now one way and now another.'<sup>57</sup> In this process, what is decisive is the prevision of the figure or form to be attained. It is in this previsioning that there occurs the disclosure, which then constitutes the basis of everything that follows.

Heidegger takes up the possible objection that although this way of defining *techne* may be applicable in the Greek sphere, it cannot be applied to the modern machine-powered technology. We can now ask whether the interconnectedness of *alētheia* and *techne* also apply to modern technology and what the essential nature of modern technology is?

Heidegger tells us that within the realm of modern technology, *alētheia* and *techne* also exhibit this close interconnectedness. Even modern technology must be seen in the context of hiddenness and disclosure. To do so adequately, one must consider the question of the essence of modern technology. This is the central question of this essay, for it concerns the manner in which, in modern technology, a disclosing or uncovering takes place. In other words, how do entities manifest themselves in the technological way of dealing with them? This leads to another question: How does the human being who is determined by technology respond to what is given?

Heidegger's answer is that in the technological attitude, everything is presented merely in respect to its availability and disposability – everything becomes standing reserve (*Bestand*). Thus, turned into something 'on order', everything is put into use. Utilising puts everything in such a position that what is thus placed follows the result that is to ensue. Everything is thus 'in consequence of'. The consequence is something that has been from the very first intended as the desired result. The result is that kind of consequence which itself remains geared to the upshot of further consequences. The standing reserve is sustained by a particular kind of placing – dis-posing [*Be-stellen*, positing in the manner of making disposable].

This way of viewing beings defines a new epoch. In the previous epoch, entities were apprehended as objects. In the modern period, man was seen as a 'knowing' subject, and that which faced him an object. Man therefore was seen as the measure of things. In modern technology, this idea is carried to the extreme, in the sense of man having mastery over all the objects in the world. The mastery shows itself in the power of having something at one's disposal, and this takes place in the *Bestand* – the transformation of things into standing reserve.

Heidegger does not see this transformation as simply the result of human caprice. The change from object to standing reserve allows us to become aware of a transformation of unconcealedness (*alētheia*), a transformation that according to Heidegger is totally outside man's control, even though it concerns him deeply. Such a transformation we find in human being's dealings with entities in the manner of the Greek concept of *bringing-forth*, or the objectification that occurred subsequently, or finally, in the contemporary mode of turning into standing reserve.

Wherever man opens his eyes and ears, unlocks his heart, and gives himself over to meditating and striving, shaping and working, entreating

and thanking, he finds himself everywhere already brought into the unconcealed. The unconcealment of the unconcealed has already appropriated wherever it calls man forth into the modes of revealing allotted to him. When man, in his way, from within unconcealment reveals that which presences, he merely responds to the call of unconcealment, even when he contradicts it. Thus when man, investigating, observing, pursues nature as an area of his own conceiving, he has already been claimed by a way of revealing that challenges him to approach nature as an object of research, until even the object disappears into the objectlessness of standing reserve.<sup>58</sup>

Thus, for Heidegger, the essence of human being remains to be defined and sustained by his relationship to unconcealedness. This is in line with his view as explained in the sections on *Being and Time*, *On the Essence of Truth* and *The Origin of the Work of Art*. The openness, which lets every manifest entity be encountered, is this unconcealedness. Along with the mode of openness, in which human being is placed, his relation and approach to the manifest entities also changes.

The technological way of dealing with entities is thus not an activity capriciously chosen by man; rather, human being is placed within this way of dealing with them by that specific mode of unconcealment itself, which Heidegger calls Enframing (*Ge-stell*). *Ge-stell* is not of the nature of a thing, but names a specific mode of unconcealedness.

Enframing means the gathering together of the setting upon that sets upon man, i.e., challenges him forth, to reveal the actual, in the mode of ordering, as standing reserve. Enframing means the way of revealing that holds sway in the essence of modern technology and that is itself nothing technological.<sup>59</sup>

The fact that machinery of various sorts is bound up with the operations and organisation of technology should not lead us to think of *Ge-stell* as referring to what is of such a thingly character. Heidegger discards a description of technology as an instrument, and rather wants to inquire back into the unconcealedness typical of technology.



He goes on to point out that the word *Stellen* in *Ge-stell* is intended to keep alive the connection of *Stellen* in the sense of bring forth, as it occurs in *poiēsis*. In the kind of bringing forth or producing that conforms to *poiēsis*, entities are brought into presence, but not in such a way that they are standing reserve. The Greek letting-become-present that we have in this bringing-forth in the sense of *poiēsis* and the modern securing of resources as a challenging of Nature in the sense of *Ge-stell* are two opposite poles that belong in the same dimension – the basic dimension of unconcealment (*alētheia*). Unhiddenness happens in both, though in very different ways.

Heidegger tells us that 'Man's ordering attitude and behaviour display themselves first in the rise of modern physics as an exact science.'<sup>60</sup> Heidegger believed that modern science is in essence technological. He calls modern physics the '...herald of enframing, a herald whose provenance is still unknown.'<sup>61</sup> I will discuss Heidegger's indictment of modern science in Chapter 4 in more detail.

Heidegger goes on to focus on understanding the *Ge-stell*. In the *Ge-stell*, there is not meant anything thingly, but rather a mode of human being's relationality to entities. Heidegger deliberately avoids speaking of relationality, since it implies human being to be the centre of relations. In its modern form, this position has been exposed and seen through by Heidegger as a particular mode in which metaphysics has evolved. Because we stand within this metaphysical tradition, it is very difficult for us to escape this approach.

In the *Ge-stell*, a particular mode of disclosure occurs. Human being is intimately involved in this disclosure, but he is nevertheless not the master of disclosing. Heidegger says: 'Enframing is the gathering together which belongs to that setting-upon which challenges man and puts him in position to reveal the actual, in the mode of ordering, as standing-reserve. As the one who is challenged forth in this way, man stands within the essential realm of enframing.'<sup>62</sup>

Thus, in the *Ge-stell*, human being experiences a particular mode of disclosing – he is placed in it as a kind of destiny. Heidegger regards the pondering of this destiny to be one of human being's most fundamental tasks, since this pondering opens up a pre-eminent possibility – the possibility of not simply remaining restricted to this particular way of dealing with what is. This possibility of escaping from a specific relationality is opened up in and by thinking. It lies in inquiring into the dimension that

is the primary basis of every kind of disclosing, the dimension of unconcealedness. This quest enables human being to find himself, i.e., to find a determination of his own being, which is sustained by the relationship to unconcealedness.

This does not, however, mean that human being is a mere bearer or messenger. How concealment comes about does not lie with human being. But, on the other hand, human being need not necessarily be totally absorbed in dis-posing, for he is capable of recollecting that which delivers such a thing as dis-posing at all. In disclosing as *poiēsis*, disclosing as objectification and disclosing as dis-posing, what is appears in a different manner, and human being also understands himself differently.

In the case of dis-posing, we see how human being is allowed to be only something dis-posable, and yet, human being puts on airs of being the absolute master over every being. '...Man everywhere and always encounters only himself.'<sup>63</sup> In Heidegger's interpretation, however, the very opposite becomes evident – '*In truth, however, precisely nowhere does man today any longer encounter himself, i.e. his essence.*'<sup>64</sup>

The supremacy of *Ge-stell* '...threatens man with the possibility that it could be denied to him to enter into a more original revealing and hence to experience the call of a more primal truth. Thus where enframing reigns, there is *danger* in the highest sense.'<sup>65</sup> This is because truth is not, for Heidegger, located in the statement, but is, rather, as unhiddenness, that destiny within which human being stands.

Yet, if in the *Ge-stell* a certain mode of unhiddenness is exhibited, if in every kind of unhiddenness something like a granting is involved, then precisely here too, the idea of something that grants may become a matter calling for thought. Thus human being may be seen in terms of his relationship to truth, which is Heidegger's constant endeavour. Such thinking may contribute something towards surmounting the loss of substance that results from the sheer dis-posing and securing of resources. This could become the start of a process of transformation – a transformation made possible in the sense of a happening that rescues, which can emerge in the midst of the utmost peril. It is conceivable that such a transformation may come about precisely from the realm of art, for in art the main point has long been a letting-come-to-light of that which is. It may also come about in thinking, as distinguished from mere philosophising that remains ensnared within the grip of metaphysics.

### **3.6 Heidegger's Concept of Truth in *On the Way to Language: The Nature of Language***

Throughout his work, Heidegger remains on the trail of language. In this section, I concentrate on understanding Heidegger's conception of truth in relation to language by focusing on a text from *On the Way to Language* entitled *The Nature of Language*.

The introduction to the three lectures entitled *The Nature of Language* describes what is at issue as the possibility of 'undergoing an experience with language'.<sup>66</sup> To undergo an experience with language means to let ourselves be properly concerned by the claim of language in that our attention is drawn to our relation with language. In other words, Heidegger is not suggesting that we carry out experiments with language, but rather that we recall that language is our abode.

Thus, from the beginning of this essay, Heidegger makes it clear that his enquiry into the nature of language is not intended to be conducted along the lines of a modern metaphysics, and that investigations of a metalinguistic character remain bound to this way of thinking. 'Metalinguistics is the metaphysics of the thoroughgoing technicalization of all languages into the sole operative instrument of interplanetary information.'<sup>67</sup> Here we can already see the intimate connection between language and modern technology in Heidegger's view.

In undergoing an experience with language, our objective is that language itself may 'bring itself to language', give utterance to itself. Language has the special peculiarity that we live in it, are at home in it, but usually without expressly turning our attention to it. To extricate himself from this situation, Heidegger appeals to a poet. He does so because in his view, the poet possesses a privileged relationship to language and also can give utterance to this relationship. Heidegger chooses a poem by Stefan George called *The Word*, which appeared in 1919, to form the centre of his discussion:

## The Word

Wonder or dream from distant land  
I carried to my country's strand

And waited till the twilit morn  
Had found the name within her bourn-

Then I could grasp it close and strong  
It blooms and shines now the front along...

Once I returned from happy sail,  
I had a prize so rich and frail,

She sought for long and tidings told:  
'No like of this these depths enfold.'

And straight it vanished from my hand,  
The treasure never graced my land...

So I renounced and sadly see:  
Where word beaks off no thing may be.

The first triad tells us about the poet – he is able to bring home marvellous things and treasures seen in dream. The goddess of fate, Norn, presents him with names for what he has brought in. Thus, that which already is, is made to shine forth by the word, even for others. It is through the name that the poet keeps hold of his vision, which is then able to unfold itself by virtue of this retention. What is presented here is a highlight of the poetic act. The triad culminates in the evocation of a presence.

In contrast to this, the second triad speaks of an experience in which the poet brings for the purpose of being given a name, not a faraway thing, but something familiar – he calls it a jewel, a treasure. We may here conjecture that it is *the* jewel that makes the being of its bearer manifest – enables this being itself to appear. But precisely for that the goddess Norn cannot find any name. Since she had found, till then, a name for every entity, it might be supposed that what is now presented is a nonentity. But, on the other hand, it is called a jewel all the same, specially precious, and therefore an entity of an unmatched kind.

Because there is no word for it, the treasure disappears - the poet cannot retain it. Here a new mode of the word's being appears. The word can provide a name not merely for grasping something that already is, but on the contrary, it is that which

bestows presence as well. 'Stated more explicitly, the poet has experienced that only the word makes a thing appear as the thing it is, and thus lets it be present.'<sup>68</sup>

According to Heidegger, the end of the poem mentions not that which is to be renounced, but the realm into which renunciation must enter. 'What the poet learned to renounce is his formerly cherished view regarding the relation of thing and word.'<sup>69</sup>

The poet experiences himself as one who is entrusted with the word. He is the trustee of the word. Here, expression is given to a boundary-experience for which no word is adequate, for which Norn cannot find a name. This should not, however, be taken in a purely negative sense. For with the learning of renunciation, the potency of the word also becomes apparent. In the mood of sadness Heidegger discovers 'the mood of replacement into the nearness of what is withdrawn but at the same time held in reserve for an originary advent.'<sup>70</sup> We can characterise this mood as also the basic mood in Heidegger's thinking, as the mood of the 'time of need'. In the withdrawal of Being and in the thinking of this withdrawal, there is the announcement of a new advent, once the withdrawal as such has been experienced. This becomes clear in Heidegger's attitude towards metaphysics. He thinks of the history of metaphysics as the epoch of the oblivion of Being (*Seinsvergessenheit*). This epoch is not at once concluded with the emergence of Heidegger's thought, but the absence of Being is first expressly thought of and comprehended as the epoch of the remoteness of Being, providing thus the possibility of a reversal, which no one can say when it will come about. These comments on language and on the poet's words are not just auxiliary problems that happen to engage Heidegger, but, in them, his basic experience is gathered together and a repetition of the question about Being occurs in them.

What matters to Heidegger here is listening to the promise of language. 'Language must, in its own way, avow to us itself – its nature.'<sup>71</sup> Once this happens, we become capable of understanding a thinking experience with language. The preparation for such an experience consists in having a glimpse of the neighbourhood of poetry and thinking, in our ability to establish ourselves in this neighbourhood.

Heidegger's interpretation is meant to show that regardless of the important statements about language we find made in the realm of thought, in spite of the stimulating things that have been composed in language, the essence of language 'nowhere brings itself to word as the language of being.'<sup>72</sup> We saw earlier that while

we are speaking, language itself falls back and withdraws in favour of what is said in it. This withdrawal might have its ground in 'that language holds back its own origin and so denies its being to our usual notions.'<sup>73</sup> The difficulty here is in abstaining from personifying such a state of affairs. Heidegger offers a conjecture as to why the essential nature of language denies itself to us: '...the two kinds of utterance par excellence, poetry and thinking, have not been sought out in their proper habitat, their neighbourhood.'<sup>74</sup> It is precisely this that Heidegger will do in the second of the three lectures in the series *The Nature of Language*.

The attempt to interpret the concluding verse of George's poem was intended to show that here the issue is the relationship between the thing (entity) and word, and that it is the word that enables the thing (entity) to be and keeps it in being. The word thus does not merely stand in relation to the thing, but is 'what holds, relates, and keeps the thing as thing'<sup>75</sup>. The word is what Heidegger calls the relationship (*Verhältnis* – a holding together), by which he does not simply mean a mere relation, but something that holds and keeps, in the sense of that which vouchsafes or grants.

What poets and thinker have in common is the element of language, though we do not yet know how this element is to be understood, and how it changes according to whether words are used poetically or as in thinking. From the approach adopted in the interpretation of George's poem, it seemed that we had reached the 'neighbourhood' of poetry and thinking, that what was poetically composed was accessible by approaching it from the side of thinking. Heidegger points out, however, that something crucial is missing in this attempt, namely the grasp of this neighbourhood as such, the neighbourhood in quest of which the interpretation began.

Whenever we speak, we already dwell in language, but expressly to understand this is the most difficult of tasks. And if it is this dwelling that defines man in his very being, then, that returning 'into the sphere of human being'<sup>76</sup> is what is presented as a task to us in Heidegger's thought and is what lies at the basis of all his aspirations. The sphere mentioned here should not be thought of in terms of a 'fixed place' to which man is pinned down, but rather as the place at which he is provided with his possibilities of development.

Heidegger never thinks of this return as a capricious step back to the archaic, which is impossible since Dasein is conceived as historical and Being is thought of in the

dimension of time. In this context, Heidegger contrasts the 'step back into the location of man's being' or nature, with the 'progress of the machine world'.<sup>77</sup> This contrast implies that so long as human being does not know what his nature is and in what it is grounded, every advance in the sense of achieving technical mastery remains questionable. For here, he who advances can measure his advance only in terms of his increasing ability to gain mastery over nature and has no need to know anything about his own plight or to find out whether the aspect of nature that becomes visible in his mode of dealing with it is really nature as such.

While interpreting the poem by George, Heidegger left as an open question in what sense the jewel is to be understood. He now suggests that the precious gem, for which the goddess is unable to find a word, is nothing but the word itself. This shows the limits of the poet. In the land of the poet, the word for the word cannot be found.

The word is not a thing. We will never find it if we look for it among the world of things. The word *is* not, if we reserve the *is* for the realm of entities, and yet, it is in a more pre-eminent sense than all things. '...We may never say of the word that it is, but rather that it gives.'<sup>78</sup>

It gives, not in the sense of being there, of being present-on-hand, but rather in a sense of giving, a gift. By its very nature, the word gives, it bestows. What it grants is Being. This should not be understood, however, in the sense that the word generates the thing as, according to the medieval concept, God's thoughts originate all that is. We must call back to mind the concept of the clearing, in which all entities are able to appear without themselves being created by the clearing.

'For man is man only because he is granted the promise of language, because he is needful to language, that he may speak it.'<sup>79</sup> This sentence expresses a crucial shift in the essay. Until now, our concern has been the determination of man's proper nature; in the process we came upon language as the abode of man, which as such remains hidden from him even though it is that which is closest to him. Now, man abruptly withdraws into the shadows and language comes to the forefront. Man now appears to be the one who is used by language. How are we to understand this?

In order to advance on this path of questioning, Heidegger summarises the essential nature of language to be situated in 'saying'. 'To say' means to show: to make appear, to set free, 'to offer and extend what we call World, lighting and concealing

it'.<sup>80</sup> This is a consistent development of thought regarding language based on *The Origin of the Work of Art*, in which letting-appear is perceived in its double character of releasing and holding back, of disclosure and concealment.

The guiding principle for the experience of language is as follows: 'The being of language: the language of being.'<sup>81</sup> In this key statement, a reversal is executed that, once we have grasped it and have ourselves undergone it, takes us to the very limit.

In the first sentence, essence/being is understood in the sense of a what. Its subject is language and the intention here is to understand the essence of the subject. 'Essence so understood becomes restricted to what is later called the concept, the idea or mental representation by means of which we propose to ourselves and grasp what a thing is.'<sup>82</sup> Essence understood in this manner thus remains caught up within the realm of metaphysical representation.

The second sentence is meant to bring about a conversion from metaphysical representing to a non-metaphysical thinking. This is very difficult to accomplish, since human being is enmeshed in metaphysical representing. For this reason, the second sentence seems very strange to us.

Whereas in the first sentence, essence/being means 'whatness', in the second sentence, it should be conceived of as meaning 'lasting' and 'lingering', though not merely in the sense of sheer duration, but as that which concerns, touches or affects us. '...Language belongs to this persisting being, is proper to what moves all things because that is its most distinctive property.'<sup>83</sup> How are we to understand this all-moving, path-generating being? In the later writings, Heidegger conceives it as the 'fourfold', as the four world-regions of earth, sky, mortals and divinities, which in their interaction constitute the world.

In his interpretation of verses from the fifth strophe of 'Bread and Wine', Heidegger finds in Hölderlin the word as '...the region that determines earth and sky to be world regions, as it makes earth and sky, the streaming of the deep and the might of the heights, encounter one another.'<sup>84</sup> Thus, language is understood as that on which the interaction of the four world-regions is based. It is in this interplay that nearness comes about. Nearness and saying as letting-appear constitute the essential mode of being of language – they are the same.



'Language, Saying of the world's fourfold, is no longer only such that we speaking human beings are related to it in the sense of a nexus existing between man and language. Language is, as world-moving saying, the relation of all relations. It relates, maintains, proffers and enriches the face-to face encounter of the world's regions, holds and keep them, in that it holds itself – Saying – in reserve.'<sup>85</sup>

The sounding of language is not considered here as a result of physical processes. Language is regarded as that primordial reality that holds the world-regions together, which at the same time means, holds them apart. We are always in danger of regressing into our customary ways of representing, of regarding language as something like an external bond, so that it is hard to see where this bond comes from and where it derives its power to bind together.

For Heidegger, language is not a separate entity, to be found outside the fourfold of the world, but is rather to be found within the fourfold itself, as a relation of the fourfold. Language is not a transcendental power – to consider it as such would be to conceive it metaphysically. Rather language is the nearness that prevails in the fourfold, for which Heidegger suggests the term 'nighness' (*Nahnis*). It is, in other words, the primordial gathering (*Versammlung*).

Heidegger now turns to Heraclitus and his idea of *logos*, which Heidegger had earlier interpreted as the original gathering. Language as the primordial gathering is soundless. From it comes the gift of saying 'is' to man. The gathering, soundless language of stillness is the language of essence, provided we do not represent it metaphysically.

In the context of the next essay, *The Way to Language*, the term event (*Ereignis*) emerges as a central point. Heidegger tells us in this essay that 'Language speaks in that it, as showing, reaching into all regions of presence, summons from them whatever is present to appear and to fade.'<sup>86</sup> The interconnection of language and letting appear runs throughout all the texts dealing with language from *Being and Time* onwards although there is a change in the conception of letting-appear and of what it is that speaks. The speaker, man, can speak only because he listens to language, and he can listen to it only because he belongs in it. 'Saying grants the hearing, and thus the speaking, of language solely to those who belong within it.'<sup>87</sup> In this way, Heidegger is able to single out granting as the basic feature of language.

The relation of the speaker to language reminds us of the relation of Dasein to Being. For Heidegger, Dasein can only be because of Being, but, on the other hand, Being has need of Dasein. Similarly, 'Language needs human speaking, and yet is not merely of the making or at the command of our speech activity.'<sup>88</sup>

The fundamental underlying language, which Heidegger calls 'saying' enables all appearing. 'Saying pervades and structures the openness of that clearing which every appearance must seek out and every disappearance must leave behind, and in which every present or absent being must show, say, announce itself.'<sup>89</sup> Through a consideration of what takes place in saying as thus conceived, Heidegger comes upon the *Ereignis*, the event of appropriation, or the disclosure of appropriation. There occurs '...the opening of the clearing in which present beings can persist and from which absent beings can depart while keeping their persistence in the withdrawal.'<sup>90</sup>

This granting should not be conceived on the model of causality. 'There is nothing else from which the Appropriation itself could be derived, even less in whose terms it could be explained.'<sup>91</sup> This is what the eye, seeking to penetrate the riddle of the giving of saying, of what saying gives, ultimately rests upon. Heidegger has said that Being gives<sup>92</sup>, but here he points out that it is the *Ereignis* that vouchsafes even this; *it gives*<sup>93</sup>.

The multiple possibilities of showing refer to saying as showing, and this in turn refers to *Ereignis*, the mode of disclosure in which appropriation occurs. The *Ereignis* is not some strange power standing above Being. In reflecting on the *Ereignis*, we are not trying to leave language behind. It is a new view of language that has been fashioned in the light of the question as to how language lets human being himself speak, by opening himself up to the clearing in which every entity is able to appear.

In speaking, what happens is a manifestation of the *Ereignis* itself, which does, however, remain hidden from the speaker himself. That is why experiencing in thought the nature of language is for Heidegger a revealing of the movement that leads from *Ereignis* to man's speech. Language has the power to bestow the clearing because it is in its very nature a granting appropriation (*Ereignis*). The moment of historicity is also present here. The appropriation is not something that happens only once – it is capable of showing itself or withdrawing itself. It is in conformity with this showing itself or denial that language happens and human speech itself changes.

We can see, then, that Heidegger's thought on truth necessarily is connected with his thought on language. In the excerpt from *On the Way to Language* just discussed, it is evident that Heidegger's conception of truth has not changed, but has indeed been expanded by connecting it with language in an intimate fashion.

### **3.7 Heidegger's Concept of Truth in *The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking***

Heidegger tells us that this work is meant to provoke an 'immanent criticism' of *Being and Time*, i.e. to inquire into the basic experience underlying that book and the aptness of its formulations, without abandoning the perspective of the question of Being.

Heidegger begins by calling philosophy metaphysics. 'Metaphysics thinks beings as a whole - the world, man, God – with respect to Being. Metaphysics thinks beings as beings in the manner of a representational thinking that gives grounds.'<sup>94</sup> Thus, for Heidegger, metaphysics seeks after the ground of beings and calls this ground Being. Being is understood in the sense that it lets entities become present. This ground can be conceived as causing or producing the real or actual (God as the ultimate ground), or as the transcendental ground (Kant's condition of the possibility of experience), as the dialectical movement of Absolute Spirit (Hegel), as an explanation of the process of production (Marx) or as Will to Power (Nietzsche).

What then does the end of philosophy mean? It is not regarded as an ending in the sense of extinction, but rather as the place, '...that place in which the whole of philosophy's history is gathered in its uttermost possibility.'<sup>95</sup> This gathering is at the same time the completion of philosophy. Completion means a coming to an end.

Heidegger reminds us that we cannot regard Kant's philosophy as more perfect than Plato's, and the latter's as more perfect than, for example, Parmenides'. In every philosophy something finds expression, which in itself possesses a necessity of its own. When we judge philosophy from the point of view of science, it is easy to succumb to the illusion that the earlier is always the imperfect. This is not the proper way for looking at philosophies. Plato's thought is not rendered redundant by subsequent philosophies. On the contrary, for Heidegger, Platonism dominates

throughout the whole of metaphysics, which in its final form is the reversal of Platonism we find in Nietzsche.

The development of philosophy is accompanied by the formation of the sciences, which then break away from philosophy. Today, we are in the midst of a process in which questions that were formerly dealt with by philosophy are increasingly passing into the realm of science. For Heidegger, this is the mark of the completion of metaphysics. Modern metaphysics is for Heidegger the ground from which the sciences have emerged.

The development of philosophy into the independent sciences that, however, interdependently communicate among themselves ever more markedly, is the legitimate completion of philosophy. Philosophy is ending in the present age. It has found its place in the scientific attitude of socially active humanity. But the fundamental characteristic of this scientific attitude is its cybernetic, that is, technological character.<sup>96</sup>

The question that now arises is whether, with the end of philosophy in the sense of its absorption into the sciences, is there a possibility which philosophy itself has not developed, a first possibility that lies hidden at the core of philosophy itself? In order to answer this question, one must surely consider philosophy in its historical unfolding. Heidegger moves on then to ask what task is reserved for thinking at the end of philosophy. He discusses the views of two philosophers – Hegel and Husserl – in order to further elucidate the matter of thinking.

In Heidegger's view, both Hegel and Husserl uttered the call 'to the thing itself'<sup>97</sup>. Heidegger notes that from the perspective of both these philosophers, the matter of philosophy is subjectivity. He believes that ruminating on his insights into the work of Husserl and Hegel are not helpful, unless we ask what remains unthought in the call to the matter itself.

According to Heidegger, philosophising is '... already admitted to the free space of the clearing. But philosophy knows nothing about the clearing.'<sup>98</sup> Heidegger refers to this situation as the oblivion of Being. Presence, the word for Being as conceived by the Greeks, is always dependent on what Heidegger calls the clearing (*Lichtung*).

Clearing, to open or lighten, means to make something free and open, as when one clears an open space in a forest of trees. Heidegger tells us that metaphysics, which stresses the 'natural light' of the thinking subject who casts his beam on objects has not attended to the clearing of Being – the opening that precedes all natural and divine light. For Heidegger, the task of thinking requires then a creative return to early Greek thinking, since even the Greeks did not secure the clearing for thought and keep it from oblivion.

In this respect, Heidegger returns to the early words of Parmenides. In his poem, *alētheia*, unconcealedness, is called 'well-rounded' because it is turned in the pure sphere of the circle where beginning and end are everywhere the same.<sup>99</sup> Previously, Heidegger had shown that the path of thinking needs the clearing in order to come into being. Now he suggests that what-is can become present only as a result of this openness. Thus, what the clearing grants is the path on which the enquiry into what-is may be conducted, in regard to its being present; and the fact that what-is itself achieves presence.

We must think *alētheia*, unconcealment, as the clearing which first grants Being and thinking and their presencing to and for each other. The quiet heart of the clearing is the place of stillness from which alone the possibility of the belonging together of Being and thinking, that is presence and apprehending, can arise at all.<sup>100</sup>

The question already put forward in early Greek thought and one which remains a question for the entire metaphysical tradition – namely, how thinking and Being belong together – is here considered by Heidegger in terms of *alētheia*.

Now it seems that *alētheia* emerges as the basis of Being and of truth. *Alētheia* can now no longer be equated with truth, since it is that which grants truth in the first place – truth in the sense of correspondence or of absolute certainty of knowledge. Heidegger now turns his critique on himself, and criticizes the attempt in *Being and Time* to translate *alētheia* as truth. He says:

Insofar as truth is understood in the traditional 'natural' sense as the correspondence of knowledge with beings, demonstrated in beings; but also insofar as truth is interpreted as the certainty of the knowledge of Being; *alētheia*, unconcealment in the sense of the clearing, may not be

equated with truth. Rather, *alētheia*, unconcealment thought as clearing, first grants the possibility of truth. For truth itself, like Being and thinking, can be what it is only in the element of the clearing.<sup>101</sup>

For Heidegger, there is only presence because of *alētheia*. Yet, human being remains bedazzled by what is present and does not question presence and the clearing that grants presence. Heidegger asks whether this is so because '*lethe* belongs to *a-alētheia*, not as a mere addition, not as shadow to light, but rather as the heart of *a-alētheia*.'<sup>102</sup> Thus, in this essay, we see how Heidegger reinterprets his identification of *alētheia* and truth that we noted in all the previous works. *A-letheia* is not truth, but rather that which makes it possible for us to speak of truth in the first place.

### 3.8 Summary

For Heidegger, all talk about *alētheia* must remain provisional. If we forget this, we shall turn his thinking, which regards itself primarily as an enquiry, as the paving of a path, into a kind of dogmatics. Heidegger's thinking of *alētheia* can be seen as an ever-renewed search for fresh start. He does not provide any final solution, but instead constantly tries out new approaches.

I have demonstrated in this chapter how Heidegger's thought on truth develops through a selection of his works. We can see that his thought on truth turns around the concept of unconcealedness or *alētheia*. It is only in *The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking* that Heidegger disconnects truth and *alētheia* from their previous identification, and claims that *alētheia* grants the possibility of truth.

- <sup>1</sup> M. Heidegger, *The Question concerning Technology in Basic Writings: Martin Heidegger (Revised and Expanded Edition)* D.F. Krell (trans.) (London, Routledge, 1993), p. 319.
- <sup>2</sup> W.B. Macomber, *The Anatomy of Disillusion: Martin Heidegger's Notion of Truth* (Evanston, Northwestern University Press, 1967), p. 3.
- <sup>3</sup> W. Biemel, *Martin Heidegger: An Illustrated Study* (London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1977), p. 25.
- <sup>4</sup> M. Heidegger, *The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking in Basic Writings: Martin Heidegger (Revised and Expanded Edition)* D. F. Krell (trans.) (London, Routledge, 1993), p. 444.
- <sup>5</sup> M. Heidegger, *Being and Time, A Translation of Sein und Zeit* (Albany, State University of New York Press, 1996), § 44.
- <sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 207.
- <sup>7</sup> J.J. Kockelmans, *Heidegger and Science* (Boston, University Press of America, 1985), p. 175.
- <sup>8</sup> M. Heidegger, *Being and Time: A Translation of Sein und Zeit* (Albany, State University of New York Press, 1996), p. 207.
- <sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 208; See also M. Heidegger, *On the Essence of Truth in Basic Writings: Martin Heidegger*, D.F. Krell (trans.) (London, Routledge, 1993), p. 122.
- <sup>10</sup> M. Heidegger, *Being and Time: A Translation of Sein und Zeit* (Albany, State University of New York Press, 1996), p. 209.
- <sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 205.
- <sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 204.
- <sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 205.
- <sup>14</sup> M. Heidegger, *On the Essence of Truth in Basic Writings: Martin Heidegger (Revised and Expanded Edition)* D.F. Krell (trans.), (London, Routledge, 1993), p. 117.
- <sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 117.
- <sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 118.
- <sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 118.
- <sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 119.
- <sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 121.
- <sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 122, 123.
- <sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 123.
- <sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 125.
- <sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 126.
- <sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 127.
- <sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 128.
- <sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 129.
- <sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 130.
- <sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 130.
- <sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 132.
- <sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 133.
- <sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 136, 137.
- <sup>32</sup> M. Heidegger, *Letter on Humanism in Basic Writings: Martin Heidegger (Revised and Expanded Edition)* D.F. Krell (trans.) (London, Routledge, 1993), p. 231.
- <sup>33</sup> M. Heidegger, *The Origin of the Work of Art in Basic Writings: Martin Heidegger (Revised and Expanded Edition)* D.F. Krell (trans.) (London, Routledge, 1993), p.156.
- <sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 161.
- <sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 165.
- <sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 167.
- <sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 170.
- <sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 172.
- <sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 173.
- <sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 174.
- <sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 174.



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- 45 *Ibid.*, p. 177.  
46 *Ibid.*, p. 179.  
47 *Ibid.*, p. 180.  
48 *Ibid.*, p. 180.  
49 *Ibid.*, p. 181.  
50 *Ibid.*  
51 *Ibid.*, p. 185.  
52 *Ibid.*, p. 192.  
53 *Ibid.*, p. 196.  
54 *Ibid.*, p. 197.  
55 M. Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology in Basic Writings: Martin Heidegger (Revised and Expanded Edition)* D.F. Krell (trans.) (London, Routledge, 1993), p. 311.  
56 *Ibid.*, p. 317.  
57 *Ibid.*, p. 319.  
58 *Ibid.*, p. 324.  
59 *Ibid.*, p. 325.  
60 *Ibid.*, p. 326.  
61 *Ibid.*, p. 327.  
62 *Ibid.*, p. 329.  
63 *Ibid.*, p. 332.  
64 *Ibid.*  
65 *Ibid.*, p. 333.  
66 M. Heidegger, *On the Way to Language* (London, Harper and Row, 1971), p. 57.  
67 *Ibid.*, p. 58.  
68 *Ibid.*, p. 65.  
69 *Ibid.*  
70 *Ibid.*, p. 66.  
71 *Ibid.*, p. 76.  
72 *Ibid.*, p. 81.  
73 *Ibid.*  
74 *Ibid.*  
75 *Ibid.*, pp. 82, 83.  
76 *Ibid.*, p. 85.  
77 *Ibid.*  
78 *Ibid.*, p. 88.  
79 *Ibid.*, p. 90.  
80 *Ibid.*, p. 93.  
81 *Ibid.*, p. 94.  
82 *Ibid.*  
83 *Ibid.*, p. 95.  
84 *Ibid.*, p. 100.  
85 *Ibid.*, p. 107.  
86 *Ibid.*, p. 124.  
87 *Ibid.*  
88 *Ibid.*, p. 125.  
89 *Ibid.*, p. 126.  
90 *Ibid.*, p. 127.  
91 *Ibid.*  
92 M. Heidegger, *On Time and Being* (New York, Harper and Row, 1972). p. 5.  
93 M. Heidegger. *The Way to Language in On the Way to Language*. P.D. Hertz (trans.) (London, Harper and Row, 1982), p. 127.  
94 M. Heidegger, *The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking in D.F. Basic Writings: Martin Heidegger (Revised and Expanded Edition)* D.F. Krell (trans.) (London, Routledge, 1993), p. 432.  
95 *Ibid.*, p. 433.  
96 *Ibid.*, p. 434.  
97 *Ibid.*, p. 438.  
98 *Ibid.*, p. 443.  
99 *Ibid.*, p. 444.





<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 445.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 446.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 448.

## CHAPTER 4: LANGUAGE

*In the beginning was the Word<sup>1</sup>*

### 4.1 Introduction

Already emerging as a fundamental mode of Being's disclosure in *Being and Time*, language becomes a central theme in Heidegger's subsequent writings.<sup>2</sup> In his later writings, Heidegger supplements his existential analysis of *Being and Time* in two main ways: Firstly, with a philosophy of 'overcoming', and secondly, with a deepened enquiry into the nature of language. He believed that these would lead to an increased understanding of the question of Being. Thus, Heidegger's later writings on language build upon his original questioning in earlier works.

In the first instance, Heidegger's philosophy of 'overcoming' consists of a sequence of deconstructive readings of the eminent thinkers of the Western metaphysical tradition - Plato, Aristotle, Kant, Hegel and Nietzsche among others. These readings aim to take a step back from the onto-theological framework of metaphysics in order to reveal the underlying presuppositions of all metaphysics. For Heidegger, this 'unthought' starting point of metaphysics is the phenomenological horizon of the temporal experience of Dasein, where Being first shows itself to human being.

By subjecting the metaphysical thinkers of the Western tradition to such a phenomenological deconstruction, Heidegger wishes to show how the history of philosophy represents the history of Being as it unfolds and discloses itself in and through its own concealment<sup>3</sup>. He insists that phenomenology does not aim to eradicate metaphysics, but only to rethink its obscured temporal foundations in a more accurate way. Thus, Heidegger's deconstructive project is not intended as a refutation of metaphysics, but rather as a reinterpretation of its concealed dimensions. Deconstruction enables metaphysics to retrieve its own origins by recovering its forgetfulness of the temporality of Being.

According to Heidegger, the chief blunder of the metaphysical tradition is that it distorted the question of Being into that of the 'being of beings'<sup>4</sup>. This forgetting of Being (what Heidegger calls ontological difference) results in seeing Being in static, thing-like terms. In addition to this substantive image of Being comes the 'humanisation' of Being in Western thought. Heidegger asserts that this practice

began with Plato, and resulted in the dominance of the human subject and its calculating techniques over the world becoming characteristic of modern thinking<sup>5</sup>.

Heidegger asserted that even Nietzsche had remained ensnared within the traditional essence of metaphysics. He claimed that Nietzsche could not free himself from the Platonic opposition between being and becoming that plays an important role in the definition of the Eternal Return; as well as from the opposition between truth and appearance. This, according to Heidegger resulted in Nietzsche's inability to reach the true medium of philosophy and think the Greek *Anfang* at its true depth<sup>6</sup>.

The second major way in which Heidegger's later work developed the existential analysis of *Being and Time* is by means of a philosophical re-examination of language, particularly poetic language.

As mentioned in Chapter 1<sup>7</sup>, I support the view that although Heidegger's thought did undergo a reorientation after *Being and Time*, his work contains an underlying unity. I believe that Olafson's<sup>8</sup> discussion of language as an example to illustrate this unity is fruitful, and so my discussion of Heidegger's thought on language will necessarily attempt to demonstrate this unity. Other authors, like Paul Ricoeur, for example, also see the theme of language as central in illustrating the *continuity* between the so-called 'Heidegger I' and 'Heidegger II':

It is my conviction, however, that the continuity between Heidegger I and Heidegger II lies mainly in the persistence of the circle which I described: the 'backward relatedness' between Being about which we are asking in the enquiry, and the enquirer himself, as a mode of being. Because the question is no longer an analytic of Dasein, this circle does not occur in the same way and is not expressed in the same terms. But it may be recognised as the center of the philosophy of language which, to a certain extent, replaces the analytic of Dasein. The same problems which have been linked to the self of Dasein now occur in the problem of language; they are linked to the problem of the word...<sup>9</sup>

## 4.2. What is language?

Today, it is assumed that language is the most powerful tool that humankind has ever developed. The skilful use of speech and writing enables human being to rise above

other mute animals. The development of civilisation itself seems to depend on human being's linguistic foundation. Language functions as an inseparable facet of human existence; in fact, language has been and continues to be so intimately a part of human being, that most often he is not reflexively aware of its presence.

Philosophical interest in the phenomenon of language is not new. From Plato's discussion of the cognitive range of language in the *Seventh Letter*, through to the period of modern philosophy, there has been sustained interest in language as a crucial theme in philosophy.

From the late eighteenth century, within the confines of modern epistemology, language was conceived as an instrument. From Locke through Hobbes to Condillac, an attempt was made to understand language within the confines of the modern representational epistemology made central by Descartes. In the mind, there are 'ideas' which are representations of an external reality. Knowledge consists in having representations that 'agree' with reality. We can only do this if we assemble our ideas according to a responsible procedure. Language plays an important role here. Why?

Words are given meaning by being attached to the objects they represent by means of the 'ideas' that represent them. The introduction of words facilitates the combination of ideas into a logical picture. For Locke and Hobbes, words allow us to grasp things in classes, and hence make synthesis possible. Non-linguistic intuition, in contrast to this, would be confined to the painstaking association of particulars.

In contemporary philosophy, a heightened degree of interest exists over the philosophical problems of language. Within the empiricist-analytic movement, there is the logical atomism of Bertrand Russell, the logical positivism of Rudolf Carnap, and Ludwig Wittgenstein's philosophy of ordinary language, to name but a few perspectives that are linguistically oriented. Within the contemporary phenomenological-existential movement, there exists a similar interest in language, with Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Paul Ricoeur and others expressing a critical need for a philosophy of language. In Heidegger's philosophy, we find a similar deep concern for the foundations of language.

### 4.3 Heidegger's ways to language

In a similar vein to my discussion on Heidegger's conception of truth, I trace Heidegger's 'ways' to language by giving attention to various texts, in order to illustrate the basic progression and continuity of his philosophy of language. I will not, however, discuss each individual text in full here, since such a task would be repetitious. Therefore, I will use excerpts from the various texts in order to trace the development of his ideas on language.

Although Heidegger's interest in language dates from the very beginning of his career, as was previously mentioned, the analysis of Dasein's situational, understanding-interpreting way of being-in-the-world in *Being and Time* places language in a new context. In *Being and Time*, the realm of logic and 'assertions' falls into the category of presentational thinking, while language in its true essence, as primary articulation of the situational, historical understanding, is viewed as something belonging to the way of being of human being. From this position, Heidegger can later criticise theories that view language as a mere tool enabling communication.

In *Being and Time*, Heidegger emphasises the importance of discourse or talk (*die Rede*) for language<sup>10</sup>, and the secondary character of assertions and propositions – the discourses of science and philosophy, journalism, politics and culture in general. He tells us that 'The existential-ontological foundation of language is discourse'<sup>11</sup>, and stresses the importance of our listening to and heeding speech, suggesting that the silence that enables us to listen is more significant than all the noise of signification<sup>12</sup>.

An in-depth investigation into the theme of language only emerges relatively late in the text of *Being and Time* (§33-38). Yet, in the introductory description of the disclosedness of being-in-the-world, Heidegger mentions language, among other things, as one manifestation of an existential called *logos* (*Rede*)<sup>13</sup>. This cursory reference to language gives rise to the supposition that language will come to the fore only in a much later phase in the transcendental division. When, in *Being and Time*, the structure of man's disclosedness is brought to light in greater detail, we see that language forms part of the continuing explanation of human being's understanding<sup>14</sup>. The topic of language, therefore, follows naturally on from Heidegger's treatment of

understanding and interpretation. Just as an interpretation is grounded in understanding, so assertion is grounded in interpretation.

Heidegger begins by defining an assertion (statement) as a '... pointing out which communicates and defines'<sup>15</sup>. Thus, assertions partake of the structures already manifest in wordless interpretative activities, such as mending a hammer. To decide how to mend a hammer involves an interpretative fore-structure that reveals our fore-structure of our understanding of the hammer when it is in use. Similarly, when we say that a hammer is 'too heavy'<sup>16</sup> for us, we pick out the object as having a certain character, and articulate the specific fore-conception that we have of it. Heidegger explains that: 'Like interpretation in general, the statement necessarily has its existential foundations in fore-having, fore-sight and fore-conception'.<sup>17</sup>

Assertion, for Heidegger, therefore narrows down the focus of our concerns:

When confronted with something that is already manifest, with the hammer that is too heavy, determining must first take a step back. 'Positing the subject' dims beings down to focus on 'the hammer there' in order to let what is manifest be seen *in* its determinable definite character through this dimming down.<sup>18</sup>

Thus, making an assertion about an object limits our openness to it.

Making an assertion is a possible activity for Dasein as a mode of his being-in-the-world, but employing our understanding of assertions as a model for human understanding of meaning *per se* is an incomplete conception of language. Thus, Heidegger immediately introduces the term *Rede* (discourse) as the existential-ontological foundation of language (including assertions)<sup>19</sup>.

Being-there as openness, transpiring as being-in-the-world, discloses itself and its world meaningfully to itself via discourse. Discourse then belongs among the constitutive ways in which being-there-as-openness carries itself out as being-in-the-world. In discourse, a network of intertwining significations is fashioned, in the elucidating that permits self-orienting and self-directing as such. Discourse is, for Heidegger, not necessarily an utterance in words. 'Speaking a lot about something does not in the least guarantee that understanding is thus furthered'<sup>20</sup>. Yet, utterance in words also belongs integrally to this discourse. Words are not discrete and

isolated, external to discourse and supplied with meaning secondarily. Rather, the totality of significations articulated in discourse itself 'comes into language'<sup>21</sup>.

Heidegger's distinction between assertion and discourse is therefore a distinction between a type of speech act and the conceptual framework upon which that speech act must draw. This does not, however, mean that Heidegger holds language and discourse to be identical. Language is the worldly manifestation of discourse. Discourse itself is not a worldly totality, but an *existentiale* of Dasein – one of the three facets of Dasein's disclosedness, which includes attunement and understanding.

Discourse, mood (attunement) and understanding are discussed in *Being and Time* as the three modes by which Dasein is being-in-the-world<sup>22</sup>. Discourse is that *existentiale* by which Dasein projects itself into the world and integrates itself with it by intelligibly articulating its possibilities. Discourse is related to attunement, since Dasein gives utterance to his mood by the intonation, modulation and tempo of his talk. Discourse is also related to understanding, since it allows us to communicate about things in the world. Thus, discourse, attunement and understanding are the three fundamental facets of Dasein's disclosedness that Heidegger identifies.

#### **4.4 Language as Interpretive Discourse**

As we have seen, language as interpretative discourse has its roots in human being's everyday existence in the world as a primordial interpretation of Being; it enables human being to interpret a thing as something that is intimately related to his project of being-in-the-world. For example, discourse does not simply assert that a rock is there, it also interprets the rock as something meaningful for human being's existence. Hermeneutic discourse recognises objects as instruments ready-to-hand. Each thing is disclosed as the bearer of a specific message. Hermeneutic discourse reveals beings in terms of their possible serviceability for human being.

Communication is more deeply understood as the interpretation of a common life-world, which involves human being responding to the other's project of meaning and vice versa<sup>23</sup>. The things of human being's Dasein are disclosed as symbols of his relationship to other Daseins. In other words, hermeneutic discourse defines human being's individual being-there (Dasein) as a communal being-with-others<sup>24</sup>.

Heidegger distinguishes between authentic and inauthentic forms of existential discourse. The authentic form he calls 'saying' and the inauthentic form he calls 'idle talk'<sup>25</sup>. 'Saying' is our ability to remain responsible for our speech by remaining silent in order to listen and genuinely respond to the voice of Being<sup>26</sup>. 'Idle Talk' is the opinionated chatter unmindful of the claim of other Daseins.

#### **4.5 Language as Idle Talk**

For Heidegger, language becomes idle talk when the speaker ceases to respond individually to the address of the other and is content to correspond to the anonymous chatter of 'public opinion'<sup>27</sup>. The existential responsibility of each I capitulates to the unthinking influence of 'das Man'. Human being's speech ceases to be authentically his own. His existence is no longer lived by him; it is lived for him by the impersonalised 'das Man'.

Heidegger defines this alienated condition of language as an ontological groundlessness, where it becomes impossible to distinguish between a genuine utterance and mere verbalising. Idle talk acts as a form of closure<sup>28</sup> that suspends any authentic interpretation of the being of human being. Anonymous clichés and catchwords protect us from self-interpretation and suppress the fundamental question of our rootedness in Being. The two most common ways in which this uprooted talk is conveyed are curiosity and ambiguity (double-speak).

Curiosity is an inauthentic being-with-others in that it seems to possess everything without having to commit itself to anything. 'It seeks novelty only to leap from it again to another novelty ... Curiosity is everywhere and nowhere. This mode of being-in-the-world reveals a new kind of being of everyday Dasein, one in which it constantly uproots itself'<sup>29</sup>.

#### **4.6 Language as Saying**

For Heidegger, poetic language is the most authentic mode of human being's being-with-others<sup>30</sup>. Poetry recognises the rootedness of language in his authentic being-in-the-world and confronts him with the realisation that his being is ultimately rooted in death. In poetry, for example, a rose is no longer seen as a horticultural object, or a mere flower, or a symbol of something. Here, it exceeds all of our hermeneutic



projects and is allowed to be itself. Poetry is a privileged means for revealing ourselves as being-towards-death, for reminding us that our existence is finite. In poetry, Being is made manifest in all its otherness. Heidegger's ideas on poetic language are developed more fully in the texts after *Being and Time*, which I will discuss in more detail presently.

#### 4.7 The Clearing (*Lichtung*)

In Heidegger's philosophy, language is essential to the fact that things show up at all (what Heidegger calls the 'clearing'). Heidegger claims that:

Saying is showing. In everything that speaks to us, in everything that touches us by being spoken and spoken about, in everything that gives itself to us in speaking, or waits for us unspoken, but also in the speaking we do ourselves, there prevails Showing which causes to appear what is present, and fade from appearance what is absent... Saying pervades and structures the openness of that clearing which every appearance must seek out and every disappearance must leave behind, and in which every present or absent being must show, say, announce itself.<sup>31</sup>

For Heidegger, the clearing cannot be identified with any of the beings that show up in it. It is not to be explained by them as something they cause, or one of their properties or as grounded in them. He tell us that:

When we talk in an ontically figurative way about the *lumen naturale* in human being, we mean nothing other than the existential-ontological structure of this being, the fact that it *is* in the mode of being its there. To say that it is 'illuminated' means that it is cleared in itself as being-in-the-world, not by another being, but in such a way that it *is* itself the clearing. Only for a being thus cleared existentially do objectively present things become accessible in the light or concealed in darkness. By its very nature, *Da-sein* brings its there along with it. If it lacks a there, it is not only factually not of this nature, but not at all a being. *Da-sein is its disclosure*.<sup>32</sup>

Heidegger claims that Plato's notion of the Idea placed the clearing among beings. Plato thus gave an ontic account of the clearing. Heidegger felt that because the act

of ontically placing the clearing reflects a drive towards grasping it - exercising intellectual control over it - and this is manifest in the Will to Power. It represents a move towards subjectivism<sup>33</sup>.

Heidegger's investigation of language in *Being and Time* is thoroughly ontological, in that his expositions on language are always done in the context of allowing Being to reveal itself. When human being speaks, he discloses his being-in-the-world. His way of speaking, his intonation, modulation and tempo, reveals the particular manner in which he finds himself in the world. For Heidegger, then, language is a manner of Dasein's being-in-the world – language is human being's way of being<sup>34</sup>.

Language is the way of articulating and laying bare the ontological structure of the world onto a level of intelligibility that it shares in common with the latter insofar as both are projections of Dasein. Only human being has language, for it belongs exclusively and determinately to being-there as Being-in-the-world, i.e. to human being as the locus of the illumined open clearing via which Being reveals itself<sup>35</sup>.

For Heidegger, language is therefore not an entity that exists, but the very giving of Being whereby everything exists. It is not a present object, but presencing. As we have seen in the preceding chapter, it is not something true, but the very coming to be of truth. Unlike beings (*Seiendes*) that are, language as Being (*Sein*) is not, for it is that whereby beings exist without itself being something that exists<sup>36</sup>. I now aim to show that Heidegger continues this line of thought in his later works.

On the basis of his exposition on language in *Being and Time*, Heidegger continues in his later works to strongly dispute the conventional view of language. His view of language in the later works is strongly anti-subjectivist. The usual relation in which language is seen as a tool is inverted: 'Language is not a tool at our disposal, rather it is that event which disposes of the supreme possibility of human existence.'<sup>37</sup>

Heidegger insists that language is essentially not something that human subjects use instrumentally for the purpose of gaining conceptual control over their world. Rather, language is what displays human being - to himself and to others - as always already in the world. Heidegger speaks of language speaking, rather than human beings<sup>38</sup>. He can do so because he claims that it is through language that disclosure to humans takes place. Language is thus entirely integral to human being's manner of

existing because it is essential to the fact that things show up at all (the 'clearing' (*Lichtung*)).

Human being is, first and foremost, linguistically in the world<sup>39</sup>, not only because language allows him to define his world, but also because he comes to be defined as a worldly dweller through language. Humans are language animals, because they are the locus of this constitutive power of expression. Human being does not linguistically reveal a world that previously existed in muteness, but rather, to be a worldly inhabitant is to  *dwell in language*.

We are always speaking, even when we do not utter a single word aloud, but merely listen or read, and even when we are not particularly listening or speaking but are attending to some work or taking a rest.<sup>40</sup>

In these words that echo *Being and Time*, Heidegger shows us that he does not mean that our social and worldly existence is made available to us only when we vocalise or exchange words. Human being constitutes and persists in his worldliness through language, despite any silence or solitude. When we do not participate in conversation with others, or ourselves, we do not cease to dwell in language<sup>41</sup>.

Human being in this sense is an ongoing historical conversation. Language writes the text of our being-in-the-world. Heidegger says: 'Language is the house of Being in which man ek-sists by dwelling, in that he belongs to the truth of being, guarding it.'<sup>42</sup> Language cultivates interactive participation with what is manifest, the world and with-world, and brings into question that which escapes manifestation in its hiddenness - Being. As such, language constitutes our primordial abode.

The theme of language emerges strongly in the *Introduction to Metaphysics*. In this essay, Heidegger evaluates the assertion by Parmenides that being is the same as that for which apprehending occurs<sup>43</sup>. In other words, there is being only when there is appearing, i.e. when there is disclosure<sup>44</sup>. Heidegger tells us that just as there can be no occurrence of Being without apprehending and vice versa, there can be no Being without language and no language without Being. If human being had no preknowledge of Being, then:

Would there merely be a noun and a verb less in our language? No.  
*There would be no language at all.* No essent as such would disclose

itself in words, it would no longer be possible to invoke it and speak about it in words. For to speak of an essent as such includes: to understand it in advance as an essent, that is, to understand its being.<sup>45</sup>

Heidegger tells us that, on the other hand, human being could not be in any sense imaginable to us without language, '...for to be a man is to speak'<sup>46</sup>. Human being did not invent language any more than he invented time or Being itself. 'How could man ever have invented the power which pervades him, which alone enables him to *be* a man?'<sup>47</sup>

As is the case in *Being and Time*, *Unterwegs zur Sprache* also takes its orientation from the spoken rather than from the written word. Here, as we have seen in Chapter 3, Heidegger finds the very essence of language in speaking and especially in saying (*das Sagen*). The being of language is 'Saying that shows'.<sup>48</sup> Thus, Heidegger views language not as an expression of human being, but rather as an appearance of Being. Thinking does not express human being; it lets Being happen as a language event. In this letting-happen lies the fate of human being, the fate of truth, and ultimately the fate of Being.

The idea that it is not human being who speaks but rather that language itself speaks becomes most explicit in *Unterwegs zur Sprache*. The human act of saying is what is specifically human, but the saying itself is an act *by* language. 'We do not merely speak the language – we speak by way of it. We can do so solely because we always have already listened to the language. What do we hear there? We hear language speaking.'<sup>49</sup>

#### 4.8 The Greek Language

For Heidegger, the notion of poetry as a 'piety of thinking' is similar to the pre-Socratic model of language as logos. By logos, the pre-Socratics understood not some logical correlation between objects, but a hidden ontological attunement of the Word of human thinking and the Word of Being. Thus, Heidegger claims that:

... in the Greek language what is said in it is at the same time what is called... What it presents is what lies immediately before us. Through the audible Greek word, we are directly in the presence of the thing itself, not first in the presence of a mere word sign.<sup>50</sup>

Post-Socratic metaphysics, on the other hand, reduced logos to logic.

Heidegger aims to restore to language the poetic status it once enjoyed as a measure of balance between the opposed poles of Being and thinking. The substitution of logic for logos resulted in the reduction of the presencing of Being (as *alētheia* or disclosure) to the representation of entities according to a pre-determined set of idealist categories. It also resulted in the reduction of language as a harmonious attunement of opposites.

Heidegger concludes that the reign of an exclusively instrumental logic has reached dangerous proportions in the modern technological era. Only by means of poetic thinking can light be thrown on the priority of logos over logic. Poetry can enable philosophy to reclaim its own origins in that thinking which corresponds to the saying of the Logos.

Poetic thinking, which lies at the root of genuine thinking, is a way of speaking in accord with Being - a speaking in co-responsence with language itself. Things do not exist as independent empirical facts. They only come into being in so far they are summoned by language that bestows meaning upon them. By deconstructing the purely utilitarian functioning of language in favour of a more poetic saying, Heidegger proposes to retrieve the forgotten Word of Being.

#### **4.9 The Hermeneutic Project**

As we have seen, Heidegger seeks a method of penetrating to the root of Western conceptions of being – a 'hermeneutics' that will allow him to reveal the presuppositions upon which Western conceptions of being have been based. In Husserl's phenomenology, Heidegger found conceptual tools to enable this task, since phenomenology had opened up the realm of the preconceptual apprehending of phenomena. Yet, Heidegger was reluctant to accept Husserl's phenomenology just as it was, because of Husserl's willingness to trace all phenomena back to human consciousness. Such a standpoint grounded in subjectivity did not provide the framework in which Heidegger's investigations could be undertaken fruitfully. Thus, the kind of phenomenology that Heidegger develops in *Being and Time* is called hermeneutic phenomenology<sup>51</sup>.

The root word for hermeneutics is the Greek verb, *hermeneuein*, which simply means *to interpret*. In Heidegger's view, hermeneutics ultimately points to *Hermes*, the winged messenger of the gods, and to *hermios*, the priest who interprets the sayings of the Oracle of Delphi. Thus, hermeneutics can be traced back to the Greeks and the rise of Greek philosophy<sup>52</sup>.

Hermes is the messenger of the Gods, he who brings a word from the realm of the wordless; *hermeios* brings the word back from the realm of the Oracle - *hermeneuein* is primordial interpretation, the bringing into word of what was previously not yet word. Hermeneutics can be understood then as the most primitive sense of 'to say'. From this coming to birth of word, of language, and its derived meanings of explaining as in bringing to understand, and translating, as in making a foreign tongue or meaning familiar in one's own tongue, arise.

Although Heidegger notes that he gave the answer to why he used the terms 'hermeneutic' in his work in the introduction to *Being and Time*<sup>53</sup>, he goes on to say in *A Dialogue on Language* that he originally became familiar with the term in the course of his theological studies. Heidegger tells us that:

In *Being and Time* the word 'hermeneutics' is used in a *still* broader sense, 'broader' here meaning, however, not the mere extension of the same meaning over a still larger area of application...In *Being and Time*, hermeneutics means neither the theory of the art of interpretation nor interpretation itself, but rather the attempt first of all to define the nature of interpretation on hermeneutic grounds.<sup>54</sup>

Hermeneutics, in Heidegger's conception, is a fundamental theory of how understanding emerges in human existence. Understanding, in Heidegger's sense of the word, is the power to grasp one's own possibilities for being, within the context of the lifeworld in which one exists<sup>55</sup>. Understanding is not something which human being possesses, but rather a constituent element of being-in-the-world<sup>56</sup>. An important aspect of understanding is that it always operates within a set of already interpreted relationships. The prestructure of understanding, always already interpreting and embedded in world, goes beyond the older model of the interpretive situation in terms of subject and object.

Understanding and meaningfulness are for Heidegger the basis for language and interpretation – ‘The statement’s pointing out is accomplished on the basis of what is already disclosed in understanding... The statement is not an unattached kind of behaviour which could of itself primarily disclose beings in general, but always already maintains itself on the basis of being-in-the-world’<sup>57</sup>.

For Heidegger, the true foundation of language is the phenomenon of speaking, where something is brought to light. This is the hermeneutical function of language. Language as speaking is not an objective collection of words that human being can manipulate as objects. Language in this sense is neither an objective nor subjective phenomenon, but rather both together, since world is prior to both.

After *Being and Time*, Heidegger’s thinking becomes more ‘hermeneutical’ in the usual sense of the word, in that his thinking is centred on the interpretation of texts. He turns increasingly to reinterpreting earlier philosophers like Kant and Nietzsche, and also to interpretations of the poetry of Rilke, Hölderlin and Trakl. Philosophy becomes historical, a creative recovery of the past, a form of interpretation<sup>58</sup>.

Heidegger’s contribution to hermeneutical theory is many-faceted. In *Being and Time*, he sees understanding itself in a radically new context. He also redefines the word ‘hermeneutics’ itself, identifying it with phenomenology, and with the basic function of words in brining about understanding. In his later works, his focus shifts to the exegesis of texts, suggesting that he is a ‘hermeneutical’ philosopher in the more traditional sense of the term. Yet, Heidegger always approaches the themes of language, art, philosophy and understanding in terms of the process of disclosure, whereby Being comes to presence.

Heidegger moves beyond other theorists like Dilthey, since his conception of hermeneutics points to the event of understanding as such, and not to historical methods of interpretation as against scientific methods. Heidegger leaves the historical-scientific dichotomy that Dilthey devoted his work to behind, by claiming that all understanding is rooted in the historical character of existential understanding<sup>59</sup>. In this, the way is cleared for Gadamer’s ‘philosophical hermeneutics.

#### 4.10 Technology and Language

In *Being and Time*, Heidegger had already suggested the direction of his later criticisms of presentational thinking in his discussion of the derivative character of 'assertions'. In his later writings, Heidegger attempts to understand how Western thinking came to define thinking, Being and truth in essentially presentational terms. As we have seen in Chapter 3, Heidegger asserts that the earlier conception of truth as disclosure is lost in the Western development of metaphysics. What happens to thinking and language, under the sway of subjectivism, which expresses itself today in the frenzy for technological mastery?

In *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, Heidegger reminds us that:

... words and language are not wrappings in which things are packed for the commerce of those who write and speak. It is in words and language that things first come into being and are. For this reason, the misuse of language in idle talk, in slogans and phrases, destroys our authentic relation to things.<sup>60</sup>

According to Heidegger, traditional philosophies tended to reduce language to formal or abstract expression. Language was considered in its scientific capacity of assertion. Assertion served the threefold purpose of designating, predicating and communicating. Words were used impersonally to define reality as a collection of objects present-at-hand. In assertion, words are frequently treated as little more than lifeless entities for the abstraction of reality. This reached its extreme in the modern reign of logical positivism.

'Between the age of the tool and the age of mechanized technique there is that rupture, that pause in which a language is deployed, the language of ratio: calculative reason.'<sup>61</sup> The main threat to human being's discovery of his abode is the supposition that language serves a purely instrumental function. In a technologically structured world, the view of language as a tool or instrument has gained increasing currency. Today's unrestrained technological objectification deforms language 'into an instrument of reportage and calculable information...a manipulable object to which our thinking must conform.'<sup>62</sup> Technological objectification reduces all words to terms, in the sense of instrumental designations for specific objects. Neologisms, abbreviations



and acronyms that proliferate in our technological society further this reduction. Words become sheer signs, ciphers that no longer evoke a historic worldliness. The relation between human beings and their world is lost. Heidegger notes that:

Speech is challenged to correspond to the ubiquitous orderability of what is present. Speech, when posed in this fashion, becomes information. It informs itself concerning itself, in order to establish securely, by means of information theories, its own procedure. Enframing, the essence of modern technology that holds sway everywhere, ordains for itself a formalised language – that kind of informing by virtue of which man is molded and adjusted into the technical-calculative creature, a process by which step-by-step he surrenders his 'natural language'.<sup>63</sup>

The fact that worrying about such losses strikes many today as absurd is, for Heidegger, indicative of the fact that technological thought is hegemonic. It is a symptom of the one-track thinking that the technological life results in. According to Grange, there is a paradox inherent in technological language:

Technology, our great symbol of change, wants no part in its results. Its language, so desirous of fixing the movement of difference, betrays a paranoid streak. Like the *moi* of Lacan, technology dons a rigid suit of armour when it comes to naming its children. But that should not surprise, for the power sought by technology is always and everywhere power *over* as opposed to power *to*.<sup>64</sup>

When words become signs for speedy communication, they become one-dimensional. They may serve an instrumental purpose well, but they cease to resonate with the multiple chords inherent in language. Indeed, if language were successfully reduced to unequivocal signs, philosophic thought would become nearly impossible.

To insist that language is not reducible to utilitarian signs is not to say that language is somehow divorced from practical concerns and concrete life. Language is, in a sense, eminently practical. Our being-in-the-world is always as a historical being, and language constantly retrieves and preserves our historical embeddedness. Thus, dwelling in the medium of language is not without practical effect - those who pay attention to language are inevitably transformed by it<sup>65</sup>. What we do basically

depends on who we think we are, and who we think we are largely depends on the language by which we describe or define others and ourselves.

In the modern era, dominated by an increasingly technologised use of language, the caring for the word, which Heidegger commends to both the thinker and the poet, requires us to reach back into the silent abyss in search of a language capable of speaking Being in all its otherness<sup>66</sup>. The task of creating such a poetic utterance in our times is both difficult and hazardous. Only by attending to the concealed origins of language can we learn to speak the words originally again. Accordingly, Heidegger sees poetry as the 'conscience' of the Word of Being, which upsets our natural consciousness and invites us to experience the strangeness of things<sup>67</sup>.

Poetry is far more than an act of individual conscience. It involves a communal recollection. Authentic poetry can remind a community that they have been exiled from their tradition that must be sought after anew. Poetry allows human being to come home, but not in the sense of some exultant return to a fixed past, but rather in the sense of a future arriving that can never finally arrive. Language can then be '...the house of being in which man ek-sists by dwelling, in that he belongs to the truth of Being, guarding it'<sup>68</sup>.

Heidegger affirms that the communal vocation of poetry entails a historical project whereby we may recover what is no longer present as what is still to come. He concludes that Hölderlin's poetry of homecoming<sup>69</sup> acts as a summons to others to become hearers of the word that is coming, to become a community that turns from its abuse of language as mere idle talk or technical manipulation and return to the essence of language as a caring for the mystery of origins. The poet cannot do this by himself - he needs others to listen to his language of care and to take the burden of that care upon themselves.

In *On the Way to Language*, Heidegger tells us that poetry becomes a 'piety of thinking'<sup>70</sup> whenever the poet enters the 'play of language', thereby suspending the common approach to speech as a utilitarian vehicle of information. We do not represent language to ourselves - language presents itself to us and speaks through us.

Heidegger speaks of poetry as a sacred or mysterious language<sup>71</sup>, but this does not entail an elitist cult of transcendental otherworlds. By using language in a strange

way, the poet estranges us from our familiar use of words in order to restore a sense of originality to their earthly origins. Poetry and philosophical language are both strange because they represent non-representational linguistic activities. Heidegger also discovers that the two are akin in that they both search out Being<sup>72</sup>. One must be cautious, however, not to mistake this kinship between poetry and philosophy as a complete identification of the two.

When the poet incarnates Being within the word, Being therein appears in its fresh and vital creation. The constant utilization of the linguistic structure in which this creation appears can, however, make the latter static and solidify its novelty into a literal depictive linguistic structure; it is the thinker's, that is the philosopher's task to preserve the metaphorical, presentational character of the language ... Once the poet has linguistically revealed Being through non-representational, metaphorical language, that revelation can be concealed in the repeated use of that language and the literal founding of it. It is at this point that the philosopher – the thinker – assumes his professional role of preserving the metaphorical, non-literal meaning of the poet's language.<sup>73</sup>

One should not mistake Heidegger's primary meaning of poetry with the poet's actual writing in verse form. Poetry (*Dichtung*) in its essential, original sense is for Heidegger the linguistic creation or allowing-to-be of things. Verse making, or poetry in the narrow sense (*Poesie*), depends upon *Dichtung* and is derived from it<sup>74</sup>.

Given this original poetry as the letting-be of what is, it becomes manifest that language in its pristine form is for Heidegger, poetry. *Dichtung* is the actual creation of language in and through its letting beings be. As a result, the primordial act of naming is a linguistic use very different from the naming activity of representational language. In everyday depictive language, a name refers to something already designated; in poetry (*Dichtung*), the name creates the entity as named. The purpose of poetic language is to make things manifest – to make things appear in their unconcealment. Poetry presents things in language for the first time by calling them into appearance, and at the same time preserving these appearances. The mystery is shown in poetic language, rather than pictured as some kind of entity in a representational context<sup>75</sup>.

Language is the chief mode within which Being shows itself – poetic discourse discloses reality by making it manifest. To say means to show or to let appear<sup>76</sup>. Language in its primordial sense then is essentially a manifestation. To say something is Dasein's way of bringing it to Being. This disclosure by human being is its way of owning something – appropriation is a key characteristic of language<sup>77</sup>.

As we have seen, for Heidegger, there is a close relationship between language and thinking. In fact, he asserts that 'All reflective thinking is poetic, and all poetry in turn is a kind of thinking. The two belong together by virtue of that Saying which has already bespoken itself to what is unspoken because it is a thought as a thanks.'<sup>78</sup>

Heidegger tells us that traditional metaphysics is problematic because it has failed to utilise the proper manner of expressing its subject matter, Being. Traditional philosophers have allowed Being to slip into oblivion, metaphysicians have failed to think of and articulate Being correctly since their language and their thoughts have approached Being from a literal, representational point of view. The question about Being has lapsed into an inquiry about things<sup>79</sup>. Heidegger's philosophical aim is to overcome this misunderstanding of traditional metaphysics and ask the question of Being anew.

In the *Letter on Humanism*, Heidegger asserts that 'To bring language ever and again this advent of Being that remains, and in its remaining waits for man, is the sole matter of thinking.'<sup>80</sup> Here the emphasis falls on man as a respondent to the address of Being. The arrival of Being in language is described in terms of the word *Geschick* – destiny. Heidegger claims that what is needed in the present world crisis is less philosophy and more attentiveness to thinking. For Heidegger, thinking '...gathers language into simple saying.'<sup>81</sup>

#### **4.11 Truth and Language**

For Heidegger, we may share in truth only because we share in language<sup>82</sup>. How and why does the truth of poetic discourse differ from the truth of proposition discourse? As we have seen, for Heidegger, the proposition fixes securely, settles, places. The statement states, stops all movement, closes the process. Propositions put subjects and objects in their proper place, they involve possession of meaning. They assume

the self-possession of the Cartesian cogito. Propositions represent a static reality, and their truth is one that always simply says what it says and is what it is.

Apophantical truth, the truth of assertions, statements and propositions, lets things appear in a very distinctive way. It is not a way that gives the thing freedom in showing itself. The assertion evidences a tendency to master and dominate.

Assertions are aimed at some fixed state of reality. The correspondence theory locates our experience with truth in a representational relationship - a relationship determined by the structure of subject and object. This structure conditions the character of our involvement with things. According to Heidegger, this character is oppositional, confrontational and marked by aggression. Truth, in the sense of correctness, is always an exercise of power. Thus, in *The Origin of the Work of Art*, he asks:

Can such an assault perhaps be avoided? - and how? Only, certainly, by granting the thing, as it were, a free field to display its thingly character directly.<sup>183</sup>

Poetising discourse allows for a sensuous, phonological field for the play of sound and sense. Truth as *alētheia* appreciates this field of play, where presences and absences are intertwined. Truth as correctness does not. Poetising discourse is a discourse that stays in touch with our pre-ontological pre-understanding of the world. In poetising discourse, both sound and sense require a theory of truth that accommodates their 'ecstatic' play within a 'free field'. Truth as correctness cannot do justice to the interactive processes essential to poetising discourse. Truth as *alētheia* can, because it is hermeneutical - it lets sound and sense play in the interplay of presence and absence, identity and difference.

#### 4.12 Summary

In *Being and Time*, Heidegger carried out his investigation of language within the general context reflected in the statement 'Da-sein has Language'<sup>184</sup>. Twenty three years later, this formulation would be superseded by the view that 'man acts as though he were the shaper and master of language, while in fact language remains the master of man.'<sup>185</sup> This is not to say that the analysis of *Being and Time* was completely overturned, but that it was this analysis that led Heidegger to an

experience of the 'origin' of the question of Being that could no longer be formulated in the ontological language of that text. If there is a change between Heidegger's earlier and later work, there is also an important continuity. *Being and Time* intends to raise anew the forgotten origin, the oblivion of the question of Being. The oblivion of the understanding of Being is precisely what makes thinking possible, so that it is not the result of this oblivion that must be thought, but the oblivion itself. 'What was a question in *Being and Time* becomes a process of *questioning* in the later work.'<sup>86</sup>

What Heidegger realised as a result of the existential analytic of *Being and Time* is that the origin of the meaning of Being could not be represented in the metaphysical language that operates in the space opened by the ontological distinction between Being and beings, but could only be approached by thinking that difference as such. This point is explicitly made in various places in the later work, including the essay *Language*, where difference (*Austrag*), thought of in terms of Trakl's word 'threshold', is described as the rift that bids us to come to the transformation with language, out of the difference into the difference by responding. Here is the heart of Heidegger's shift in focus from *Being and Time* to *Time and Being*', a shift grounded in a new understanding of language. Heidegger tells us that here, everything is reversed and that:

The division in question was held back because thinking failed in the adequate saying of this turning [Kehre] and did not succeed with the help of the language of metaphysics. The lecture 'On the Essence of Truth', thought out and delivered in 1930 but not printed until 1943, provides a certain insight into the thinking of the turning from 'Being and Time' to 'Time and Being'. This turning is not a change of standpoint from Being and Time, but in it the thinking that was sought first arrives at the location of that dimension out of which Being and Time is experienced, that is to say, experienced from the fundamental experience of the oblivion of Being.<sup>87</sup>

Yet, while it is important to keep in mind the continuity between the ontological orientation of *Being and Time* and the task of thinking the difference as such by which that orientation is given (the task of thinking undertaken in Heidegger's later work), it is also important to realise the significance of the change that has taken place.

On the one hand, Heidegger dismisses the assessment that *Being and Time* ended in a 'blind alley' and says that the thinking that 'hazards a few steps in *Being and Time* has even today not advanced beyond that publication'<sup>88</sup>. Yet on the other hand, Heidegger states that 'perhaps in the meantime it has in one respect come farther into its own matter.'<sup>89</sup> This 'one respect' is the difference between a kind of philosophising which deals with its subject matter at arm's length without risking itself in the process and one that does. But the fact that the orientation of Heidegger's thinking does change, even if the object of his thought does not, indicates that there must have been a risk already involved in the writing of *Being and Time*, a risk which Heidegger opened himself to in desiring to raise anew the question of the meaning of Being.

There is continuity between *Being and Time* and Heidegger's later work insofar as the meaning of Being remains the guiding question, but in the later writing, this question has given rise to a more fundamental kind of thinking and questioning. It is no longer a matter of trying to grasp the question of Being 'explicitly and transparently', but of allowing oneself to be gripped by the experience of the difference which keeps explicitness and transparency always just out of reach.

Heidegger proposes that 'The thinking that inquires into the truth of being and so defines man's essential abode from Being and toward Being is neither ethics nor ontology ... The answer is that such thinking is neither theoretical nor practical. It comes to pass before this distinction.'<sup>90</sup> It is thinking in the fullest sense. The manner in which this thinking comes to pass is as saying (*Sage*). This saying is dwelling, in the manner of 'being-in' as this is worked out in *Being and Time*. Here, being-in as being-with partially constitutes the structure of care. Thinking is the 'recollection of Being and nothing else'<sup>91</sup>, but this recollection is also a building, for thinking builds upon the house of Being. Heidegger reminds us that '...man is not only a living creature who possesses language along with other capacities. Rather, language is the house of Being in which man ek-sists by dwelling, in that he belongs to the truth of Being, guarding it.'<sup>92</sup>

Language as the house of Being elucidates thinking, understood as the recollection of Being in its most primordial form. Language, in its primary function of saying, has the function of bringing about a healing transformation of human being. Dasein, freed into its inherent possibilities by that meditative poetic thinking, which is basically a

thinking, enters onto a path of creative self-transformation. Thinking may not be sufficient to this task on its own, but it is a necessary condition in Heidegger's view.



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- <sup>1</sup> John 1:1
- <sup>2</sup> Heidegger's interest in language dates from the very beginning of his career with his dissertation *The Doctrine of Judgement in Psychologism: A Critical and Positive Contribution to Logic* and his dissertation on Duns Scotus' doctrine of categories and meaning.
- <sup>3</sup> See M. Heidegger, *On Time and Being* (New York, Harper and Row, 1972), p. 9.
- <sup>4</sup> M. Heidegger, *An Introduction to Metaphysics* (U.S.A., Yale University Press, 1964), p. 18-19.
- <sup>5</sup> See M. Heidegger, *Being and Time, A Translation of Sein und Zeit* (Albany, State University of New York Press, 1996), p. 19.
- <sup>6</sup> A detailed discussion of the Heideggerian critique of Nietzsche will not be included here. For a discussion of Heidegger's reading of Nietzsche, see: M. Haar, Critical Remarks on the Heideggerian Reading of Nietzsche in C. Macann (ed.), *Critical Heidegger* (London, Routledge, 1996), p. 121-133.
- <sup>7</sup> See page 3 in Chapter 1.
- <sup>8</sup> F.A. Olafson, The Unity of Heidegger's Thought in C.B. Guignon (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 97-121.
- <sup>9</sup> P. Ricoeur, The Critique of Subjectivity in M.S. Frings (ed.), *Heidegger and the Quest for Truth* (Chicago, Quadrangle Books, 1968), p. 72.
- <sup>10</sup> M. Heidegger, *Being and Time, A Translation of Sein und Zeit* (Albany, State University of New York Press, 1996), p.150.
- <sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 150.
- <sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 154.
- <sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 28.
- <sup>14</sup> See, for example, *Ibid.*, p. 82.
- <sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 146.
- <sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 147.
- <sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 145.
- <sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 150.
- <sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 154.
- <sup>21</sup> M. Heidegger, The Way to Language in *On the Way to Language* P.D. Hertz (trans), (London, Harper and Row, 1982), p. 130.
- <sup>22</sup> M. Heidegger, *Being and Time, A Translation of Sein und Zeit* (Albany, State University of New York Press, 1996), p.150.
- <sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 145.
- <sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 152.
- <sup>25</sup> See *Ibid.*, p. 164.
- <sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 154
- <sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 159.
- <sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 161.
- <sup>30</sup> See *Ibid.*, p. 152.
- <sup>31</sup> M. Heidegger, The Way to Language in *On the Way to Language* P.D. Hertz (trans), (London, Harper and Row, 1982), p. 126.
- <sup>32</sup> M. Heidegger, *Being and Time, A Translation of Sein und Zeit* (Albany, State University of New York Press, 1996), p. 125.
- <sup>33</sup> See M. Heidegger, The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking in *Basic Writings: Martin Heidegger (Revised and Expanded Edition)* D. F. Krell (trans.) (London, Routledge, 1993), p. 441-444.
- <sup>34</sup> See M. Heidegger, *Being and Time, A Translation of Sein und Zeit* (Albany, State University of New York Press, 1996), p. 81, 82.
- <sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 133.
- <sup>36</sup> See M. Heidegger, The Way to Language in *On the Way to Language*. P.D. Hertz (trans), (London, Harper and Row, 1982), p. 127.
- <sup>37</sup> M. Heidegger, Hölderlin and the Essence of Poetry in T.D. Scott (ed.), *Existence and Being* (Chicago, Regnery, 1949), p. 278.
- <sup>38</sup> C. Taylor. Heidegger, Language and Ecology. in H.L. Dreyfus and H. Hall Heidegger: A

- Critical Reader*. (Cambridge, Blackwell Publishers, 1992). p. 248.
- <sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 154.
- <sup>40</sup> Heidegger, M. *Poetry, Language, Thought* Trans. A. Hofstadter (New York, Harper and Row, 1971), p. 189.
- <sup>41</sup> See M. Heidegger, *Being and Time, A Translation of Sein und Zeit* (Albany, State University of New York Press, 1996), p. 154.
- <sup>42</sup> M. Heidegger, *Letter on Humanism in Basic Writings: Martin Heidegger (Revised and Expanded Edition)* D.F. Krell (trans.), (London, Routledge, 1993), p. 237.
- <sup>43</sup> M. Heidegger, *An Introduction to Metaphysics* (U.S.A., Yale University Press, 1964), p. 96, 97.
- <sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 101.
- <sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 82.
- <sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 156.
- <sup>48</sup> M. Heidegger, *The Way to Language in On the Way to Language*. P.D. Hertz (trans), (London, Harper and Row, 1982), p. 130.
- <sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 124.
- <sup>50</sup> M. Heidegger, *What is Philosophy?* Translated by W. Kluback and J. Wilde (London, Vision Press, 1958), p. 45.
- <sup>51</sup> M. Heidegger, *Being and Time, A Translation of Sein und Zeit* (Albany, State University of New York Press, 1996), p. 33.
- <sup>52</sup> M. Heidegger, *A Dialogue on Language in On the Way to Language*. P.D. Hertz (trans), (London, Harper and Row, 1982), p. 29.
- <sup>53</sup> M. Heidegger, *Being and Time, A Translation of Sein und Zeit* (Albany, State University of New York Press, 1996), p. 33.
- <sup>54</sup> M. Heidegger, *A Dialogue on Language in On the Way to Language*. P.D. Hertz (trans), (London, Harper and Row, 1982), p. 11.
- <sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 131.
- <sup>56</sup> M. Heidegger, *Being and Time, A Translation of Sein und Zeit* (Albany, State University of New York Press, 1996), p. 138.
- <sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 146.
- <sup>58</sup> R.E. Palmer, *Hermeneutics: Interpretation Theory in Schleiermacher, Dilthey, Heidegger and Gadamer*. (Evanston, Northwestern University Press, 1979), p. 126.
- <sup>59</sup> For a discussion on Dilthey's *methodical* hermeneutics compared to Heidegger's *existential* hermeneutics, see R. Wiehl, *Schleiermacher's Hermeneutics* in K. Wright (ed.) *Festivals of Interpretation: Essays on Hans-Georg Gadamer's work*. (Albany, State University of New York Press, 1990), p. 26-42.
- <sup>60</sup> M. Heidegger, *An Introduction to Metaphysics* (U.S.A., Yale University Press, 1964), p. 13, 14.
- <sup>61</sup> A.F. Lingis, *On the essence of Technique* in M.S. Frings (ed.), *Heidegger and the Quest for Truth* (Chicago, Quadrangle Books, p. 126).
- <sup>62</sup> M. Heidegger. *The Piety of Thinking*. Trans J. Hart and J. Maraldo. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1976), p. 29.
- <sup>63</sup> M. Heidegger. *The Way to Language in Martin Heidegger: Basic Writings. Revised and Expanded Edition* (London, Routledge, 1993), p. 421.
- <sup>64</sup> J. Grange, *As Technology advances, Language decays*, *International Philosophical Quarterly* 29(2), June 1989, p. 170.
- <sup>65</sup> M. Heidegger, *The Way to Language in On the Way to Language*. P.D. Hertz (trans), (London, Harper and Row, 1982), p. 87.
- <sup>66</sup> See M Heidegger, *Letter on Humanism in Basic Writings: Martin Heidegger, (Revised and Expanded Edition)* (London, Routledge, 1993), p. 262.
- <sup>67</sup> See, for example, M. Heidegger, *The Origin of the Work of Art in Martin Heidegger: Basic Writings. Revised and Expanded Edition* (London, Routledge, 1993), p. 200.
- <sup>68</sup> M Heidegger, *Letter on Humanism in Basic Writings: Martin Heidegger, (Revised and Expanded Edition)* (London, Routledge, 1993), p. 237.
- <sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 241.
- <sup>70</sup> M. Heidegger, *The Way to Language in On the Way to Language*. P.D. Hertz (trans), (London, Harper and Row, 1982), p. 72.
- <sup>71</sup> M. Heidegger, *An Introduction to Metaphysics* (U.S.A., Yale University Press, 1964), p. 171.
- <sup>72</sup> M. Heidegger, *The Way to Language in On the Way to Language* P.D. Hertz (trans),



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- (London, Harper and Row, 1982), p. 80.
- <sup>73</sup> G.F. Sefler, *Language and the World: A Methodological Synthesis within the writings of Martin Heidegger and Ludwig Wittgenstein* (Atlantic Highlands, N.J., Humanities Press, 1974), pp. 152, 153.
- <sup>74</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 146.
- <sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 148.
- <sup>76</sup> M. Heidegger, *On the Way to Language* (London, Harper and Row, 1971), p.107.
- <sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 128.
- <sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 136.
- <sup>79</sup> M. Heidegger, *Being and Time, A Translation of Sein und Zeit* (Albany, State University of New York Press, 1996), p. 5.
- <sup>80</sup> M. Heidegger, Letter on Humanism in *Martin Heidegger: Basic Writings. Revised and Expanded Edition* (London, Routledge, 1993), p. 264.
- <sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 265.
- <sup>82</sup> See Chapter 3, p. 73-81.
- <sup>83</sup> M. Heidegger, The Origin of the Work of Art in *Basic Writings: Martin Heidegger Revised and Expanded Edition* (London, Routledge, 1993), p. 151.
- <sup>84</sup> M. Heidegger, *Being and Time, A Translation of Sein und Zeit* (Albany, State University of New York Press, 1996), p. 154.
- <sup>85</sup> R. Walsh, Language, Thinking and being in the Earlier and Later Philosophy of Martin Heidegger, *Philosophy Today* 35(3), 1991, p. 234.
- <sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 234, 235.
- <sup>87</sup> M. Heidegger, Letter on Humanism in *Basic Writings Martin Heidegger Revised and Expanded Edition* (London, Routledge, 1993), p. 231, 232.
- <sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 246.
- <sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 259.
- <sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 237.

## CHAPTER 5: TECHNOLOGY

*Technology is not demonic, but its essence is mysterious.*<sup>1</sup>

This chapter is divided into two sections. In the first part of the chapter, I explore Heidegger's views on technology in detail. I include a section dealing with Heidegger's thought on science, in order to understand how science and technology are related in Heidegger's thought. My focus will be on Heidegger's conception of *Das Ge-stell* as the manner in which Being manifests itself in the age of technology; and *Bestand* as Heidegger's word for 'standing reserve' – the way in which all things including human being are revealed in this age. The second part of this chapter includes a discussion of Heidegger's concept of *Gelassenheit* and his suggestions for the 'overcoming' of the calculative thinking that have become all-pervasive in the age of technology. I reserve my critical appreciation of his ideas on technology for the final chapter of this study.

### 5.1. Technology and the Danger

#### 5.1.1 What is technology?

In our time, technology has become a major concern for us. Every person in our society is touched by technology. In fact, 'our lives are technologically textured for most waking moments.'<sup>2</sup> We are seduced by the power of technology. We cannot fail to see how its products and processes have influenced our ways of thinking and acting, indeed, the very character of our lives.

Yet, technology increasingly evokes fear and trepidation in us when we look at the rapid destruction of the earth's resources and the possibilities for self-destruction that technology has placed in our hands. Technology seems to have become the central, endangering phenomenon of our times. Still, many believe that we will find solutions for the crises that we face as a result of our technological over-zealousness, and that we will find these solutions in technology itself. After all, it is *our* technology, one that will surely open up new possibilities to overcome these difficulties. We are the masters of technology; we cannot allow ourselves to be mastered by it.

### 5.1.2 Heidegger on Technology.

In the decades after the Second World War, Heidegger's writings on modernity came to focus explicitly on the problem of technology. Although only two essays *The Question concerning Technology* and *The Turning* are explicitly devoted to it, technology is a primary issue in all of Heidegger's work subsequent to 1930.

In ordinary German, *Technik* means both technology and technique<sup>3</sup>, yet Heidegger does not see technology in this conventional manner. Rather, for Heidegger, 'Technology is a way of revealing.'<sup>4</sup> Essentially, then, technology is not about machines, complex techniques or the manufacture of artefacts in Heidegger's conception. The essence of technology is itself not technological. As Heidegger sums it up: 'Our age is not a technological age because it is the age of the machine; it is the age of the machine because it is the technological age.'<sup>5</sup>

Heidegger does acknowledge the fundamental relation between machines and technology<sup>6</sup>, but views the modern production of machines merely as a ramification of a particular way of thinking. Machine technology is therefore just the most obvious outgrowth of modern technology. In Heidegger's ontological perspective, technology is neither neutral<sup>7</sup> nor instrumental. It signifies a particular mode of disclosure. It reveals Being in a particular way.

According to Heidegger, the major epochs in Western history are actually stages in the steady decline in Western human being's understanding of what it means to 'be'.

Technological modernity was anticipated by the Greek *epistēme*, combined with the Christian conception of an external nature subordinated to man. Heidegger cements the originality of these interpretations by viewing metaphysics as the only, leading allotment of beings - it is in the light of the withdrawal of Being that the technological-scientific epoch is revealed for what it is.

The final element that Heidegger adds - the essential link in his history of metaphysics - is the securing of truth as certainty, and of thought as representation<sup>8</sup>. Without the cogito and the instituting of the subject-object correlation, the technological-scientific era would remain incomprehensible.

In the technological age, for something to 'be' means for it to be raw material - part of the endless process of production and consumption. For Heidegger, the horror of the technological age is that human beings are also seen as raw material<sup>9</sup>. Thus, the 'question concerning technology' is ultimately a question about human dignity.

Modern technology reveals the world in the manner of a challenging forth (*Herausfordern*)<sup>10</sup> and not in the manner of a leading forth from concealment into unconcealment (*her-vor-bringen*). This challenging forth confronts what lies in potential by extracting it in order to use it, and not as a phenomenologically discoverable essence in need of safeguarding. This challenging forth unlocks and exposes; and is always directed at something else - the maximum yield at the minimum expense. The goal of technology as a whole is thus the endless pursuit of efficiency in the exploitation of resources.

For Heidegger, technology possesses a highly ambiguous nature: it is dangerous, since it is the supreme provocation, and yet it is salutary, since we have no other access to the truth of Being in our times<sup>11</sup>. How does Heidegger come to view technology as a way of revealing, as the way in which modern human beings accesses truth?

### 5.1.3 Technē

Reflecting on the ancient Greeks, Heidegger notes that the root of the word 'technology' is *technē*. For the Greeks, *technē* meant a revelation of something, an uncovering or a bringing to light. The word *technē* according to Heidegger then means a mode of knowing. Thus, we can see that from his reflections on the Greek *technē*, Heidegger can conclude that modern technology is also a manner of bringing forth out of concealedness. Heidegger notes that the manner in which modern technology reveals what is concealed is very different from that of the ancient Greeks. The Greek experience of *technē* was a revealing of what lay in potential. Hence, *technē* was a form of 'care', a way of enticing from beings their potential forms and functions. Heidegger tells us that:

Technology is in its essence a destiny within the history of Being and of the truth of Being, a truth that lies in oblivion. For technology does not go back to the *technē* of the Greeks in name only but derives historically and essentially from *technē* as a mode of *alētheuein*, a mode, that is, of

rendering beings manifest [*Offenbarmachen*]. As a form of truth technology is grounded in the history of metaphysics, which is itself a distinctive and up to now the only perceptible phase of the history of Being.<sup>12</sup>

Technē is one particular mode of openness to beings, which describes the human being's solicitous relationship to the world. This solicitation is the burden of freedom. Human freedom has not typically been identified with the solicitation of what lies in potential, but rather with the power to possess and master the actual. Modern technology receives its defining characteristics from this power of appropriation. I will discuss Heidegger's view of freedom in more detail presently.

#### **5.1.4 *Bestand* (Standing Reserve)**

In the endless technological drive for efficiency, the earth, its creatures and our fellow human beings are reduced to the status of raw material - Heidegger's word for this is 'standing reserve' (*Bestand*). The world as a whole becomes standing reserve. Now, 'everything is ordered to stand by, to be immediately on hand, indeed to stand there just so that it may be on call for a further ordering.'<sup>13</sup>

For Heidegger, the most dangerous result of this view is that other human beings also are regarded as 'standing reserve'. In the technological era, 'No longer are individuals "commanding presences" for each other; they have become disposable experiences that can be turned on and off like water from a faucet.'<sup>14</sup>

#### **5.1.5 *Das Ge-stell* (Enframing)**

In the decades after the Second World War, Heidegger's writings on modernity came to focus explicitly on the term *das Ge-stell*, which he uses as a key expression when describing the nature of modern technology.

Varying English translations exist for the term *das Ge-stell*, the term Heidegger uses to describe the essence of technology. Theodore Kisiel, for example, suggests 'composite'<sup>15</sup>, stressing the 'provocative positing' involved. Joseph Kockelmans uses 'the com-positing'<sup>16</sup>, while Albert Hofstadter uses 'enframing'<sup>17</sup>. I will use Hofstadter's

translation, since I feel that it most accurately expresses the idea that *das Ge-stell* allows human beings only to reveal reality as standing reserve (*Bestand*).

According to Heidegger, enframing is the manner in which Being manifests itself in the age of technology<sup>18</sup>. Enframing allows human being to reveal reality as standing reserve (*Bestand*). In this sense, technology is totalising. It reduces the metaphorical, expressive powers of language and thinking, in order to make reality calculable and manipulable. For Heidegger, enframing is the supreme danger, because it causes the event of revealing (Being itself) to slip into oblivion. As a result, human being is no longer Dasein as an open possibility, but rather a grounded actuality, a fixed identity. A human being fully adapted to the technological world would no longer be a human being, because of his complete forgetfulness of Being.

As we have seen, the development of a new machine, artefact or set of procedures is of secondary importance to Heidegger. To him, the totalising reach of enframing as a particular mode of human being is most important. Machines are only an example of that which awaits use as standing reserve and integrates the world as standing reserve.

There are three respects in which the character of Ge-stell as the highest danger is manifest. Firstly, there is contained in it the impending possibility that human being may come to take the measure of all things only in relation to an uncovering which provokes, and that thereby he will decisively drive out every other possibility of revealing<sup>19</sup>. *Das Ge-stell* thus endangers human being's relationship to things. Secondly, *das Ge-stell* represents the highest danger by the fact that it poses a threat to human being's own relation to himself to the extent that provoking-uncovering is taken as the standard by which human being is measured. Human being is seen as *Bestand*, and yet he continues to give himself airs of being master on earth<sup>20</sup>. Everything that comes into contact with technology becomes uniformly subsumed into a framework of sufficiently exploited resources. Modern technology has no boundaries or limits and so in the end, humanity itself becomes another element of technological ordering. Humanity as the only producer and consumer of technology becomes that which technology primarily produces and consumes.

The third danger is that human being now nowhere encounters himself in his essence, since he always encounters himself as a subject of, never as subject to the



call under which he stands<sup>21</sup>. *Das Ge-stell* threatens human being's entrance into a domain in which he can remember Being.

### 5.1.6 Technology and Metaphysics

Modern technology and metaphysics are completely entwined in Heidegger's view. In fact, they are largely equivalent terms. This is because the 'Enlightenment directive' to control and standardise life follows from the metaphysical drive to objectify the world. Both modern technology and metaphysics are a result of a refusal to think Being, in their systematic effort to exert mastery over beings<sup>22</sup>. Yet, neither technology nor metaphysics allows us a proper perspective from which to evaluate the other. Technology entices us into a productive process that disallows questioning thought - the kind of questioning that would properly reveal the nature of metaphysics. Metaphysical humankind, on the other hand, engaged as a subject in the reductive objectification of beings, cannot do other than exhibit a technological apprehension and manipulation of the world.

Technology is the main historical manifestation of the subjectivism introduced by Western metaphysical thought<sup>23</sup>. Metaphysical subjectivism views the human being as a subject standing before an object of perception. This view of the world as an object results in its instrumental use and domination. The subjectivism underlying modern technology has evolved into a radical humanism<sup>24</sup>, i.e., it has become a species-level orientation, an objectifying anthropocentrism. It is important to remember that technological activity, the development of techniques and the production of artefacts, is not the origin of this subjectivism, but rather a ramification of it.

In his discussion of the emerging world picture in *The Age of the World Picture*<sup>25</sup>, Heidegger further illuminates the nature of species subjectivism. The world conceived as a picture is a metaphysical reduction of the world to a human representation. Now, the inclusive representation of the world as an object becomes the basic human experience and the world picture becomes humanity's main measure of reality. The emergence of the technology of 'Virtual reality' is particularly insightful in this regard.<sup>26</sup> In a 'virtual world' one experiences and directs the course of sights, sounds and sensations made available through sophisticated computer simulations. By 'world picture', Heidegger means that we have effectively reduced the world to our representation of it. The human subject, in effect, begins to 'create' his own reality.

Wherever he looks, 'man everywhere and always encounters only himself.'<sup>27</sup> All that exists does so because it is represented or produced by us.

Heidegger believed that the crisis of modernity, exemplified as it was in the political and social chaos of the Weimar republic, no longer allowed any scope for a new philosophical point of view. All that remained was to reflect upon the crisis of modernity. For Heidegger, the essence of this crisis lay in the hegemony of technological thinking in the modern age, made possible by a subjectivist and destructive interference into familiar and well-understood relations between humanity and its environment. He related the essence of modern technological intervention in humankind's traditional relation with the environment as the culmination of the history of metaphysics<sup>28</sup>. This was initiated when Plato postulated the idea as a perceivable value - the idea of the good – and was fulfilled in Nietzsche's conception of the Will to Power as the wilful and subjectivist positing of values. Heidegger claimed that a 'new' philosophy would simply continue this subjectivist positing of values, and so proclaimed in *The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking*<sup>29</sup> that a new kind of thinking, which is neither philosophy, metaphysics nor science could perhaps create the possibility of overcoming the modern world's technological-scientific-industrial character as the sole criterion of human being's world sojourn<sup>30</sup>.

### **5.1.7 Technology and Ontology**

Technology is ontologically devastating, because it usurps all other modes of revelation. With everything standing in reserve for our use, 'distance' disappears<sup>31</sup>. Here, Heidegger is referring to distance as an existential sense of our proximity to horizons: those between earth and sky, mortals and immortals. This blurring of borders is the main sign of an unconditioned anthropomorphism. This is not only an anthropomorphism that objectifies the world in order to exploit it, but also one that creates the world in its own image, where everything that humankind comes into contact with becomes an extension of itself.

Technology distances us from the world as a fourfold home in need of preservation. The sky, for example was always beyond human reach, worthy of contemplation for its otherness. Now, it has become an integrated standing reserve. It soaks up our gaseous wastes, it has become a port for thousands of satellites, it has become an object of increasing militarisation, and its clouds are 'seeded' to extort precipitation. With each passing day, the likelihood increases that we will look up into the heavens,

or deep within nature, and the only impressions we will receive will be those made with our own hands.

Yet, human being as Dasein necessarily inhabits a 'there' and so can never encounter only himself<sup>32</sup>. Since human being is a thinking being-in-the-world, a situated and limited being, Heidegger can show that the ultimate victory of technological humankind is a delusion. Its reign would, however, not be any less catastrophic, because delusion may become accepted as reality. Human nature and human freedom<sup>33</sup>, in Heidegger's special sense of the word, still lie in the balance.

### 5.1.8 The Danger

The danger, therefore, is for Heidegger not the potential physical self-annihilation of humanity, but rather that intensive technological production will overpower man's capacity for manifold modes of disclosure. Philosophic thought would be replaced with utilitarian cognition; artistic creativity would atrophy as a result of endless innovative production, and political action would be obviated by social engineering. Heidegger's fear is that someday, calculative thinking would be accepted and practised as the only way of thinking. Calculative thinking is that mode of any type of thought that deals with the quantifiable and the measurable; it is that mode of cognition that neatly categorises all of reality into thingly structures. 'Calculation refuses to let anything appear except what is countable ... Calculative thinking compels itself into a compulsion to master everything on the basis of the consequential correctness of its procedure.'<sup>34</sup> Most disturbing of all is that technological calculation and innovation may satisfy our material needs and our diminished spiritual needs to such an extent that we would not even notice what we had lost.

It is important to note that Heidegger in his criticism of calculative thinking is in no way attempting to deny any validity to it. He does however fear that calculative thinking might one day become the only way of thinking, as a result of human being being so captivated by the technological revolution. Calculative thinking admittedly has validity, but only in its own realm – the realm of objects.

According to Heidegger, 'Devastation is the high-velocity expulsion of Mnemosyne.'<sup>35</sup> Mnemosyne means remembrance, not in the sense of simply a recollection of what was, but also as a constant, intimate concentration on worldly affairs and things<sup>36</sup>.

The expulsion of memory is therefore the loss of the capacity to abide by, rather than challenge forth the world. Once the fourfold is reduced to an extension of our cerebral computations, our capacity to dwell within its horizons disappears. We are left truly homeless.

### 5.1.9 Homelessness

Heidegger claims that the *Heimatlosigkeit* (homelessness) of contemporary human being is related to the 'dis-essencing' of language and thinking. *Das Ge-stell* does not coincidentally occur in the age of homelessness. It is the root from which this condition grows. The fixating of truth within *Das Ge-stell* exiles human being from his essence, namely to be Dasein. There is no longer a relation to the openness of Being, for the possible becomes identical to the real. Homelessness therefore consists in the abandonment of Being by beings<sup>37</sup>.

Heidegger's word for home is *Heimat* and not *Heim*. This indicates a homeland, rather than a household. Because of this, Heidegger remains an easy target for those who rely on his political biography and depict his concern for homelessness as xenophobic and protofascistic. Heidegger did on occasion speak of homelessness as if its remedy entailed a national retrenchment, but I believe that a national, racial, ethnic or linguistic circumscription of home is not intrinsic to Heidegger's thought. He says in the *Letter on Humanism*: 'The word (homeland) is thought here in an essential sense, not patriotically or nationalistically, but in terms of the history of Being.'<sup>38</sup>

However, Heidegger's post-war preoccupation with homelessness is perhaps understandable as the product of enduring national and cultural concerns. Securing a home for Aryan Germans allowed the denial of home to neighbouring Poles and Slavs, as well as to the 'wandering' Jews and Gypsies. Nazism would create its own refugee problem and then impose its own solution, resulting in the massive destruction of the homes and lives of millions of Germans and Germany's neighbours. Though Heidegger had no taste for the racist violence with which the restoration of the German *Heimat* would be attempted, his nostalgic longing for the establishment of an organic national family rooted in tradition by blood, language and soil allowed a dangerous accommodation.

The defeat of the Nazis did not erase the concrete problems of homelessness, nor Heidegger's concern for authentic dwelling. Fifteen years later, Heidegger would still wonder how he and his fellow Germans might set themselves up as a 'bulwark against the on-rush of the alien.' The answer was for them to 'awaken unceasingly the bestowing and healing and conserving powers of Home.'<sup>39</sup>

For Heidegger, home does not primarily refer to a spatial location, but rather is a relation of nearness to the world. For Heidegger, 'world' is '... the clearing of Being into which man stands out on the basis of his thrown essence.'<sup>40</sup> Heidegger's many ruminations on homelessness have allowed his philosophy to be connected to an ecological framework that identifies the earth as the human habitat in need of caretaking. I will discuss Heidegger's connections with ecologically minded philosophers in Chapter 6, cautioning that by turning Heidegger into an 'ecophilosopher' we do violence to his work, and misunderstand the fundamental tenets from which he was working.

We cannot ignore the social, cultural, psychological and ontological significance of homelessness in our contemporary world. Humanity has been uprooted from the traditions of land, language, ethnicity and religion, and it has found no substitutes for them. The question we are asking today is whether humankind is losing its capacity to find a home on earth.

Marshall McLuhan<sup>41</sup> feels that today we have replaced our shared sense of home and belonging with a sharing of information. This information is not a stable possession since it is our own disposable and pliable creation. The vast diversity of human experience is homogenised into a uniform, universal currency. Homogenisation indicates not the capacity to share a home, but the incapacity to resist a process.

Heidegger believes that a way beyond contemporary homelessness consists in a humanity transformed by the opportunity to participate in worldliness. A discovery of our essential Being-in-the-world and our worldly shepherding of Being is needed. Routinised and homogenised, contemporary humanity is left without a nature and without a project. He says: 'We are too late for the gods, and too early for Being.' And yet, 'Being's poem, just begun, is man.'<sup>42</sup> This hope that Heidegger hints at rests on the possibility for a fundamental transformation. A humanity that is to listen to Being's poem cannot remain a humanity that is defined by its metaphysically grounded possession and mastery of the world. In *Building, Dwelling, Thinking*<sup>43</sup>, Heidegger

seeks further insight into that 'saving power' that begins to surface in meditation on the essence of technology, a new way of seeing human being's position with regard to things. I discuss these insights in more detail in the second section of this chapter.

In his 1947 *Letter on Humanism*, Heidegger underlines the fact that his philosophic appeal to humanity should not be confused with humanism. Humanism places humankind at the centre of a universe, which is available for exploitation. Being exists as a resource for the species and as such receives its value. The species becomes defined in its essence by its rule over the universe of beings. Humanism is founded upon metaphysical subjectivism because Being is always objective presence - that which relates as object to the species subject. By rejecting humanism, Heidegger aims to engage that thinking which questions human being anew. The aim is to discover in this questioning the essence of human being, to find that the mystery that situates this questioning constitutes a new abode for human being, a place of dwelling.

Anxiety is the mood of homelessness that wrests human being away from the habitual dispositions that make possible his coping with daily affairs. It is perhaps best described as the state of unease in which human being's 'there' is revealed to be not fully his own. In anxiety, human being feels displaced and alienated. The world becomes disclosed as foreign. In short, anxiety is the foreboding of homelessness.

Yet, anxiety is not to be deprecated, because it communicates a basic, sometimes harsh ontological reality: our thrown being-in-the-world. The point is neither permanently to escape our anxious apprehension of contingency and the nothingness of Being, nor self-destructively to languish in it. The problem is to live in the balance.

Anxiety is an awareness or foreboding of our homeless condition. We must, according to Heidegger, learn to become at home in our homelessness. We must experience our anxiety as our own and make our abode in the world in a way that acknowledges rather than denies our sense of existential displacement. The ongoing search for a home in our earthly homelessness defines human life. Engaging in this search authentically defines the philosophical life.

In the contemporary world, the problem of our homelessness is made manifest as a metaphysical drive to construct an abode. Homelessness now becomes a problem to

be resolved through social engineering and technological ingenuity. Heidegger feels that all such resolutions are ill fated. A proper abode for humanity can never be fabricated. It may only be discovered and rediscovered. True dwelling is not an imposition of the self on a foreign landscape, but rather a setting at peace, a preserving and a safeguarding of each thing in its nature.

Being at home connotes a peaceful belonging, while anxiety indicates an uneasy displacement. To be truly homeless is to lose one's ability to reveal the world as the place for human dwelling. To be truly at home is to exercise one's ontologically disclosive capacities. Being at home in the world and being free are the same thing, according to Heidegger. To be at home everywhere is to experience the freedom that allows our disclosure of Being.

#### **5.1.10 Heidegger's Conception of Freedom**

Heidegger developed a new understanding of freedom in the context of his ideas on technology - freedom seen as an activity, event or happening. Freedom, for Heidegger, is proposed as a disclosive letting-be - a freedom that celebrates care taking, rather than mastery.

The essence of freedom is originally not connected with the will or even with the causality of human willing. Freedom governs the free space in the sense of the cleared, that is to say, the revealed. To the occurrence of revealing, i.e., of truth, freedom stands in the closest and most intimate kinship...All revealing comes out of the free, goes into the free, and brings into the free. The freedom of the free consists neither in unfettered arbitrariness nor in the constraint of mere laws.<sup>44</sup>

For Heidegger, every act of freedom is a foreclosing of alternatives and possibilities. Freedom is not absolute liberty in the sense of an unbounded power to do, move and create. Freedom is freedom to reveal what is. Human being, as a bounded circle of disclosure, displays its freedom to the extent that it remains open to the inexhaustible mystery of Being in its bounded disclosing of beings.

For Heidegger, freedom is then fundamentally and foremost, an openness, as well as a letting-be. By attending to technology as enframing, Heidegger tells us that we are

...already sojourning within the free space of destining, a destining that in no way confines us to a stultified compulsion to push on blindly with technology or, what comes to the same, to rebel helplessly against it and curse it as the work of the devil. Quite to the contrary, when we once open ourselves expressly to the *essence* of technology we find ourselves unexpectedly taken into a freeing claim.<sup>45</sup>

Heidegger's rejection of the traditional conception of freedom as a power-to or a power-over has been severely criticized. I will explore whether these criticisms are justified in Chapter 6, in the context of a discussion on the ethical dimensions of Heidegger's thought.

### **5.1.11 Science in the Heideggerian view**

The word 'science' is one that usually evokes awe in us. When we speak of science, we have in mind an activity that, through disciplined observation and experiment, attains knowledge concerning all kinds of phenomena. Modern research scientists, guided in their experimentation by the ideal of exactitude and objectivity, have achieved dramatic successes. Nevertheless, they have entered into a state of crisis. This crisis, according to Husserl<sup>46</sup>, was a crisis evidenced by the modern failure to relate the sciences to human subjectivity and to the life-world, and also by the absorption of human being into the sciences as though he himself were just a complex natural object. Heidegger begins then, in an effort to understand this crisis.

Pure science probes phenomena in a disinterested, objective fashion. Yet, for Heidegger, there is no pure, disinterested science.<sup>47</sup> Rather, modern science always approaches reality with a predetermined outlook and predetermined intent; '... it orders its experiments precisely for the purpose of asking whether and how nature reports itself when set up this way'.<sup>48</sup>

Far from disinterestedly pursuing discovery for discovery's sake, modern science sets out always toward a specific goal, in accordance with prescribed criteria that it never fails to provide for itself. To Heidegger, it is this character of modern science which distinguishes our science from the science of every previous time and marks it as distinctively modern.



Modern science always proceeds as to discover reality as something calculable. It looks for sequences of cause and effect that it can follow out, and confidently expects to find patterns and coherences that will allow it to deduce 'laws' on the basis of which it will be able to predict phenomena not yet met with. In comporting itself in this way, modern science invariably approaches the reality toward which it looks with a prior knowledge that at once defines and makes possible its work. Thus, Heidegger asserts that modern science is always and everywhere 'mathematical'<sup>49</sup>. What does he mean here?

Heidegger gives the name *Befindlichkeit* to the first and determining awareness of oneself in the world<sup>50</sup>. *Befindlichkeit* is a given sense of the way in which one finds oneself in one's world. This sense is manifest in the different modes of attunement to the world. Although there is always already some mood present, certain moods are relatively permanent, while others are transitory. Heidegger discusses the mood of fear as an example of the latter. Fear is a response to a threat that tends to organise all one's intentions and behaviours around itself. In general, then, one's whole way of being in the world is always polarised in a characteristic manner by some mood.

But Heidegger's ideas on mood are not only applicable to human being, but also to epochs. To understand the fundamental orientation of an epoch, according to Heidegger, one must first discover its dominant mood or attunement. To understand the scientific and technological era, we must then discover the mood that motivates this era.

In *The Question Concerning Technology*, Heidegger inquires into the mood-basis of modern techniques. He proceeds by contrasting modern and ancient techniques. Both reveal nature as changeable by human being's manipulation, but they reveal its subordination to different kinds of intentionality. Ancient Greek techniques (the Greek *technē*) rearrange the parts and energies of nature for human being's use. Modern techniques, on the contrary, work over and release hidden energies, so that they may be used in turn to release other energies. If ancient techniques merely rearrange or change the place of objects or energies, modern techniques dis-place, pro-voke (*herausfordern*) and transform (*umformen*) them.

The mood or attunement that Heidegger identifies as prevailing when objects are seen as standing reserve (*Bestand*), is what he calls *Ge-stell*. As we have seen, *Ge-stell* is the skeleton or general pattern of modern technological culture. In this mood,

everything is seen as standing reserve. In his essay, *What is a Thing?*, Heidegger describes the type of understanding which is determinative of *Ge-stell*. In this essay, the term 'the mathematical' is used to refer to that which is taken by an epoch to be axiomatically or self-evidently true, and this is known in advance about the whole world. The quantitative mathematical properties of the world are, for *Ge-stell*, presupposed in this manner. They were divined by the Greeks, but only reached clear and explicit expression with the Newtonian laws of motion. Thus, these physical-mathematical laws became for the seventeenth century and for much of later metaphysics the invisible but real skeleton in which the experienced world is constructed. Only the mathematical physicist has the discipline and knowledge necessary for acquiring insight into the articulation of this reality. Scientific knowledge becomes the most powerful and efficient instrument at our disposal in the modern world.

Thus, modern science is commonly described as mathematical, in contrast to medieval and ancient science. It is distinguished by the fact that it is mathematical. For Heidegger, modern science is able to proceed mathematically because it is in a deeper sense already mathematical, and this sense of mathematical must be discovered if we are to gain clarity as to the essence of modern science.

Heidegger pursues the recovery of this deeper sense of mathematical by meditating on the meaning of the Greek *mathesis, ta mathemata*<sup>51</sup>. Heidegger sees that for the Greeks, the mathematical signified that about things that we already know, which we do not first come to know from things themselves, but which we already bring to these things. It was only because numbers are those things most obviously known beforehand and because numbers are the most apparent of mathematical, that the term mathematical came to take on a narrower meaning. Modern science is thus distinguished as mathematical, not because it makes use of numbers, but because it is based in the deeper sense of mathematical as pertaining to that which is known of things independently of things.

The mathematical character of science does not lie in the fact that science works with numbers, although this is often the case. *Ta mathemata* means in Greek, '...the things insofar as we take cognisance of them as what we already know them to be in advance, the body as the bodily, the plant-like of the plant, the animal-like of the animal, the thingness of the thing, and so on.'<sup>52</sup> Number is only one salient instance of such defining characteristics that are always already known. But, because of its

prominence, the numerical in time drew the name mathematical to itself.<sup>53</sup> In understanding the mathematical character of modern science, we must go behind this specialized usage. Our science is mathematical because in coming to reality it always already knows what it is seeing. It has a prior conception of what it will discover and it necessarily views reality from out of that knowledge.

Heidegger describes the basic approach of modern science as the projecting (*Entwurf*) of a fixed ground plan (*Grundriss*) of the reality with which it has to do.<sup>54</sup> Each science views its specific object-sphere as a vast theatre of events whose basic character and manner of interrelation it can stipulate in advance. This results in the fact that a specific science cannot question its own presuppositions. Since Heidegger asserts that physics is not a possible object of a physical experiment, it follows that science cannot be the measure of knowledge, at least in that it cannot be a measure of itself. Heidegger does not mean that a scientist cannot interrogate science, but only that when he does so, he thinks outside the project that defines the domain of his science, i.e. in a philosophical way.

The projecting of a ground plan presupposed in advance and the rigorous adherence to that plan and its requirements, when taken together, are the fundamental 'event' (*Vorgang*) that always underlies the 'procedure' (*Vorgehen*) of modern science. The actual methodology (*Verfahren*) of science only arises out of and follows upon the self-constituting event in which the latter projects its determinative plan and accepts the stringent obligation of adherence to it.

The crux of that methodology lies in its character as an 'explicating' (*Erklären*) of the actual relationships subsisting among the elements composing an object sphere that appear within the purview of the ground plan that governs specific work.<sup>55</sup> The plan provides a fixed perspective that captures reality and sets it over against the viewer in some kind of predictable pattern.

In each of its forms of procedure with regard to its subject matter, modern science, starting from a premise that posits beforehand the explicability of reality with which it is concerned, is able indeed to explicate that reality – complex and varied though it may be – solely from out of the knowledge that it itself has gained and is continually gaining.

The explication that the methodology of modern science accomplishes is always provisional, since each science finds itself able to undertake only limited observations of its object sphere. The evidence provided by the phenomena investigated always remains incomplete. This evidence does not suffice to establish absolutely the validity of the laws in question for all the phenomena with respect to which they would be applicable; or to ensure that those laws exhaust the range of interrelations that are in play among the elements constituting the object-sphere. In this way, science remains aware that the laws that it propounds are in fact not laws at all, but rather 'hypotheses'. They are established bases for its work, fixed in accordance with known data and accepted as deserving of acceptance. Yet, at the same time, they are always in need of verification and always being tested. Thus, the explication of reality that science accomplishes has a twofold character: 'It accounts for an unknown by means of a known, and at the same time it verifies that known by means of that unknown.'<sup>56</sup>

It is basic to the character of modern science that it is what Heidegger calls an 'on-going activity'<sup>57</sup>. Thus, science never proceeds in a random manner, but rather, all its workings and activities are directed towards the solidifying of its position and to draw more and more of reality into its scope of comprehension. Science builds itself forward.

Science has become and is becoming increasingly specialised. Heidegger tells us that this should not be viewed as nothing but a necessary evil. It is rather a direct expression of the character of modern science as such.<sup>58</sup>

For science in the highly institutionalised and specialised form that it has now assumed, rich opportunities lie open. Results of research can be exchanged and confirmed, joint projects can be undertaken and methodologies can be borrowed or modified.<sup>59</sup> Thus, far from losing themselves in fragmentation as a result of their specialisation, the sciences are actually establishing themselves with a solidarity and unity appropriate to them. Increasingly, in our age, science has succeeded in bringing all manner of entities to stand before it in a secured, surveyable formation.

In contemporary times, science has begun to display clearly the character that Heidegger sees as most intrinsic to it, a character that is inherently technological in cast. This is then, where Heidegger identifies an intimate connection between modern science and technology.

In science, incessantly, ever newly projected inquiry and observation are being carried out, and through that on-going activity the reality that is under investigation is being ever more thoroughly ordered and categorised in accordance with the presuppositions from out of which science projects itself forward. Under the dominion of modern science, the particulars of the reality that is brought under observation are systematically emptied of their significance as the particulars that they are.

More and more, calculating is becoming dominant in every science.<sup>60</sup> Increasingly the information that is handled in all the sciences is stripped of extraneous details regarding the phenomena it concerns. Today cybernetics, the statistical study that aims at controlling the flow of information in particular systems, is the place where all the sciences meet.<sup>61</sup>

Increasingly, the elements composing the object-spheres of the various sciences are being reduced to a state very much like that of the contents of the standing reserve that is continually being set in order under the reign of modern technology. The very destining of Being that rules in modern technology rules in modern science as well. As that destining comes more and more overtly into play, the comportment of science and of those who further its work presses ever more intently forward into the realm where technology is already carrying itself out in its assigned manner.

It is the most abstract of modern sciences – mathematical physics - which according to Heidegger has played the most salient role in preparing for technology's very concrete work.<sup>62</sup> Firstly, physics, with its fundamental concern to exhibit reality as a coherence of motions among units of mass viewed in spatio-temporal relations, has always grasped and displayed nature as a 'surveyable network of forces'<sup>63</sup>. In doing so, physics provides to technology that assessment of nature as a vast storehouse of reserves of available energy that is fundamental to the latter's happening.<sup>64</sup> The demanding summons that so rules in technology as to command forth what is into the standing reserve, does so ultimately through revealing nature precisely in the guise that physics has already discerned. Secondly, the exactitude of measurement that mathematical physics pioneered is absolutely indispensable to technology in the execution of its mandate to order everything as standing reserve.<sup>65</sup>

Thus, the relationship between physics and technology is in some respects reciprocal. The research of modern physics can proceed and its precise

determinations can be gathered only through the use of the sophisticated apparatus that technology provides. Scientific achievements that technology makes possible take place ultimately for the sake of technological advance. Technology relies on the precision and accuracy of these scientific achievements.

Science, as harbinger of the manner of holding sway that is bringing itself to fulfilment in the modern age, displays the very characteristics that are definitive for technology. Science therefore has prepared in thought and attitude and action for the ascendancy of technology. The revealing presently holding sway as decisive is a revealing via which only calculable relationships stand forth, and the interrelated is but standing reserve placed in some needed order to serve some intended end. Science as science has been superseded – the day has come when science can display its true character and appear as technology itself.

In the modern world, Being has become evident primarily as an object. It is also true that human being is now also counted as an object, one that can be measured, analysed, predicted, controlled and exploited. Man and his world are regarded as human and natural resources. What does it mean to exist under conditions such as these?

According to Heidegger, science is the theory of reality. Reality is the translation for the German *Wirckliche*. Heidegger connects this with the word *wirken*, meaning to effect or to establish as present<sup>66</sup>. The word theory he relates to the Greek *theorein*, which has to do with contemplative seeing, with an intelligent viewing of the aspect of being which comes to human being through appearances. Heidegger then interprets his definition to mean that a science acquires its object by 'working it over' until it can be viewed as present and real. This working is nothing other than the bringing forth into presencing that Heidegger names *Ge-stell*. Heidegger does not use the word *Ge-stell* specifically when speaking of the engagement of the sciences with the objects whose components are its concern, but it seems evident from the texts on science where he speaks of science as an observing of the real that reference to *Ge-stell* is pertinent here. For Heidegger, the mathematical and experimental sciences historically preceded the development of modern machine-power technology; nevertheless, they are a single growth in Heidegger's eyes. Neither would have been possible in a world not dominated by *Ge-stell*. He tells us:

Chronologically speaking, modern physical science begins in the seventeenth century. In contrast, machine-power technology develops only in the second half of the eighteenth century. But modern technology, which for chronological reckoning is later, is, from the point of view of the essence holding sway within it, historically earlier.<sup>67</sup>

This 'working over' of the real is accomplished by a change in the more common and practical relation to a being. It modifies certain of the relations that constitute a thing as being in the life-world. For modern science, this working over has come to be understood in the Cartesian tradition and is initially effected through the operations of measurement. By means of the techniques of measurement, the object is disposed in a new way – it is reduced to its mathematical structure that may then be symbolically transformed and managed by mathematical methods.

The Cartesian procedure is to presuppose that any object belongs to the mathematical and objective world and can be exhaustively known only within it. But within this context, the object can be seen to obey exact laws that are discoverable by means of experiment. But the experiment, in its planning and execution is guided and carried along by the basic law, in order to confirm or refute that law. Science is specifically modern when it has thus conceived, in advance, of the possibility of experiment as taking its departure from mathematically expressible laws hidden within experience or nature. When such laws are established, a new relation to the object is made possible. By utilising this new relation, modern man seeks to place objects altogether according to his will in a world subject to his technology. Technology embodies this new relation – it profits from the predictable results of mathematically grasped laws in order to take the object into its control.

Thus, the scientist works over the object until it can pass into the standard concepts of modern scientific theory – the object is subjected to calculation and control. But, in making its measurements, physics leaves behind much of what the life-world presents - physics conceals or forgets the non-physical. Physics unveils objective nature, and the other sciences take their cue from physics.

Heidegger points out that physics itself cannot take itself as its own object of study, for its methods cannot work the whole science over into a single item within the same science. Thus, it cannot investigate itself. In general, then, the sciences are non-self-reflexive.

Heidegger's aim is neither to replace the sciences nor to reform them, but Heidegger's interrogation of modern science in which it is understood in terms of the mathematical project prepares the way for a decision as to whether science is the measure of knowledge, or whether there is a knowledge in which the ground and limit of the sciences are determined.

The technological interpretation of knowledge leads quite naturally to the vision of human being in the grip of *Ge-stell*, a human being who is possessed by the Cartesian motive of becoming the master and possessor of nature. It is notable that in Heidegger's view, this mood (*Ge-stell*) comes first.

According to Lingis:

The relationship, therefore, between modern, mathematized science and modern technique is indeed superficially conceived when we say that technique would be the application of science. Their relationship is already conceived reciprocally when we notice that modern science, inasmuch as it is experimental, is mediated, in its turn, by modern technique.<sup>68</sup>

It is important to note that Heidegger's philosophy is not a Romantic rejection of the natural world and its sciences, since for him, natural science and technology are not ontologically independent beings. They are founded within the life-world and so their evaluation must be related to this dependence. Authentic Dasein could definitely pursue the sciences and technology, since it is Dasein and not technology, which may be called authentic or inauthentic. Thus, Heidegger's appraisal of the sciences is to be determined rather by what he believes contemporary man has made of them, rather than by their independent character. According to John Sallis:

Heidegger does not seek to give an *evaluation* of science, for to understand his task as one of evaluating, would be to remain totally under the domination of the essence of the modern scientific project ... Heidegger is in search of clarity regarding the essence of science.<sup>169</sup>

Heidegger's criticisms and warnings are addressed to contemporary human being and are provoked by his recognition of the danger inherent in the modern



technological outlook (*Ge-stell*). Human being today is tempted to become completely absorbed by the very demanding universe of natural objects studied and manipulated by the sciences. The temptation could then follow to interpret the self on the model of an object, and so authentic Dasein is lost. Thus, the threat of *Ge-stell* is the seductive promise of infinite power over the world offered upon one condition: the forgetfulness of Dasein. For Heidegger, modern human being continually yields to this temptation. Heidegger thus sees the danger associated with *Ge-stell* neither in science or technology, nor in machines as such, but rather in human being who has lost his insight into human being and behaves towards himself and others as if they were all non-Dasein-like objects. Thus, it is not technology or science per se that constitutes the danger, but rather that the essence of technology as a way of revealing threatens to eclipse all other modes of revealing, and reduce human being to standing reserve.

## 5.2: The Turning of Being and the Saving Power

Heidegger believed that a genuine surmounting of technology that would allow the what-is to once more stand in true appearing can happen only from out of Being.<sup>70</sup> Rather than close itself utterly away, Being will suddenly turn about in its way of happening. Being will then claim human being to co-accomplish in heedful responding, the self-opening that it itself is bringing to pass. Then, the real will again stand forth determinatively, appearing in a way that will let its particulars belong to one another; that, in belonging, they will come truly into their own. But as for now, Being happens as the gathering summons taking place in modern technology. Therefore, that which is itself the danger of all dangers is at the same time that which alone can rescue and restore – ‘... in technology’s essence roots and thrives the saving power.’<sup>71</sup>

We cannot know with certainty when and how this turning in Being may take place, nor can we bring it to pass. The possibility is real that man might be engulfed by the standing reserve and Being might shut itself away. But does this mean that we are totally powerless against the tightening grip of technology in Heidegger’s view?

When in interviews Heidegger was asked whether from his thought constructive proposals could be derived, his answers were emphatically negative<sup>72</sup>. Yet, he does hint at some possibilities. In the concluding part of *The Question Concerning Technology*, for example, he asks whether the arts ‘may for their part expressly foster the growth of the saving power, may awaken and found anew our vision of, and trust

in, that which grants?'<sup>73</sup>, a suggestion that has been taken up by some philosophers of technology in urging artistic practice as a counterforce to technology<sup>74</sup>. In addition, Heidegger tells us that we can foster the saving power 'here and now and in little things'<sup>75</sup>.

Heidegger also addressed the question of what can be done in the well-known *Der Spiegel* interview. He elaborated on the notion that waiting, not willing, was the proper response to the nihilistic, technological frenzy of our age. He stated that philosophy as well as all purely human reflection and endeavour would not be able to bring about any immediate change in the current state of the world.

Only a god can save us. The sole possibility that is left for us is to prepare a sort of readiness, through thinking and poetising, for the appearance of the god or for the absence of the god in the time of foundering (*Untergang*); for in the face of the god who is absent, we founder.<sup>76</sup>

A mistaken notion has arisen that Heidegger is suggesting that we fatalistically abandon reflective thought and action to abide in religious faith. Rather, we must see the 'waiting' he advocates as an attending upon the reawakening of our capacity for fundamental questioning. No all-powerful entity will redeem our finitude or fallenness. The moral, redemptive god is every bit as dead for Heidegger as for Nietzsche. Yet, Heidegger does not aim to promote a disbelief in God or to promote a belief in the non-existence of God, but rather encourages remaining oriented in awe to that which is unknown and escapes comprehension. He finds pretensions to a familiar relationship with a deity to be blasphemous. He advocates a 'god-less' thinking which abandons God insofar as God comes to be metaphysically constructed, which keeps God from becoming known as an object that we as subjects evaluate and elevate<sup>77</sup>. Basically, Heidegger rejects both atheism and theism, since both doctrines provide answers where, at the present time, questions rightfully reign alone<sup>78</sup>. This does not mean that we are condemned to remain insensible to transcendence. Heidegger hopes that our wonder at the transcendent might somehow survive this event to unfold as the question of Being.

Those who would interpret Heidegger's words about waiting for a god politically rather than religiously are also mistaken.<sup>79</sup> His point in speaking of gods is not to

suggest the possibility of salvational figures, but to orient us disclosively to worldly life in a way that marks the limits of human power and ingenuity.

To wait for gods is to acknowledge that the disclosure of the transcendent is not solely under human control. The transcendent would not really be the transcendent if it remained within our power to procure it at will. Heidegger concludes that the loss of the question of the transcendent within the technological world is not completely within the scope of human being to redress. The opposite is also true: If only a god can save us from technological nihilism, then this nihilism itself must also exceed the ambit of human directives. The point is not that nihilism is not our concern, but rather that it is not solely our doing. To assume that nihilism is of our making, and so completely within our capacities to exorcise it, is itself a nihilistic position characteristic of a technological frame of mind. The belief that we might subdue technological nihilism at will is part of the disease and not the cure.

Heidegger does give us a hint about the nature of the thinking that might loosen the grip of technology. The restoring overcoming of technology is similar to what happens when one gets over grief or pain<sup>80</sup>. One cannot surmount grief through a wilful overcoming, since this only displaces grief and makes its reappearance at a later time likely. Grief is not overcome by mastery, intellect or will, but rather by another mood. Moods cannot be created, but only summoned. One gets over grief through a mood of rediscovered sanctuary, by once again coming to feel one's belonging in the world.

### **5.2.1 *Gelassenheit***

Heidegger suggests an attitude of *Gelassenheit* (releasement), whereby thinking listens to language and allows it to move back into its element (Being). In the modern era, dominated by an increasingly technologised use of language, the caring for the word requires us to reach back into the abyss of silence, in search of a language capable of speaking Being in all its otherness and unpredictability. Heidegger suggests that by means of poetic thinking, the priority of logos over logic can be reaffirmed, in a time when the reign of a purely instrumental logic has reached dangerous proportions.

Heidegger borrows the term *Gelassenheit* (releasement) from Meister Eckhart. It literally means a letting-be. Heidegger's 'turning' is often described as a turning away

from existential concerns such as anxiety and resoluteness and a turning towards mystical concerns with releasement. Yet, *Gelassenheit* is already at work in the analysis of the anxious Dasein in *Being and Time*, and anxiety in the face of death remains central to *Gelassenheit*.<sup>81</sup>

In Heidegger's *Conversation on a Country Path about Thinking*, the teacher indicates that when we let ourselves into releasement, 'we will non-willing'. This attempt to overcome wilful mastery confronts us with a paradox. The willfulness required for the overcoming of will is precisely that which we are trying to escape. Willfulness must be abandoned, but having done so one wonders what remains to be done. Heidegger admonishes us to wait. Waiting, not awaiting, since awaiting already links itself with re-presenting and what is represented.

It seems that waiting is a good antidote for the technological hyperactivity to which we are prone. Once we escape the seduction of calculative thought, we realise that our most basic existential situation remains a mystery in every way. This realisation is the prerequisite for releasement. Life is, in actual fact, a waiting - a waiting for death. It is not an awaiting, since no one knows what death is. Waiting for death is fully apprehending human being in its finitude. Acknowledging, understanding and accepting finitude of human being constitutes wisdom. Thus, philosophy, the love of wisdom, has, from ancient times, been identified with learning how to die. For Heidegger, the essence of a human being is to be 'one who waits', the one who attends upon the coming to presence of Being in that in thinking he guards it. Only when human being as 'the shepherd of Being'<sup>82</sup>, attends upon the truth of Being, can he expect an arrival of a destining of Being and not sink to the level of a mere wanting to know.

Heidegger's main concern is that the essence of technology comes to light in its undisguised form. The shackles that bind us to technology are strongest when we naively believe in the neutrality of technology. Complex machinery and techniques are not dangerous per se, but rather the philosophic somnolence that may overtake us if we fail to think of what *das Ge-stell* means.

Our opportunity to remember our homelessness in the face of our consuming penetration of the earth is the saving power. The peril of losing our ability to find a home on earth and an abode in thought stirs us to recollection. The philosophical and historical task before us today is the challenge of technology, for technology

threatens human being's capacity for disclosive freedom. The question of Being, properly understood, comes down to the question of technology in the end.

Homelessness is the mood of the technological age. Rediscovering our worldly home as threatened signals the 'restoring surmounting' of technology. Memory or recollective thought chiefly summons this sense of a threatened sanctuary. Recollecting our worldly habitat not only fosters resistance to *das Ge-stell*, but also provides guidance in negotiating relations with the products of technology, i.e. machines and techniques. Heidegger acknowledges that we should neither reject nor do without the products or skills of technology. He says that we cannot repudiate the technological world of today as the 'work of the devil' nor should we destroy it, assuming that it does not do this to itself.<sup>83</sup> Heidegger does not advocate a retreat to a pre-technological state of being (in the ordinary sense of the word 'technology'). Nor does he suggest that we fatalistically resign ourselves to the victory of *das Ge-stell*. Fatalism is no answer because it reflects the same absence of thought that is evidenced in a naive complacency with technological progress.

Although it is crucial to perceive the danger of our technological constructions in case they dominate us, it is unnecessary to reject them completely. But the alternative to becoming slaves of our own machines is not simply to become their masters. The goal is to integrate technology within a bounded worldly dwelling no longer structured by possessive mastery. Heidegger describes the comportment required to disengage ourselves from possessive mastery and achieve an appropriate relation to technology: We can say both 'yes' and 'no' to technology by having an attitude of releasement toward things. Awaiting and receiving, openness and releasement are summoned by recollective thinking. Releasement towards things and openness to the mystery grant us the possibility of dwelling in the world in a totally different way: a way where the mood of homelessness has been displaced. Until this occurs, our attempts to control the products of technology will only maintain our subordination to its imperative. The greatest irony is that the 'freedom' that has been systematically nurtured and cherished for two and a half millennia in the West has fostered this technological servitude.

How does Heidegger describe this meditative and receptive thought or releasement in *Gelassenheit*? Firstly, only Dasein whose vision has been rectified by becoming authentically itself can achieve it. Secondly, it is a will-less and non-representative thinking. Releasement is a waiting that is a release into openness or an acceptance

of the coming forth of truth upon the initiative of Being. In this way, we can say with Paul Ricoeur that *Gelassenheit* is the gift of the poetical life<sup>84</sup>.

Genuine philosophical thinking is summoned by Being rather than human being, it is a matter of Being 'presencing' to human being, rather than human being 'representing' Being to itself and thereby reducing all things to objects present-to-hand. For Heidegger, the most essential form of thinking is thanking<sup>85</sup> - an openness to and guardianship of the truth of Being. In contrast to technocratic thinking, the 'Denken' that Heidegger counsels is a non-objectifying, non-systematic receptivity that enters the play of Being by giving thanks.

Heidegger's main concern is that the essence of technology comes to light in its undisguised form. The chains that bind us to technology are strongest when we naively believe in the neutrality of technology<sup>86</sup>. Complex machinery and techniques are not dangerous per se, but rather the philosophic somnolence that may overtake us if we fail to think of what enframing means. Yet, Heidegger tells us that the danger posed to human beings by technology reveals a 'saving power' in the very thinking of its profound threat.

Our opportunity to remember our homelessness in the face of our consuming penetration of the earth is the saving power. The threat of losing our ability to find a home on earth and an abode in thought stirs us to recollection. The philosophical and historical task before us today is the challenge of technology, for technology threatens human being's capacity for disclosive freedom. The question of Being, properly understood, comes down to the question of technology.

The problem with the creation of the world picture is that everything is reduced to two dimensions. Whatever is disclosed, is disclosed uniformly as a product of human ingenuity. As such, it becomes measurable, calculable and exchangeable in a free market of resources. Although values vary within the technological marketplace, everything is assessed in terms of its rank within standing reserve. Heidegger observes that we cannot simply ransom our escape from Enframing through pure willfulness. The problem of technology is one of willfulness itself. Technology is symptomatic of a subjectivist and anthropomorphic Enframing of the world and so the attempt to master Enframing is self-defeating.

Neither heroic action nor religious faith can overcome Enframing and deliver us from our technological addictions. Only a non-wilful doing grounded in reflective thinking will avail. Thought, however, can provide us with no answers. It can only keep questioning alive, and once the nature of modern technology is brought into question, its hold is loosened.

As we have seen, for Heidegger, homelessness is the mood of the technological age. Rediscovering our worldly home as threatened signals the 'restoring surmounting' of technology. Memory or recollective thought chiefly summons this sense of threatened sanctuary. Recollecting our worldly habitat not only fosters resistance to Enframing, but also provides guidance in negotiating relations with the products of technology, i.e. machines and techniques. Heidegger acknowledges that we should neither reject nor do without the products or skills of technology. He does not advocate a retreat to a pre-technological state of being. Nor does he suggest that we fatalistically resign ourselves to the victory of Enframing. Fatalism is no answer because it reflects the same absence of thought that is evidenced in a naive complacency with technological progress. Heidegger wants us to respond to the question 'What shall we think?' rather than 'What shall we do?' Thought must first save us from our typical modes of behaving; namely those oriented towards possessive mastery.

As long as we continue to see technology as a tool, we will remain caught up in the will to master it. Heidegger does not deny that from political, social, cultural and environmental standpoints, technology has many virtues, but technological instruments and innovations may become addictive. They become an escape from our worldly finitude and a denial of boundaries. This denial expels us from the fourfold<sup>87</sup>. Thus, the question to ask when confronting any technological development is whether it develops or hinders the philosophically, artistically or politically mediated disclosure that delivers us into the fourfold.

In *Building Dwelling Thinking*, Heidegger seeks further insight into the 'saving power' that begins to emerge in meditation on the essence of technology. The main issue of this lecture is the relation of 'building' to 'dwelling' and the kind of 'thinking' that is the result of giving attention to this relation. Heidegger explains that humans are inherently builders. He tells us that the proper meaning of *bauen* (to build) is really to dwell<sup>88</sup>, and explains that the fundamental character of dwelling is to preserve the free sphere that safeguards each thing in its essence. Thus, the proper plight of dwelling in our age does not lie in the lack of houses, for Heidegger. Rather, it lies in the fact

that ' ... mortals ever search anew for the essence of dwelling, that they must ever learn to dwell'<sup>89</sup>.

Although it is crucial to perceive the danger of our technological constructions lest they dominate us, it is unnecessary to forswear them completely. But the alternative to becoming slaves of our own machines is not simply to become their masters. The goal is to integrate technology within a bounded worldly dwelling no longer structured by possessive mastery. Heidegger describes the comportment required to disengage ourselves from possessive mastery and achieve an appropriate relation to technology: Neither pessimism nor cynicism, nor heroic self-assertion is called for. We can say both 'yes' and 'no' to technology by having an attitude of releasement toward things. Awaiting and receiving, openness and releasement are summoned by recollective thinking. Releasement towards things and openness to the mystery grant us the possibility of dwelling in the world in a totally different way: a way where the mood of homelessness has been displaced. Until this occurs, our attempts to control the products of technology will only perpetuate our subordination to its imperative. The greatest irony is that the 'freedom' that has been systematically nurtured and cherished for two and a half millennia in the West has fostered this technological servitude.

### **5.2.2 What about art?**

Heidegger's interpretation of art is fundamentally in service to his thinking of Being, as we saw in Chapter 3 and 4. Heidegger insists that human being discovers its home in the world primarily by means of poetic thinking, the thoughtful disclosure of Being through language. Human life is full of wondrous deeds and accomplishments, yet our capacity to dwell, to find a home in the world is defined not by our productivity, but by our poetry. To dwell is to discover and accept the world as a fourfold marking the human horizon. Such discovery and acceptance is a poetic act, an act of thankful and thoughtful disclosure.

In *The Age of the World Picture*, Heidegger discusses the conversion of the realm of art to that of aesthetic experience. Works of art enter our world as objects used to stimulate a special kind of experience. A business develops for marketing such stimuli and the more original function of art is lost. Once, art could open up or change the world in which men live. Now, art is used to manipulate our feelings. The whole



phenomenon of art is absorbed into a way of thinking and living centred on the subject-object division.

Through his descriptive analysis of Greek ideas about art and language, Heidegger shows that modern ways of experiencing works of art and thinking about them are not the only ways of doing so. He argues that for the Greeks, to encounter something as real was to encounter it as coming to presence with other beings in the open space provided by *physis* (nature)<sup>90</sup>. Nature was not seen as the sum total of laws and objects, but rather as the process by which things rise out of hiddenness into the luminous clarity that reveals them in their order and their tensions. It was not man who brought the world out of its hiddenness, but rather, it was man's task to harmonise himself with what was revealed. In this way, art was not seen as being involved with man's subjective responses, symbolising them or simulating them. Art was the skilful making present again of some thing or action that was already present on its own in the natural encounter<sup>91</sup>.

This theory is usually referred to as the theory of art as *mimesis* (imitation)<sup>92</sup>. According to Gadamer<sup>93</sup>, the Greeks distinguished between two kinds of productive activity: Manual production which fabricates utensils, and mimetic production which does not create anything 'real' but simply offers a representation. The original mimetic relation is not an imitation in which we strive to approach an original by copying it as closely as possible. On the contrary, it is a kind of showing. In this sense, showing does not intend a relation between the one who shows and the thing shown. Showing points away from itself.

### 5.2.3 Science and technology in *Being and Time*

In order to support my contention as stated in Chapter 1 that the 'early' and 'later' Heidegger's thought exhibits a unity, I will now discuss how the 'later' essays on science and technology serve as an extension and critique of themes that are already present in *Being and Time*. I am not asserting that there are no differences between the various texts, but only that their examination in this manner will cause them to reveal an underlying unity intrinsic to Heidegger's paths of thinking.

Don Ihde, in his essay *Heidegger's Philosophy of Technology*<sup>94</sup> examines the relationship between the ideas stated in *Being and Time* and those of *The Question concerning Technology*. Ihde admits that technology is not an explicit thematic

concern of *Being and Time*, but proceeds to use the tool analysis in *Being and Time* to explicate the significance of *Being and Time* for an understanding of technology. In his article, Ihde shows how the phenomenological distinction between *noesis* and *noema* is maintained from *Being and Time* through the essays on technology. He does, however, also note the differences that become evident. The tone of wholeness and approval in the tool analysis yields to a sharply critical view of technology; and the distinction between contemplative science and circumspective praxis in *Being and Time* is collapsed in the *Ge-stell*, which is the origin of both science and technology.

*Being and Time* seems to be ambiguous (it is not clear whether it promotes or opposes technology), since Heidegger's illustrations are drawn from both the pre-technological workshop and the railway station. At one point, for example, Heidegger says with apparent approval that 'the wood is a forest of timber, the mountain a quarry of rock; the river is water power...'<sup>95</sup> Ihde claims that the Heidegger of *Being and Time* plays down the differences between scientific technology and the older handwork technology.

Despite the discrepancies pointed out by Ihde above, I believe that the later analyses of technology are also anticipated in *Being and Time* with the analysis of 'the they'. In *Being and Time*, the existence of 'the They' is explicated as neither a collection of definite Others nor a single definite Other.

... It is not a being or a set of beings to whom mineness belongs, but a free-floating, impersonal construct, a sort of consensual hallucination to which each of us gives up the capacity for genuine self-relation and the leading of an authentically individual life<sup>96</sup>

This inauthentic existing of Dasein that the Heidegger of *Being and Time* points out, exhibits the same levelling down<sup>97</sup>, the restlessness and the aggressiveness that is so characteristic of modern technology for the 'later' Heidegger.

Hubert Dreyfus<sup>98</sup> argues that the analysis of equipment in *Being and Time* is neither pre-technological nor fully technological. He asserts that *Being and Time* rather plays a transitional role in the history of the being of equipment.

Dreyfus substantiates his thesis by constructing from Heidegger's hints a three stage history of the being of equipment, which loosely co-ordinates with the epochs in the history of Being: (1) The period of craftsmanship expressed in the Greek notion of *technē*; (2) Industrialisation and its attitude of pragmatism; (3) cybernetic control as articulated in systems theory. Each period is characterised by a different view of nature – as *physis*, raw material and *Bestand* – as well as fitting ideals of human use – fitting response, needs satisfaction and exploitation. In the light of this epochal history of Being, *Being and Time* can for Dreyfus, be seen as the decisive step towards technology<sup>99</sup>.

From the above, I conclude that although there are differences between the various texts, which are highlighted by both Dreyfus and Ihde, there is an undeniable underlying unity intrinsic to Heidegger's paths of thinking.

#### 5.2.4 Technology and Truth

As was demonstrated in Chapter 3, the theme of truth as *alētheia* or revealing is the centre around which Heidegger's thinking on the themes of technology and language turns. I also believe that the theme of truth is one of the 'bridges' that connects his thinking in *Being and Time* and the 'later' works.

With regards to technology, it is quite evident that Heidegger sees technology contrary to the usual way of seeing it, because of his connecting technology with revealing. As we have seen, Heidegger defines truth as unconcealment or revealing, rejecting the idea that truth can be reduced only to correspondence.

The essence of technology is a way of openness to the disclosure of Being. To forget Being is to lose contact with occasional revelatory events (*Ereignis*) by preoccupation with concerns about controlling the world. In the first or Greek period, truth was experienced as the immediate self-presenting of *physis*, nature in the inclusive sense of the flow of concrete temporal experience, i.e. of history. In the second, or Christian period, truth became certitude guaranteed by a highest timeless being – God. In the third, modern, post-Cartesian period, this certitude became guaranteed by the interior self-control of the knowing subject.

The noted physicist Stephen Hawking, in his book *A Brief History of Time* writes: 'The eventual goal of science is to provide a single theory that describes the whole

universe.<sup>100</sup> Such a theory would be a theory to end all theories, a theory that would be the systematic arrangement of all knowledge that is theoretically possible. Following Heidegger, this is an example of the dream of technological thought in the modern era. We dream of knowing everything, for then we can control everything. It is then a dream of absolute power. All is revealed, nothing remains concealed.

As a constellation of truth, technology exhibits a strange ambiguity. It is dangerous because it is the supreme provocation. Yet, in our time, human being has no other access to the truth of Being other than through technology.

### **5.2.5 Technology and Language**

In the previous chapter, I have demonstrated that Heidegger sees language in the technological era as being tainted by the calculative thinking that holds sway in these times. In other words, in the grip of technological thinking, language is brought totally within the framework definitive of modern metaphysics and science. Language comes to be regarded as a mere instrument for mastery over beings.

Philosophical thinking is now also radically affected by this demand placed on language, in such a fashion that the transformation of modern philosophy that had begun in the origination of modern metaphysics now comes explicitly to light. Philosophical thinking becomes the mere demand for explanations and proofs.

### **5.2.6 Summary**

In this chapter, I have shown that when Heidegger speaks of technology, he means much more than machines. When Heidegger describes the essence of technology, he means a specific way of revealing. Heidegger is careful to distinguish between the mathematical nature of modern science and machine technology, but reverses the usual understanding of their relation. For Heidegger, the term technology involves a particular understanding of the being of human being and things. This understanding of how beings exist calls for natural science as the appropriate way of making available the things in the world. Today's science can exist only because nature is revealed as existing in a technological manner.

Heidegger calls the specific way in which Being reveals itself in the age of technology *das Ge-stell*, or enframing. In the age of technology, everything is revealed as standing reserve or *Bestand*. By this, Heidegger means that everything is ready for ordering and use. What Heidegger finds most worrying is that human being now also belongs to the realm of standing reserve.

Heidegger does not suggest that we try to change or escape modernity, or try to incorporate it into a fuller totality in the Hegelian manner. However, there is a sense in which modernity and with it technologico-calculative thinking can be 'overcome'. Heidegger suggests an attitude of *Gelassenheit* as a possible way in which this can take place, although *Gelassenheit* is all but an easy 'solution'. I evaluate *Gelassenheit* as a possible escape route from technological thinking in Chapter 6.

With regards to *Gelassenheit*, I have described Heidegger's ideas on the end of philosophy and the thinking that he believes can overcome the reign of calculative thinking, as well as his suggestions regarding the saving power of art. In Chapter 6, I will discuss whether these suggestions by Heidegger are in any way fruitful for modern human being in going beyond the hegemony of technology.

I now move on to a critical appreciation of Heidegger's conception of technology, truth and language as is set out in the preceding chapters, as well as this one. The point of such an endeavour is to highlight some of the possible objections to Heidegger's thinking in this regard.

- <sup>1</sup> M. Heidegger, The Question concerning Technology in *Martin Heidegger: Basic Writings (Revised and Expanded Edition)* (London, Routledge, 1993), p. 333.
- <sup>2</sup> D. Ihde, *Existential Technics* (Albany, State University of New York Press, 1983), p. 3.
- <sup>3</sup> Langenscheidt's New College German Dictionary. ( Berlin, Langenscheidt KG, 1995).
- <sup>4</sup> M. Heidegger, The Question concerning Technology in *Martin Heidegger: Basic Writings (Revised and Expanded Edition)* (London, Routledge, 1993), p. 318
- <sup>5</sup> M. Heidegger *What is called Thinking?* (New York, Harper and Row, 1968), p. 24.
- <sup>6</sup> M. Heidegger, The Question concerning Technology in *Martin Heidegger: Basic Writings (Revised and Expanded Edition)* (London, Routledge, 1993), p. 312.
- <sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>8</sup> See Chapter 3.
- <sup>9</sup> H. Dreyfus. Heidegger's History of the Being of Equipment in H. Dreyfus & H. Hall (eds), *Heidegger: A Critical Reader* (Cambridge, Blackwell Publishers, 1992), p. 184.
- <sup>10</sup> M. Heidegger, The Question concerning Technology in *Martin Heidegger: Basic Writings (Revised and Expanded Edition)* (London, Routledge, 1993), p. 320.
- <sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 324.
- <sup>12</sup> M. Heidegger, Letter on Humanism in *Basic Writings: Martin Heidegger (Revised and Expanded Edition)* (London, Routledge, 1993), p. 244.
- <sup>13</sup> M. Heidegger, The Question concerning Technology in *Martin Heidegger: Basic Writings (Revised and Expanded Edition)* (London, Routledge, 1993), p. 322.
- <sup>14</sup> A. Feenberg, *From Essentialism to Constructivism: Philosophy of Technology at the Crossroads* (<http://www-rohan.sdsu.edu/faculty/feenberg/talk4.html> , 1998) p. 9.
- <sup>15</sup> See his translators' note in W. Marx, *Heidegger and the Tradition* (Translated by Theodore Kisiel and Murray Green; Evanston Ill, Northwestern University Press, 1971), p. 176.
- <sup>16</sup> See J.J. Kockelmans, *On the Truth of Being: Reflections on Heidegger's Later Philosophy* (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1984), p. 229.
- <sup>17</sup> See his note in A. Hofstadter, *Poetry, Language, Thought* (New York, Harper and Row, 1971), p. xv.
- <sup>18</sup> M. Heidegger, The Question concerning Technology in *Martin Heidegger: Basic Writings (Revised and Expanded Edition)* (London, Routledge, 1993), p. 325.
- <sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 332.
- <sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>22</sup> See M. Heidegger. *Being and Time: A Translation of Sein und Zeit* (Albany, State University of New York Press, 1996), p. 19 and M. Heidegger *Basic Writings: Martin Heidegger (Revised and Expanded Edition)* (London, Routledge, 1993), p. 309.
- <sup>23</sup> See Mehta, J.L. *The Philosophy of Martin Heidegger*. (London, Harper and Row, 1971), p. 56.
- <sup>24</sup> M. Heidegger, Letter on Humanism in *Basic Writings: Martin Heidegger (Revised and Expanded Edition)* (London, Routledge, 1993), p. 225.
- <sup>25</sup> M. Heidegger. *The Age of the World Picture* in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, W. Lovitt (trans.) (New York: Harper and Row, 1977).
- <sup>26</sup> For a detailed discussion see M. Heim, *The Metaphysics of Virtual Reality* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1993).
- <sup>27</sup> M. Heidegger, The Question concerning Technology in *Basic Writings: Martin Heidegger (Revised and Expanded Edition)* (London, Routledge, 1993), p. 332.
- <sup>28</sup> M. Heidegger, Letter on Humanism in *Basic Writings: Martin Heidegger (Revised and Expanded Edition)* (London, Routledge, 1993), p. 244.
- <sup>29</sup> M. Heidegger, *The End of Philosophy and the task of Thinking* in *Basic Writings: Martin Heidegger (Revised and Expanded Edition)* (London, Routledge, 1993).
- <sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 436, 437.
- <sup>31</sup> See, for example, M. Heidegger, The Question concerning Technology in *Basic Writings: Martin Heidegger (Revised and Expanded Edition)* (London, Routledge, 1994), p. 331.
- <sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 332.
- <sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 330.
- <sup>34</sup> M. Heidegger, Postscript to 'What is Metaphysics' in *Pathmarks* W. McNeill (ed.), (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 235.
- <sup>35</sup> Quoted in L.P. Thiele, *Timely Meditations: Martin Heidegger and Postmodern Politics*

- (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1995), p. 204.
- <sup>36</sup> M. Heidegger, What calls for thinking? in *Basic Writings: Martin Heidegger (Revised and Expanded Edition)* (London, Routledge, 1994), p. 376.
- <sup>37</sup> M. Heidegger, Letter on Humanism in *Basic Writings: Martin Heidegger (Revised and Expanded Edition)* (London, Routledge, 1994), p.242.
- <sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 241.
- <sup>39</sup> M. Heidegger, 'Messkirch's Seventh Centennial', *Listening* 8, 1973, p. 45.
- <sup>40</sup> M. Heidegger, Letter on Humanism in *Basic Writings: Martin Heidegger (Revised and Expanded Edition)* (London, Routledge, 1994), p. 252.
- <sup>41</sup> M. McLuhan and Q. Fiore. *The Medium is the Massage*. (London, A. Lane, 1967).
- <sup>42</sup> M. Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought* (New York, Harper and Row, 1971), p. 4.
- <sup>43</sup> M. Heidegger. *Building, Dwelling, Thinking in Basic Writings: Martin Heidegger (Revised and Expanded Edition)* (London, Routledge, 1994).
- <sup>44</sup> M. Heidegger, The Question concerning Technology in *Basic Writings: Martin Heidegger (Revised and Expanded Edition)* (London, Routledge, 1994), p. 330.
- <sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>46</sup> See E. Husserl. *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*. Trans. D. Carr. (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1970).
- <sup>47</sup> M. Heidegger, The Question concerning Technology in *Basic Writings: Martin Heidegger (Revised and Expanded Edition)* (London, Routledge, 1994), p. 326.
- <sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>49</sup> M. Heidegger, Modern Science, Metaphysics and Mathematics in *Basic Writings: Martin Heidegger (Revised and Expanded Edition)* (London, Routledge, 1994), p. 273.
- <sup>50</sup> M. Heidegger, *Being and Time, A Translation of Sein und Zeit* (Albany, State University of New York Press, 1996), p. 29.
- <sup>51</sup> M. Heidegger, Modern Science, Metaphysics and Mathematics in *Basic Writings: Martin Heidegger (Revised and Expanded Edition)* (London, Routledge, 1994), p. 274.
- <sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 275.
- <sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 277.
- <sup>54</sup> M. Heidegger. *The Age of the World Picture in The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, W. Lovitt (trans.) (New York: Harper and Row, 1977), p. 118.
- <sup>55</sup> M. Heidegger. *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, W. Lovitt (trans.) (New York: Harper and Row, 1977), p. 121.
- <sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 124.
- <sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 123.
- <sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 125.
- <sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 122.
- <sup>61</sup> M. Heidegger, The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking in *Basic Writings: Martin Heidegger (Revised and Expanded Edition)* (London, Routledge, 1994), p. 434.
- <sup>62</sup> W. Lovitt (trans), *The Question concerning Technology and Other Essays* (New York, Harper and Row, 1977), p. 21.
- <sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 23.
- <sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 160.
- <sup>67</sup> M. Heidegger, The Question Concerning Technology in *Basic Writings: Martin Heidegger (Revised and Expanded Edition)* (London, Routledge, 1994), p. 327.
- <sup>68</sup> A.F. Lingis, On the Essence of Technique in M.S. Frings (ed.), *Heidegger and the Quest for Truth* (Chicago, Quadrangle Books, 1968), p. 128.
- <sup>69</sup> J. Sallis, Towards the Movement of Reversal: Science, Technology and the Language of Homecoming in J. Sallis (ed.) *Heidegger and the Path of Thinking* (Pittsburgh, Duquesne University Press, 1970), p. 144, 145.
- <sup>70</sup> M. Heidegger, The Question Concerning Technology in *Basic Writings: Martin Heidegger, Revised and Expanded Edition* (London, Routledge, 1994), p. 339.
- <sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 334
- <sup>72</sup> R. Wisser (ed.), Martin Heidegger: An Interview, *Listening* 6(1), 1971, p. 34-40; M. Heidegger, Only a god can save us: Der Spiegel's interview with Martin Heidegger,

- Philosophy Today* 20 (4/4), 1976, p. 277.
- <sup>73</sup> M. Heidegger, The Question Concerning Technology in *Basic Writings: Martin Heidegger (Revised and Expanded Edition)* (London, Routledge, 1994), p. 340.
- <sup>74</sup> Most notably D. Ihde, *Technics and Praxis* (Boston, Reidel, 1979).
- <sup>75</sup> M. Heidegger, The Question Concerning Technology in *Basic Writings: Martin Heidegger (Revised and Expanded Edition)* (London, Routledge, 1994), p. 338.
- <sup>76</sup> M. Heidegger, Only a god can save us: Der Spiegel's interview with Martin Heidegger, *Philosophy Today* 20 (4/4), 1976, p. 277.
- <sup>77</sup> See, for example, M. Heidegger. Letter on Humanism in *Basic Writings: Martin Heidegger (Revised and Expanded Edition)* (London, Routledge, 1994), p. 251.
- <sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 253.
- <sup>79</sup> See H.L. Dreyfus, Heidegger on the connection between nihilism, art, technology and politics in C.B. Guignon (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 314 for an example of this view.
- <sup>80</sup> W. Lovitt (trans), *The Question concerning Technology and Other Essays* (New York, Harper and Row, 1977), p.39.
- <sup>81</sup> D.F. Krell, *Intimations of Mortality: Time, Truth and Finitude in Heidegger's Thinking of Being* (University Park, Pennsylvania State University Press, 1986), p. 155.
- <sup>82</sup> M. Heidegger, Letter on Humanism in *Basic Writings: Martin Heidegger, (Revised and Expanded Edition)*(London, Routledge, 1993), p. 245.
- <sup>83</sup> M. Heidegger, The Question Concerning Technology in *Basic Writings: Martin Heidegger (Revised and Expanded Edition)* (London, Routledge, 1994), p. 330.
- <sup>84</sup> See P. Ricoeur, The Critique of Subjectivity and Cogito in the Philosophy of Martin Heidegger in M.S. Frings (ed.), *Heidegger and the Quest for Truth* (Chicago, Quadrangle Books, 1968).
- <sup>85</sup> See M. Heidegger, Building, Dwelling, Thinking in *Basic Writings: Martin Heidegger, (Revised and Expanded Edition)*(London, Routledge, 1994), p. 355. See also S. Ijsseling, The End of Philosophy as the Commencement of Thinking in C. Macann. *Critical Heidegger*. (London, Routledge, 1996), p. 196.
- <sup>86</sup> M. Heidegger, The Question Concerning Technology in *Basic Writings: Martin Heidegger, (Revised and Expanded Edition)*(London, Routledge, 1994), p. 312.
- <sup>87</sup> See M. Heidegger, Building, Dwelling, Thinking in *Basic Writings: Martin Heidegger, (Revised and Expanded Edition)*(London, Routledge, 1994), p. 353.
- <sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 349.
- <sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 363.
- <sup>90</sup> See, for example, M. Heidegger, *An Introduction to Metaphysics* (U.S.A., Yale University Press, 1964), p. 61.
- <sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 159.
- <sup>92</sup> See S. Ijsseling *Mimesis: Over Schijn en Zijn*. (Baarn, Ambo, 1990), p. 36.
- <sup>93</sup> H.G. Gadamer, *The Relevance of the Beautiful and Other Essays* (New York, Cambridge University Press, 1986), p. 127.
- <sup>94</sup> D. Ihde, *Technics and Praxis* (Boston, Reidel, 1979). p. 103-129.
- <sup>95</sup> M. Heidegger, *Being and Time, A Translation of Sein und Zeit* (Albany, State University of New York Press, 1996), p. 97.
- <sup>96</sup> Mulhall, R. *Heidegger and Being and Time* (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 69.
- <sup>97</sup> M. Heidegger, *Being and Time, A Translation of Sein und Zeit* (Albany, State University of New York Press, 1996), p. 119.
- <sup>98</sup> H.L. Dreyfus, Between Techne and Technology: The Ambiguous place of Technology in Being and Time in M.E. Zimmerman (ed.), *The Thought of Martin Heidegger, Tulane Studies in Philosophy* 32, 1984, p. 22-35.
- <sup>99</sup> H. Dreyfus, Heidegger's History of the Being of Equipment in H. Dreyfus & H. Hall (eds), *Heidegger: A Critical Reader* (Cambridge, Blackwell Publishers, 1992), p. 182.
- <sup>100</sup> S. Hawking, *A Brief History of Time: From the Big Bang to Black Holes* (London, Transworld Publishers Ltd, 1995), p. 11.



## CHAPTER 6: CRITICAL EVALUATION AND CONCLUDING REMARKS

*Heidegger's thinking is a thinking that always remains underway. Its remaining underway is not to be construed as simply a failure to provide answers to certain questions posed at the beginning of Heidegger's way – as though the path were only a bridge spanning the chasm between question and answer, as though it were not necessary entirely to rethink on the path of thinking our usual unquestioning manner of understanding the connection between question and answer.<sup>1</sup>*

Given the enormous impact of Heidegger's writings in Europe, the English-speaking world and even in Asia<sup>2</sup>, an investigation of his ideas is an important part of any attempt to understand the contemporary philosophical scene. His influence is felt in areas as diverse as psychoanalysis, literary theory, ecology, theology and rhetoric. It is evident from the huge influx of secondary literature that Heidegger has provided us with a valuable key to understand and evaluate the current historical epoch - the age of technology and information. A renewed interrogation of Heidegger's thinking on technology, truth and language will perhaps encourage a more critical attitude towards our present society and alert us to the dangers of the unreflective growth of technology.

Various incisive insights are to be found in Heidegger's thinking, but it has also been heavily criticised. In this chapter, I will discuss some of the strengths and weaknesses inherent in his philosophy, on the basis of the preceding chapters.

### 6.1 Being and the History of Being.

An important issue that I raised in Chapter 1 was whether Heidegger's use of Being does not immerse him in the very tradition he wants to break free from: the ontological tradition, the history of metaphysics. Richard Rorty answers this question in the affirmative, but states that Heidegger '...wants to get free of that tradition not by turning his back on it but by attending to it and redescribing it.'<sup>3</sup> Rorty believes that the most important move in this redescription is Heidegger's suggestion that we see the metaphysician's will to truth as a self-concealing form of the poetic urge. In other words, Rorty believes that Heidegger wants us to see metaphysics as an inauthentic form of poetry. For Heidegger, we are nothing save the words we use, nothing but an early stanza of Being's poem. Only a metaphysician would think that we are more.

In a historical sense, metaphysics refers to traditional enquiries into Being, enquiries that have erroneously substituted something (an entity) for nothing (Being). It is this type of metaphysics that Heidegger sets out to destroy and replace with a more authentic perspective on Being. Thus, in a certain sense, I agree with Rorty that Heidegger's works are 'metaphysical' in character, since in its attempt to overcome metaphysics, his fundamental ontology is really a renewal of metaphysics (the Being question), albeit in a thoroughly new way. Heidegger realised that 'Thought cannot overcome (überwinden) metaphysics, it must try to incorporate (verwinden) it'<sup>4</sup>. I believe that it was Heidegger's great insight that 'Metaphysics cannot be 'overcome' by being subjected to the process of grounding, it cannot be done away with by reaching for something higher than metaphysics'<sup>5</sup>.

Rorty also asserts that in *Being and Time* the reader is led to believe that the Greeks enjoyed a special relationship to Being which the moderns have lost, and that the Greeks had less trouble being ontological than modern human being. Modern human being, on the other hand, confuses the ontic and the ontological. Yet, Rorty tells us, in Heidegger's later work, he claims that Descartes and Nietzsche were as adequate expressions of what Being was at their time, as Parmenides was of what Being was at his time. Rorty states that this makes it unclear why Heidegger sees the history of the West as a kind of ladder with the Greeks at the top because of their more authentic understanding of Being, and modern human being at the bottom, the one who has forgotten Being. The tendency to understand history as deterioration, decline and alienation from the origin, and a nostalgia for the pure and original, are undeniably present in Heidegger's work, as Derrida has remarked<sup>6</sup>. In this context, Rorty notes that:

Heidegger cheerfully ignores, or violently reinterprets, lots of Plato and Nietzsche while presenting himself as respectfully listening to the voice of Being as it is heard in their words. But Heidegger knew what he wanted to hear in advance. He wanted to hear something that would make his own historical position decisive, by making his own historical epoch terminal.<sup>7</sup>

Thus, Heidegger is criticised for supplying an ontological metanarrative that should be greeted with incredulity. Caputo also criticises Heidegger on this point:

Heidegger's thought was thereafter<sup>8</sup> held captive by a sweeping metanarrative, a myth of monogenesis, a monomaniacal preoccupation with a single deep source, with an originary, unitary beginning, which he thought must be kept pure and uncontaminated like a pure spring.<sup>9</sup>

Caputo sees Heidegger's tendency to construct a fantastic portrait of the Greek sources of Western thought and culture as the core of a highly perilous metanarrative – a sweeping myth about Being's fabulous movements through Western history. He believes that Heidegger's view would be strengthened, not weakened, were it disentangled from this 'story' – the great Greco-German metanarrative<sup>10</sup>.

Heidegger's insistence that the Being of what-is is to be understood as a happening (as a concealing and a revealing) enables him to take into account a wide variety of phenomena in any age. The human comportment that is counterpart to those phenomena ranges from genuine apprehending to misapprehendings that may vary from time to time. Those apprehendings, carried into play via language, eventuate in any age and among any people. Yet for Heidegger, in each age only one particular mode of apprehending and concomitant doing is truly decisive. Both Rorty and Caputo ask whether Heidegger's history as the history of Being is not possessed of a simplicity that itself masks a complexity that is finally of another order than that which he shows us.

More specifically, the question can be asked whether, in our own age, is it only a 'technological' comportment that has determined and now determines the way in which all that we encounter appears to us as individuals, as well as socially? Surely there have been many occasions in which particular persons and groups of persons have met in genuine openness with other persons and things, and thereby participated in the accomplishment of a fullness of happening and experience far beyond that which any technologically motivated approach to reality could provide.

Caputo believes that for Heidegger, all such events would claim only a secondary place in our modern, technologically governed age. Is it sufficient to see them as thus? Do we not rather need a portrayal of historical reality that will permit us to see the interplay of a plurality of disparate determinings, some small in scope, some happening on a large scale, as human beings variously pursue their ways, and, out of diverse orientations of mind and spirit, constantly meet with and gather forth into some meaningful perspective, whatever it is with which they have to do?

When we think of technology in this regard, it is true that the modern age is permeated by exploitation and challenge, but it is also true that such exploitation is of ancient date. Human being's meetings with nature in other epochs were often governed by just such an attitude of power and exploitation<sup>11</sup>. Authors like Rorty and Caputo believe that Heidegger's oversimplification of history leaves us no room to ask such questions or adduce such evidence.

Reductivist strategies are indeed out of fashion and so the assumption in philosophy that a single foundation (Being in Heidegger) could be posited which saturates every aspect of life is rejected by Caputo. He states that only:

...with Derrida, finally, we reach home ground. He brings to fruition the overcoming of metaphysics that began with Kierkegaard. Although late Heidegger is devoted to overcoming metaphysics and its commitment to presence, he still finally remains caught up in the nostalgia for presence. In contrast to late Heidegger's reverent, serious, obedient listening to being, Derrida's critique is irreverent, playful, disobedient.<sup>12</sup>

I believe that the above criticisms are based on a misunderstanding of what Heidegger was trying to express in his writings. Throughout his work, Heidegger refers to his ideas as a 'way', one fraught with danger and one that could lead to dead ends<sup>13</sup>. He does not posit his ideas as the final 'truth' on the matter but rather sees his ideas as one path that could be chosen. He considered his work '... a way and not a shelter. Whoever cannot walk should not take refuge in it. A way, not 'the' way, which never exists in philosophy'<sup>14</sup>.

Heidegger's hermeneutic strategy is also important in this regard. In *Being and Time*, Heidegger aims to tap into the operative, pre-theoretical understanding in which we already live. He admits that 'Every questioning is a seeking. Every seeking takes its direction beforehand from what is sought'<sup>15</sup> and yet, he is aware that '... no arbitrary idea of being and reality, no matter how 'self-evident' it is, may be brought to bear on this being in a dogmatically constructed way'<sup>16</sup>. Heidegger therefore wants to avoid the wanton positing of just *any* projective framework at all, but he also wants to insist that the fore-structures are not merely something to be tolerated, unavoidable limitations which ideally we could do without<sup>17</sup>. If we see Heidegger's interpretation of various authors in this light, Rorty's critique of Heidegger's interpretation of various authors

seems rather facile. Rorty himself admits that even he reads Heidegger by his own lights, and that no reader of anybody can help doing this<sup>18</sup>. If we see Heidegger's account of the ancient Greeks as '... a good story, (but) not a sheer fabrication'<sup>19</sup>, as Caputo encourages us to do, then perhaps Heidegger's thought can be liberated from the 'enervating nostalgia and new dawn-ism'<sup>20</sup> of which it has been accused.

In addition, Heidegger's Being is anything but a stable foundation for our conceptual reductions and reconstructions<sup>21</sup>. As Heidegger understands it, Being remains fundamentally questionable. It is the ultimate deconstructive force. He tells us that the meaning of Being is an 'absence of ground' or 'abyss'<sup>22</sup>.

Kolb explains that all the epochs in Heidegger's history of the understandings of Being do not lead to one another because of dialectical tensions or deficiencies in the earlier stages.<sup>23</sup> For Heidegger dialectic is simply a particular kind of movement within a prior space untouchable by dialectical gyrations. He tells us that although the sequence of epochs in the destiny of Being is not accidental, 'neither can it be calculated as necessary'<sup>24</sup>. A dialectical account of modernity misses the essence of our world just as much as a social scientific account and for the same reason - neither is aware of the basic meaning of Being that lets it be what it is.

The process of metaphysical deformation that Heidegger decries in the history of philosophy has not, in any of its aspects, progressed by reason of a dialectical compulsion:

Heidegger repudiates the notion that idea follows idea with Hegelian necessity. The thinking of an age is an outgrowth from that of past epochs, but only as a "free consequence," never as a determined resultant. Although every epoch of thought is a *destiny* of Being, it is not a *fated* destiny.<sup>25</sup>

Heidegger is often accused of being a determinist or nihilist who is submissive before history. This is, according to Heim, because of a confused distinction between the German *Geschichte* and *Historie*<sup>26</sup>. In English, the words history and historical seem to be anchored semantically to the totality of facts studied by the historian. In German, *Geschichte* is the series of ongoing events that constitute history, which then become *Historie*, or the object of historical study. Heidegger's concern is not simply with

*Geschichte*, but with *Urgeschichte*, or the latent history of reality as the background against which everyday history takes place.<sup>27</sup>

I therefore believe that Heidegger's concern with the historical, i.e. the wide-spread, ongoing, shifting context within which our present milieu belongs and out of which it has arisen, should be seen as a strength of his philosophy. His emphasis on the distinctiveness of peoples, each gathered into a unity by way of language peculiar to itself and characterised by its own ways of thinking and acting, and the distinctiveness of historical epochs wherein various orientations of mind prevail is a valuable insight which Heidegger gives us. I believe that Heim, whom I now quote at length, is correct when he tells us that:

Like Hegel (and Ong), Heidegger takes seriously the epochal changes in cultural commitments. Such changes are of fundamental significance for the philosophical understanding of things. But to this awareness of the historical commitment of human energies Heidegger adds the concept of what I call historical drift and of cultural trade-offs, or gains and losses in reality apprehension. Rather than a developmental series of systematic improvements, epochal transformations can be understood to be sets of finite pathways which develop, lead onward, then trail off when new pathways are opened by considerably different techniques and skills. The pathways opened are finite in that human concerns project new and different directions for development while previous projects are dissolved or taken up in ways that are obscure or transform the original impulses of previous projects. Pathways are also finite in the sense that some larger ways become major thoroughfares through which alternate routes are opened and can branch out, but remain, as branches, attached and rooted to the larger highways; some choices create a new future but are dependent on a latent set of choices made in the past.<sup>28</sup>

In other words, the fact that Heidegger identifies the technological comportment as decisive for our age does not mean that he denies that there are other movements within the dominant way of thinking. The fact that the technological comportment is a 'major thoroughfare' in our time, does not deny the existence of other 'alternate routes'. Heidegger is outlining broad currents of ideas which have flowed through time contingently, which happen to have run together to shape the mainstream of contemporary thought. With regards to his historical commentary:

... Heidegger is not examining the real thought of specific philosophers. Rather he is studying epochal tendencies which he, however, *isolates* and *exemplifies* in the Utterances of representative individuals ... Heidegger's primary concern has been the history of *thought* as such, not the history of thinkers. If Heidegger's oftentimes arbitrary interpretations of the texts of antiquity are considered in this light, they will perhaps prove less disconcerting to critics<sup>29</sup>.

It is commendable that Heidegger asks us to direct our attention intently towards history, yet, when we look at the way in which he himself carries out his thinking on history, serious questions as to the adequacy of his portrayals emerge. An example of this discrepancy in Heidegger's thought is that no account is taken by Heidegger of the diffusion of the Greek language and Greek influence in the Hellenistic age, and of the concomitant entry into the thinking of the time of influences from various non-Greek peoples whose distinctive way of thinking influenced the late Greek mind.

These omissions evince an inadequacy in Heidegger's thinking that displays what seems to be a striking narrowness of perspective. We do, however, see a few examples in Heidegger's work where he does make reference to far eastern thinking<sup>30</sup>, which by implication, suggests that Heidegger's perspective was meant to be inclusive of all of non-Western humanity. In fact, Heidegger tells us that the West '...is not thought regionally as the occident in contrast to the Orient, nor merely as Europe, but rather world-historically out of nearness to the source.'<sup>31</sup>

## 6.2 Heidegger the Mystic?

A mystic is a person who sees language and communication as a hindrance to the unmediated perception of truth<sup>32</sup>. Heidegger's deprecation of common speech, his celebration of the poetry of silence and his criticism of linguistic pragmatism seems to open him to the charge of mysticism. Yet, his devotion to the shared, worldly nature of language<sup>33</sup> saves him from it. As we have seen, Heidegger tells us that, in speaking, we silently acknowledge our being-with. Being-in-the-world-with-others is unavoidable. Yet, Heidegger has also been accused of mysticism on other grounds - his own writings are said to be permeated by a mystic-poetic nature:

More and more, especially in the later writings, Heidegger's philosophical comportment resembles that of a prophet who views himself as standing in a position of immediate access to Being. Increasingly, his discourse threatens to make its stand beyond the realm of philosophical statements that are capable of being discursively redeemed. In celebrating the ineffability of Being (or, according to Heidegger's quasi-theological answer to the *Seinsfrage* in the 1946 'Letter on Humanism': 'Yet Being-what is Being? It is *It* itself'), Heidegger risks promoting an intellectual method and style whose distinguishing feature is its 'non-falsifiability'.<sup>34</sup>

Heidegger admits the affinity of his writings to those of the mystics, most notably those of Meister Eckhart<sup>35</sup>. This affinity is unproblematic if the worldly nature of language and truth is retained. If the attempt to escape the conceptual and representative language results in giving certain words like Being totemistic powers, then the charge of mysticism must be taken seriously. Heidegger did, however, advocate resistance to this enchantment.

His writing of Being as ~~Being~~ was an attempt to reduce the linguistic totemism that threatens to usurp the philosophical effort to speak questioningly<sup>36</sup>. Thus, I believe that although Heidegger does confront us with language and ideas that are sometimes strange and different, his overturning of our everyday usage of words and ideas serves to accentuate his emphasis on seeing things in a new light. In addition, many of Heidegger's writings, though philosophically challenging, are written in a deceptively simple style and are completely free of philosophical jargon<sup>37</sup>.

### 6.3 Truth

Ernst Tugendhat locates Heidegger's revision of the traditional correspondence theory of truth already in *Being and Time*; an idea that is then further accentuated by Heidegger in subsequent writings such as *On the Essence of Truth*. I showed this development of Heidegger's thought on truth in Chapter 3 of this study. In his essay *Plato's Doctrine of Truth*, Heidegger identifies the fall of Western metaphysics with Plato's relocation of truth in the supersensuous sphere of 'Ideas'<sup>38</sup>. For Heidegger, Platonism represents the fatal move away from things themselves, that is, as they naturally reveal themselves, and towards the 'subjectivisation' of the concept of truth –



truth as what can be thought by human being, from which metaphysics up until now has never fully recovered.

For Tugendhat, the central problem with Heidegger's concept of truth stems from its overgeneralization. In seeking to surpass Husserl and correspondence theory, Heidegger extends the concept of truth to *all* uncovering and *every* disclosedness.<sup>39</sup> The result is that the difference between a 'true' uncovering of entities from uncovering as such is effaced. Thus, in seeking an ontologically more primordial stratum of truth, Heidegger risks regressing both behind the Greek and phenomenological conceptions of truth. Tugendhat says:

By equating the concepts of uncovering, disclosedness, and unconcealedness as such with truth there results an overall loss, despite the real gain in insight which these concepts contain in and for themselves. This is true not only because in the case of truth as assertion, something that is already known loses its clarity. In addition, the new possibilities for broadening the truth-relation which this standpoint has opened up remain unutilized: instead of broadening the concept of truth itself, Heidegger has given the word truth another meaning.<sup>40</sup>

In the modern Western philosophical tradition, 'reality' is understood as the realm of material objects that exist outside and independently of the human subject. As we have seen, Heidegger aims to overturn this subject-object division. He tells us that the scandal of philosophy is that proofs to demonstrate that reality is 'real' in the sense described above 'are expected and (are) attempted again and again'<sup>41</sup>. For Heidegger, this expectation arises from a failure to properly understand the nature of Dasein's relation to his world – being-in-the-world. It is in this context that we should view Heidegger's ideas on truth.

It is true that Heidegger does give truth another, more original meaning, but I believe that he does not intend this meaning to usurp all other meanings of truth. In *On the Essence of Truth*, he explicitly states that:

A statement is invested with its correctness by the openness of comportment; for only through the latter can what is opened up really become the standard for the presentative correspondence. Open comportment must let itself be assigned this standard. This means that it

must take over a pre-given standard for all presenting. This belongs to the openness of comportment. But if the correctness (truth) of statements becomes possible only through this openness of comportment, then what first makes correctness possible must with more original right be taken as the essence of truth.<sup>42</sup>

In the context of Heidegger's project of overcoming metaphysical thinking, this delving into a more original meaning of truth is essential. Seeing truth as meaning only the correspondence between a statement and 'reality' forces us to remain caught up in a vision of human being and world as subject and object.

## 6.4 Language

In his prevailing concern with that which is nearest to us, Heidegger focuses our attention on a phenomenon that easily escapes our notice: language. Unlike many philosophical analyses of language that treat it descriptively, Heidegger asks us to acknowledge language as the pivotal phenomenon out of which all our thinking and doing is configured. In our time, various forces have mounted an attack against language as we customarily know it. These forces are overtly technological in character, but a certain type of philosophical thinking also reinforces them. Their goal is to replace 'natural language' with 'information language' that can strip away connotative vagueness and make language an instrument. Computer programming languages exemplify this undertaking in our time. Heidegger's attribution of language to a crucially central role calls us back to look at this element of our existence questioningly.

For Heidegger, language allows the world to be seen as something more than the mere conglomeration of unintelligible particulars, and transforms it into a semantic world where both differences and similarities can be seen, preserved, explored and deepened<sup>43</sup>. Yet, Heidegger's emphasis on the semantic function of language does not commit him to a *Sprachidealismus*, since he does not view language as imposing a meaning on an indifferent and foreign reality. Rather, Heidegger sees language and reality as mutually illuminating – changes in the world necessitate changes in language, and changes in language affect what we can understand about the world.

It is, however, problematic when Heidegger claims that '... in the Greek language what is said in it is at the same time in an excellent way what it is called ... What is present immediately lies before us. Through the audible Greek word we are directly in the

presence of the thing itself, not first in the presence of a mere word sign'.<sup>44</sup> It is true that language is always more than mere word signs, but it never completely escapes this role, either in Greek antiquity or the present day. Indeed, language allows the disclosure of difference precisely because it balances between Being and beings without ever reducing itself to the pure invocation of the former or the solely instrumental designation of the latter.

It is also problematic that Heidegger extols the '... special inner kinship between the German language and the language of the Greeks and their thought'.<sup>45</sup> He would declare German to be, along with the Greek language, one of the most powerful and spiritual languages<sup>46</sup>. To salvage the profound core of Heidegger's insights on language, we must deny him this 'linguistic chauvinism'. Human being, not national being is the shepherd of Being, and this shepherding takes place by way of words that summon ontological, not ethnic difference.

According to Young<sup>47</sup>, although Heidegger does exhibit a persistent tendency to privilege his native language, he does not seem to privilege it over all languages. As evidence, Young notes that in the Nietzsche lectures, for example, Greek, German and Sanskrit are identified as implicitly philosophical and metaphysical and therefore are distinguished above every other language. In addition, Young mentions that in the *Dialogue on Language* between Heidegger and a Japanese visitor, it seems that Heidegger views the Japanese and perhaps also the East Asian languages to be at least equal to any European language in terms of their philosophical capabilities. From this Young concludes that the scope of Heidegger's philosophico-linguistic chauvinism appears to be confined to modern European languages.

I would argue with Young that '... Heidegger's essential thinking excludes linguistic chauvinism'.<sup>48</sup> Young believes that it is on the basis of the fact that Heidegger regards all languages and all language users to be on the same level, that he can say that language (not the German Language), is the house of Being, and that human being (not the German) is the guardian of Being.

Heidegger's increasing emphasis on the linguisticality (*Sprachlichkeit*) of human being's way of being, and his assertion that Being leads human being and calls him, so that in the end it is not human being, but Being that shows itself are of incalculable significance for theory of understanding. It makes the essence of language its hermeneutical

function of bringing a thing to show itself. It means that the discipline of interpretation becomes more than mere analysis and explanation.

## 6.5 Technology

Heidegger's insights into the nature of technology are valuable. Technology's incessant gathering of everything into standing reserve, the sciences' refining of everything in accordance with their presuppositions, philosophy's preoccupation with subjectivity as the sole arena within which anything is, the arts' overriding concern with the impact that their offerings will make on the feelings of their audiences – all these Heidegger shows us as exemplary of a single mindset and a single way of dealing with reality. Once we are on the trail of Heidegger's trenchant analyses, we cannot think of the phenomena of our time without considering the rightness of his characterisations. Yet, is it plausible to agree with Heidegger that all human activity is reduced to *Ge-stell* in our time?

The Enframing (*Ge-stell*) that for Heidegger holds sway throughout everything in our time, rules as an exploitative happening. Via the purposeful planning and ever-calculative behaviour of human being, the Enframing gathers everything as something to serve some projected end. The impression given by Heidegger is one of the relentless advance of ruthlessly exploitative happening, whose ruling displays itself in a structured complex of relationships and occurrences that follow on one another with unwavering precision. Is this in fact what confronts us in the technological realm? Does the implementing of technologically motivated processes actually move forward with the unswerving directness that Heidegger's depiction seems to suggest? Is the reduction of all human activity to *Gestell* just another form of totalising thinking that does not take into account the plurality of ways and the nuanced character of the contemporary world?

Heidegger does not explicitly consider that technologically motivated behaviour might itself be flawed and less than wholly successful within the technological sphere itself. Human activity, often heedless, inefficient or perverse, constantly contributes intrinsically to the structuring and detailed working out of the accomplishments that are underway. Heidegger does not consider that the technological attitude itself may be flawed by this activity.

Phillip Fandozzi, in *Nihilism and Technology: A Heideggerian Investigation* (1982), confronts Heidegger's position regarding the character of our time with evidence from

literature, philosophy and social science among others. Fandozzi shows that Heidegger's view of the modern period as issuing at once in nihilism and technology is widely traceable and shared. Yet, Fandozzi tells us that Heidegger's thought fails to attend adequately to features of our time that are evident in the work of others – i.e. the attractiveness of technology and the experience of meaninglessness.

I agree with Fandozzi that Heidegger's view of the modern period as being immersed in nihilism and technology is accurate, but the fact that Heidegger identifies the technological compoment as decisive for our age does not imply that he denies all other movements within this dominant way of thinking. As I mentioned in the first section of this chapter, the fact that the technological compoment is a 'major throughfare' in our time, does not deny the existence of other 'alternate routes'. Heidegger is outlining broad currents of ideas which have flowed through time contingently, which happen to have run together to shape the mainstream of contemporary thought.

According to Marsh:

The Heideggerian account of technology as *Ge-stell*, or enframing, confuses in an undifferentiated fashion at least four different realities - two legitimate and two illegitimate. The first, technology, is valid as a form of knowledge and praxis, and the second, technocracy, is an incorrect equating of technology with all knowledge and praxis. The third is a beneficial uncoupling of system from life-world; the emergence of a market economy in the modern era allows for production, distribution, and consumption of goods and commodities that is much more efficient and universal than the old economic mechanisms. The fourth is the colonization of life-world by system; the inappropriate intrusion of economic models and criteria into political, social and cultural spheres is an example of such colonisation.<sup>49</sup>

Marsh defends the first and third senses of technology and criticises and rejects the second and fourth. He believes that Heidegger's account 'flattens out differences' and ascribes the pathology of the modern only to technology, rather than to class or group domination. For Marsh, the pathology of modernity consists in the misuse of technology in the service of class or group domination.

I believe that Marsh's understanding of Heidegger's concept of technology is fundamentally flawed, and that this flawed conception results in his indictment of Heidegger's view as one that denies the fact that technology is misused in the service of class or group domination. Marsh remains mired in viewing technology in the instrumental sense here, rather than in Heidegger's sense of an attitude born out of metaphysics and brought to its culmination within the modern worldview.

The second part of Marsh's criticism is more serious – the idea that Heidegger's view of technology 'flattens out differences' and ascribes the pathology of modernity *only* to technology. Yet, Walter Biemel tells us that to regard Heidegger's explanation of technology as the only possible one is something that Heidegger himself would disallow.<sup>50</sup> He says:

What matters here is not to acknowledge someone's authority; what does matter is at last to ask in what condition twentieth-century man exists. To preserve one's freedom, to set in motion a questioning that renders our own selves open to question – that is what matters. Nothing is easier than to be intoxicated by the triumphs of technology or simply to condemn technology by pointing out its negative aspects. In Heidegger's inquiry into the nature of technology, what happens is something different, namely, the attempt to give to technology the status that is due to it.<sup>51</sup>

## 6.6 *Gelassenheit*

Releasement towards things (*Gelassenheit zu den Dingen*) is a term that Heidegger borrows from Meister Eckhardt<sup>52</sup>. The problem with this concept as Heidegger uses it is summarised by Ballard:

I shall go no further than to observe that Heidegger points the way from Gestell to *Gelassenheit*, but it is difficult to discern all the steps which must lie along this way. To describe 'releasement' so as to eliminate the unintended overtones of mysticism, perhaps of 'misology', to clarify the movement of transcendence from Gestell to this releasement, and to specify the relation between the use of mind characteristic of Gestell and that characteristic of releasement, these are tasks which require completion if a philosophical point of vantage is fully to be gained from which the

human world may be envisaged and if the danger which lurks in Gestell is to be seen clearly and neutralized.<sup>53</sup>

In other words, Ballard is looking for a step-by-step 'recipe' which explains how to escape from the grip of the technological attitude into that of *Gelassenheit*. It seems to me that in his criticism of Heidegger on this point, in asking for a 'recipe', Ballard is merely demonstrating that he is still caught up in the technological way of thinking. When we ask how such a thinking characteristic of *Gelassenheit* is possible, we cannot respond with a ready-made set of prescriptions, since this response is characteristic of the technological attitude itself. We may also question whether another kind of thinking is indeed ever possible, since we are dominated by metaphysico-technical thinking? Will this new kind of thinking not be just another form of metaphysico-technical thinking? Heidegger is aware of this problem, and contends that this other thinking can only be prepared, that it can always only remain a task.

For Heidegger, the holding sway of technology is '... never a fate or destiny that compels; for Dasein becomes truly free insofar as it belongs to the realm of mission and thus becomes a listener [*Hörender*], though not one who simply submits [*Höriger*]'<sup>54</sup>. Although it is of great import to perceive the danger of our technological constructions in order that they no longer dominate us, it is unnecessary to forswear them completely. Yet, for Heidegger, the alternative to becoming slaves of our own machines is not simply to become their masters. The goal is to integrate technology within a bounded worldly dwelling no longer structured by possessive mastery. Heidegger describes the comportment required to disengage ourselves from possessive mastery and achieve an appropriate relation to technology: Neither pessimism nor cynicism, nor heroic self-assertion is called for. We can say both 'yes' and 'no' to technology by having an attitude of releasement toward things. Awaiting and receiving, openness and releasement are summoned by recollective thinking. Releasement towards things and openness to the mystery grant us the prospect of dwelling in the world in an entirely different way: a way where the mood of homelessness has been displaced. Until this takes place, our attempts to have power over the products of technology will only perpetuate our subordination to its imperative.

## 6.7 Technology and Ecology

In order to investigate how helpful the proposal of *Gelassenheit* is in the light of our complex technological situation today, we can ask whether Heidegger's ideas on

technology provide us with the means for a rethinking of action, especially in terms of ecological practice? I contend that this question itself is flawed in the context of Heidegger's thinking on technology, and that in asking it, we are exhibiting a major misunderstanding of his ideas in this regard.

The question has been answered in the negative by many theorists: Caputo believes that Heidegger's thought does not provide us with this means: '...Heidegger's hope is too enervating and Being-historical for me, too removed from the actual needs and the real destitution of those who have been deprived of hope'<sup>55</sup>. Otto Pöggeler admits that Heidegger lacks even the 'beginnings of an explicit political analysis of the circumstances as it is created by world civilisation'<sup>56</sup> and Karsten Harries maintains that Heidegger's view of technology is one-dimensional and only presents a 'caricature' of our world.<sup>57</sup>

The word ecology is derived from the Greek *oikos*, which means house, home or dwelling. Ecological practice is therefore about the care-taking of our earthly dwelling place. Heidegger's ecological credentials have become a frequent topic of discussion amongst philosophers and environmental ethicists<sup>58</sup>, but I believe that one must be wary of simple translations of Heideggerian philosophy into ecological theory. Why? Heidegger insists that human being is to be defined primarily not as the shepherd of beings, but rather as the shepherd of Being. Thus, Heidegger's is an ontological project, not a naturalistic one. I would also agree with Zimmerman who asserts that Heidegger's views are so much more radical than most ecologically minded thinkers, since most continue to see human being as the 'husbander' of nature who has the 'right' to manipulate it.<sup>59</sup>

Heidegger supports a non-anthropocentric approach to the earth, but he does not suggest that we replace anthropocentrism with biocentrism. Intrinsic to most deep ecological perspectives, biocentrism places the human species on the same level as all other organisms. On the contrary, Heidegger firmly maintains human exceptionality. He does this because of his assertion of Dasein's unique disclosive capabilities. Non-human animals cannot engage in philosophical, artistic or political work in which the disclosure of Being in thought, word or deed occurs, because they lack freedom. Our capacity for disclosive freedom is what makes our brief time on earth exceptional. There is a special place reserved for human being in Heidegger's world, because it is in that place that freedom appears.



Heidegger is clear that giving ontological priority to human being in no way suggests that the natural world exists solely for our benefit. Disclosive freedom only appears in the absence of the possessive mastery that underlies such an assumption. Human being is the 'highest' being only to the extent that human being gains release from all self-aggrandising subjectivism.

Herbert Marcuse aims to show how human being can bring about changes in himself through praxis, which will enable the overcoming of technology.<sup>60</sup> In the end, however, he admits that he can find no effective action that can lead humankind out of its predicament. For Heidegger, only releasement will allow man to dwell within the world, not as its master, but as the being which exists in a relation of openness to Being.

Heidegger observes that we cannot escape from *Das Ge-stell* through pure willfulness. The problem of technology is one of willfulness itself. Technology is symptomatic of a subjectivist and anthropomorphic *Ge-stell* of the world and so the attempt to master *Das Ge-stell* is self-defeating.

The strength of the Heideggerian interpretation of technology, according to Janicaud<sup>61</sup>, consists in '... showing its unity, in tracing its metaphysical genealogy, in tearing through the horizon and reaching its immense powers - which have partly come to pass'. Janicaud points out that the weakness of Heidegger's interpretation consists in presupposing that entering this essence will prepare a decisive reversal in an almost Hegelian fashion - as though, after realising that its greatness has been penetrated, technology allowed itself to be tamed, or as though this awareness were dependent on an ontological structure. Janicaud feels that if nothing beckons us but an awaiting possible, perhaps we must admit that the possible is manifested in a plurality of unassuming ways, and that no saving power will ever completely emerge from the danger.

As I have already mentioned in the first section of this chapter, I do not believe that Heidegger's intention was to assert that the history of Being occurs in a determined, Hegelian fashion. With Kolb, I assert that the process of metaphysical deformation that Heidegger decries in the history of philosophy has not, in any of its aspects, progressed by reason of a dialectical compulsion<sup>62</sup>.

Attempts to force Heidegger's ideas into a framework of action forget his intention of escaping the willfulness inherent to the technological attitude. He tells us explicitly that 'Human activity can never directly counter this danger. Human achievement alone can never banish it. But human reflection can ponder the fact that all saving power must be of a higher essence than what is endangered, though at the same time kindred to it.'<sup>63</sup>

It is in this sense that I think that trying to fit Heidegger's work into an 'ecological' framework of action might convert it into the very willing which it is trying to escape. In our time, the world will remain largely and permanently technological, but we can launch an incisive critique of technology that exposes the hegemony of its present reign. From, this, Heidegger believes that the saving power could grow. Admittedly, Heidegger does not give us much in terms of a political programme for change in terms of action, but in view of his definition of technology, this is warranted.

Heidegger wants us to respond to the question 'What shall we think?' rather than 'What shall we do?' Thought must first save us from our typical modes of behaving, namely those oriented towards possessive mastery. Thus, when we now return to the original question posed in this section, we can see that the question itself is inappropriate in terms of Heidegger's ruminations on the technological mindset.

It is understandable that many eco-philosophers and environmentalists have enthusiastically received Heidegger's critiques of technology. Yet,

... few of them appreciate the place that technology has in Heidegger's historical scheme as the final 'abandonment of Being', and even if his critique appeals to few of the concepts – 'sustainable development', 'intrinsic values in nature', and so on – that today's environmentalists, 'shallow' or 'deep', typically employ when complaining of modern technology.<sup>64</sup>

I conclude then that although Heidegger's work on technology is valuable to us, it cannot be simply translated into a theory of action to support the strategies of environmentalists and ecologists.

## 6.8 Freedom

No theoretical aspect of Heidegger's work has given rise to more controversy and heated debate than his attitude towards freedom. On the one hand, according to Dallmayr<sup>65</sup>, he is reproached for having carried the modern concept of freedom to an absurd point. On the other hand, his writings are claimed to endorse a complete dismantling of human freedom and willing. Accordingly, Heidegger is seldom acknowledged as a philosopher of freedom. Thiele<sup>66</sup> asserts that there are two reasons for Heidegger's work seldomly being seen as having important implications for our understanding of freedom. The first is Heidegger's own political biography. For many, Heidegger's prerogative to investigate freedom should be irreversibly revoked because of his fervent support of National Socialism while serving as the rector of Freiburg University and his subsequent reluctance to atone for, or even come to terms with the significance of his involvement.

The second reason is that Heidegger articulates freedom in a way that takes us beyond traditional formulations. As such, either his formulations are considered overly idiosyncratic and hence irrelevant to standard debates, or his perspective (particularly of technology) is held to leave little room for liberty of any kind.

During his politically active career as rector of Freiburg University, Heidegger adopted a positive concept of liberty, locating freedom in the mastery of a self that prescribes its own law. At this time, he stated that 'To give law to oneself is the highest freedom.'<sup>67</sup> Positive liberty is a freedom to - it signifies a freedom to do. Positive liberty does not, however, entail that one can do whatever one desires, but rather what one should desire, unhindered by internal constraints, such as irrational drives or false consciousness. Positive freedom is freedom to be the most one can be.

After his rectorate, Heidegger eventually abandoned his advocacy of a nationalistic positive liberty, yet he did not move in the direction of a negative liberty. Instead, he developed a new understanding of freedom - freedom seen as an event or happening. Freedom, for Heidegger, is proposed as a disclosive letting-be - a freedom that celebrates care-taking, rather than mastery.

The essence of freedom is originally not connected with the will or even with the causality of human willing. Freedom governs the free space in the

sense of the cleared, that is to say, the revealed. To the occurrence of revealing, i.e., of truth, freedom stands in the closest and most intimate kinship ... All revealing comes out of the free, goes into the free, and brings into the free. The freedom of the free consists neither in unfettered arbitrariness nor in the constraint of mere laws.<sup>68</sup>

For Heidegger, every act of freedom is a foreclosing of alternatives and possibilities. Freedom is not absolute liberty in the sense of an unbounded power to do, move and create. Freedom is freedom to reveal what is. Human being, as a bounded circle of disclosure, displays its freedom to the extent that it remains open to the inexhaustible mystery of Being in its bounded disclosing of beings.

Heidegger's conception of freedom can also be seen as fully actualised in the transpiring of human existing in authenticity – freedom is the transpiring of openness as fully accordant with the happening that brings it into play, as that openness is accomplished in conscious awareness, via which alone it can be genuinely carried out.

For Heidegger, freedom is then fundamentally an openness, as well as a letting-be. By attending to technology as enframing, Heidegger tells us that we are:

...already sojourning within the free space of destining, a destining that in no way confines us to a stultified compulsion to push on blindly with technology or, what comes to the same, to rebel helplessly against it and curse it as the work of the devil. Quite to the contrary, when we once open ourselves expressly to the *essence* of technology we find ourselves unexpectedly taken into a freeing claim.<sup>69</sup>

Heidegger's 'freedom' does not include a human capacity for independently undertaken choice and what we might call self-disposal, i.e. it does not include a capacity not to accord with the happening of Being. The fact that human beings can do nothing other than serve the ruling of Being limits the meaning of freedom as Heidegger understands it. Every individual's pursuing of his way is determined immediately from out of Being. As we have seen in the first section of this chapter, however, this does not imply a determinism. Being, for Heidegger, is the 'abyss' – anything but a stable foundation for our conceptual reductions and reconstructions.

A Cartesian orientation that objectifies the world fuses our identity and behaviour in a specific way. The world becomes raw material for representation, acquisition, domination and control by the subject. The dangerous self-confidence expressed in humanity's unsustainable exploitation of the earth is the product of this equation of freedom and sovereign power. Humanity is now threatened by the ecological limits of a world it has unceasingly sought to possess and master. If, on the other hand, we discover our dignity in a freedom that is not equated with acquisitive control, I believe that our politics and lives will be transformed accordingly.

We are not free because we mentally or physically master our fate by either submitting to or exploiting its decrees. Rather, we are free when we release ourselves from the will to master the world, and thus open ourselves to its mystery. One may suspect that Heidegger has simply redefined 'freedom', using verbal gymnastics to address a concrete problem. Yet, Heidegger is not proposing a solution by linguistic fiat. A change in the meaning of freedom follows only from changes in the actual experience of freedom. What threatens the earth's ecological well-being is not so much the variety of our technological capacities as the uniformity of our technological drive. This drive has its limits left undefined because of our identification of freedom with possessive mastery. Heidegger describes our freedom as dependent on, rather than limited by our worldly boundaries. Once the boundaries of human being are experienced neither as a threat to human freedom nor an affront to human dignity, the disastrous effort to conquer the earth might end.

The Heideggerian alternative seems to be all too passive to his critics. Does disclosive freedom not reduce us to impotent observers of fate? Is disclosive freedom not a recipe for existential lassitude? Does it not mark the end of humanity's creativity and ingenuity? Heidegger suggests otherwise.

Just as freedom in resoluteness is not arbitrary willfulness, so freedom in letting-be is *not a doing nothing*. Disclosive freedom is always the freedom resolutely to will openness to Being and releasement to beings. Openness and releasement invite activity and thought, and letting-be entails the formation of worldly relationships made all the more dynamic because they are no longer constrained by the habits of possessive mastery. Heidegger tells us that: 'Releasement towards things and openness to the mystery never happen of themselves. They do not befall us accidentally. Both flourish only through persistent, courageous thinking.'<sup>70</sup>

From its inception, freedom in the Western world has remained predominantly in the service of possessive mastery. Disclosive freedom no doubt has its own susceptibilities and pathologies. Openness to the mystery of Being might degenerate into fatalism, and releasement towards things might deteriorate into passivity. Perhaps disclosive freedom can be seen as an invitation to expand horizons, a supplement to the freedoms already won today. Disclosive freedom, properly cultivated, can offer us dignity and stamina in the political struggle against the irresistible power of a technologically driven way of life.

My discussion on Heidegger's conception of freedom opens the way to investigate criticisms launched against him in terms of its correlate – the notion of responsibility. This has been identified by many critics as one of the most important inadequacies of Heidegger's thinking – the consideration of human conduct from what we could call a moral or ethical point of view.

## **6.9 Ethics in the thought of Martin Heidegger**

One of the most striking claims made by many readers of Heidegger's work today is that there is no place for ethics in his philosophy. Heidegger very seldomly uses the word 'ethics' in his work, and when he does, it is mostly to reveal the term's inability to disclose the basic truth of Being. Theodore Kisiel notes that:

The absence of an outspoken ethics is made all the more acute for us now, as we learn more and more about both the 'ontic' and 'ontological' career of this prominent native son of a Germany caught in the thick of the world-historical events of our century.<sup>71</sup>

Emmanuel Levinas argues that Heidegger is so preoccupied with giving Being its due, that he fails to do justice to human being who is my neighbour. It is arguable that Levinas is so preoccupied with doing justice to human being that he fails to do justice to non-human being, despite his rare references to our responsibility for 'everything'.

The question I wish to concentrate on here is whether Heidegger's preoccupation with giving Being its due allows human and non-human beings to be given their due. John Llewelyn<sup>72</sup> concludes that Heidegger's philosophy does leave room for direct proto-ethical responsibility to human and non-human beings, unlike that of Levinas, which only leaves room for human beings. For Llewelyn, proto-ethical responsibility is a

responsiveness which is a responsibility because it is a response to another's need, whether or not that other is a human being or not. It is proto-ethical because that responsibility is inevitably mine. Llewelyn, I think, correctly notes that it is important to remember that Heidegger does insist that the thinking of Being must not be mistaken for ethics in the traditional sense. Llewelyn discusses Heidegger's concept of *Gelassenheit* in this regard, and notes that *Gelassenheit* prohibits anthropomorphism. It requires that no beings be treated only as objects requisitioned in order to calculate and as far as possible totalise the satisfaction of human need and greed.

In this context, Jean Grondin<sup>73</sup> demonstrates that a presuppositionally attuned ontology of Dasein is in fact the overt rehabilitation of the radically ethical and practical from the start. Grondin notes that the events of 1933 have led some to believe that the political error had something to do with a certain typical ontological blindness towards the ethical dimension. Grondin asserts that it appears doubtful that this engagement can be attributed to any absence of an 'ethics' in Heidegger.

For Grondin, the futurally conative 'to-be' of care is ethically even more formal than Kant's *Sollen* (ought), and the tendency to fall from self-determination is akin to the young Hegelian 'self-alienation'. For Grondin, the ultimate ethical thrust of all of Heidegger's formal indications is in their indexical exhortation to individual appropriation and self-actualisation in accord with our differing situations. The absence of a specific ethics in Heidegger's work is a reaction against the traditionally sharp division and fragmentation of disciplines in a philosophy that must always return such divisions to the whole of experience. Thus, the ethical motive in Heidegger expresses itself in the larger concern of preparing a transformed dwelling place on this earth for the human being subject to the epochal destiny of technological nihilism. Grondin asserts that:

If Heidegger did not develop any specific 'ethics', it is only because his entire project, founded as it is on the self-preoccupation of Dasein, which is also 'there' collectively, was ethical from the ground up.<sup>74</sup>

Grondin concludes that Heidegger entered the political arena in the hope that he could direct what he took to be a promising revolution in the direction that was appropriate, because he believed that Dasein must carry responsibility for his situatedness and his community. It is Grondin's contention that Heidegger jumped into the fray in 1933 because he felt he could not remain indifferent to the requirements of his time, thus

putting into practice his own idea of resolute existence. Here, I support Caputo's view when he says that:

On the view I am defending ethics is always already in place, is factually there as soon as there is Dasein, as soon as there is a world. Ethics is not something to be fitted into a world that is somehow constituted prior to it. Ethics constitutes the world in the first place; ethics, as Levinas would insist, is 'first' philosophy<sup>75</sup>.

In his *Letter on Humanism*, Heidegger answers Jean Beaufret's question on the relationship between ontology and a possible ethics as follows:

If the name 'ethics', in keeping with the basic meaning of the word *ethos*, should now say that 'ethics' ponders the abode of man, then that thinking which thinks the truth of Being as the primordial element of man, as one who ek-sists, is in itself the original ethics.<sup>76</sup>

This identification of fundamental thinking and original ethics does not leave any room for ethics in the sense that philosophers before Heidegger conceived of it. I believe that Heidegger's examination of Dasein is a description of human existence immersed in history, but faced with choices concerning self-identity. Yet, Dasein is always tempted to forget history and choice, and remain trapped in present tasks and narrowly defined social roles. Thus, there is little doubt that in his description of Dasein, Heidegger is indeed offering us an ethics. He urges us to be authentic, to see ourselves as part of history, to avoid falling into the traps of the moment and to avoid falling prey to the vision of human being that is represented by traditional metaphysics. Since authenticity and inauthenticity, facticity and fallenness are possibilities for all of us, Heidegger clearly has an ethics. 'Care may be an existential structure of Dasein, but it is also a virtue that has been forgotten by generations of philosophers too concerned with the problems of knowledge'<sup>77</sup>.

Heidegger moves beyond traditional conceptions and offers us a new vision of human being:

Ethics as an ontic technique remains ineffective unless it is put at the service of the ontological inspiration of primordial Being. Ethics as mere doctrine and exhortation of the *homo animalis* remains powerless unless it



has already been rooted in the true ethos, in the original dwellingplace of the homo humanus. And finally, ethics and metaphysics are together in this: that they leave Being unthought<sup>78</sup>.

In *Being and Time* Heidegger destroys the traditional subject-object set of problems, and a new manner of understanding of human being is inaugurated with the concept of *Dasein*. Heidegger, contrary to philosophical attempts to explicate reality from Plato onwards, calls upon us from the beginning to assume a unity among elements and to discover ways in which the elements are related to each other. In this respect, Heidegger's concept of man's being-in-the world comes to mind. Heidegger's philosophy, therefore, is another attempt to dethrone human being as the 'measure' of all things. Similar to the work of Freud, Darwin, Nietzsche and others, Heidegger's vision places human being and his relation to others in a new light.

### 6.10 Truth and Language in Heidegger's Critique of Technology

According to Heidegger, after Plato, the fundamental attitude of the Western spirit was one in which the subject-object dichotomy came to reign supreme. The climax of this development came with Descartes. Thinking was relegated to the arena of a subjective consciousness, while Being became an object of rational analysis. The act of knowing became a matter of properly ordering and mastering various objective phenomena. Truth came to be measured by the accuracy with which an object measured up to an unattainable idea: an *adequatio rei et intellectus*. Thus:

The relationship drawn by Heidegger between technology, language and truth is so intimate that the indictment of technology automatically casts suspicion on the possibility of a truth-telling discourse. Clearly, this then also has profound implications for all endeavours that are tied to language.<sup>79</sup>

According to Heim:

These three aspects of Heidegger's philosophy fit together. The existential notion of a world implies a criticism of the cumulative truth of history; the critique of cumulative history implies a self-forgetfulness and erosion of responsiveness induced by technology; and the analysis of an all-

enframing technology is one which points to the reduction of the metaphorical powers of language to a single aspect of information management.<sup>80</sup>

I believe that the intimate connection Heidegger draws between the technological compartment, truth and language is most fruitful. It is a strength of his work that he explores the ramifications of the technological attitude with regards to language and our understanding of truth, since it is in these arenas where we most clearly can see the effects of technology. Other philosophers have taken up Heidegger's critique, most notably Hans-Georg Gadamer in his philosophic hermeneutics and Jacques Derrida in his project of deconstruction. Although both philosophers draw on the work of Heidegger, they have pursued widely divergent courses in their treatment of the effect of technology upon the relationship between language and truth.

In Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics, he develops the themes of truth, language and being as Heidegger set them out. Gadamer's major philosophical concern is the problem of understanding, and his views on the 'scientificity' of thinking and on the relationship between truth and language are stated in the context of this issue. In *Truth and Method*, he decries the virtual identification of understanding in the so-called human sciences with quasi-scientific methods of interpretation<sup>81</sup>. Quasi-scientific methods such as those of Schleiermacher and Dilthey replaced the role of humanist ideals, especially in understanding the literary monuments in Western culture. The task of philosophical hermeneutics is to overcome the epistemological truncation by which the traditional science of hermeneutics has been absorbed into the idea of modern science.<sup>82</sup>

Whereas Heidegger's criticism of technology hinged on the distinction between *technē* and *episteme* in abstraction from *poiesis*, Gadamer's criticism of technological thinking follows from his criticism of scientism in the humanities. In *Truth and Method* he contrasts *technē* with *phronesis*, or moral knowledge. Gadamer notes that despite the similarities that can be drawn between these two kinds of knowing, there are several differences, most notably that we do not learn moral knowledge in the same way that we learn a skill. Also, the instrumental ends of technical knowledge cannot be confused with the moral ends of *phronesis*. *Phronesis* for Gadamer is that 'knowing in the widest sense' which Heidegger attributed to the original meaning of *technē* before it took on exclusively instrumental connotations. *Phronesis* is the alternative ideal for

understanding in a world where thinking has been reduced to the technical mastery of linguistic instruments.

Gadamer echoes Heidegger when he holds that the crisis in our current technological situation is that *technē* has been given over to a calculative mode of thought. Even moral knowledge has been reduced to a calculative mode of thinking. Gadamer tells us:

Not that our society has been completely determined by social technologists, but a novel expectation has become pervasive in our awareness: whether a more rationalised organisation of society, or briefly, a mastery of society by reason and by more rational social relationships may not be brought about by intentional planning. This is the ideal of a technocratic society, in which one has recourse to the expert and looks to him for the discharging of the practical, political and economic decisions one needs to make. Now the expert is an indispensable figure in the technical mastery of processes. He has replaced the old-time craftsman. But this expert is also supposed to substitute for practical and political experience.<sup>83</sup>

When thinking - both practical and theoretical - is reduced to the sorting of factual information, there follows an increase in information, but not necessarily any strengthening of social reasoning. When one becomes lost in a sea of signs and incoherent bits of information, 'truth' is reduced to technically correct and manipulable information. The difference between truth and falsehood becomes the difference between verifiably correct and erroneous information, and the grounds of meaning disappear.

Gadamer tells us that the only possible response to this crisis is a return to the question of the essence of the human being, to an analysis of human existence based on the a priori assumption that human being is a thinking, knowing being, that coherent fields of meaning can potentially be specified, and that the notion of truth is not merely the stepchild of an outmoded metaphysics. Instead, truth emerges to the degree that understanding takes place within language. Language, according to Gadamer, '...is the fundamental mode of operation of our being-in-the-world and the all embracing form of the constitution of the world.'<sup>84</sup> Language is more than the secondary objectification of things signified – it is the medium by which Dasein exists. There can be no historical experience apart from language. We exist as linguistic beings.

Throughout his writing, Gadamer modestly presents his own work as an attempt to develop some of the basic insights that Heidegger had put forward. Jacques Derrida, on the other hand, seems to turn both toward and away from Heidegger.

In Derrida's view, the re-evaluation of the metaphysical tradition, which was initiated by Heidegger, is accelerated to the point where the very possibility of truth-telling discourse is rejected. Derrida's central preoccupation involves dismantling the metaphysical presuppositions of truth and meaning that Western thought has assumed since Plato. In this sense, his project is very similar to Heidegger's. Yet, we do find that Derrida is hostile to the association of Heideggerian thinking with deconstruction in some passages in his texts. In *The Postcard*, for example, Derrida criticises French translators who have identified Heidegger's idea of 'destruction' with Derrida's formulation of the concept of 'deconstruction':

*Abbauen*: the word that certain French Heideggerians recently have translated as 'to deconstruct', as if all were in all, and always ahead of the caravan. It is true that this translation is not simply illegitimate once it has been envisaged (rather recently). Unless one manipulates an aftereffect precisely in order to assimilate and in order to reconstruct that which is difficult to assimilate<sup>85</sup>.

Derrida insists that deconstruction is different from Heideggerian philosophising, even though he does admit the Heideggerian lineage for deconstructive thought<sup>86</sup>

Derrida attacks the 'privileging' of writing in order to launch a criticism of the metaphysical tradition that places *logos* at the centre of language and thought. In the traditional ordering of things, *logos* stands at the centre of a cosmos, surrounded concentrically by concepts, words, sounds and finally, by the technique of writing.<sup>87</sup> Within this 'logocentric' cosmos, the origin of writing is closely tied to the emergence of a controlling metaphysical mentality that insists upon a difference between signifier and signified, and upon an ontological priority granted to the latter. The signifier is the technical device by which the signified becomes epistemically present. Writing itself becomes an instrument of calculated control.

In challenging the logocentric metaphysics that writing as inscription presupposes, Derrida challenges the conventional technological ordering of modern society and in his

criticism of technology shares much with Heidegger. Derrida does, however, launch an incisive critique of the 'early' Heidegger in that he asserts that Heidegger remains tied to the notion of a transcendental signified in his analysis of Dasein, and thus to the metaphysical tradition from which he wants to break free. The problem for Derrida is that Heidegger 'would reinstate rather than destroy' Being<sup>88</sup>.

In asking 'What is Being?', the Heidegger of *Being and Time* establishes an 'ontological difference' between Being and beings. In order to speak of the Being of beings, Heidegger must assume Being in the first place, yet this is precisely what he has set out to question. Heidegger becomes caught up in a circular argument – in assuming the very matter he sets out to question, he must use the signifier 'Being' to represent it. Yet, Heidegger constantly reminds us that Being is neither the word nor the concept of Being, and therefore the word 'Being' would seem to assume a hidden signified, Being itself, of which beings are the signifiers. Derrida rejects this line of thinking, and faults Heidegger for maintaining Being in the radically central position it has enjoyed in the history of metaphysics as the entity of entities. Derrida's deconstruction of the remnant of metaphysics in Heidegger is indicated by his adoption of Heidegger's own device – the cancellation of the word Being in the very course of using it (Heidegger indicated this by drawing crossed lines through the word Being). Heidegger explains:

The drawing of these crossed lines [through 'Being'] at first only repels, especially the almost ineradicable habit of conceiving 'Being' as something standing by itself and only coming at times face to face with man.<sup>89</sup>

But for Heidegger, this device need not indicate the exclusion of Being from the essence of the human being:

Man in his essence is the memory of Being...This means that the essence of man is a part of that which in the crossed intersected lines of Being puts thinking under the claim of an earlier demand.<sup>90</sup>

Derrida goes even further, rejecting even this remnant of 'onto-theology'. The metaphysics of presence is rejected. There remains only the 'trace', not meant to be the master word for Derrida that Being was for Heidegger, but the mark of the 'absence of a presence'<sup>91</sup>.

Derrida's concern is the metaphysics of presence of Being that even Heidegger's critique of Nietzsche could not overthrow. Heidegger presupposes this metaphysics of presence in his understanding of *technē* as a calling forth into being of that which lies hidden, through meditative thinking. As a result of Derrida's deconstruction of the Heideggerian text, such notions are subverted, and with them, the notion of truth as *aletheia*, or the revealing of Being. The metaphysical conditions for the possibility of expressing truth are rejected by Derrida, for the denial of a coherent unity of meaning is in effect the denial of a truth that can be expressed in language. Instead, any number of arbitrarily assigned ideological slogans stands ready to fill the void. Ultimately, it would seem that the tyranny of technology over language prevails, even after the deconstruction of the foundations of both. Heidegger ends up with a poetic mystagogy, which Derrida finds insufficient, but Derrida ends up with a play of inscriptions, which also seems strangely deficient, but perhaps more convincingly anti-metaphysical.

## 6.11 Conclusions

No one has been bolder than Heidegger in the endeavour to penetrate the highest and most abstract matters of Being, time and thought. But, Heidegger was always an explorer. He never simply put the language of Being through its rhetorical paces. Many of his explorations ended in dead ends, no doubt, and moreover, the whole enterprise remained for him questionable. Heidegger provides us with no answers, only better ways of posing questions.

Heidegger's path of thought, is, according to Ijsseling, a matter of transgressing the limit, a transgression that, in general, is immediately reprovved or neutralised by the dominant thinking.

A transgression with respect to which a limit, or end, must first be established and with respect to which, finally, a question has to be asked with regard to the determination of this limit, this end. For Heidegger, a limit is never the place where something comes to an end, but, on the contrary, where it begins ... The establishment of a limit, its transgression and the question concerning the determination of the limit, belongs to the problematic at the end of philosophy.<sup>92</sup>

In our jaded contemporary world, we have become shockproof. To use Heideggerian language: the call of Being has become muted. Heidegger calls on human being to

safeguard the invisibility in the visible, to shepherd Being in the permanent everywhere, to dwell in an age of increasing homelessness, to care for the earth and to restrain technology in an age of possessive mastery<sup>93</sup>. We live 'dummy-lives'<sup>94</sup>, where human possession and mastery is endlessly creating empty indifferent things – pseudo-things. The dummy-life is seductive, replete with comfort and the enchantments of hyperproductivity. It is also replete with 'liberation' – freedom is everywhere sought and everywhere supplied.

I agree with Thiele when he asserts that many post-modern theorists fail to address the threat of euphoric disengagement and the dummy-lives that many are living<sup>95</sup>. Conformism with socio-economic and cultural conventions are made palatable by the 'spectacular PR maneuver' of postmodern theory<sup>96</sup>. It has 'succeeded in repackaging and marketing ... what had been previously bemoaned as ontological Angst into playfulness and joy: transcendental homelessness for the me-generation'<sup>97</sup>. A turning back to Heidegger may, in my opinion, give us a new way of thinking about the emptiness we face in contemporary times.

- <sup>1</sup> J. Sallis (ed.), *Heidegger and the Path of Thinking* (Pittsburgh, Duquesne University Press, 1970), p. 1.
- <sup>2</sup> I have not discussed this impact in detail during the preceding chapters. It is, however, interesting to note the affinities between Heidegger's work and Zen Buddhism, for example. See F. Dallmayr, Heidegger and Zen Buddhism: A Salute to Keiji Nishitani in *The Other Heidegger* (London, Cornell University Press, 1993), p. 200.
- <sup>3</sup> R. Rorty, Heidegger, Contingency, and Pragmatism in H. Dreyfus, & H. Hall, *Heidegger: A Critical Reader* (Cambridge/Massachusetts, Blackwell Publishers, 1992), p. 215.
- <sup>4</sup> O. Pöggeler. Metaphysics and Topology of Being in Heidegger in Kockelmans, J.J. (ed.), *A Companion to Martin Heidegger's 'Being and Time'* (U.S.A., University Press of America, 1986), p. 244. The use of 'incorporate' as a translation for *verwinden* in this quotation does not completely express the meaning of the German word. I suggest that one should remember that that *verwinden* carries the connotation of 'unsettling' or 'disruption', which the use of the word 'incorporate' does not.
- <sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>6</sup> S. Ijsseling. *Mimesis. Over Schijn en Zijn*. (Baarn, Ambo, 1990), p. 48.
- <sup>7</sup> R. Rorty, Heidegger, Contingency, and Pragmatism in H. Dreyfus, & H. Hall, *Heidegger: A Critical Reader* (Cambridge/Massachusetts, Blackwell Publishers, 1992), p. 225.
- <sup>8</sup> After Heidegger's active political engagement with National Socialism had ended.
- <sup>9</sup> J.D. Caputo, *Demythologising Heidegger* (Indianapolis, Indiana University Press, 1993), p. 4.
- <sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 29.
- <sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 36.
- <sup>12</sup> J.F. Caputo, Postmodernism/Critical modernism. Caputo reads Marsh: In defence of ambiguity in J.L. Marsh, J.D. Caputo and M. Westphal (eds.), *Modernity and its discontents* (New York, Fordham University Press, 1992), p. 13.
- <sup>13</sup> See for example: M. Heidegger *Being and Time: A Translation of Sein und Zeit* (Albany, State University of New York Press, 1996), p. 398. 'Not "the" sole way', and Heidegger, M *The Question concerning Technology* in D.F. Krell (ed.), *Basic Writings: Martin Heidegger. Revised and Expanded Edition* (London, Routledge, 1993), p. 311. 'Questioning builds a way' (my emphasis).
- <sup>14</sup> M. Heidegger. *Schelling's Treatise on the Essence of Human Freedom*. J. Stambaugh (trans.) (Athens, Ohio University Press, 1985), p. 64.
- <sup>15</sup> M. Heidegger *Being and Time: A Translation of Sein und Zeit* (Albany, State University of New York Press, 1996), p. 3.
- <sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14.
- <sup>17</sup> J. D. Caputo, Husserl, Heidegger and 'Hermeneutic' Phenomenology in J.J. Kockelmans, (ed.), *A Companion to Martin Heidegger's 'Being and Time'* (U.S.A., University Press of America, 1986), p. 121.
- <sup>18</sup> R. Rorty, Heidegger, Contingency, and Pragmatism in H. Dreyfus, & H. Hall, *Heidegger: A Critical Reader* (Cambridge/Massachusetts, Blackwell Publishers, 1992), p. 225.
- <sup>19</sup> J.D. Caputo, *Demythologising Heidegger* (Indianapolis, Indiana University Press, 1993), p. 36.
- <sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>21</sup> See, for example, M. Heidegger. *An Introduction to Metaphysics* (Trans.) R. Mannheim. (USA, Yale University Press, 1959), p. 78. "'Being" proves to be totally indeterminate and at the same time highly determinate'. and M. Heidegger. *On Time and Being*. (Trans.) J. Stambaugh. (New York, Harper and Row Publishers, 1972), p. 6. 'To think Being explicitly requires us to relinquish Being as the ground of beings in favour of the giving which prevails concealed in unconcealment, that is, in favor of the It gives'.
- <sup>22</sup> See C.B. Guignon. Introduction to *The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger*. (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1993), p.12.
- <sup>23</sup> D. Kolb, *The Critique of Pure Modernity: Hegel, Heidegger and After* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1986), p. 149.
- <sup>24</sup> M. Heidegger. *On Time and Being*. (Trans.) J. Stambaugh. (New York, Harper and Row Publishers, 1972), p.9.
- <sup>25</sup> G. Driscoll, Heidegger: A Response to Nihilism, *Philosophy Today*, 2, 1967, p. 32.
- <sup>26</sup> M. Heim. The Finite Framework of Language in *Philosophy Today* 31 (4), 1987, p.18.
- <sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 19.
- <sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.





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- <sup>29</sup> G. Driscoll, Heidegger: A Response to Nihilism, *Philosophy Today*, 2, 1967, p. 32.
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## Summary

**Title:** Heidegger: Technology, Truth and Language.  
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**Degree:** Magister Artium (Philosophy)  
**Department:** Philosophy  
**Language:** English

Martin Heidegger is one of the most important philosophers to have made the age of technology central to his thought. The aim of this study is to gain a critical perspective on how Heidegger viewed man's forgetfulness of Being and the concomitant erosion of responsiveness in language and thinking induced by technology. An in-depth investigation of Heidegger's ideas on technology is irrevocably linked to his ideas on truth and language. One issue I investigate in this study is whether this linkage is fruitful and tenable.

According to Heidegger, the major epochs in Western history are actually stages in the steady decline in Western man's understanding of what it means to 'be'. In the technological age, for something to 'be' means for it to be raw material - part of the endless process of production and consumption. For Heidegger, the horror of the technological age is that man is also seen as raw material. Thus, the 'question concerning technology' is ultimately a question about human dignity.

My main concern is whether Heidegger's ideas regarding technology, truth and language have any meaning or relevance for modern man. Are there not other, more plausible accounts of the origins of modern technology and of how to limit its destructive features? I explore Heidegger's ideas in this regard and contrast them with the ideas of his critics.

A focal point in this study will be Heidegger's notion of technology as *Gestell* (Enframing). According to Heidegger, Enframing is the mode in which Being manifests itself in the age of technology. Enframing allows man to reveal reality as standing reserve (*Bestand*). It reduces the metaphorical expressive powers of language and thinking, in order to make reality calculable and manipulable. For Heidegger, Enframing is the supreme danger, because it causes the event of revealing (Being itself) to slip into oblivion. As a result, man is no longer Dasein as an open possibility, but rather a grounded actuality, a fixed identity. A human being fully adapted to the technological world would no longer be human, because of his complete forgetfulness of Being. Heidegger claims that the *Heimatlosigkeit* (homelessness) of contemporary man is related to the 'dis-essencing' of language and thinking. The fixating of truth within the *Gestell* exiles man from his essence, namely to be Dasein. There is no longer a relation to the openness of Being, for the possible becomes identical to the real.

To counter this, Heidegger suggests an attitude of *Gelassenheit* (releasement), whereby thinking listens to language and allows it to move back into its element (Being). In the modern era, dominated by an increasingly technologised use of language, the caring for the word requires

us to reach back into the abyss of silence, in search of a language capable of speaking Being in all its otherness and unpredictability. Heidegger suggests that by means of poetic thinking, the priority of logos over logic can be reaffirmed, in a time when the reign of a purely instrumental logic has reached dangerous proportions.

In this study, I investigate whether Heidegger's conclusion that all human activity is reduced to *Gestell* is plausible. Is this perhaps not just another form of totalising thinking? Even if one agrees with Heidegger, the question remains whether an attitude of *Gelassenheit* is an adequate solution to this conclusion. Can one still retain ideas like human freedom and moral agency in terms of his philosophy? Many critics have voiced doubts as to whether Heidegger's thought concerning technology provides the resources for a genuine rethinking of action. I investigate these and related questions drawing on the works of various critics.

In Chapter 1, I outline the basic research questions of the study, and include a brief biographical overview of Heidegger's life. In this section, I investigate the problem of Heidegger's involvement with National Socialism and discuss some of the numerous texts that have been elicited by this involvement. In Chapter 2, I lay the groundwork upon which I build my exposition on Heidegger's thought on truth, language and technology, by discussing Heidegger's conception of Being and also of human being. Chapter 3 of this study is devoted to an elucidation of Heidegger's thought on truth. Chapter 4 is an explanation of Heidegger's ideas on language and Chapter 5 deals with his views on technology. In each of these chapters, I show the development of Heidegger's thought through *Being and Time* into his 'later' works. I reserve Chapter 6 for a critical appreciation of the ideas expounded upon in the preceding chapters on technology, truth and language.

I conclude that Heidegger's ideas on technology, truth and language are indeed of value for modern human being. In addition, I demonstrate that the various criticisms of Heidegger's work that I explore are based on a misunderstanding of his texts. His ideas on freedom and the ethics that lies implicit in the texts give us, in my opinion, valuable insights into issues that are of crucial importance today. I conclude that a turning back to Heidegger may give us a new way of thinking about the emptiness human being faces in contemporary times.

**Key Terms:** Heidegger, Technology, Truth, Language, *Gestell*, *Gelassenheit*, art, freedom, politics, National Socialism, Being.

## Opsomming

<b>Titel:</b>	Heidegger: Tegnologie, Waarheid en Taal
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Martin Heidegger is een van die belangrikste filosowe wat die era van tegnologie sentraal in sy denke geplaas het. Die doelwit van hierdie studie is om 'n kritiese perspektief te kry op Heidegger se opvatting oor *Seinsvergeessenheit* (Synsvergetelheid) en die gepaardgaande erosie van refleksiwiteit en ontvanklikheid in taal en denke, soos teweeggebring deur tegnologie. 'n Diepte-ondersoek van Heidegger se idees oor tegnologie is onherroepelik gekoppel aan sy opvatting oor waarheid en taal. Een vraagstuk wat ek in hierdie studie sal ondersoek is of hierdie koppeling inderdaad vrugbaar en houdbaar is.

Volgens Heidegger is die hoof tydperke in die Westerse geskiedenis in werklikheid stadia in 'n geskiedenis van verval - die geleidelike verval in die Westerse verstaan van wat dit beteken om te wees. Vir iets om te wees, in die tegnologiese era, moet dit onbewerkte materiaal of 'n grondstof wees - deel van die eindelose proses van vervaardiging en verbruik. Vir Heidegger is die afgrysligheid van die tegnologiese era dat die mens ook as grondstof beskou word. Dus is die 'vraag rondom tegnologie' uiteindelik 'n vraag oor menslike waardigheid.

My primêre besorgdheid is of Heidegger se idees aangaande tegnologie, waarheid en taal enige betekenis of toepaslikheid vir die moderne mens het. Is daar nie ander, meer aanneemlike verduidelikings vir die oorsprong van die moderne tegnologie en hoe om die vernietigende gevolge daarvan te beperk nie? Ek ondersoek Heidegger se idees in hierdie verband en kontrasteer dit met die idees van sy kritici.

Heidegger se opvatting van tegnologie as *das Ge-stell* is 'n fokuspunt van hierdie studie. Volgens Heidegger is *das Ge-stell* die wyse waarop die Syn sigself manifesteer in die era van tegnologie. *Das Ge-stell* laat die mens toe om die werklikheid as beskikbare materiaal (*Bestand*) bloot te lê. Die werklikheid word meetbaar en manipuleerbaar gemaak, maar tegelykertyd is daar 'n verlies aan die metaforiese en ekspressiewe krag van taal en denke. Vir Heidegger is *das Ge-stell* die opperste gevaar omdat dit veroorsaak dat die gebeure van onthulling (die Syn self) wegsink in vergetelheid. Die resultaat is dat die mens nie meer Dasein as 'n oop moontlikheid is nie, maar eerder 'n gegronde essensie, 'n vasgestelde identiteit. 'n Mens wat ten volle aangepas is by die tegnologiese wêreld sal nie meer mens wees nie, en wel as gevolg van sy totale verontagsaming van die Syn. Heidegger gee voor dat die Heimatlosigkeit (ontheemdheid) van die kontemporêre mens verwant is aan die 'ont-wesenliking' (ontaarding) van taal en denke. Die vaslegging van die waarheid in die *Gestell* ontnem die mens van sy wese, naamlik om Dasein te wees. Daar is nie meer 'n verhouding teenoor die openheid van die

Syn nie, omdat die moontlike identies word aan die werklike (in die sin van dit wat voorhande is).

Om dit teen te werk, stel Heidegger 'n ingesteldheid van *Gelassenheit* (gelatenheid) voor, waarvolgens denke ontvanklik word en 'luister' na taal, en aldus 'toelaat' vir 'n terugkeer na sy element (die Syn). In die moderne era, gekenmerk deur die toenemende vertegnologiseerde gebruik van taal, verg die omsien na die woord 'n inkeer in die bodemlose stilte op soek na 'n taal wat iets kan weergee van die Syn in sy andersheid en onvoorspelbaarheid. In 'n tyd waarin die heerskappy van 'n suiwer instrumentele logika gevaarlike afmetings aangeneem het, stel Heidegger 'n soort poëtiese denke voor waardeur die prioriteit van die logos bo die logika herbevestig kan word.

In hierdie studie ondersoek ek of Heidegger se gevolgtrekking dat alle menslike aktiwiteit gereduseer is tot *Ge-stell* inderdaad houdbaar is. Is dit nie dalk net 'n ander vorm van totaliserende denke nie? Selfs al stem mens saam met Heidegger se gevolgtrekking, bly die vraag of 'n benadering van *Gelassenheit* 'n voldoende antwoord is daarop. Kan idees soos menslike vryheid en morele agentskap hoegenaamd nog gehandhaaf word in terme van sy filosofie? Vele kritici betwyfel dit of Heidegger se denke aangaande die tegnologie ons hoegenaamd in staat stel tot 'n werklike herbedinking van handeling. Hierdie en ander vrae wat daarmee verband hou, word grondig ondersoek met verwysing na sommige van Heidegger se kritici.

In Hoofstuk 1 omskryf ek die basiese navorsingsvrae van die studie en sluit 'n kort oorsig van Heidegger se lewe in. In hierdie afdeling ondersoek ek die probleem van Heidegger se betrokkenheid by die Nasionaal-Sosialisme en bespreek ek die veelvoudige tekste wat hierdie betrokkenheid tot gevolg gehad het. In Hoofstuk 2 word die basis gelê waarop ek my uiteensetting van Heidegger se denke oor die waarheid, taal en tegnologie bou, en wel deur 'n bespreking van Heidegger se begrip van die Syn sowel as die mens. Hoofstuk 3 van die studie word gewy aan 'n verduideliking van Heidegger se denke oor die waarheid. Hoofstuk 4 is 'n verduideliking van Heidegger se idees oor taal, en Hoofstuk 5 handel oor sy opvattinge aangaande tegnologie. In elk van hierdie hoofstukke beoog ek om die ontwikkelingsgang van Heidegger se denke, vanaf *Sein und Zeit* tot in sy 'latere' werke aan te toon. In Hoofstuk 6 volg ten slotte 'n kritiese waardering van die idees soos uiteengesit in die voorafgaande hoofstukke oor tegnologie, waarheid en taal.

Ek kom tot die slotsom dat Heidegger se idees oor tegnologie, waarheid en taal wel waardevol is vir die moderne mens. Ek toon aan dat talle van die kritiek wat teen Heidegger geopper word gebaseer is op 'n problematiese verstaan van Heidegger se tekste. Sy idees oor vryheid en die etiek wat implisiet in sy tekste opgesluit lê, lewer volgens my, waardevolle insigte tot die vraagstukke wat van belang is vandag. Ek glo dat 'n egte ontmoeting met Heidegger 'n nuwe manier van denke oor die leegheid wat die kontemporêre mens ervaar kan ontsluit.

**Sleutelwoorde:** Heidegger, tegnologie, waarheid, taal, *Gestell*, *Gelassenheit*, kuns, vryheid, politiek, Nasionaal-Sosialisme, die Syn.