

Copyright is owned by the Author of the thesis. Permission is given for a copy to be downloaded by an individual for the purpose of research and private study only. The thesis may not be reproduced elsewhere without the permission of the Author.

**The Question Concerning the Environment: A Heideggerian
Approach to Environmental Philosophy**

A thesis presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree of Master of Arts in Philosophy at Massey University

Lynne Bowyer
2008

With thanks to all who have assisted me in my growth
and well-being

Contents

Abstract	i
Introduction	1
Chapter 1 Heidegger's critique of traditional Western thinking	14
Chapter 2 Recovering 'Nature' as <i>Physis</i>	24
Chapter 3 Disclosing World	32
Chapter 4 The Environment –The World That Surrounds Us	37
Chapter 5 The Framework of Technology – A Hegemonic Disclosure	52
Chapter 6 Recovering a Meaningful World	65
Chapter 7 An Ontological-Ethical Approach to Being-in-the-World	72
Chapter 8 Praxis	87
Chapter 9 Conclusion	93
References	95

Abstract

This thesis will engage with the thinking of Martin Heidegger in order to show that our environmental problems are the necessary consequences of our way of 'knowing' the world. Heidegger questions the abstract, theoretical approach that the Western tradition has to 'knowledge', locating 'knowledge' in the human 'subject', an interior self, disengaged from and standing over against the other-than-human world, as external 'object'. Such an approach denies a voice to the other-than-human in the construction of 'knowledge'. Heidegger maintains that we are not a disembodied intellect, but rather we are finite, self-interpreting beings, embodied in a physical, social and historical context, for whom things *matter*. In view of this, he discards traditional notions of 'knowledge', in favour of understanding and interpretation. Accordingly, he develops what can be called a *dialectical ontology*, whereby we come to understand and interpret ourselves and other beings in terms of our involved interactions. This involved understanding acknowledges the participation of other-than-human beings in constructing an interpretation of the world, giving them a voice. Following Heidegger's way of thinking, I suggest that by developing an *ontological-ethic*, a way of dwelling-in-the-world based on a responsive engagement with other-than-human entities, we can disclose a world that makes both the other-than-human and humanity possible.

The Question Concerning the Environment: A Heideggerian Approach to Environmental Philosophy

Introduction

This paper is a contribution to environmental philosophy through an engagement with the thinking of Martin Heidegger.¹ Environmental philosophy has arisen in response to what has been termed an 'environmental crisis'. This term has been coined to encompass the negative consequences of human activity on our planet. Although humans, along with other beings, unavoidably modify their environment in order to sustain life, human actions have contributed to such things as: the destruction of other-than-human habitats; the extinction of human and other-than-human beings; chemical pollution of land, waterways and atmosphere; damage to health from the widespread use of biocides; deforestation and the degradation and depletion of crop and grazing lands due to intensive agriculture. The results of human activity are far reaching and complex and in some cases, as in species extinction, irreversible.

Although we have evidence that there have been climate changes, geochemical and biological changes and mass extinctions in the past, human activity cannot be classed as a similar fateful event. Human actions are based on certain understandings and convictions of ourselves and our

¹ Although my account differs in significant ways from the following thinkers, my interest in Heidegger's thinking in relation to environmental philosophy is indebted to their writing: Joseph Grange 'On The Way Towards Foundational Ecology' in *Soundings*, 1977, p. 135-149; Michael E. Zimmerman, 'Toward a Heideggerian *Ethos* for Radical Environmentalism' in *Environmental Ethics*, 1983, Volume 5, Issue 2, p. 99-131; Michael E. Zimmerman, 'Rethinking the Heidegger-Deep Ecology Relationship, in *Environmental Ethics*, 1993, Volume 15, Issue 3, p.195-224; Bruce V. Foltz, 'On Heidegger and the Interpretation of Environmental Crisis' in *Environmental Ethics*, 1984, Volume 6, Issue 4, p. 326-338. Although many interpreters of Heidegger's thought stress the differences between his earlier and later writings, I am one who senses an important continuity in his work, and approach my account with this in mind.

world, which can be subjected to both factual and ethical criticism and subsequent transformation.

Martin Heidegger's insightful thinking reinterprets many of the traditionally held assumptions about ourselves and the world. Heidegger was a German philosopher, living between the years of 1889-1976. His first major work was *Being and Time*, published in 1927; it is concerned with ontology and explores what it *means to Be*.² Traditionally, ontology is the inquiry into, or theory of *being*, the question of what there is. However, for Heidegger, ontology is concerned with an inquiry into the question of how we come to understand what it means 'to Be'.

Heidegger points out that all philosophical thinking and inquiry is embedded in the particular cultural and historical understanding that the inquirer brings to the task of thinking. Therefore, there can be no unmediated, apodictic 'facts' or 'truths' independent of a situated interpretation.³ He claims that there can be no 'objective', value-free ground for knowledge and that our thinking and inquiry are a disclosive movement shaped and directed by our particular social and historical circumstance. The disclosive movement of thinking and inquiry begins with being assailed by moods, such as wonder, interest and curiosity, which are ways of being attuned in-the-world that make it possible to direct ourselves towards something and thus enables us

² Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, John Macquarrie & Edward Robinson (trans.), Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1967, H 5-8, p. 24-28 When I refer to 'Being' in Heidegger's sense of the word, I will use a capital 'B', although Being is not to be thought of as a noun. Heidegger states '*Being is the transcendens pure and simple*', in that it 'lies beyond every entity and every possible character which an entity may possess'. Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, H 38, p. 62. The Being of beings (what a thing is understood as), is disclosed (*alēthia*) to us through a situated, open, responsive engagement with beings, and will be discussed in detail below.

³ Heidegger lays out his phenomenological hermeneutic approach in Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, H 27-40, p. 49-64. He acknowledges his own work as interpretation and the need for continual self-questioning, as, on any path of thinking, there is always the risk of going astray.

to question our factic life.⁴ Consequently, philosophy can only be an interpretation, a thinking that is a conceptual attempt to articulate, clarify and remain attentive and responsive to our concrete, lived situation.

When we inquire into and think about some thing we have a questioning comportment.⁵ Heidegger holds that “questioning builds a way” and that “questions are paths towards an answer”. If an answer can be given it is not fixed or closed; rather, it consists in a transformation in our thinking.⁶ To travel Heidegger’s path of thinking is to call into question the understandings and assumptions of our age, that through a specific interpretation of what *is*, form our view of reality.⁷ This path of questioning is the task of thinking. It is a surrendering of previous thinking and an opening of our human existence to other possible modes of thought, in order to surpass the actualities of the past and the present and disclose future possibilities from within our present context.

My primary intention in this paper is to employ Heidegger’s path of thinking to show that, as inheritors of the Western metaphysical tradition, our way of thinking has disclosed a world of human – other-than-human relations that has resulted in the environmental problems that we encounter today. I suggest that our environmental degradation is the result of a dominating and controlling relation with the other-than-human realm and that such a relation

⁴ Heidegger discusses the disclosive capacity of moods in Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, H 134-142, p. 172-182

⁵ Heidegger points out that as human beings we are entities whose Being includes the possibility of questioning; Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, H 7, p. 27

⁶ Martin Heidegger, ‘The Question Concerning Technology’ in *Basic Writings, from Being and Time (1927) to The Task of Thinking (1964)*, David Farrell Krell (ed.), New York: HarperCollins, 1977, 1993, p. 311; Martin Heidegger, ‘The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking’, in *Basic Writings*, p. 431; 437

⁷ Martin Heidegger, ‘The Age of the World Picture’, in ‘*The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*’, William Lovitt (trans.), London: Garland Publishing Inc., 1977, p. 115-116

is the necessary consequence of our way of 'knowing' ourselves and other entities that is implicit in this tradition. Consequently, even with the best of intentions, any environmental approach that operates within the assumptions embedded in this traditional way of thinking will be unable to attend to our environmental problems.

Heidegger's path of thinking opens up new possibilities for human - other-than-human relations. I will take up Heidegger's account of authentic human existence as an attuned, responsive, engaged openness, through which we come to understand and interpret both ourselves and other-than-human entities. This involved understanding is a dialectical relation that acknowledges the participation of other-than-human beings in constructing an interpretation of the world, giving them a voice. I will show that it is a respectful relation that constitutes an *ontological-ethical* way of dwelling-in-the-world, making both the other-than-human and humanity possible.

Heidegger maintains that in seeking to explain reality and address the question of what there is, the tradition has sought to discover the principles that underlie the phenomena of the world. Philosophers have tried to explain the 'natural' world in terms of context-free elements, attributes, features or primitives, which are constantly present. Such thinking is dominated by objectivity, the idea that the world consists of objects that have timeless properties, which human beings can come to 'know' through detached contemplation. These objects are considered passive, in that they do not actively contribute to the sum total of our 'knowledge'. Human beings, as subjects, are considered to be those who 'know', producing 'knowledge' through their manipulations and representations of the world. This kind of 'knowledge' results in 'theory', a disembodied way of 'knowing' the world. Thus, human beings are regarded as rational, speaking subjects and the ground of all possible 'knowledge', relegating the other-than-human realm to silent objects, known only through detached contemplation. Such an objectification of other-than-human entities leads to the idea of human

superiority and independence and establishes a way of 'knowing' the world that is controlling and dominating.

Heidegger asserts that the tradition has failed to notice that we are not a disembodied intellect, but rather we are finite, self-interpreting beings embodied in a physical, social and historical context, for whom things matter.⁸ As such it discounts the more primordial way in which we encounter the world, through our engaged practical activities. He rejects the notion that our concrete lived existence, our practical involvements in the world, should be subordinated to abstract knowledge. He maintains that we come to understand the world because we are involved with it. In contrast to the tradition, Heidegger holds that the meaning of being must be sought in human understanding and that 'to Be' means 'to be understood as something'. Such understanding is situated and contextual. Consequently, as any theoretical abstract search for categories of being cannot provide any *significance*, they contribute to our 'forgetfulness of Being', as Being remains hidden or concealed.⁹

As a consequence, he develops what can be called a *dialectical ontology*, seeking to make explicit the structures of everyday human existence, the complexities that unite what are traditionally conceived as 'subject' and 'object', in a dynamic, interactive, on-going process of understanding, in order to make sense of how things are, rather than explaining what they are.

In order to set aside the view of reality we get from abstract theorizing and focus instead on the way things show up in our everyday, pre-reflective activities, Heidegger creates a vocabulary that seeks to avoid traditional philosophical terminology and associations. For example, he uses the word 'comportment' (*verhalten*) to refer to our directed activity, the way we

⁸ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, H 266, p. 310

⁹ *Ibid.*, H 219, p. 261-262

conduct ourselves or relate ourselves to something, in order to avoid such intentionalist language as beliefs and desires.¹⁰ Such comportments are attributed not to consciousness, but to *Dasein*. *Dasein* is Heidegger's term for the human way of being.¹¹ *Dasein* is a situated 'being-in-the-world' constituted by *understanding*, that is, the ability to live and cope skillfully within a world.¹² Fundamental to this understanding is the temporality of the care structure of *Dasein*, whereby *Dasein*'s Being can never be contained in the here and now, but is rather extended over the three temporal dimensions of past, present and future at once: through our concerned involvement in-the-world we project ourselves into an anticipated future based on an understanding determined by the past, which we still are in the present. Accordingly, human existence is a happening that unfolds from birth towards death, in which the past, the present and the future are a unity in defining the Being of *Dasein*.¹³ What ontically distinguishes *Dasein* from other entities is that its Being is an *issue* for it; *Dasein* always understands itself in terms of its *existence*, that is, in terms of a *possibility* of itself.¹⁴ Accordingly, Heidegger maintains that *Dasein*'s *essence is its existence* and that an essence is not something foundational or fixed, but is rather the way *Dasein* comes to Be, through its engaged, temporal involvements in-the-world.¹⁵ Thus, *Dasein* is a way of being that embodies an understanding of what it is

¹⁰ Ibid., H 4, p. 23, note 1

¹¹ Heidegger critiques Descartes interpretation of 'knowing' in *Being and Time*, H 89-101, p. 122-134. He replaces the Cartesian 'knowing subject' (*cogito*) of consciousness by *Dasein* in order to counter the binary distinction of subject-object. Although *Dasein* is translated in many texts as 'Being-there', William Lovitt states that Heidegger has emphatically expressed the necessity for '*Da*' to be translated as 'openness' as opposed to 'there'. See the translator's introduction by William Lovitt in Martin Heidegger, '*The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, William Lovitt (trans.), London: Garland Publishing Inc., 1977, p. xxxv, note 2.

¹² Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, H 12-13, p. 32-33.

¹³ Ibid., H 372-375, p. 424-427

¹⁴ Ibid., H 12, p. 32-33; H 143-144, p. 182-184; H 191-192, p. 236, H 231, p. 274

¹⁵ Ibid., H 42, p. 67-68

to *Be* in a particular context. It is because *Dasein's* way of being is an 'openness to Being', attuned and responsively engaged within a world, that it is able to disclose entities as something.¹⁶

As a result, Heidegger's non-reductive dialectical ontology is able to dispense with many of the concepts of traditional Western thinking that result in an epistemology of domination and control. In contrast to traditional objectivity, that sees the human - other-than-human relationship in dualistic terms, resulting in our alienation from the other-than-human realm, Heidegger maintains that we come to understand both ourselves and others through our engaged involvements.¹⁷ The act of understanding is a continuous act, not of the mind or body, but of a living participant. Accordingly, the *relation* between *Dasein* and other entities-in-the-world is more fundamental than either of the constituents of that relation. This relation is dialectical, whereby the other-than-human and the human are simultaneously shaping and being shaped by one another. This involved, reciprocal understanding is in contrast to traditional models that conceive human beings as a 'knowing subject', disengaged from and standing over against what is 'known', the other-than-human, as 'object'. Implicit in this traditional idea is that 'knowledge' belongs to subjects, not objects. It disregards the participation of other-than-human entities in constructing an understanding of ourselves and other beings-in-the-world.

As a consequence, Heidegger questions and reinterprets the traditional ideas that we have concerning 'knowledge' and 'truth'.¹⁸ Rejecting the idea

¹⁶ Ibid., H 12, p. 32-33

¹⁷ In seeking to overcome the subject-object binary, Heidegger is not denying that there are objects independent of *Dasein*, nor is he denying subjectivity, in the sense of directed activity, to *Dasein*. Heidegger's aim is to show that subject-object ontologies are unable to grasp contextual, pre-reflective experience. He shows that the theoretical constructions that ground our ideas of 'subjects' and 'objects' are derivative modes of disclosure, constructs derived from our pre-reflective experience.

¹⁸ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, H 213-230, p.256-273

of 'truth' as objective, timeless, permanent, universally valid and absolute, he reinterprets 'truth' as *disclosure (alēthia)*.¹⁹ When a thing is disclosed to us as something, it is a contextual response, consistent with the experiences of culturally formed, historically situated beings. Heidegger also shifts the focus from 'knowledge' to *interpretation*; interpretations must be attentive to and appropriate to the 'things themselves'.²⁰ An interpretation is based on our engaged understandings, that is, our concerns as a being-in-the-world.²¹

Fundamental to the notion of truth as disclosure is Heidegger's appropriation of the Greek term *physis* as the precondition for the disclosure of any entity.²² The concept of *physis* circumvents traditional Western historical and cultural associations of the term 'nature' and its cognates. Heidegger describes *physis* as a spontaneous self-becoming, which transcends the categories that represent it. It is not a finite, knowable, appearing entity; rather, it is a presencing whereby entities come out of concealment into unconcealment and are disclosed to and through *Dasein*. This disclosure occurs through a responsive engagement, a *propriating event (ereignis)*, constituted by the self-disclosure of entities and a situated *Dasein*. Through this disclosive correlation, a thing becomes intelligible as something, that is,

¹⁹ Ibid., H 75, p.105 Heidegger uses the term to 'disclose' to signify 'to lay open' and 'the character of having been laid open'. This does not imply that we have detailed awareness of the contents which are thus disclosed, but rather that they have been 'laid open' to us as implicit in what is given, so that they may be made explicit to our awareness by further analysis or discrimination of the given, rather than by any inference from it. See p. 105-106, note 1

²⁰ Ibid., H 153, p. 195

²¹ Ibid., H 152-154, p. 194-195 Heidegger explains how our interpretations are grounded in our involved understandings through the structure of *fore-having*, *fore-sight* and *fore-conception*, that is, respectively, our prior understandings, our perspective of concern and the direction that guides the interpretation.

²² Martin Heidegger, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, Ralph Manheim (trans.), London: Yale University Press, 1959 p. 14

its 'truth' is made available.²³ *Physis* provides the boundary that delineates the range of possibilities within which things can be disclosed.

A good deal of environmental thinking has posited a particular *idea* of 'nature' that should be saved. For instance, some thinkers have argued that we should save 'pristine nature'; others that 'wild nature' or 'wilderness' must be preserved; some suggest that 'nature' is a resource that must be conserved. All these connotations of 'nature' see it as something that is 'actual' and separate and apart from humanity. Heidegger's thinking enables us to see that what we understand as 'nature' is historically, socially and culturally specific and that Western metaphysical thinking has produced a particular idea of 'nature' that is alienated from humanity. In contrast, Heidegger's conception of *physis*, understood as the precondition for the disclosure of the contextual meaning of any entity, is intimately related to humanity: human beings are an openness to Being through which a *physis* - being can be meaningfully disclosed. Consequently, there is no one *idea* of nature that needs saving; rather, *physis* is an integral part of the *meaningful possibilities* inherent in the lives of culturally, socially and historically situated beings.

Thus, central to Heidegger's notion of disclosing meaningful possibilities is our ability to be open to *physis*. This openness is an apprehending (*noein*, to apprehend; *nous*, apprehension),²⁴ in which we let some thing come to us, taking a receptive attitude to that which shows itself. It is an *originary thinking* that is non-objective and attentive: it listens to and responds to 'the meaning which reigns in everything that is'.²⁵ By cultivating a way of

²³ Truth understood as disclosure is discussed in Martin Heidegger, 'On the Essence of Truth', in *Basic Writings*, p. 115-138.

²⁴ Martin Heidegger, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 137-138

²⁵ Martin Heidegger, 'Memorial Address', in *Discourse on Thinking*, John Anderson and F. Hans Freund (trans.), New York: Harper & Row, 1966, p. 46 In different texts Heidegger refers to this 'responsive engaged openness' in different ways: for example in 'Memorial

dwelling, an *ethos*, in which we are open to Being, originary thinking opens the way for a responsive understanding and respectful relation towards entities. I will show that it is this respectful relation that can constitute an *ontological-ethical* way of dwelling-in-the-world, making both the other-than-human and humanity possible.

Chapter one provides an account of Heidegger's critique of traditional Western thinking. Heidegger differentiates between ontical inquiry and ontological inquiry. Ontical inquiry is concerned with the *beingness* of entities and has led to foundationalist approaches to 'knowledge' which embrace a subject-object dualism. In contrast, ontology is concerned with an inquiry into the question of how we come to understand what it *means* 'to Be'. Heidegger's critique seeks to dissolve the subject-object binary and undermine foundationalist claims that result in a way of 'knowing' the world that is dominating and controlling, the consequence of which is a destructive relation with other-than-human entities.

Chapter two discusses Heidegger's appropriation of the term *physis*, which avoids the traditional Western terminology and associations of 'nature' and the 'natural' and serves to challenge the traditional idea that 'nature' can be 'known' in any concrete sense. Rather, a situated, responsive engagement with *physis* discloses entities as contextually meaningful.

Chapter three continues the discussion of responsive engagement, showing that it is through being open and responsively engaged that a world is disclosed. Heidegger suggests that *Dasein*, as a being-in-the-world, can dwell in-the-world either authentically or inauthentically. An inauthentic existence remains absorbed within the world of common concerns and

Address' he uses the phrase 'meditative thinking'; in *An Introduction to Metaphysics* it is referred to as 'apprehension'; in 'Letter on Humanism' it is referred to as 'thinking'. Thus, for the sake of consistency and clarity, throughout my work I will refer to the 'responsive, engaged openness' of apprehension as *originary thinking*.

practices of the particular social, cultural and historical age that it has 'fallen' into. As such, it takes its world as *the* world, an unchanging constant presence. Although *Dasein* is always situated in a particular social and historical context, an authentic dwelling recognizes that these are not fixed conditions. In authenticity *Dasein* is open to the situatedness of its existence, recognizing the extent to which a view of the world is always limited and incomplete. In authenticity *Dasein* is opened to its existence-as-possibility and is thus open to the possibility of understanding the world in a new way.

Chapter four upholds the primacy of our shared everyday concerns and emphasises our involvement with other-than-human entities in developing an understanding of our world. To this end, I provide an account of the thoughts of Martin Heidegger and also present an outline of the ecological psychology of James J. Gibson, which supports Heidegger's thinking.²⁶ Both thinkers challenge the detached theoretical stance that has dominated traditional Western conceptions of ourselves and the world. Heidegger and Gibson both recognize the dialectical nature of the encounters between ourselves, as embodied beings and other entities, in creating an understanding of a world. Understanding is not a cognitive phenomenon; it is an attuned, involved awareness and an action-guiding accomplishment.²⁷ Human understanding is consistent with the concerns of finite, self-interpreting beings, embodied in a physical, social and historical context, for whom things matter.

By separating subject from object, traditional objectivism helps to constitute the belief that we can act upon our environment without ourselves being acted upon. If we accept that our understanding of ourselves and other entities is a dialectical relationship, gained from our embodied interactions,

²⁶ James J. Gibson, *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception*, London: Lawrence Erlbaum, 1986.

²⁷ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, H 142-143 p. 182-183

then we must also accept that our actions towards other entities impact upon ourselves.

Chapter five lays out Heidegger's critique of the essence of technology, which he holds is an enframing (*Gestell*), a totalising way in which all entities are disclosed. This form of disclosure has become the dominant way of disclosing the world in our present age, concealing all other possible ways of disclosure. It is a total objectifying of the world that, through a *calculative thinking*, categorizes and assimilates beings to human order and purpose and perpetuates our dominating and controlling relation with other entities. As such, Heidegger maintains that it is the culmination of metaphysics.²⁸

Chapter six shows that it is through originary thinking that *Dasein* is able to recover a meaningful world. World, as an open realm of possibilities, is the way that *Dasein* and other entities exist authentically. Through originary thinking, *Dasein* lets other beings Be, in the sense of allowing them to manifest themselves in terms of their own inherent possibilities. Heidegger maintains that it is through the comportment of *Gelassenheit*, a way of being attuned-in-the-world that provides *Dasein* with clear vision, that *Dasein* is released from the attachments of the familiar world.²⁹ Together, originary thinking and *Gelassenheit* enable a respectful and caring relation with other entities. They make possible an *ethos*, a way of living that is open to Being and thus protects and sustains a richer understanding of the world. I maintain that it is only through an authentic existence that we can respond to and address our environmental concerns.

²⁸ When employing the term metaphysics, Heidegger is referring to traditional Western thinking that has been concerned with the beingness of beings, understood as a constant presence (discussed in chapter one), in contrast to the *meaning* of Being. Hence, for Heidegger, the essence of technology is the 'completion of metaphysics', as it discloses *all* entities as a constant presence. See Martin Heidegger, 'The End of Philosophy', Joan Stambaugh (trans.), London: Souvenir Press, p. 92-93

²⁹ Martin Heidegger, 'Memorial Address', in *Discourse on Thinking*, p. 54

Chapter seven outlines Heidegger's condemnation of traditional ethical theorizing. By offering norms, rules and measures for right behaviour, traditional ethical theorizing has been concerned with morals, the subjective calculus of what is good and what is bad. It has left unthought *Dasein's* fundamental *ēthos*; it has failed to think Being as the essential dwelling place of human existence.³⁰ Although Heidegger does not develop an ethic, I will show that his thinking allows the emergence of an *ontological-ethic*. I will maintain that an ontological-ethic that is informed by the boundaries of *physis* is able to guide actions and modes of living. An ontological-ethic suggests that in order for *Dasein* to live well it must be able to inhabit its environment in a way that enables it to pursue its existence-as-possibility, which requires the existence of other-than-human entities.

Chapter eight discusses the practical implications of an ontological-ethic and suggests ways in which an ontological-ethic can be implemented.

³⁰ Martin Heidegger, 'Letter on Humanism' in *Basic Writings*, p. 258

Heidegger's Critique of Traditional Western Thinking

Heidegger's critique of the traditional Western approach to explaining the 'natural' world seeks to undermine the foundationalist approach to 'knowledge' and to dissolve the subject-object binary that sets up this foundationalist 'knowing' relation. Hence, he engages in a 'destruction' of the metaphysical tradition, in order to disclose the finite and temporal character of Being. His critique of traditional metaphysics is not meant as a disparaging criticism of historical thinking, or a denial of tradition. Rather, its aim is positive: it is an "un-building (*de-struere*) of the layers covering up the original nature of Being, the layers which metaphysical thinking has constructed", in order to retrieve the possibilities inherent in that tradition.³¹

Beginning with the thoughts of Thales, in the sixth century B.C.E., Western thinking has been preoccupied with the composition of reality; what underlies all the changes of the 'natural' world. In seeking to answer this question, the Western tradition has taken a path that has sought to explain the world in terms of context-free elements, attributes, features or primitives, which are *constantly present*. Constant presence does not refer to *duration*, but rather to *presencing*; the tradition has sought to explain *what is* by way of some thing *unchanging* and thereby, constantly present. This focus on enduring presence is found in "Plato's Forms, Aristotle's primary substances, the Creator of Christian belief, Descartes' *res extensa* and *res cogitans*, Kant's noumena and the physical stuff presupposed by scientific naturalism".³² Scientific and philosophical theories have sought to show that the 'natural' world consists of an aggregate of objects explainable by abstract properties,

³¹ Martin Heidegger, *The End of Philosophy*, p. ix; Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, H 22-23, p. 44

³² Charles B. Guignon, *The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger*, Charles B. Guignon (ed.), Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1993, p. 4; Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, H 21-22, p. 42-44

physical laws and causal relations. Such conceptual schemes are the results of disengaged reflective activities and have led to *subjective epistemologies*. Heidegger maintains that the tradition's orientation answers the question of being, of what things *are*, as constant presence *for* the guarantee of representation. It has meant that "being, thought as object, is questioned with regard to objectivity and what makes objectivity possible".³³ Consequently, what began as *ontology*, the question of *what there is*, has become *epistemology*, the question about *knowability*, based on the idea of truth as the certainty of guaranteed representation.³⁴

Subjectivist epistemologies claim we come to 'know' the 'natural' world, as an 'object', through the disengaged reflection of a 'subject'. The essential properties that form the foundations of the 'natural' world are to be verified and 'known' through correct reasoning, a cognitive property of the human mind. Accordingly, human beings are regarded as rational, speaking subjects and the ground of all possible 'knowledge', relegating the other-than-human world to silent objects, known only through detached contemplation. Such an objectification of 'nature' leads to the idea of human superiority and independence and establishes a way of 'knowing' the world that is controlling and dominating.

In our present age, the reality within which we conduct our lives is determined by Western science; *modern science is the theory of the real*.³⁵ Although the essence of modern science is grounded in the thinking of the pre-Socratic Greeks, Heidegger maintains that there is a distinctive character to the 'knowing' of the modern age that differs fundamentally from the *epistēmē* of the pre-Socratics. The 'theory' that modern science shows

³³ Martin Heidegger, *The End of Philosophy*, p. 88

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ Martin Heidegger, 'Science and Reflection', in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, p. 157

itself to be is something essentially different from the Greek *theōria*.³⁶ Heidegger points out that in Early Greek thinking *theōria* meant “*the beholding that watches over truth*”.³⁷ This essence of *theōria* is lost when it is translated into Latin and becomes *contemplatio*, which means “a looking-at that compartmentalizes”.³⁸ As such, theory became a *frame* through which we come to view reality. And this reality eventually becomes secured as a certainty in the realm of abstract ideas and the thinking of mathematics, which establish in advance how ‘reality’ is to be determined.³⁹ Thus, “the translation, which issues from the spirit of the Roman language, that is, from Roman existence, makes that which is essential in what the Greek words say vanish at a stroke”.⁴⁰ In arriving at theory from *theōria* we have erred from the path of truth. Accordingly, Heidegger maintains there is a need to recover what has been concealed by this particular modern scientific interpretation of *what is*.

Heidegger points out that in addressing the question of ‘what there is’, the Western tradition has created a distinction between essence and existence, between what-ness, *essentia* or *quidditas* and that-ness, *existentia*. With this distinction it is essence that takes priority, leading to an emphasis on beings. Its questions focused on the *essentia*, on entities and the facts about them,

³⁶ Ibid., p. 157; 166

³⁷ Ibid., p. 165

³⁸ Ibid., p. 166

³⁹ Martin Heidegger, ‘Modern Science, Metaphysics and Mathematics’, in *Basic Writings*, p.271-305

⁴⁰ Martin Heidegger, ‘Science and Reflection’, in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, p.165 By emphasizing a visual approach to ‘knowledge’ contained in the modern notion of ‘theory’, the world is presented as a world of surfaces to be inspected, turning it in to a passive object that human beings can come to ‘know’. Heidegger rejects such a visual approach for a sound orientated approach that comes to understand a world by listening to and responding to Being. As such, understanding is a responsive, interactive process. This will be discussed below.

whereas the *existentia* of Being remained unquestioned.⁴¹ Heidegger calls this focus on the properties and structures of beings *ontical inquiry*; it is the 'beingness' of entities.⁴² Ontical inquiry focuses on substances and their essential properties, in order to ascertain that which 'stands-under' (*substantia*) and remains continuously present (unchanging) throughout change.

Ontical inquiry answers the question of being by differentiating the thinking subject from the object of thought: "It began when *eon*, the being of the essent, was represented as *idea* and as such, became the object of *epistēmē*".⁴³ Thus, thinking about things became distinct from the things thought about. The search for 'knowledge' and 'truth' became a matter of a disengaged, rational 'subject' constructing a theory, or framework, that discloses the world as a set of 'objects', shaped by the framework that *makes them what they are*.

This turn to abstraction exemplifies the methods of traditional Western philosophy and 'natural' science. Heidegger suggests that if we conceive the other-than-human world as an 'object', as something that is only 'known' through the methods of science and metaphysics, it will be radically misunderstood.⁴⁴ Heidegger shows that science explicitly pursues 'nature' as

⁴¹ Martin Heidegger, *The End of Philosophy*, p. 1-4 Heidegger points out that the division into what-ness and that-ness is an event in the history of Being; it is the *oblivion* of Being.

⁴² Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, H 11 p. 31, note 3

⁴³ Martin Heidegger, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 116-117; 121

⁴⁴ Heidegger uses the term 'science' to mean any discipline or branch of knowledge which re-presents the world in a particular ontic way. He does not dismiss scientific and traditional philosophical thinking; rather, he aims to show that they are derivative modes of disclosure, made possible by the meaningful, pre-reflective practice of our practical involvements in-the-world, which will be discussed in chapter four. He notes that theoretical structures can be disclosive in their own way, but their hegemonic status conceals other meaningful ways in which *Dasein's* world can be disclosed.

Modern physics acknowledges a connection of subject and object in scientific investigation. Heisenberg states: 'Science no longer confronts 'nature' as an objective observer, but sees itself as an actor in the interplay between man and 'nature'... method and object can no longer be separated'; Werner Heisenberg, *The Physicist's Conception of Nature*, Arnold J.

something to be observed and *made* meaningful, what he calls being 'present-at-hand' (*Vorhandenheit*): "Entities are grasped in their Being as presence; this means that they are understood with regard to a definite mode of time – the 'Present'".⁴⁵ Thus, "that which is present is regarded as what is".⁴⁶ Heidegger maintains that such thinking is concerned with 'correct' but not truthful ideas and he considers it to be a 'calculative' kind of thinking.⁴⁷ Calculative thinking, which is our predominant mode of thinking in our present age, is means/ends orientated, objectifying, categorizing and assimilating beings to human order and purpose. It is concerned with regulation, planning, prediction, efficiency and control.⁴⁸ He maintains that when thinking is reduced to calculation directed towards the manipulation of 'objects' we debase thinking and as a consequence our humanity, our *potentiality*, is threatened. Calculative thinking serves to cover up other ways

Pomerans (trans.), Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1958, p. 29. However, Heidegger's criticism of science is not only focused on dissolving the subject/object dualism, but on establishing an *authentic* relation with other beings. He argues that an authentic relation can not be grasped through scientific or technological thinking, as they are concerned with calculative thinking. An authentic relation lets beings Be; it requires originary thinking. Calculative and originary thinking will be discussed below.

⁴⁵ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, H 25, p. 47. In trying to determine the being of beings, i.e., what is the condition of being real, traditional Western thinking is dominated by an unexamined metaphysics of presence. Heidegger explicitly confronts the question of being in relation to time. He identifies a tension contained in the representational idea of time: that everything temporal is transitory and that which is most real is thought of as an enduring presence. Whilst metaphysics, in thinking of time as that which constantly passes, rules out the possibility of eternity, it also tacitly appeals to eternity, as the concept of eternity is implicated in the model of the 'now', that is, in *reality* as constant, unchanging presence. For a more detailed account of metaphysical presence see Tina Chanter, 'Metaphysical Presence: Heidegger on Time and Eternity' in Arleen B. Dallery & Charles E. Scott (eds.), *Ethics and Danger: Essays on Heidegger and Continental Thought*, Albany N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1992, p. 125-138

⁴⁶ Martin Heidegger, *What is Called Thinking?* Fred D. Wieck and J. Glenn Gray, (trans), London: Harper & Row, 1968 p. 92

⁴⁷ Heidegger contrasts calculative thinking, which results in 'correct' ideas, with originary thinking, which discloses truth. Truth as disclosure will be discussed in chapter two.

⁴⁸ Martin Heidegger, 'What calls for Thinking', in *Basic Writings*, p. 369-391 Calculative thinking seems to be in accord with Adorno and Horkheimer's idea of 'instrumental rationality', which they see as a mode of reasoning that originally developed because humans wanted to work out the best way to control and dominate 'nature'. See Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, trans. John Cumming. London: Verso, 1997, p. 37

of understanding the 'natural' world, which is achieved through a more primordial mode of thinking, *originary thinking*. Originary thinking is open to disclosing and thus understanding entities in all their possibilities.⁴⁹

As a form of calculative thinking, science is always an explanation; it is a theoretical projection that abstracts that which is studied from the everyday world of meaningful experience. By placing other-than-human entities into a conceptual theoretical framework, science makes it an object of investigation, decontextualized into meaningless elements, revealed as present-at-hand (*Vorhandenheit*). It establishes one particular, defined way through which 'nature' can be 'known'. An excerpt from Charles Dickens novel '*Hard Times*', where the teacher, Mr. Gradgrind, is exalting scientific 'knowledge', provides a pertinent example:

"Girl number twenty unable to define a horse!" said Mr. Gradgrind...

"Some boy's definition of a horse". "Bitzer", said Thomas Gradgrind, "Your definition of a horse".

"Quadruped. Graminivorous. Forty teeth, namely twenty four grinders, four eye-teeth, and twelve incisive. Sheds coat in the spring; in marshy countries sheds hoofs too. Hoofs hard, but requiring to be shod with iron. Age known by marks in mouth".

"Now girl number twenty," said Mr. Gradgrind, "You know what a horse is".⁵⁰

In this instance, a certain *idea* of a 'horse' is re-presented; it is contained within a framework that science has established in advance and which shapes our view of things. The *idea* of the horse is determined by

⁴⁹Originary thinking will be discussed in chapter three and chapter six. However, it is important to note that Heidegger's aim is not to replace one mode of thinking with another, but instead to move from the hegemony of calculative thinking to a balance between calculative and originary thinking.

⁵⁰ Charles Dickens, *Hard Times*, London Oxford University Press, 1974, p. 5

permanently present characteristics, whilst the horse *itself*, its many *contextual meanings*, remains concealed. This may result in a 'correct' representation, but what is correct is not yet true.⁵¹ 'Correctness' is a limited form of truth; an inadequate truth, grounded upon the framework that makes it what it is. But it remains blind to the essence of truth because it conceals existential meaning. As a consequence, our experienced reality is supplanted by an abstract model of 'reality', which, for all its usefulness, cannot claim epistemological or ontological priority over the world as it is lived.

In this way, science, as a rationale or explanation, abstracts from context and objectifies the other-than-human realm; other-than-human entities are 'known' as a constant presence (*Vorhandenheit*). Heidegger insists that a theoretical interpretation does not make the *lived world* intelligible.⁵² Thus, when we try to comprehend the physicist's small-nesses, the astronomer's distances and the mathematician's varieties of infinitude, we lose functional, meaningful contact with the world.⁵³

By maintaining that any genuine access to 'nature' is through theory, the way to get a grasp of these entities has been decided in advance: through a 'beholding' of the mind.⁵⁴ Thus, by a representing of 'nature' as an object, something 'already-known', human beings become *subiectum*, 'subject', the "being upon which all that *is*, is grounded, as regards the manner of its Being

⁵¹ Martin Heidegger, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 188- 193; Martin Heidegger, 'The Question Concerning Technology' in *Basic Writings*, p. 313

⁵² Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, H 65, p. 93-94

⁵³ Daniel McKinley makes this point; see 'The New Mythology of Man in nature', in *The Subversive Science: Essays Towards An Ecology Of Man*, Paul Shepard and Daniel McKinley (eds.), New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1969, p.361

⁵⁴ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, H 95, p. 128

and its truth".⁵⁵ By separating human beings as those that 'know', a disengaged, rational mind, from the physical world as a set of objective conditions, there began the development of *subjective epistemologies*. Subjective epistemologies take human beings, as 'subject', to be the source of all knowledge and construe 'nature' as a silent 'object', that which can be 'known', through theoretical explanation. They disregard other beings as subjects of significance, denying them a voice in the production of 'knowledge'. Through such subjective epistemologies the world is conceived and grasped as 'picture' (*Bild*), a "structured image that is the creature of human producing, which represents and sets before".⁵⁶ Heidegger maintains that "humanism first arises when the world becomes picture".⁵⁷

The interpretation of human beings as 'subject' and 'nature' as 'object' creates a separation and alienation of human beings from the 'natural' world. Together with the method of science as the preeminent way of explaining the world, they constitute a way of knowing the world that is dominating and controlling. Thus, the path to environmental disharmony and planetary imperialism is laid. This alienating stance has led to the idea that we can act upon the world without ourselves being acted upon. It implies that we can poison our rivers, use chemicals on the land to increase food production, administer biocides to kill 'unwanted' living organisms, drain wetlands and pollute the atmosphere, without affecting ourselves in the process.

⁵⁵ Martin Heidegger, 'The Age of the World Picture', in *The Question Concerning Technology*, p. 128; 'Modern Science, Metaphysics and Mathematics', in *Basic Writings*, p. 304

⁵⁶ Martin Heidegger, 'The Age of the World Picture', in *The Question Concerning Technology*, p. 134

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 133. Paul Shepard also notes and discusses how the multisensuousness, especially the auditory quality, of the Early Greek world was lost when the visual sense of the detached observer became dominant, and the world becomes picture; see Paul Shepard, 'Five Green Thoughts', in *Encounters with Nature: Essays by Paul Shepard*, Florence R. Shepard (ed.), Washington D.C., Island Press, 1999, p. 117-134

By upholding a distinction between *ontical* inquiry and *ontological* inquiry, Heidegger separates the inquiry into the beingness of entities (ontical inquiry), from an inquiry into the question of how we come to understand what it *means* 'to Be' (ontological inquiry).⁵⁸ For Heidegger, 'to Be' means 'to be understood as something'. He maintains that any theoretical, abstract search for categories of being, that prioritize *essence* over *existence* and emphasize beingness rather than Being, cannot provide any existential significance. Hence, they contribute to our forgetfulness of Being.⁵⁹ Heidegger states:

Men have always to do with being in that they are always dealing with essents; it is alien to them in that they turn away from being, because they do not grasp it but suppose that essents are only essents and nothing more. They are awake (in relation to the essent) and yet Being is hidden from them.⁶⁰

When the other-than-human world is objectified and 'known' through methods of abstraction that frame that 'knowledge', it is no longer seen as a locus of meaning and value. Meaning and value are seen as a purely human, subjective matter and become something 'added on' to a subjective experience. Thus, ontic clarity is attained at the expense of truth, in that an explanation of 'reality' is given, but it has been completely cleared of ontological meaning.

Consequently, the foundationalist approach of the Western philosophical tradition overlooks or conceals our meaningful involvements in-the-world. It disregards our situated, social, cultural and historically specific context

⁵⁸ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, H 8-15, p. 28-35

⁵⁹ Martin Heidegger, *The End of Philosophy*, p. 3-4

⁶⁰ Martin Heidegger, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 130

through which we interact with the other-than-human world and disclose meaning. However, Heidegger maintains that being a 'subject' is not the sole possibility belonging to the essence of historical humanity. It is not an absolute; it belongs to a particular epoch of thinking. Heidegger states that what Descartes "left undetermined (when he began with the *cogito sum*)...was the kind of Being of the *res cogitans*, or – more precisely – the *meaning of the Being of the 'sum'*".⁶¹ Heidegger's ontology calls into question the Cartesian *cogito*, humanity as a thinking, representing 'subject' and provides an account of human existence as *Dasein*, a being who *apprehends*. As a corollary, he is able to show that 'nature' can no longer be conceived as an 'object', a constant presence; rather, it is a *presencing*. The concept of 'nature' is dismantled to retrieve the originary phenomena of 'nature' as *physis*, which the Western tradition has covered over.⁶² Heidegger maintains that through an open, responsive engagement with *physis*, the Being of beings is disclosed to *Dasein*. And Being is the reality in which we conduct ourselves.

⁶¹ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, H 24, p. 46

⁶² Heidegger points out that the Greek word *physis* was translated into Latin as *natura*, which properly means 'to be born' or 'birth', and through which we derive our word 'nature'. However, through this act of translation, the original meaning and philosophical force of the term *physis* is destroyed. See Martin Heidegger, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 13

Recovering 'Nature' as *Physis*

In the previous chapter I have presented Heidegger's critique of the foundationalist approach that seeks to explain 'nature' as *Vorhandenheit* and as a consequence, conceals existential meaning. As the ontological issue is not about explaining, but rather, *understanding*, making sense of how things *are*, Heidegger maintains that it is because *Dasein* is 'open to Being', attuned and responsively engaged within a world, that beings are able to be disclosed as something.⁶³ It is through an active, responsive engagement with *physis* that beings are disclosed to us. The disclosure of entities as something is intimately bound up with language; language is a 'saying that shows', which preserves (*bewahrt*) what has been opened up.

Environmental philosophy frequently uses the terms 'nature' and 'environment' interchangeably. However, the conflation of these conceptual terms has often led to a misunderstanding of these phenomena. Heidegger's way of thinking dismantles these concepts in order to try and retrieve the originary phenomena that the Western tradition has covered over. The idea of 'nature' and 'environment' are quite distinct in Heidegger's thinking. In chapter four I discuss what is brought forth by the use of the word 'environment'. In this chapter I discuss Heidegger's use of the term *physis*, a word he appropriates from the early Greek thinkers, to lead us away from our traditional theoretical conceptions and foundationalist explanations of 'nature' that try to provide an 'objective' account for what is 'out there'.

As inheritors of the Western tradition, we have been socialized into a world that has disclosed a particular way of 'knowing nature'. In the course of our history, science and metaphysics have provided influential accounts of

⁶³ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, H 137, p. 176

'nature' and 'humanity' that have served as the primary guides to human - other-than-human relations. By attempting to provide objective, theoretical, foundationalist accounts, these narratives have evolved a dualist explanation of humanity and 'nature', which has legitimated a dominating and controlling relation with the 'natural' world.

This foundational assumption is apparent in the way that we use the term 'nature' in everyday usage. 'Nature' can mean principle, source or essence of anything whatsoever; that which is immutable and eternal about a thing. The idea of an entity having a 'nature' implies that it possesses some inherent, enduring ontic feature, quality or characteristic. Thus, when 'nature' is used in this sense we say that it is in a dog's 'nature' to bark, or it is the 'nature' of clay to be malleable. The word 'nature' is also used in a collective sense to designate the sum total of all ontic things, implying that its referent is somehow a unified whole. As such, it is synonymous with the 'physical world'.

We have come to define the human by contrast and disjunction, so that much of our thinking about and use of the term 'nature' expresses the dualist idea that 'nature' refers to something that is separate from humanity, or can be distinguished from human activity. For instance, the 'natural' is contrasted with the artificial, whereby the features and characteristics of a 'natural' thing are something within and intimately belonging to that thing, in contrast to an artificial thing, whose features and characteristics are the product of human determination. Contrasts of 'nature' with nurture and 'nature' with culture differentiate between what is considered to be 'naturally' determined as opposed to that which is said to be determined by social convention.

By confronting the 'history of being' Heidegger attempts to overcome, in the sense of passing through and beyond, this foundationalist, dualist assumption that dominates our view of 'nature' and humanity and the

relation between them in which we live. To do so he confronts the texts of the pre-Socratic Greek thinkers, from which has emerged our current path of thinking about 'nature'. However, this path became one of errancy, in that its methods have led us to conceive of 'nature' as a constant presence, with human beings as the ground and standard for all things, and it has forgotten how we come to understand Being.⁶⁴ Heidegger retrieves this understanding through his account of *physis*.

Physis is a spontaneous self-becoming, which transcends the categories that represent it. It is not a finite, knowable, appearing entity, but rather the precondition for the existence of any entity. Heidegger states:

The being of *physis* and *physis* as being remain unprovable because *physis* does not need a proof, for wherever a *physis*-being stands in the open, *physis* has already shown itself and stands in view.⁶⁵

Physis is the presencing whereby entities come out of concealment into unconcealment and are disclosed to and through human beings. This disclosure occurs through a responsive engagement, a *appropriation* (*ereignis*), constituted by the self-disclosure of entities and a situated *Dasein*.⁶⁶ This

⁶⁴ In Martin Heidegger, 'On the Essence of Truth' in *Basic Writings*, p. 132- 135, Heidegger uses the words 'errancy' and 'to err' to mean 'to wander from the right way'.

⁶⁵ Martin Heidegger, 'On the Essence and Concept of Physis in Aristotle's Physics B, 1', Thomas Sheehan, (trans.), in *Pathmarks*, William McNeill (ed.), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, p. 201

See also Martin Heidegger, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 14; Martin Heidegger, 'On the Essence of Truth' in *Basic Writings*, p. 126; Martin Heidegger, 'On the Essence and Concept of Physis in Aristotle's Physics B, 1', p. 200, 201, 207, 228

⁶⁶ Martin Heidegger, 'The Way to Language', in *Basic Writings*, p. 415 *Ereignis* is rendered as *appropriation* to save the sense of 'ownness' that inheres in the German word *eigen*, 'own' and its cognates. It is important to note that 'to own' is not only to appropriate, but also to recognize and acknowledge an *other*; to admit or acknowledge some thing. See *Concise Oxford Dictionary*, 10th edition, revised, Judy Pearsall (ed.), Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2001, p. 1019

disclosive correlation entails both the opening of Being and Dasein's openness to Being; it is the process of unconcealment through which a thing becomes intelligible as something, that is, its 'truth' is made available.⁶⁷ As such, it makes a world *intelligible*. Heidegger uses the Greek term *alēthia*, to depict this truth as disclosure or unconcealment. It is through unconcealment that beings come into the 'present' out of the 'not-present' (*lēthē* or concealment), through our interactions with *physis*.⁶⁸ This unconcealedness of the Being of beings is never a merely existent state, or an essential property of things, but rather, a happening. Thus, central to *physis* is the idea of movement in time, whereby a being comes to presence in the historical-temporal clearing constituted through *Dasein*. Accordingly, Heidegger understands the 'essence' of a thing to be the manner in which a thing endures in coming to presence.⁶⁹

What is disclosed in this presencing is not 'true' in any absolute sense. What something is disclosed as is contextual and consistent with the experiences of socially and historically situated beings. Consider the example of water. If we question as to what water *is*, we can disclose water appropriately in a number of ways: as an object of scientific study; as a thing to quench one's thirst; as something in which to cool oneself on a hot day; as a way in which to clean oneself; as a means to generate power; as a thing of great beauty; as something in need of conservation and protection; as an environment for a myriad of other beings. None of these represents the 'real water'; a person

⁶⁷ Martin Heidegger, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 102; 'On the Essence of Truth' in *Basic Writings*, p. 125

⁶⁸ Martin Heidegger, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 114. Heidegger quotes the Heraclitus Fragment 123, *physis kryptesthai philei*, 'Being (emerging, appearing) inclines intrinsically to self-concealment', to disclose the intimate bond and conflict between Being and appearance.

⁶⁹ Martin Heidegger, 'The Question Concerning Technology' in *Basic Writings*, p. 335-336. To make this point Heidegger writes *An-wesen*, using the verb *anwesen*, 'to presence' and stressing its constituent parts: *wesen* meaning to *continue or endure* and *an-* to or toward, indicating that it is *Dasein* who the presencing comes to; see note 7, p. 9 in Martin Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*.

may disclose water in many of these ways during the day, depending upon their context of engagement with what has been named 'water'. Thus, disclosure does not create truth, rather it uncovers truth as a contextual understanding. As such, truth is independent of human beings; they have no power over truth.⁷⁰ Heidegger states:

Once entities have been uncovered they show themselves precisely as entities which beforehand already were. Such uncovering is the kind of being that belongs to truth.⁷¹

Physis provides the boundary that delineates the range of possibilities within which things can be disclosed, so not all interpretations are equally valid. It is important to note that when Heidegger talks of 'boundary' it is not in the sense of a fixed or rigid conception; a boundary does not block off. Rather, a boundary sets a thing free to be disclosed as some thing.⁷² That we can have a shared understanding of a world indicates that the boundary of *physis* is operating, as there are general consistencies as to *how* we can interpret the world. For example, we can all accept the numerous interpretations of water that I have suggested above, but to suggest that water is something that human beings, with their physiology, can live out their lives submerged beneath is inconsistent with our embodied, situated interactions with what is 'out there'.

⁷⁰ Martin Heidegger, 'Conversation on a Country Path', in *Discourse on Thinking*, p. 84

⁷¹ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, H 227, p. 269. N. Katherine Hayles has offered an account of what is 'out there' that bears many similarities to the Heideggerian notions of *physis* and *ereignis*, but does not seem to be attributed to a Heideggerian influence; see 'Searching for Common Ground', in *Reinventing 'nature'?: Responses to Postmodern Deconstruction*, Michael E. Soulé and Gary Lease (eds.), Washington D.C.: Island Press, 1995, p. 47-63

⁷² Martin Heidegger, 'The Origin of a Work of Art', in *Basic Writings*, p. 208

Thus, if we are responsive to the boundary set by *physis* it will delineate the ways in which we can authentically disclose and interpret the world: our attendance to these bounds enables us to say that there are general consistencies in our interactions with *physis*; by being open to *physis*, its boundary will entail that our interactions will disclose its *possibilities*. The importance of the latter will be discussed in relation to technology below.

Thus, it is only in a limited sense *up to us* how we understand the Being of beings.⁷³ When we remain open to Being, intelligibility resides as much in the beings encountered as in our ability to understand. As such, the Being of *physis* is not a human product or possession; it is transcendent. All we can do is engage with *physis* in an authentic way, by recognizing our situated existence and the appropriating event through which we experience what is 'out there'.

Heidegger regards the coming into presence, the appearing of entities as *something* and the role of human practices in articulating what shows up, to be fundamental to an understanding of Being. Accordingly, there is a hidden unity between Being and appearance and there is a reciprocal bond between apprehension (originary thinking) and Being.⁷⁴ He also stresses the profound importance of language, asserting that thinking and language are intimately bound up with the disclosure of Being; language is our original and fundamental relation to beings. He maintains that 'language is at once the house of Being and the home of human beings'.⁷⁵ it is in language that the

⁷³ Unlike strong forms of constructivism Heidegger regards our interpretations to be constrained and guided by what is 'out there', the possibilities that inhere within the bounds of *physis*. Thus, whereas constructivism asserts that humankind constructs a world, Heidegger maintains that the human beings disclose a world, and that this disclosure is an attuned, engaged responsiveness with what is 'out there'. This is important for understanding his critique of technology discussed below.

⁷⁴ Martin Heidegger, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 98-196

⁷⁵ Martin Heidegger, 'Letter on Humanism' in *Basic Writings*, p. 262

meanings disclosed in our responsive encounters are articulated; human beings dwell in language, in that language discloses a world, a meaningful way of understanding what is 'out there'.

Heidegger maintains that language is a 'saying that shows' and that saying and speaking are not identical:

One can speak, speak endlessly, and it may all say nothing. As opposed to that, one can be silent, not speak at all, and in not speaking say a great deal.⁷⁶

Thus, he stresses the importance of listening as an aspect of the essence of language, suggesting that the silence that enables us to listen is more significant than all the noise of signification.⁷⁷ As a 'saying that shows', language lets something appear, lets it be seen and heard and consequently, understood.⁷⁸ Thus, when language says, in order to show, such showing is "preceded by a thing letting itself be shown".⁷⁹ Accordingly, as language using entities, humans do not create beings, but it is through language that we make them manifest. In view of this, it is essential that we have a sense of responsibility for the words we use. Heidegger claims that "man (has) to make an effort to live properly with language", as it is through language that we "bring beings *to* their being *from out* of their being", and thus say what they come out into the open as.⁸⁰ Thus, he insists that:

⁷⁶ Martin Heidegger, 'The Way to Language', in *Basic Writings*, p.408; *Being and Time*, H 164-165, p. 208

⁷⁷ Martin Heidegger, 'The Way to Language', in *Basic Writings*, p.395

⁷⁸ Ibid. p.408-409 The Latin *dico*, 'I say', originally means 'I show through words'. Editor's note p. 409

⁷⁹ Ibid. p.410

⁸⁰ Martin Heidegger, 'What Calls for Thinking?' in *Basic Writings*, p. 388; Martin Heidegger, 'The Origin of the Work of Art', in *Basic Writings*, p. 198

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, slogans and phrases destroys our authentic relation to things.⁸¹

We must avoid language that defines and delimits the world and instead seek language that opens thinking to the phenomena of the world. Such language is authentic language: it says/shows in a way that allows things to 'speak themselves'.

Heidegger holds that the language most appropriate for disclosing Being is *poetic*. The word 'poetry' and its cognates are derived from the Greek word *poiēsis*, a 'bringing forth into appearance'.⁸² Thus, authentic language listens to Being, letting beings Be in their many possible manifestations, rather than reducing them merely to a controlling or dominating frame of reference. The language of science and technology that objectifies, categorizes and assimilates beings to human order and purpose, discloses *a* world, not *the* world. In our present age it has become hegemonic. As a consequence, humanity is impoverished: the scientific/technological model frames our experiences of beings and conceals other ways of disclosing beings, such as through art and poetry. Such modes, which are free from dominating agendas, provide a way of disclosure that is more responsive to Being, and hence are more authentic. By listening and responding to the call of Being, they disclose a world that is more in tune with beings.

⁸¹ Martin Heidegger, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 13-14

⁸² Martin Heidegger, 'The Question Concerning Technology' in *Basic Writings*, p. 318

Disclosing World

In chapter two I discussed how it is through our involvement with *physis* that a world is disclosed. World is a place of significance, made possible by *ereignis*; the historical-temporal clearing that human beings present that enables them to be open to a responsive encounter with *physis*. Only by standing-out into the openness of Being can *Dasein* understand its-Self authentically. Only out of *ereignis* can there be an authentic disclosure of Being. However, this disclosedness never goes unchallenged. Heidegger points out that as human beings we inherit a 'common world' (*das Man*), a world of already constructed social practices into which we are 'thrown' and from which we learn about ourselves in relation to other beings-in-the-world.⁸³ This 'thrownness', the way in which *Dasein* already finds itself, provides a social context and a range of concerns that constitute a world that has been interpreted by a particular historical culture; it is *Dasein's* facticity.⁸⁴ On the basis of its situated facticity, that discloses world in a particular way, certain possibilities are open to *Dasein* and others remain closed off.⁸⁵ Hence, *Dasein* dwells "equally in truth and untruth"; although *Dasein* is an openness to Being and to its own Being as possibility, it nonetheless relinquishes this openness in exchange for whatever *das Man* maintains is true.⁸⁶ Truth, understood as disclosure, thus slips into the same oblivion as Being.

⁸³ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, H 126-130, p. 163-168; H 284, p. 329

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, H 221-222, p. 264-265

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, H 194, p. 239

⁸⁶ Martin Heidegger, 'On the Essence of Truth' in *Basic Writings*, p. 132 Untruth is not a lie; rather it is that which is covered over, yet can be disclosed.

To the extent that we remain absorbed within this world of common concerns and practices shared with other *Dasein*'s, our lives can be considered *inauthentic*. Inauthenticity is not a negative or deficient state; rather, it is an ontological condition that reflects *Dasein*'s absorption with its world of everyday concerns and social relations that it has 'fallen' into.⁸⁷ An inauthentic existence uncritically accepts the way of being-in-the-world that is socially dominant; it remains "tranquillized and familiar".⁸⁸ In so doing, this fallen, immersed familiarity covers up the fact that we are finite, situated beings: that the particular possibilities of ourselves and our world are limited by our particular social, cultural and historical circumstance; that when a thing is disclosed in a particular way it inevitably covers over any other ways of disclosure. However, if we remain oblivious to the fact that this disclosure is only one possible disclosure, we further conceal what is concealed. The result is that a particular interpretation of 'reality' is taken to be the ultimate 'truth' about the world. When 'reality' becomes fixed in this way, as 'actual', it conceals *Dasein*'s Being as an open realm of possibilities, and covers over a meaningful world.⁸⁹

Preoccupation in the world of *das Man* conceals that the Being of *Dasein* is that of possibility and finally the im-possibility of death.⁹⁰ When *Dasein* is open to its situatedness, recognizing the extent to which a view of the world is always limited and incomplete and consequently subject to revision in light of new experience, its existence can be considered authentic. This situated finitude of *Dasein*, its existence-as-possibility, is a constant movement from

⁸⁷ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, H 175-176, p. 219-221

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, H 189, p. 234

⁸⁹ Martin Heidegger, 'On the Essence of Truth', in *Basic Writings*, p. 130-132 Heidegger refers to the concealing of what is concealed, that covers over a meaningful world of possibilities, as 'the *mystery*'. It is this mystery that holds sway in the enframing of technology; see chapter five.

⁹⁰ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, H 12, p. 33; H 143-144, p. 182-184; H 329-330, p. 378-379

a thrown past to an anticipated future. As a potentiality, *Dasein* is always 'not yet' some thing, the absence of which makes possible *Dasein's* concerned involvement in-the-world, a movement from what is to what can be.⁹¹

Dasein's Being is a towards-which, a projected, anticipated future, that bestows presence and gives meaning to *Dasein's* world. Absence is always part of a thing's Being, so that Being cannot be associated with constant presence. For example, if I am practicing to be a competitive gymnast, it is this that gives my life meaning at the moment. Although my status as 'competitive gymnast' is relatively absent, it is the towards-which that gives me presence: it is the meaningful world in which I currently live. The relatively absent towards-which, although as yet unattained, gives world.⁹²

An authentic existence involves being open to Being through originary thinking and *Gelassenheit*. Originary thinking is thinking that is open to the possibilities inherent in entities; it is open to what is given.⁹³ The comportment of *Gelassenheit* is an attunement that releases *Dasein* from its attachments with the familiar world of *das Man*.⁹⁴ Releasement is both a condition for the possibility of originary thinking and a necessary factor in the process of that thinking. Together, originary thinking and *Gelassenheit* enable us to realize that 'it does not have to be this way'. This attuned, open comportment lets beings Be. Heidegger emphasizes that letting Be (*Seinlassen*) is not indifference or neglect, but rather the opposite; to let Be

⁹¹ Ibid., H 233, p. 276; H 364, p. 415-416

⁹² Thomas Sheehan makes this point in his paper 'Dasein', in *A Companion to Heidegger*, Hubert L. Dreyfus and Mark A. Wrathall (eds.), Oxford: Blackwell, 2005, p. 204

⁹³ Heidegger maintains that originary thinking is *Dasein's* essential nature; see Martin Heidegger, 'Memorial Address', in *Discourse on Thinking*, p. 56.

⁹⁴ *Gelassenheit* is discussed in Heidegger's work *Discourse on Thinking*, and will be discussed in more detail below in chapter six.

is the ontological freedom to engage oneself with the disclosedness of beings and thus be responsive to Being.⁹⁵

Authenticity opens up the space for new meanings and thus the possibility of understanding the world in a new way, a way that has previously been concealed from us, in that we have failed to notice, have forgotten, or such a way of disclosing has been covered up, for example, by social convention. Thus, although *Dasein* is always situated in a particular social and historical context, which transmits a particular understanding of world, the dynamic of authenticity recognizes that this is not a fixed condition. Although, in inauthenticity, individual *Daseins* are absorbed in social and historic practices, they are not securely grounded in these practices. 'Human nature' is not some 'fixed essence'; *Dasein* is its possibilities and consequently it can change, adapt and alter, and thus modify its world.⁹⁶ Accordingly, understanding itself in terms of its possibilities is the pre-condition for *Dasein's* freedom, where freedom is understood in an ontological sense as the openness that allows the disclosure of Being.⁹⁷

In becoming open to new perspectives and possibilities, consistent with the bounds set by *physis*, we can deepen and enrich our lives. An awareness of our situated finitude illuminates why and how some thing matters to us and informs our 'concernful dealings' in the world, opening up the possibility of reorientating our world in a meaningful way. However, the inauthenticity of *das Man* is a necessary pre-requisite for authenticity: we must first develop the skills of living in a world, before we can call that world into question.⁹⁸

⁹⁵ Martin Heidegger, 'On the Essence of Truth' in *Basic Writings*, p. 125; 129 *Gelassenheit* and originary thinking will be developed in chapters six and seven.

⁹⁶ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, H 297-298, p. 344

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, H 285, p. 331; H 384, p. 436

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, H 130, p. 168

It is to our everyday 'concernful dealings' in-the-world that I next turn. Heidegger shows that it is through the primacy of our embodied involvement that a meaningful world is disclosed. In order to overcome the detached, disembodied theoretical stance that has dominated Western thinking, he shows that the world that surrounds us cannot be understood as a collection of objects; the world is a context of meaning organized around our 'concernful dealings' and understood through the temporal structure of *care* (*Sorge*).⁹⁹

⁹⁹ Heidegger's discussion on 'Care As The Being of *Dasein*' is contained in *Being and Time*, H 181-273, p. 225-273

The Environment – The World That Surrounds Us

As noted in chapter two, environmental philosophy frequently uses the terms 'nature' and 'environment' interchangeably. The term 'nature' was questioned to retrieve the originary phenomenon of 'nature' as *physis*. It is now necessary to turn to the concept of the 'environment', in order to reveal what has been covered over by contemporary usage of the word. Most environmental thinking has relied on a notion of the 'environment' which has largely and uncritically been borrowed from the natural sciences, involving such concepts as ecosystems, biodiversity and habitats.¹⁰⁰ Utilizing scientific theoretical concepts is problematic because they issue from the spirit of the scientific endeavour, in that they are detached from our immediate, lived concerns and they embrace methods that involve the idea of constant presence.

In conflating the words 'nature' and 'environment' many Western environmental thinkers have framed environmental issues as a choice between humans and 'nature', or humans and the 'environment', upholding a separation between human beings and the 'natural' world. They are concerned with preserving and protecting such things as 'wilderness' and 'pristine nature' as places which they claim human beings are not and should not be. At best, environmentalists may concede that 'nature' or the 'environment' is some thing that humans may visit, but it is not a place in which to work, stay or live; these are human activities that many environmental thinkers equate with 'environmental destruction'.

In contrast to this conception of the environment, Heidegger understands the environment to be a meaningful world of everyday activities, constituted by

¹⁰⁰ Bruce V. Foltz and Robert Frodeman, (eds.) *Rethinking Nature: Essays in Environmental Philosophy*, Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2004, p. 4; 7

the interactions that we have with the entities we encounter.¹⁰¹ Such an understanding leads to a significantly different approach to an 'environmental ethic'. Being able to account for the presence of human beings and, as will be discussed below, exposing the affects of dominating and controlling ideologies on both the human and the other-than-human entities, seeks an 'environmental ethic' that integrates the relations of human and the other-than-human in a way that considers and supports the well-being of both.¹⁰²

In this chapter I show how Heidegger's thinking is supported by the ecological psychology of American psychologist James J. Gibson.¹⁰³ Both Heidegger and Gibson develop accounts that show how it is through our engaged transactions that we come to have a lived understanding of our environment. Both thinkers take understanding to be our most basic ability to live in and cope skillfully with our world.¹⁰⁴ Both accounts maintain that the environment cannot be considered as an aggregate of objects explainable through causal properties that are known through rational principles and faculties. Rather, the environment is the 'world that surrounds us', a place of significance which we come to understand through our active engagement with the entities in that world. The relation between human beings and other-than-human entities is not a relation of human being as subject and other-

¹⁰¹ In his 'Science and Reflection', in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, p.159-161, Heidegger traces the etymology of the words 'to work' (*Wirken*) and 'reality' (*Wirklichkeit*) and the connection between the two in 'bringing-forth' a meaningful world.

¹⁰² The 'environmental justice' movement also defines the 'environment' to account for the presence of people and their functional relationships with other-than-human entities; see Giovanna Di Chiro, 'Nature as Community: The Convergence of Environment and Social Justice', in *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature*, p. 298-320

¹⁰³ James J. Gibson, *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception*, London: Lawrence Erlbaum, 1986. Although Gibson's account deals primarily with the modality of sight, he is quick to point out that we develop our understanding through the interactions of the nexus of sensory modalities.

¹⁰⁴ Heidegger refers to the awareness that guides this involved, familiar competence as *circumspection* (*Umsicht*), see Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, H 69, p. 98-99

than-human entities as object; it is a dynamic, dialectical relation through which meaning arises. As such, it gives a voice to other-than-human entities, recognizing their participatory contribution in disclosing a world. Thus, central to both Heidegger's and Gibson's account is the rejection of the subject-object binary and its prioritization of cognition over action.

When we interact with the environment in-order-to initiate an event that brings forth the artifacts necessary for human life, just *how* we engage in such interactions is significant for our relations with the environment: our interactions can increase or diminish the prospects of other beings. Heidegger maintains that it is through *technê*, an attuned, respectful transaction with entities in the environment that the Being of those entities is disclosed to us. *Technê* is guided by *physis* and as such, is a way of disclosing beings that remains within the bounds of their possibilities.

Environmental philosophy has arisen in response to perceptions that there were hostile practices taking place that resulted in the pollution and destruction of the planet, which in turn posed a threat to the well-being of both human and other-than-human individuals and societies. Pollution is a contaminant: it is a substance that has been transformed or transposed in a way that poses a danger or harm to an entity. For the most part, pollution is unseen and invisible and we become aware that something is wrong when we experience such things as the unexplained deaths of large numbers of birds or fish, or an event occurring out of its usual place, such as an algae bloom in a lake where it has not been observed before, or when humans and livestock are mysteriously sickened, or crops fail to grow.¹⁰⁵ What we are aware of and what is being affected in situations of this sort is our *umwelt* or environment, the meaningful world that surrounds us. We cannot talk about the environment without talking about the interactions that we have in-the-

¹⁰⁵ For an insightful account of chemical pollution and its complex effects see Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring*, London: Penguin, 1962

world, as it is through our interactions that we become aware of and understand our environment.¹⁰⁶ Thus, Heidegger maintains that all Being is 'Being-in-the-world': the relation of Being to world is not a spatial relationship; rather, it is understood in terms of involvement.¹⁰⁷

Heidegger's account shows that *Dasein* inhabits a meaningful world organized around the temporality of care (*sorge*), which is the primordial structure of the Being of *Dasein* and which embraces the totality of *Dasein's* existence.¹⁰⁸ *Dasein's* existence is care because entities always somehow *matter* to it, and it is because entities matter that they can have meaning and therefore be intelligible. If nothing mattered there would be no basis on which to make sense of what is encountered.¹⁰⁹ The temporality of care is made manifest through *Dasein's* existence-as-possibility, which can never be contained in the here and now, but is rather extended over the three temporal dimensions of past, present and future at once: through our concerned involvement in-the-world we project ourselves into an anticipated future based on an understanding determined by the past, which we still are in the present.¹¹⁰ It is this temporal structure of care that makes a world possible.

For *Dasein*, who is always engaged in projects directed at its future state of Being, there are a multiplicity of ways of *being-in*: producing something, attending to something, making use of something, interrogating, discussing,

¹⁰⁶ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, H 66-67, p. 94-95.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, H 53-59, p. 78-86

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, H 182-183, p. 227

¹⁰⁹ Heidegger points out that the way in which some thing matters to us is constituted by the attunement of moods, which disclose the world in a particular way. For example, it is only through the mood of fear that we discover what is environmentally ready-to-hand as threatening; see *Being and Time*, H 137, p. 176, and below.

¹¹⁰ Heidegger defines *Dasein's* 'existence-as-care' as 'ahead of-itself-Being-in-(the-world) as Being-alongside (entities encountered within-the-world); *Being and Time*, H 192, p. 237

considering, accomplishing...all of which have 'concern' as a way of being, in that we 'concern ourselves' with activities which we perform, or things that we procure.¹¹¹ This condition of active engagement is the starting point of human relations with the enviroing-world. It is through such relations that entities in the world become meaningful: what something is understood as is disclosed through our attuned involvements with that thing. Every form of understanding has its mood or attunement (*Befindlichkeit*) through which entities are disclosed as meaningful.¹¹² This is not a subjective or inner state: "A mood assails us. It comes from neither 'outside' nor from 'inside', but arises out of Being-in-the-world, as a way of such Being".¹¹³ Accordingly, mood is an ontological disposition that marks the various ways in which some thing *matters* to *Dasein*. Such disclosures constitute a *world* as an open realm of meaningful possibilities, in which a being is culturally and historically situated.

Heidegger maintains that the world is never primarily encountered as a collection of objects 'present-at-hand' (*Vorhandenheit*); rather the mode in which we principally discover entities in-the-world is as some thing 'ready-to-hand' (*Zuhandenheit*), through our 'concernful dealings', 'in-order-to' achieve a particular task.¹¹⁴ The Being of entities is disclosed to *Dasein* in its 'concernful dealings', which manipulates and puts things to use.¹¹⁵ Heidegger refers to those entities that we encounter in our 'concernful dealings' as equipment: equipment is essentially 'something in-order-to...',

¹¹¹ Ibid., H 56-57, p. 83 Heidegger also points out such ways of Being-in-the-world as neglecting, renouncing and leaving undone, which are deficient modes of concern.

¹¹² Ibid., H 137, p. 176

¹¹³ Ibid., H 136, p. 176

¹¹⁴ Ibid., H 182-183, p. 226-227; H 69, p. 98

¹¹⁵ Ibid., H 67, p. 95

whereby the 'in-order-to' turns 'towards-which' is to be produced.¹¹⁶ The environment as ready-to-hand is disclosed to us in our involvement with a task. For instance, if we are concerned with traveling across water, the wind is disclosed to us as 'wind in the sails' in-order-to propel a sailing vessel; if we are concerned with having shelter, the forest is disclosed to us as timber in-order-to to build a house. *Dasein's* involvement structure, its 'concernful dealings' 'towards-which' go back to a 'for-the-sake-of-which', that is *Dasein's* constant possibilities into which it projects itself.¹¹⁷ This temporal care structure imparts meaning and unity to the flow of experiences and shows *Dasein* to be a complexity of *possibilities*, on-going 'concernful dealings', 'towards' and 'for-the-sake-of' meaningful activity.¹¹⁸

Accordingly, our environment is a meaningful world of everyday activities, constituted by the relations we have with the entities we encounter. It is a network of purposeful transactions in which things are encountered in terms of the relevance to what we are doing. Meaning and value are not 'things' added on to our activities; they are implicit in our inter-entity transactions. As a corollary, we understand ourselves in terms of those transactions, the worldly involvements in which we find ourselves: a pen becomes meaningful because I am a writer; a tree becomes meaningful because I am a builder, or because I am a conservationist; the wind becomes meaningful because I am a sailor, or because I am a farmer. Heidegger states:

Self and world belong together in the single entity *Dasein*. Self and world are not two beings like subject and object;...self and world are

¹¹⁶ Ibid., H68, p. 97; H70, p. 99

¹¹⁷ Ibid., H 297, p. 344 The 'in-order-to', 'towards-which' and 'for-sake-of-which' are Heidegger's non-intentionalist terms for the activity of a situated *Dasein*.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., H 86, p. 119 'Possibility' and 'potentiality' are used interchangeably when referring to *Dasein*.

the basic determination of *Dasein* in the unity of the structure of being-in-the-world.¹¹⁹

Accordingly, we come to understand our possibilities in terms of the possibilities inherent in disclosing a world. The human – other-than-human relation is dialectical, whereby the other-than-human and the human are simultaneously shaping and being shaped by one another.

Equipment ready-to-hand can present itself as unready-to-hand for a number of reasons: it can be damaged; it can be missing; it can be an obstacle to the achievement of some purpose.¹²⁰ It is in the mode of unready-to-hand that we can experience pollution in our environment. For example, we pick fruit when ripe in-order-to eat. However, the fruit may have experienced chemical pollution so that it never becomes ripe and we perceive the ripeness as 'missing'. Cotton is grown and harvested in-order-to produce clothing. If the cotton plant does not complete its growth due to toxins in the region where it grows, we perceive the cotton as damaged, that is, it is unready-to-hand and unusable. In our concerned-dealings, the readiness-to-hand which belongs to a particular entity has the character of "inconspicuous familiarity".¹²¹ When something ready-to-hand is found missing or damaged, when something is unusable for some purpose, we become aware of the environment in a conspicuous way, for we are no longer able to engage in our concerned dealings in-the-world. This disruption or malfunction of our concerned dealings is a negative condition, a breakdown in the totality of our involvement structure in-the-world, that explicitly shows why and how things *matter* to *Dasein*. It opens up the mood of anxiety, through which meaning recedes and *Dasein's* everyday familiarity collapses. *Dasein* is *unheimlich* no

¹¹⁹ Martin Heidegger, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, Albert Hofstadter (trans.), Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982, p. 297

¹²⁰ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, H 73-76, p. 102-107

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, H 103, p. 137

longer at home in-the-world.¹²² It is this mood of anxiety that discloses *Dasein's* radical finitude and enables the movement toward authenticity, whereby *Dasein* is opened to questioning and thus re-orientating its world. It is in authenticity that *Dasein* is able to respond to our environmental concerns. This is discussed below in chapter six.

The American psychologist James J. Gibson also provides an account of direct, interactive understanding of ourselves and our environment that supports the thinking of Heidegger. Gibson maintains that all beings perceive entities in the environment in terms of what those entities *afford*, either positively or negatively, to enable those beings to accomplish certain behaviours.¹²³ He describes perceiving as an achievement of the individual: it is an experiencing of things, rather than a having of experience. The act of picking up information is a continuous act that involves perceptual systems; it is a psychosomatic act not of the mind or body, but of a living participant. To perceive is to be aware of the surfaces, lay-out and substances of the environment and oneself within it. Upon encountering an entity in the environment, affordances are specified in what Gibson terms the 'optic array', the pattern of reflected light at a point of observation for a moving observer.¹²⁴ Tools, shelter, food, amiable others are distinguished from fires, weapons, poisons and hostile others by their shapes, colours, textures and deformations.

Such *affordances* exist as inherent potentials of things themselves; they are not subjectively 'added on' to a neutral thing: "the object offers what it does

¹²² Ibid., H 188-189, p. 233

¹²³ James J. Gibson, *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception*, p. 127 'Affordance' is Gibson's equivalent word for Heidegger's word 'Being'.

¹²⁴ The moving point of observation is essential for understanding that the environment surrounds all observers in the same way that it surrounds one observer, and will be discussed below.

because it is what it is".¹²⁵ And it can be many different things to different beings. Thus, according to Gibson, we come to know the environment when we perceive the affordance of the things within that environment. For example, we perceive the affordances of a stone as a missile, a paper-weight or a hammer, or a place under which to conceal some thing.¹²⁶ A being may or may not perceive or attend to an affordance, according to his needs, but the affordance, being invariant, is always there to be perceived.¹²⁷ Thus, perception is a matter of dis-covering affordances in the environment through transactions with that environment. It is through this continuous act of perceiving that we co-perceive ourselves; it is through our transactions that we dis-cover what we are and what we can do.¹²⁸ Thus, the transactional relation is dialectical.

The environment offers many ways of life and different beings-in-the-world have assumed different ways of life. How a being lives depends upon the set of affordances it appropriates. The pick up of information in ambient light and through touch, sound, odour and taste enables a being to interact with the environment in ways that are beneficial to it and to avoid ways in which it could be harmed. The substances, surfaces and lay-out of the environment afford different things to different beings: an affordance may be perceived as harmful to one being and perceived as beneficial to another.

Through its interactions with the environment, a being will come to know the environment and what it affords. For instance, the environment has a lay-out that contains *places*: some places are where food is found, some are not; some are places of danger, where predators lurk; some are places of safety,

¹²⁵ Ibid., p. 139

¹²⁶ Ibid., p. 134 'Perceiving affordances' accords with Heidegger's notion of 'disclosing possibilities' that are inherent in some thing.

¹²⁷ Ibid., p. 139

¹²⁸ Ibid., p. 240

which afford shelter and hiding. The surfaces of an environment can afford locomotion if they are rigid, extended and horizontal (or at an incline sufficient to allow locomotion), such as paths, lawns and roads; or they can be a barrier or obstacle to locomotion, if they are rigid, extended and vertical, such as a cliff face, wall, or tree. Some substances of the environment can afford nutrition, like certain fruits and nuts; some substances, like clay, can be molded, others, like rock, cannot. Some substances are objects that can be grasped, thrown, used for cutting or striking, used for binding or weaving, or not, depending upon size, texture, malleability, shape. Any substance, any surface, any layout of places has some affordance for the benefit or injury to some thing. Benefits and injuries, safety and danger, positive and negative affordances are properties of things taken with reference to a particular being in their concerned dealings with the world.¹²⁹

The environment, therefore, is the surroundings of a being that perceives and acts. Such a being is able to pick up the information that is there in the environment through their transactions with the environment. Information is not lost to the environment when it is gained by an individual, and the act of picking up information is a continuous act, ceaseless and unbroken. Hence, if we take the surrounding world with reference to a moving point of observation along a path that any individual can travel, the surroundings of one being can also be the surroundings of all beings. Gibson states:

The available paths of locomotion in a medium constitute the set of all possible points of observation. In the course of time, each animal moves through the same paths of its habitat as do other animals of its kind. (So, although) no two individuals can be at the same place at

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, chapter 8

the same time, any individual can stand in all places, and all individuals can stand in the same place at different times.¹³⁰

This idea is also pursued by Heidegger when he states that all entities with *Dasein's* kind of Being, who encounter environing 'nature' in their concerned dealings as ready-to-hand, encounter a *public world* which is discoverable and accessible to everyone.¹³¹ The idea that a being stands at the centre of its own private world is a misconception.

It is through our active engagement within our environing-world that we come to understand ourselves and our world. This dialectical relationship is in contrast to traditional models that conceive of human beings as the 'knowing subject', disengaged from and standing over against what is 'known', the world, as 'object'. What is disclosed (Heidegger) or perceived (Gibson) is not a property of our subjective experience; it does not consist of a subjective meaning added on to a neutral perception. We come to grasp entities as entities through our transactions; they come to have meaning and value through their interpretive uses within a context.¹³² We acquire direct understanding of the environment through our practical activities; it is through our interactions with the world that the environment is disclosed to us, that is, we come to perceive what it affords. Consequently, interaction precedes conception: understanding and meaning are disclosed in a being-world involvement; they are the result of a transaction between a being-who-acts-in-the-world and its environing world. Accordingly, it is not necessary for a being to objectify, classify and label things in order for that being to come to understand its environment.¹³³

¹³⁰ Ibid., p. 43

¹³¹ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, H 71, p. 100

¹³² Ibid., H 150, p. 190-191

¹³³ Both Heidegger and Gibson recognise that human beings can and do re-present things, but that this is a derivative form of disclosure, dependent upon having a pre-reflective

Through their interactions with the environment, beings initiate and sustain many events in the environment. An event is any change of substance or lay-out and can be chemical, mechanical or biophysical. The change may be slow or fast, reversible or non-reversible, repeating or non-repeating.¹³⁴ Although events in the environment occur all the time, some of these events are initiated by animate beings.

Over time, through their interactions with the environment, human beings have initiated events that have modified the environment. They have transformed the surfaces of the earth by cutting down forests, leveling land, building roads and houses. They have altered the substances of the earth by converting 'natural' materials into 'artificial' materials, such as glass, concrete, steel and pasta. Inadvertently through their actions, human beings have changed the medium of the environment; the air for land-dwelling organisms and the water for aquatic organisms.¹³⁵ However, this is not a new environment; it is the same environment modified by the human species. Human beings lack the power to bring anything original into being; artifacts have to be manufactured from 'natural' substances. All human activity is dependent on employing some thing that already exists, which they can manipulate, alter or rearrange.

The process of modification is undertaken in-order-to make human life easier: transformations of the surfaces of the earth make it easier to produce food and move around; transformations of substances make it easier to keep

understanding of the world, and does not have the foundational status that traditional Western thinking has given to it. 'Thematizing' is Heidegger's term for the way in which circumspective practical concern becomes modified into theoretical explanation, where beings are re-presented as present-at-hand; see *Being and Time*, H 357-364, p. 408-415. Gibson discusses the dependence of other modes of 'knowing' on engaged practical perception in his section 'A New Approach to Nonperceptual Awareness', in *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception*, p. 255-263

¹³⁴ James J. Gibson, *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception*, p. 242

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 129-130

warm and dry and well-fed. In making life easier for humankind, life has often become harder for other species. By transforming and transposing substances human beings have produced pollution in the environment. We have learned how to modify the environment before we have learned how to think about the consequences of those modifications.

It is through our engaged interactions with the environment, that initiate and sustain events, that entities-in-the-world are disclosed to us. When we come to interact with other-than-human entities in-order-to initiate an event that brings forth the artifacts necessary for human life, just *how* we engage in such interactions is significant for our relations with those entities. Heidegger maintains that *technê* is an attuned, respectful transaction with entities that enables us to bring-forth artifacts in a responsible, caring way.

Like *physis* discussed above, *technê* is a form of *poiēsis*, a 'bringing forth into appearance'. However, whereas *physis* involves self-manifestation, the arising of something out of itself, *technê* involves the arising of something in another: for example, an artifact is 'brought forth' by a craftsman.¹³⁶ It implies that what is produced is done so in an attuned, responsive way. As such *technê* belongs not only to the activities and skills of the craftsman, but also to the arts of the mind and the fine arts.¹³⁷

Technê is a mode of revealing that enables the artisan to reveal what an entity affords; the Being of a being. It requires the artisan to perceive or attend to the affordances of a thing, according to his needs, and respond mindfully to that which is presented.¹³⁸ It is the ability to perceive and put to

¹³⁶ Martin Heidegger, 'The Question Concerning Technology' in *Basic Writings*, p. 318-319

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 318

¹³⁸ As such, *technê* is a kind of 'knowing' in the widest sense, linked to the word *epistēmē*. Both words imply to be entirely at home in something, to understand and to be expert in it. See Martin Heidegger, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 159 and 'The Question Concerning Technology' in *Basic Writings*, p. 318-19

work the Being of any particular essent.¹³⁹ In this way, *technê* must cooperate with *physis*, for it is *physis* that informs *technê* and as such, *technê* is a responsive and caring way of disclosing the Being of beings. For example, a true cabinetmaker will be able to “answer and respond above all to the different kinds of wood and to the shapes lumbering in the wood... this relatedness to wood is what maintains the whole craft”.¹⁴⁰ *Technê* implies knowledge, in the sense of ‘knowing-how’. It is a familiarity with what grounds producing (bringing-forth) and what that production must come to: that is, *technê* contains an antecedently envisioned appearance of what is to be produced.¹⁴¹ Through *technê* we comport ourselves well towards the Being of entities: our attuned, responsive engagement with entities enables them to disclose themselves to us and thus, lets them ‘Be’.

It must not be assumed that Heidegger’s account of *technê* is a yearning for the simple life of a pre-modern technological age. Rather, his emphasis is on the *thinking* that is involved in revealing some thing through *technê*; thinking that is originary, attuned and responsively engaged with the bounds of *physis*. Brought-forth in this way, both the *physis*-being and the artifact revealed by the work of the craftsman are respected and cared for.

The increasing complexity of Western societies has led to a differentiation and specialization of human activity that has changed the character of events that happen in the environment. The environment is no longer predominantly modified through *technê*, which requires an artisan to respond mindfully to that which is presented through *physis*. Many human modifications in the contemporary world are the result of rapidly developing technologies. Technology has radically altered the way in which we disclose

¹³⁹ Martin Heidegger, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 159

¹⁴⁰ Martin Heidegger, ‘What Calls for Thinking’, in *Basic Writings*, p. 379

¹⁴¹ Martin Heidegger, ‘On the Essence and Concept of *Physis* in Aristotle’s *Physics* B, 1’, p. 192-193

entities in our environment and consequently affects our relation with the other-than-human world. Installed within the framework of technology, many human beings are alienated from the range of affordances of the other-than-human realm (Gibson); the disclosure of other-than-human entities through the responsive engagement with *technê* and *physis* (Heidegger). The results of this alienation are far-reaching: not only do we disassociate ourselves from the affects of our actions, but we are disassociated from our humanity, the essence of our Being. How this occurs and its consequences are the subject of the next chapter.

The Framework of Technology - A Hegemonic Disclosure

In chapter one I discussed how the method of Western science and traditional Western philosophical thinking has resulted in a dominating and controlling relation toward other-than-human entities. Their approach constructs in advance the framework through which entities will be 'known', disclosing them as 'objects' for a disengaged, 'knowing' subject. Existential significance is removed from this world of 'objects' and becomes grounded in the human 'subject', alienating humanity from other entities.

Heidegger maintains that the culmination of this mode of revealing is in the essence of technology, which he calls an 'enframing' (*Ge-stell*).¹⁴² This enframing is the predominant mode of disclosure of all entities in our present age: it shapes our thinking and our relations towards other beings and results in our alienation from both other-than-human entities and from the essence of our humanity. Thus, the enframing of technology (*Ge-stell*) is the ultimate in the objectification of beings. Stripped of all existential significance, all beings are revealed as standing-reserve (*Bestand*) and are classified and ordered as either useful or useless: they simply disappear into the anonymous interchangeability of 'resource'.¹⁴³ The danger of the enframing is that it has become hegemonic, crowding out other modes of revealing the other-than-human and denying human beings of their way of Being: it covers over *Dasein's* essence as an engaged openness to Being and thus, its existence-as-possibility.

Accordingly, Heidegger understands technology ontologically, in that it is a way of disclosing a world; a way of understanding 'reality'. For Heidegger,

¹⁴² Martin Heidegger, 'The Question Concerning Technology', in *Basic Writings*, p. 324

¹⁴³ Martin Heidegger, 'The Question Concerning Technology', in *Basic Writings*, p. 324; 'Science and Reflection', in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, p. 173

ontology is also to be understood historically, in that the past (social and cultural traditions) contributes to the way in which *Dasein*, as a socially and historically situated being, discloses and understands its world. The past is the 'thrownness' of our particular situated existence, from which we move through the present toward our future possibilities.¹⁴⁴

Heidegger maintains that "technology will not be struck down; and it most certainly will not be destroyed".¹⁴⁵ However, he holds that the enframing, which is the predominant way through which beings are disclosed to us in our present age, can be surmounted through the attuned comportment of *Gelassenheit*, a releasement towards things that allows us to remain open to the Being of entities.

Heidegger states that:

It would be foolish to attack technology blindly. It would be shortsighted to condemn it as the work of the devil. We depend upon technological devices; they even challenge us to greater advances.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁴ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, H18-22, p. 40-44; H 378-397, p. 429-449. In his text, *Questioning Technology*, London: Routledge, 1999, Andrew Feenberg accuses Heidegger of being a particular kind of 'technological essentialist', which according to Feenberg make his account unacceptable. He accuses Heidegger of ahistoricism, substantivism and one-dimensionalism. In his article, 'What's wrong with being a technological essentialist? A response to Feenberg', in *Inquiry*, Volume 43, Issue 4, 2000, p.429-444, Iain Thomson unpacks and critiques each of these claims to show that Heidegger rejects ahistoricism entirely, and the one-dimensionalism and substantivism he accepts do not carry the negative implications usually associated with these doctrines. Thus, his limited technological essentialism 'does little to discredit his profound ontological understanding of the historical impact of technology'; p. 441

¹⁴⁵ Martin Heidegger, 'The Turning' in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, p. 38

¹⁴⁶ Martin Heidegger, 'Memorial Address', in *Discourse on Thinking*, p. 53 This is an important point to note, as Heidegger does not condemn technology outright; he is concerned with the hegemony of technological thinking which results from the enframing (*Ge-stell*), and the way in which it discloses a world, which is discussed below.

However, he makes it clear that the essence of technology is not anything technological, nor is it neutral. Although it is correct that technology is a human activity and a means to an end, this anthropological and instrumental definition of technology is inadequate: it does not show us the essence of technology; it does not reveal what technology is.¹⁴⁷ In order to arrive at the essence of technology we must look at *the way* in which technology pursues its ends; what means are employed to do so. In so doing, it is important to remember that 'essence' is to be understood as the manner in which something endures in coming to presence.¹⁴⁸ Consequently, we must look at how technology discloses and brings to presence entities in-the-world.

In order to bring something about, that is, to achieve a particular end, we are accustomed to thinking about what 'causes' us to attain that end. Heidegger encourages us to see this bringing about, what we ordinarily think of as 'cause', in terms of 'occasioning', or being 'responsible' for something.¹⁴⁹ He maintains that when a craftsman brings forth an artifact through *technê*, there are four concurrent paths of responsibility for that thing. The four participants that are co-responsible for a thing to be revealed are: the material that a thing is made of; the aspect a thing assumes, that is, its *eidōs* or thinghood; that which circumscribes a thing, that is, its *telos*; the craftsman who considers carefully and gathers together (*legein, logos*) the three aforementioned ways of being responsible, in order to decide the 'that' and the 'how' of the thing coming into appearance.¹⁵⁰ In return, the thing

¹⁴⁷ Martin Heidegger, 'The Question Concerning Technology', in *Basic Writings*, p. 311-313

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 335-336

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 314 What we call 'cause' is called *aition* by the Greeks, meaning 'that to which something else is indebted'.

¹⁵⁰ For a discussion of the word *logos* and its interpretation as 'a gathering that brings an essent, i.e. a being, together' and its essential bond with *physis*, see Martin Heidegger, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 120-136. *Logos* is that which gathers some thing together into a unity and brings it forth, revealing what was formerly hidden, to let it be manifest as something.

which is crafted is 'indebted' to all that is responsible for its revealing, that is, all that grounds its bringing-forth (*poiēsis*).¹⁵¹ An example will clarify this: the artisan who builds a house reveals what is to be brought forth by gathering together the aspect (house-ness) and the material (wood) of the house, with a view to the finished article (that which circumscribes the activity; in this case it is the need for a home, a place in which to dwell) and thus determines the manner of its construction.

As what is brought-forth (*poiēsis*) through *technê* gathers within itself the four modes of occasioning, ends and means belong to its domain. Instrumentality (a means to an end) is a fundamental characteristic of technology and therefore technology, like *technê*, is a form of revealing. Accordingly, like both *physis* and *technê*, technology is a mode of disclosure of beings. The revealing of Being through both *physis* and *technê* has a practical dimension: when we are open to the Being of beings we are guided in our transactions within the world by the bounds inherent in *physis*. Such guidance informs the understandings that constitute the practices of farmers, herbal healers, hunters, foresters and fishermen, poets, sculptors and painters. In the same way, technology, as a form of revealing, guides science in its practices, to order, manipulate and control beings. Technology, as the revealing that holds sway, directs the way in which science orders information as 'knowledge'.¹⁵² Thus, as a particular mode of the revealing of

¹⁵¹ Martin Heidegger, 'The Question Concerning Technology', in *Basic Writings*, p. 314-318

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 329. Heidegger makes an important distinction that although the essence of technology as enframing is our *destiny*, it is not necessarily our *fate*. Destiny is the enduring, historical tradition that holds sway at a particular epoch in society; it has an inherent direction, but this is not a determination. He reiterates this in 'The Turning', in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, p. 47. stating that 'enframing is, though veiled, still glance, and no blind destiny in the sense of a completely ordained fate'. As such, the enframing is a particular phase in our ethical development. Consequently, Heidegger 'do(es) not see the situation of man in the world as a fate which cannot be escaped or unravelled', see Martin Heidegger, 'Only a God Can Save Us: Der Spiegel's Interview with Martin Heidegger on September 23, 1966', in *Philosophy Today*, 1976, p. 280

beings, Heidegger maintains that technology is not a consequence of science, but rather precedes it.¹⁵³

The revealing which *technê* brings about through a craftsman attuned to *physis*, who brings-forth an artifact using his knowledge of the entire practice (the four modes of occasioning), co-operates with the bounds of *physis*. For example, when cultivating crops is undertaken as a form of *technê*, it is a mode of knowing (*epistēmē*) which discloses (*alēthia*) Being and which supports and guides all comportment toward beings. *Technê* never signifies the action of making; it is a bringing-forth out of concealment into unconcealment.¹⁵⁴ Consequently, the farmer as a craftsman, in accordance with *technê*, works with the land by sowing seed in keeping with *physis* and the unhurried forces of growth: his “*work lets the earth be an earth*”.¹⁵⁵ The earth, through its sheltering and concealing, brings forth from this concealment the things that grow: it allows the self-manifesting of beings. The farmer watches over its increases, taking care of and maintaining the integrity of the process of disclosing that which is grown.¹⁵⁶ The way that the farmer, as a craftsman, uses the earth does not use up or misuse the earth; rather, it sets it up to be nothing but itself.¹⁵⁷ Heidegger states:

Proper use does not debase what is being used - on the contrary, use is determined and defined by leaving the used thing in its essential nature.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵³ Martin Heidegger, ‘The Question Concerning Technology’, in *Basic Writings*, p. 326-328

¹⁵⁴ Martin Heidegger, ‘The Origin of the Work of Art’ in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, p. 59.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid*, p. 46

¹⁵⁶ Martin Heidegger, ‘The Question Concerning Technology’, in *Basic Writings*, p.320

¹⁵⁷ Martin Heidegger, ‘The Origin of the Work of Art’ in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, p. 64

¹⁵⁸ Martin Heidegger, *What is called Thinking?*, p. 187

As stated above, the bringing-forth in accordance with *technê* is not to be understood as a return to some former romanticized, pre-technological time. What is important is the *thinking* involved in the disclosure of Being through *technê*. It is thinking that is attuned and responsively engaged and that lets beings Be. Such thinking is significant for a respectful relation with other beings.

In contrast, the revealing that holds sway in the enframing of technology is a setting-in-order that challenges (*Herausfordern*). It places unreasonable demands on the other-than-human world, opposing the world order, in its efforts to control and dominate. What is revealed through the challenging of technology does not present itself of its own accord, through *physis*, nor is it brought-forth from within the bounds of *physis*, through *technê*. Modern technology, through its challenging, does not co-operate with *physis* but rather attempts to overcome or conceal it. Heidegger states:

The revealing that rules throughout modern technology has the character of setting-upon, in the sense of a challenging-forth. Such challenging happens in that the energy concealed in nature is unlocked, what is unlocked is transformed, what is transformed is stored up, what is stored up is in turn distributed, and what is distributed is switched about ever anew. Unlocking, transforming, storing, distributing and switching about are ways of revealing...What kind of unconcealment is it, then, that is peculiar to that which results from this setting upon that challenges? Everywhere 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. Whatever is ordered about in this way has its own standing. We call it the standing reserve (*Bestand*).¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁹ Martin Heidegger, 'The Question Concerning Technology', in *Basic Writings*, p. 322

The enframing of technology, as a 'revealing that orders', imposes order on everything, processing entities and devising solutions for every sort of problem. The focus on imposing order that is characteristic of technology can only be understood in terms of efficient causality: technology reduces the four modes of occasioning involved with *technê* to one cause only, that of calculating the most efficient means of production. When thinking is narrowed to calculation, meaning disappears: when all Being is challenged-forth as a standing-reserve, the possibilities inherent in *physis* are covered over and remain hidden.

The totalising framework of technology (*Ge-stell*) is all encompassing, replacing all other practices which embody human meaning. The field of possibilities, through which all beings and their relations are constituted, is reduced to an actuality; all beings just *are* resources, standing-reserve.¹⁶⁰ This enframing dissolves entities as entities so that technological life can run efficiently: by reducing the diversity in the world, through destroying entities and disclosing those that remain as resources, their meaning as individual beings is obliterated, so that all become interchangeable and ready for use. The enframing of technology levels everything for the uniformity of production and human consumption. In this way, technology is not neutral: it "drives out every other possibility of revealing"; no longer can any thing appear as it is in itself.¹⁶¹ Thus, we come to inhabit a world of objects; we no longer dwell amongst things.

As such, this hegemonic disclosure is the culmination of the Western metaphysical tradition, ordering and ruling our relation to all that is. Heidegger states:

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 324-326

¹⁶¹ Ibid., p. 332

The decline of the truth of beings occurs necessarily, and indeed as the completion of metaphysics. The decline occurs through the collapse of the world characterized by metaphysics, and at the same time through the desolation of the earth stemming from metaphysics.¹⁶²

When the earth is challenged forth through modern technology it is a degenerate and debauched form of use; it is a utilizing, a using up, an exploiting, that results in its desolation.¹⁶³ As a setting-in-order, modern technological farming employs a barrage of chemical fertilizers, automated irrigation and a range of mechanical devices that plough, plant, harvest, store and distribute, so that agriculture becomes the mechanized food industry.¹⁶⁴

Technology makes large-scale organization of the environment possible, which serves to remove individuals from direct contact with other-than-human entities. For instance, in regards to the mechanized food industry, food for most people living in the Western world is 'de-worlded': it loses its contextual meaning, as we are removed from the context wherein and whereby our foods first come into Being. In our modern technological world food is abstracted from the other-than-human realm, separated from the context in which it is originally found, arriving processed, packaged and ordered in supermarkets. It bears no resemblance to *physis*; it is no longer disclosed as a living, growing being that has significant relations of its own with its environment.

¹⁶² Martin Heidegger, *The End of Philosophy*, p. 86

¹⁶³ Martin Heidegger, *What is called Thinking?*, p. 187

¹⁶⁴ Martin Heidegger, 'The Question Concerning Technology', in *Basic Writings*, p.320

This same 'de-worlding' process isolates human beings from the effects of their technological actions. The enframing of technology removes us from direct encounters with other-than-human entities and thus we do not experience our impact on those entities. When we buy our potatoes from the supermarket we may not understand or consider the meaningful possibilities that have been covered over for the sake of mass-production. We are ignorant of the transactions that a myriad of other-than-human entities have with *their* environment, which have been destroyed to provide the vast tracts of earth that need to be cultivated in a technological world. We do not always think about the chemical fertilizers that have to be spread over continually ab-used and depleted soils, and that run into waterways causing contamination of aquatic environments. We are not confronted with the abuse of the environment necessary to produce the plastic bags in which the potatoes are held and displayed. Nor do we regularly reflect on the parts of the earth that are disclosed as 'fossil fuels' and burnt to transport such goods both regionally and globally, and the subsequent pollution of the environment that the transformation of these substances cause. The enframing of technology isolates us and shields us from directly experiencing the effects of our actions on ourselves and on all the other-than-human entities that constitute our environment.

Through the enframing, the Being of other-than-human entities is now only that of 'resource', constantly available, constantly present. Their own possibilities of concealment and self-emerging are denied. Although human beings accomplish this challenging, revealing all as standing-reserve, technology also defines and reveals the Being of humanity. Heidegger's example of the forester shows this:

The forester who measures the felled timber in the woods and to all appearances walks the forest path in the same way his grandfather did is today ordered by the industry that produces commercial woods,

whether he knows it or not. He is made subordinate to the orderability of cellulose, which for its part is challenged forth by the need for paper, which is then delivered to newspapers and illustrated magazines. The latter, in their turn, set public opinion to swallowing what is printed, so that a set configuration of opinion becomes available on demand...Modern technology, as a revealing that orders, is thus no mere human doing. Therefore, we must take the challenging that sets upon man to order the actual as standing reserve in accordance with the way it shows itself. That challenge gathers man into ordering. This gathering concentrates man upon ordering the actual as standing reserve.¹⁶⁵

Thus, in order for technology to run smoothly, human beings themselves must also be assimilated into the process: they are revealed through the enframing as 'human resources', interchangeable parts in the machinations of a technological world.

As discussed above, the enframing of technology, like *technê*, is a way of engaging with and disclosing entities. Therefore, it follows that when all entities are named and defined as resources, the dialectical transactions we have with those entities-as-resources determine who we are: our very humanity is constituted by the way in which we disclose and interpret the other-than-human. Heidegger states:

Being claims human being for grounding its truth in beings...he takes his essence from the relation of Being to himself and, in accordance with this relation, loses his essence, neglects it, gives it up, grounds it, or squanders it.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 323-324

¹⁶⁶ Martin Heidegger, *The End of Philosophy*, p. 82 Paul Shepard has also discussed how our humanity, the human way of being, is made possible through our relations with other-

Dasein's essence, its way of Being, is its existence-as-possibility, and its possibilities are constituted by the possibilities of others it encounters in its interactions in-the-world. Accordingly, it follows that if we ignore or restrict the possibilities of one constituent of this dialectic, we will disregard or restrict the possibilities of the other. Consequently, if we disclose and articulate the world through the hegemonic discourse of technology, disclosing other-than-human entities as resources, we come to define ourselves through that same framework and cover over the possibilities of both. The language of this dominating discourse shapes our thinking and influences our interpretation of our world and ourselves. When we disclose and interpret all other-than-human beings as interchangeable raw materials for consumption, human beings are necessarily disclosed as the interchangeable raw materials of production and consuming. The technological framework that reduces thinking to calculation, for the planning and control of these 'resources', entails that the only possibility for humanity is that of a 'resource' itself, to fulfill the endless circularity of production and consumption in the aimless activity of technological domination. All beings become an 'emptiness', devoid of meaning, for it is the framework of technology that *makes them what they are*. The world becomes nothing more than an endless cycle of technological production and consumption, an 'unworld', for it no longer has any meaning.¹⁶⁷

By reducing all thinking to calculation, the enframing seeks to control the other-than-human world for human order and purpose, reducing the on-going activity of meaningful life to mere busyness.¹⁶⁸ It has resulted in

than-human Others. See *Nature and Madness*, Athens, Georgia: The University of Georgia Press, 1982; *The Others: How Animals Made Us Human*, Washington D.C.: Island Press, 1996

¹⁶⁷ In *'The End of Philosophy'*, p. 107, Heidegger states that 'technology is the organization of a lack, since it is related to the emptiness of Being contrary to its knowledge'.

¹⁶⁸ Martin Heidegger, 'The Age of the World Picture', in *The Question Concerning Technology* p. 138. On-going activity becomes reduced to mere busyness when there is no longer an openness to Being.

human beings assuming power beyond precedent to affect the other-than-human world. Such one-track thinking has led to an enlargement of the scale of the human enterprise, enabling the manufacture of greater quantities of products with greater ease. It allows for governments and economic elites to continue to push for endless economic growth and development. It has created the ability to sustain and prolong human life, leading to the expansion of human populations, without concerning itself with the quality of that life. It creates the illusion that human beings are supremely able to understand and control events to suit their own purposes. The enframing also compartmentalizes and fragments human life, as it necessitates the formation of skills specific to a particular aspect of the enterprise. This frequently leads to a lack of ownership and responsibility for what is achieved or produced, a distancing or removal from the source of the 'products', that is, the other-than-human, and consequently, a lack of ownership and responsibility for the impact of human actions on other-than-human entities. In Heideggerian terms, the idea of technological mastery conceals the *finitude of Being-in-the-world*, the limits of humanity within the contingencies and vagaries of life. The technological disclosure of beings as constant presence also covers up the *finitude of Being*, the possibility of 'absence in the midst of presence', which is always part of a thing's Being. As discussed in chapter three, it is this presence-absence structure that imparts meaning: it is the possibility of losing a soccer game that makes winning meaningful; the not yet attained status of 'teacher' that gives meaning to one's study; the possibility of death that gives meaning to life.¹⁶⁹ The enframing is both a concealing of a thing's possibilities and a covering over of this concealing. As such, it is the danger that obliterates a meaningful world. Heidegger maintains that the concealing of what is concealed is the

¹⁶⁹ Martin Heidegger, *Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, p. 311

mystery that we must be open to if we are to become open to Being, disclosed through *physis*.¹⁷⁰

Heidegger suggests that it is from within the danger of the enframing that we can come to a 'restorative surmounting' of the essence of technology. It can only be a 'restorative surmounting' as the enframing is not something that can be overcome by *Dasein*, as that would mean that *Dasein* was the master of Being. Rather, a 'restorative surmounting' of the enframing can only come to pass when *Dasein* learns to dwell in a manner that is receptive to Being. Thus, this 'restorative surmounting' is not a case of "what should we do?"; it is rather, "How must we think?"¹⁷¹ Once we have insight into this danger, recognizing the enframing for what it is, only one possible way of disclosing entities, there lies the possibility of rediscovering the Being that it obscures.¹⁷² Heidegger maintains that by recovering an openness to Being we can comport ourselves in a way that releases us (*Gelassenheit*) from the enframing.

¹⁷⁰ Martin Heidegger, 'Memorial Address', in *Discourse on Thinking*, p. 55

¹⁷¹ Martin Heidegger, 'The Turning' in *The Question Concerning Technology*, p. 38-41

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, p.43-49 In 'The Turning', insight is *Einblick* and it parallels *Augenblick*, 'the moment of vision' in *Being and Time* that marks the transformation of inauthenticity to authenticity, see H 328, p. 376; H 338, p. 387. Lawrence J. Hatab points out that in *Parmenides*, Heidegger correlates 'insight' with *phronēsis* maintaining that it is insight (*phronēsis*) that is necessary to balance concealment and unconcealment. Such insight is a requisite for being open to Being and hence living authentically; see Lawrence J. Hatab, *Ethics and Finitude: Heideggerian Contributions to Moral Philosophy*, Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers Inc., 2000, p. 120

Recovering a Meaningful World

The familiar and common practices of *das Man* in our present age are the result of a calculating and objectivizing way of thinking, that thinks beings and leaves Being unthought, covering over *Dasein's* essence as that of finite possibility. As discussed in the previous chapter, the reductionist, hegemonic enterprise of the enframing of technology, reproduced through calculative thinking, conceptual thinking that orders and organizes for secured conceptions of human purpose, discloses entities as a stockpile of interchangeable resources, but "*the meaning pervading technology hides itself*".¹⁷³ This meaning is concealed because the enframing, that thinks beings, covers over the finitude of existence: it denies the limits set by *physis*; it blocks *poiēsis*, and thereby conceals the presence-absence structure that gives meaning to our world.¹⁷⁴ Within the enframing, all entities just *are* and can only *be* interchangeable resources, objects given in our terms for our advantage, through an agenda of domination and control. In contrast, a world of meaning does not sanction this principle of interchangeability.

When beings are disclosed through the enframing of technology we dwell in untruth: we no longer retain our engaged openness to Being; we are no longer open to the possibilities inherent in beings. Thus, our existence can be considered inauthentic. It is necessary for us to become aware of this inauthenticity in order to realize the possibility of living authentically: "man's

¹⁷³ Martin Heidegger, 'Memorial Address', in *Discourse on Thinking*, p. 55

¹⁷⁴ Martin Heidegger, 'The Question Concerning Technology', in *Basic Writings*, p. 335 Both *physis*, bringing forth of some thing out of itself, and *technē*, bringing forth something in another, through the four modes of occasioning discussed above, are forms of *poiēsis*; both are concealed in the enframing.

essence must first open itself to the essence of technology".¹⁷⁵ When we are open to the enframing, the way that technology discloses all beings as constant presence, we come to see it for what it is; a hegemonic disclosure, the danger that obliterates the *humanitas* of humankind, because it denies all *possibilities*. This realization is the 'saving power' contained within the enframing.¹⁷⁶

This awareness and openness to the enframing can only be achieved by *Dasein* finding "his way back into the full breadth of the space proper to his essence".¹⁷⁷ *Dasein* is the being who is essential for the disclosure of Being, as it is through its transactions with other entities that a world is made intelligible. Consequently, it is necessary that *Dasein* finds a way to the space where beings can disclose themselves to and through *Dasein*. This essential space of *Dasein's* essential being is achieved through originary thinking.

Heidegger maintains that originary thinking is thinking that is more rigorous than the conceptual: it is thinking that is open to the possibilities inherent in entities; it is open to what is given.¹⁷⁸ Thinking must transcend its preoccupation with instrumental reasoning, the sort of thinking required by modern technology, based on representation and calculative thought. Such calculative thinking is an activity that leads to 'knowing' beings as objects. It is through originary thinking that we engage with entities in a non-objective

¹⁷⁵ Martin Heidegger, 'The Turning', in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, p.39

¹⁷⁶ Martin Heidegger, 'The Question Concerning Technology', in *Basic Writings*, p. 333-337 Heidegger points out that 'to save' is to 'bring something home into its essence', that is, to be open to its possibilities.

¹⁷⁷ Martin Heidegger, 'The Turning', in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, p.39

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid*, p. 258; Martin Heidegger, 'What Calls for Thinking?', in *Basic Writings*, p. 365-391; Martin Heidegger, 'Conversation on a Country Path', in *Discourse on Thinking*, p. 67-70

way. When Being is disclosed through this engaged, responsive openness of originary thinking, it is an act of understanding, not an act of calculation.

As discussed above, it is the openness of originary thinking that allows an authentic disclosure of Being, through a responsive engagement, a *appropriation (ereignis)*, constituted by the self-disclosure of entities and a situated *Dasein*. This disclosive correlation entails both the opening of Being and *Dasein*'s openness to Being; it is the process of unconcealment through which a thing becomes intelligible as something and as such, its 'truth' is made available. The attuned comportment of *Gelassenheit* is a comportment that releases *Dasein* from the attachments of the familiar world and provides it with clear vision, pulling it out of the everyday busyness and avoidance of responsibility that characterizes the everyday world of *das Man*.¹⁷⁹ Together, originary thinking and *Gelassenheit* enable us to realize that 'it does not have to be this way'. Thus, by being freed from the dominating discourse of the enframing we can be open to technology as just *one possible way* of disclosing beings. Once we realize this, technology can play a meaningful role, as it no longer dominates our lives. Instead, we can affirm the use of appropriate technology or deny technology a significant role, depending upon our situated context.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁹ Martin Heidegger, 'Memorial Address', in *Discourse on Thinking*, p. 54; In *Being and Time*, Heidegger attributed authenticity to 'resoluteness', (*Entschlossenheit*, see H 299, p. 345) but in his later works he developed the notion of the comportment of *Gelassenheit* as the opening of *Dasein* into the clearing of Being and thus out of the familiar world of *das Man*.

¹⁸⁰ In *Questioning Technology*, p. 16, Feenberg claims that Heidegger's critique is pessimistic and 'allows no room for a different technological future'. In claiming this he fails to see that when 'technological thinking' is transcended, it allows for a 'free relation to technology'. When we recognise technology for what it is, we can transcend its claims on us and live in a way that enables us to affirm the unavoidable use of technical devices, yet deny them the right to dominate us. See Martin Heidegger, *Discourse on Thinking*, p. 53-55. Although we cannot directly control the technological future, we can, through *Gelassenheit*, be receptive to a transformation in our understanding of Being. Feenberg also maintains that 'Heidegger's argument is developed at such a high level of abstraction that he literally cannot discriminate between electricity and atom bombs, agricultural techniques and the holocaust' (p.187). Whereas for Feenberg it is individual technologies and their applications that are significant, for Heidegger it is the way in which the essence of technology discloses Being that is important. Thus there is a fundamental difference between Heidegger and

Heidegger maintains that in authenticity we 'dwell poetically' on the earth. Dwelling poetically means that we are open to Being, bringing forth (*poiēsis*) beings in a way that allows them to show themselves within their possibilities, rather than disclosing them through an agenda of control.¹⁸¹ *Poiēsis* has no agenda; it allows entities to reveal themselves. When we dwell poetically we are open to Being, and the language we use to make Being manifest listens to Being and responds to Being, and is *poetic*. It is a mode of interaction between human beings and other entities that speaks a meaningful world.

In our present age, the world of *das Man*, disclosed through the enframing, presents a technological world as an actuality, as *the* world. By setting upon and disclosing all entities as resources to be dominated and controlled by humanity, it has concealed all other ways of revealing them. This dominating ontology is unable to respond to the Situation of our current environmental

Feenberg, the former concerned with what technology *means* and the latter concerned with what technology *does*. Feenberg is concerned that as Heidegger appears to treat all technology in the same light, his ontological approach is unable to distinguish between technology's benefits and harms. It seems however, that Heidegger's 'free relation to technology', achieved through *Gelassenheit* will permit such differentiation. Heidegger does not reject technology out-right; rather, it is the enframing that is the danger. Through a restorative surmounting of the enframing, we can affirm technologies that do not exhaust and exploit the human or the other-than-human realm, thus working within a being's possibilities. Such an authentic disclosure is able to discriminate between benefits and harms to all beings.

Iain Thomson suggests that the Amish community may have achieved this free relation to technology that Heidegger advocates, as they are 'very adaptive techno-selectives', who live reflexively with technologies for some time before deciding whether to incorporate them into their lives; see Iain Thomson, 'From the Question Concerning Technology to the Quest for a Democratic Technology: Heidegger, Marcuse, Feenberg', in *Inquiry*, Volume 43, Issue 2, 2000, p 208

¹⁸¹ Martin Heidegger, 'Poetically Man Dwells', in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, p.215; 224-228 Heidegger notes that dwelling can also be unpoetic, but only because it is in essence poetic. Thus, the enframing of technology, that is the familiar world of *das Man* in our present age, is an unpoetic dwelling, deriving from an excess of calculative thinking that discloses our (un)world. Heidegger maintains that human existence, as a poetic dwelling, is authentic or inauthentic according to the degree of openness to Being.

problems.¹⁸² For *das Man* the demands of the unique Situation of environmental concerns are essentially something that has been closed off. The project of domination and control of the other-than-human realm is taken as a secured conception of the 'good' of *das Man*, and dulls the vision of *Dasein*, so that it can only perpetuate and operate out of the general situation, out of what typically makes sense in the world of *das Man*: "The average everydayness of concern becomes blind to its possibilities, and tranquillizes itself with that which is merely 'actual'".¹⁸³ As I have discussed above, our environmental problems are the necessary consequences of an objectifying way of 'knowing' the world, which is implicit in the inauthenticity of *das Man* in our present age. Thus, as *das Man* can only respond with 'technological solutions' that seek to manipulate and control the world, albeit with a goal of 'solving' a particular environmental issue, such solutions, issuing from the enframing, will be unable to address our current environmental concerns. A 'technological' response operates out of a subjectivist anthropocentrism that sees humankind as the locus of fixed meaning: the 'good' of unlimited 'progress' for the 'improvement' of the human condition. Immersed in this actuality, which covers up Being, *das Man* is not open to the possibilities necessary to address our environmental issues, as it is unable to envisage any other world.

In contrast, an authentic existence recognizes that there can be no final meaning or settled identity and is open to the unique Situation of our environmental concerns. The attuned comportment of *Gelassenheit* enables *Dasein* to respond to a Situation, because it frees it to listen to what the Situation requires, instead of assimilating it into the preconceived world of *das Man*. In authenticity, *Dasein* recognizes that its inherited way of doing

¹⁸² Heidegger uses the term 'Situation' to refer to an existential occurrence which is disclosed to an authentic *Dasein* through originary thinking and *Gelassenheit*, and which remains closed off to *das Man*, immersed in calculative thinking; see *Being and Time*, H 299-300, p. 346; see also Martin Heidegger, 'Conversation on a Country Path', in *Discourse on Thinking*, p. 80-81

¹⁸³ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, H 195, p. 239

things is but one possible way amongst other finite possibilities. In authenticity, *Dasein* is able to question this way and become aware of how it has erred and thus transform its thinking. Through originary thinking, *Dasein* is open to the uniqueness of entities and their role in disclosing truth. Through originary thinking, *Dasein* cares for entities by letting them present themselves in ways that accord with their inherent possibilities. It lets them Be for-the-sake-of Being. This openness to Being listens to entities, giving them a voice to which we can respond, rather than disclosing them through an objectifying framework that reduces them to secured conceptions (that of 'resource').¹⁸⁴

Thus, an authentic existence can respond to the Situation of our environmental concerns because it listens to the Being of beings and allows entities to manifest themselves in accordance with their own limits, in their various kinds of intelligibility. Heidegger maintains that this authentic relation to other beings-in-the-world, whereby *Dasein* is open to Being, constitutes an *ēthos*, in the Greek sense of the term, as "the open region in which man dwells".¹⁸⁵ Implicit in this way of dwelling is a mindful inhabitation of our environment that is internal to understanding the world in an authentic way. Such comportment guides our understanding of the world in a way that enables both *Dasein* and other entities to live well, in the sense of being able to dwell within their possibilities. The dialectical nature of inter-entity transactions suggests that it is not possible to have one without the other.

An *ēthos*, understood in this sense, is an authentic existence, a poetic dwelling, in which the practical involvements and practices of everyday human life are characterized by 'care' in a twofold sense, in that our

¹⁸⁴ Christopher Manes has pointed out that 'people do not exploit a nature that speaks to them', see Christopher Manes, 'Nature and Silence' in *Environmental Ethics*, Volume 14, Winter 1992, p. 340

¹⁸⁵ Martin Heidegger, 'Letter on Humanism, in *Basic Writings*, p. 256 Dwelling is another term for Heidegger's 'being-in' structure.

concernful-dealings in the world (that which we care about) must enable entities to be brought forth (*poiēsis*) to us in their own way (in that we care for them). In authenticity we care for (*sorge*) and save (*wahren*) the Being of beings, in the sense of letting beings manifest themselves in their own way. In the next chapter I explain how authenticity, in which we assume responsibility for our openness to Being, makes possible the development of an ontological-ethic.

An Ontological-Ethical Approach to Being-in-the-World

Throughout this paper I have upheld the idea that if we are to understand and address our current environmental problems it is necessary to try and understand ourselves as human beings and the relation we have with the other-than-human entities that constitute our environment as a place of significance. By engaging with Heidegger's thought I have shown that the prevalent Western tradition has resulted in a way of 'knowing' ourselves and others that results in a dominating and controlling relation with other-than-human entities. The privileging of Western scientific notions of 'objective truth', the view of human beings as a disengaged rational 'subject', the secured conception of unlimited progress through calculative thinking and the disclosing of all beings as resources constantly present, have resulted in our alienation from and the domination of other-than-human entities.

Heidegger's critique of the Western metaphysical tradition and his account of *Dasein* as a being-in-the-world suggest that *Dasein* is not a disengaged isolated 'self' and challenge the traditional foundationalist assumptions that we have about human and other-than-human entities. Heidegger shows *Dasein* to be constituted by a dialectical relation with other entities-in-the-world. An understanding of *Dasein* and other entities is achieved through its engaged interactions, which sees meaning and value arise out of those inter-entity transactions.

Dasein is the abandoning of a subjectivizing attitude and is a mode of being that has the capacity to be open to the true (*alēthic*) Being of other entities. *Dasein* is not a fixed or stable essence: *Dasein* is essentially temporal and the Being of *Dasein* is that of possibility. As a potentiality for Being, *Dasein*'s

ungrounded and ungroundable existence makes possibility higher than actuality.¹⁸⁶

In order to be open to this possibility *Dasein* must let beings Be. Such a letting Be (*Seinlassen*) is a mode of non-interference that can protect against the domination and control inherent in traditional foundational, reductionist ideas that remain immersed in beings. The openness that lets beings Be can be construed as a respectful relation to entities that acknowledges their own possibilities and does not reduce them to a resource, constantly present.

Although Heidegger's ontology places humanity in an esteemed position, he cannot be accused of anthropocentrism. Anthropocentrism asserts the dominance of humankind and operates from the assumption of a subject-object binary. It gives human beings a preeminent position as a 'knowledgeable subject' and discloses all other-than-human entities as 'objects', constantly present. Implicit in anthropocentrism is the perpetuation of calculative thinking, requiring that all 'knowledge' move in a way that guarantees continued calculation and valuation towards human order and purpose, resulting in a way of 'knowing' that is dominating and controlling. This objectification of the non-human realm sees meaning and value as something located in the human 'subject' and 'added on' to experience.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁶ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, H 38, p. 63; *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, p. 308

¹⁸⁷ As discussed above, Heidegger rejects the notion of 'value' as a subjective construct, a result of the subject-object dualism of traditional Western thinking. He maintains that values cannot be understood as something 'added on' to things, as it would make values determinate characteristics that a thing possesses and they would be present-at-hand, see *Being and Time*, H 99, p. 132. Thus, he also rejects axiological approaches to ethics, which construct 'objective' notions of value grounded in the subject. Such objectivizing reduces value to an 'actuality', concealing the possibilities of lived involvement. When entities are valued in accordance with human estimations, it denies them their own modes of presencing on their own terms. See Martin Heidegger, 'Letter on Humanism', in *Basic Writings*, p. 251

It is clear from Heidegger's critique of traditional Western thinking that he rejects such a humanistic view, as it remains engrossed in beings and oblivious to Being. However, he maintains that traditional humanism "does not set the *humanitas* of man high enough".¹⁸⁸ He therefore calls for a "higher humanism", a humanism that is "meditative and caring, that man be human and not inhumane".¹⁸⁹ Such comportment will make it possible for humanity to dwell authentically, open to and caring for other beings-in-the-world. Thus, Heidegger's humanism is ontological, not anthropological: human beings are appropriated by Being as guardians and preservers of the truth of Being; they are not the creators and controllers of Being.¹⁹⁰

As discussed in chapter four, human existence, as *Dasein*, unfolds through the structure of 'care', which sees humanity in terms of their concern for and concern with other entities.¹⁹¹ In an authentic existence, in which the practical involvements and practices of everyday human life are characterized by 'care', our concernful-dealings in the world (that which we care about) enable entities to be brought forth (*poiēsis*) and become manifest to us in their own way (in that we care for them). Consequently, although Heidegger places human beings in a revered position, his account of humanity is entirely reconcilable with an *ēthos*, a way of dwelling which is open to and thus, considers all beings. Indeed, if we accept Heidegger's dialectic account of Being-in-the-world, then other entities-in-the-world are essential to *Dasein's* Being. To exclude them from ethical consideration is to deny *Dasein's* authentic existence. Thus, Heidegger's account is consistent with a non-anthropocentric, non-dualistic understanding and requires respectful consideration to be given to all beings.

¹⁸⁸ Martin Heidegger, 'Letter on Humanism', in *Basic Writings*, p. 233-234

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 224

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 248

¹⁹¹ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, H 181-211, p. 225-254

In this chapter I discuss Heidegger's condemnation of traditional ethical theorizing. Heidegger maintains that traditional ethical theories have been concerned with morals, the subjective calculus of what is good and what is bad. They have aimed at offering norms, rules and measures for right behaviour and have left unthought *Dasein's* fundamental *ēthos*; they have failed to think Being as the essential dwelling place of human existence.¹⁹² In contrast to traditional ethical theorizing, Heidegger retrieves an understanding of ethics contained in the Greek word *ēthos*, as the "open region in which *Dasein* dwells", which he maintains can be called an "original ethics".¹⁹³ Thus, ethics can be understood as a relation to Being, in which *Dasein* is opened to Being. As *Dasein's* Being is its potentiality, which cannot be conceived as separate from other beings-in-the-world, I will show that its ethical way of being-in-the-world allows the emergence of an ontological-ethic.¹⁹⁴ I maintain that an ontological-ethic that is informed by *physis* is able to guide actions and modes of living. An ontological-ethic suggests that in order for *Dasein* to live well it must be able to inhabit its environment in a way that enables it to pursue its existence-as-possibility, which requires the existence of other-than-human entities.

When *Dasein* exists authentically it opens up the realm of ethical consideration: authenticity entails respectful consideration, a concern for the

¹⁹² Martin Heidegger, 'Letter on Humanism' in *Basic Writings*, p. 258

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 256; 258

¹⁹⁴ It is important to note at this point that Heidegger demurred on developing an ethics, maintaining that his 'Interpretation is purely ontological in its aims, and is far removed from any moralizing critique of everyday *Dasein*'; see *Being and Time*, H 167, p. 211 However, there are strands of his thought that offer an indication of an ethical direction, which a number of thinkers have explored, for example, Silvia Benso, 'On the Way to an Ontological Ethics: Ethical Suggestions in Reading Heidegger', in *Research in Phenomenology*, volume 24, 1994, p.159-188; Lawrence J. Hatab, *Ethics and Finitude: Heideggerian Contributions to Moral Philosophy*, Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers Inc., 2000; Bernard J. Boelen, 'The Question of Ethics in the Thought of Martin Heidegger', in *Heidegger and the Quest for Truth*, Manfred S. Frings (ed.), Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1968, p. 76-105. In keeping with Heidegger's framework of thought I venture an ethical direction for environmental thinking.

authentic Being of others; it affirms difference and otherness, which is a necessary prerequisite of ethical practice; it enables the ontological freedom to question established ways of living. Authenticity acknowledges *Dasein's* finitude, so that care and concern for things are deepened. Ontological freedom and care are existential conditions of *Dasein's* being-in-the-world, and are the sources of ontological-ethical meanings disclosed in contextual understanding. Thus, ethical consideration is not based on a set of rules; it is a respectful, situated, contextual response motivated by concern for-the-sake-of living well.

Heidegger condemns theoretical approaches to ethics, as they embrace a detached theoretical stance, uphold the idea of constant presence and emphasize subjectivity, all of which perpetuate the dominating discourse of traditional Western thinking. Traditional ethical approaches make foundationalist claims by constructing rules, abstract principles and criteria that ground the ethical life and reduce human comportment to calculation and order. Rule-based approaches are modeled on human subjectivity, whereby the criteria for ethical considerability are grounded in the faculties and decision procedures of the human subject. Such approaches treat ethics as a set of discrete moral problems, removing it from the lived, engaged concerns of human beings in a particular social and historical context. Thus, Heidegger's main concern with theoretical approaches is that they remain engrossed at an ontic level and fail to reveal the ontological dimension of *Dasein*.¹⁹⁵ They have been concerned with calculative thinking, rather than originary thinking, the "*logic of mores* rather than the *logos of ēthos*".¹⁹⁶ They

¹⁹⁵ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, H 16, p. 37

¹⁹⁶ Bernard J. Boelen makes this point in 'The Question of Ethics in the Thought of Martin Heidegger', in *Heidegger and the Quest for Truth*, Manfred S. Frings (ed.), Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1968, p. 78. In *Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 115-196, Heidegger discusses how, through metaphysics, *logos*, as that which gathers meaning, and its relationship to *physis* and Being, became *logic* as correct statements.

have left unthought Being as the *essential* dwelling-place of human existence.

The dominant discourse in environmental ethics has remained embedded in traditional Western thinking. It has embraced traditional ethical theorizing and worked to enlarge the range of ethical concern from human beings to include other beings. It has sought to extend ethical criteria to (some) other-than-human entities in order to establish their membership into the class of beings deemed suitable for ethical consideration. By seeking to show that (some) other-than-human entities possess the necessary criteria for 'rights', or that they have 'intrinsic value' and are thereby suitable candidates for ethical consideration, traditional environmental theorizing has attempted to sanction or prohibit certain actions towards the other-than-human realm. For example, Christopher Stone seeks to provide a moral/legal rationale for wilderness preservation, maintaining that legal rights should be extended to include other-than-human entities.¹⁹⁷ Stone's argument is dependent upon criteria: he seeks to focus on a criteria that is accepted as one normally possessed by humans (consciousness) and make it the capacity for 'rights'. Stone suggests that such a quality may well be present in all 'natural' things and proceeds to use it as a basis for his argument for wilderness protection.¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁷ Christopher D. Stone, *Should Trees Have Standing?: Toward Legal Rights for Natural Objects*, California: W. Kaufmann, 1974

¹⁹⁸ Although these thinkers are motivated to protect (some) other-than-human 'nature', the effort to do so by extending human principles of morality and legality leads to dealing with other-than-humans as inferior human beings. As such, other-than-human entities are degraded by the failure to acknowledge and respect them for having their own form of existence. This point has been noted by John Rodman in 'The Liberation of nature?' *Inquiry* 20, 1997, p. 83-131. This strategy also admits some other-than-human beings to the privileged class of human beings, which is the dominating class, without questioning the structure of or the necessity for domination. This situation is objectionable to ecofeminists; see Val Plumwood, 'Feminism and Ecofeminism: Beyond the Dualistic Assumptions of Women, Men and Nature', in *The Ecologist*, Volume 22, No. 1, 1992, p.11

However, such 'criteria' based approaches perpetuate and legitimize the logic of domination inherent in traditional Western thinking. By implementing any ethical criteria human beings construct the foundations for deciding what is to be preserved and what is to be exploited in their efforts to control and dominate others. In contrast to such detached, rule-based approaches, Heidegger maintains that: "More essential than instituting rules is that man finds the way to his abode in the truth of Being";¹⁹⁹ and that "ethics as a mere doctrine and imperative is helpless unless man first comes to have a different fundamental relation to Being".²⁰⁰

He points out that 'ethics' as a particular discipline of thought, along with 'logic' and 'physics', arose at the time when "science waxed and thinking waned", that is, at a time when the detached theoretical stance of Western thinking became dominant.²⁰¹ He notes that thinkers prior to this time did not single these out as separate domains, but this did not mean that their thinking was neither illogical nor immoral. On the contrary, such thinkers considered *physis* to an extent that subsequent 'physics' has never again managed to attain, and the tragedies of Sophocles preserve the *ēthos* in their sagas more primordially than Aristotle's lectures on 'ethics'.²⁰²

Thus, in place of the subjectivist stance inherent in traditional ethical theorizing, Heidegger retrieves an understanding of ethics contained in the Greek word *ēthos* as "the open region in which man dwells", which he

¹⁹⁹ Martin Heidegger, 'Letter on Humanism' in *Basic Writings*, p. 262

²⁰⁰ Martin Heidegger, *What is Called Thinking*, p. 89 Kenneth Sayre has also criticized the way in which environmental thinking has responded by approaching environmental concerns from within the bounds of traditional ethical theory. Kenneth Sayre questions as to how ethical theories can guide us in our living, as they do nothing to motivate concern; see Kenneth M. Sayre, 'An Alternative View of Environmental Ethics', in *Environmental Ethics*, 13, 1991, p. 195-214

²⁰¹ Martin Heidegger, 'Letter on Humanism' in *Basic Writings*, p. 256

²⁰² *Ibid.*

maintains can be called an “original ethics”.²⁰³ Heidegger states that the Old English and High German verb *bauen* means to dwell, in the sense of the manner in which human beings *are* on the earth. Thus, dwelling is the manner in which *Dasein* exists, as a being that makes a world manifest: dwelling is *Dasein’s* Being.²⁰⁴ The word *bauen* also means to cherish, protect and care for things. Accordingly, fundamental to the idea of dwelling is the idea that human activity should be caring and preserving, safeguarding beings from danger, in the sense of setting them free into their own presencing.²⁰⁵ Accordingly, dwelling, *Dasein’s* *ēthos*, is concerned with maintaining an openness to Being, allowing beings to manifest themselves in accordance with their own limits.

It is through *Gelassenheit* and originary thinking that *Dasein* exists authentically. Together, they provide the preconditions for the ontological freedom and care with which *Dasein* responds to Being. It is through the attuned comportment of *Gelassenheit* that we come to assume responsibility for our openness to Being; through *Gelassenheit*, a releasement from *das Man*, *Dasein* calls itself back to its-Self, and chooses its way of Being. In originary thinking, a responsive openness to the Being of beings, which is at the same time an openness to the possibilities of oneself, *Dasein* is appropriated by Being for the disclosure of (*alēthic*) truth. Together, *Gelassenheit* and originary thinking enable *Dasein* to ponder and question the way in which it dwells. Heidegger states:

If the name ‘ethics’ in keeping with the basic meaning of the word *ēthos*, should now say that ‘ethics’ ponders the abode of man, then

²⁰³ Ibid., p. 256; 258

²⁰⁴ Martin Heidegger, ‘Building Dwelling Thinking’, in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, p. 146-148

²⁰⁵ Ibid., p. 147-150

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.²⁰⁶

The ethical, understood in a Heideggerian sense, is the place where Being is encountered. Thus, it is in authenticity that we are called into an ethical sphere, the open region where Being is encountered, as a responsiveness to others is the claim of ethics.²⁰⁷

Accordingly, there is a dialectical relation between ethics and ontology, both understood in a Heideggerian sense, whereby ethics and ontology are constituting and being constituted by one another: ethics, as the open region where Being is encountered, opens the way to ontology, a particular way of disclosing and understanding beings; this ontology can inform and guide subsequent ethical comportment, as *Dasein* learns to let beings Be for the sake of Being. As a result, an "original ethic" can be understood in terms of an ontological-ethic.²⁰⁸

It is apparent that the inauthenticity of *Das Man's* in our present age, an unpoetic dwelling, only recognizes one 'towards-which' or 'good', embedded in the inviolability of human being as subject; that of technological mastery and domination and its resulting exploitation of other-than-human entities for human order and purpose. It can only maintain this position by the suppression of alternative views of the world. Hence, assimilation into the current world of *das Man* is the most dangerous and the most enduring form

²⁰⁶ Martin Heidegger, 'Letter on Humanism' in *Basic Writings*, p. 258

²⁰⁷ Martin Heidegger, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, p. 137

²⁰⁸ Silvia Benso also demonstrates a reciprocal relation between ontology and ethics, see 'On the Way to an Ontological Ethics: Ethical Suggestions in Reading Heidegger', in *Research in Phenomenology*, volume 24, 1994, p.159-188. In 'Letter on Humanism' Heidegger states: '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'. Benso points out that it is neither ethics nor ontology because actually it is *both ethics and ontology*; see Benso, p. 176.

of domination. Authenticity recognizes that there are multiple 'towards-whichs', 'multiple goods', often conflicting, that need to be acknowledged and balanced.²⁰⁹ It does not privilege one (*alēthic*) truth over another. Authentic 'towards-whichs' are situated and contextual; they are attuned and responsively engaged possibilities, that acknowledge the bounds of *physis*.

Thus, whereas the norms that organize the life of *das Man* are formulated around the importance of actualizing the human end of 'limitless' continual 'progress', authenticity requires a balancing of ontological-ethical claims that consider and are responsive to the other-than-human, within our situated limits. In authenticity we are concerned with an engaged, responsive openness to the Being of beings, rather than a concern to dominate beings and Being. An authentic dwelling discloses a world out of respect rather than from a position of control. It leads to a respectful understanding that requires us to act responsibly towards other entities. Consequently, it entails that we balance competing possibilities in a way that tries not to close them down. The *nomos* of dwelling-in-the-world is given in authenticity; it is an injunction from Being itself to let it Be. Heidegger states that dwelling in "the truth of Being offers a hold for all conduct", and that "nomos is not only law but more originally the assignment contained in the dispensation of Being".²¹⁰ As such it is a transcendent source of obligation; it is an assignment from Being. In authenticity we are bound by this injunction because we understand that our humanity depends upon it. Consequently, we can say that a way of living that closes down Being-as-possibility, that does not let beings Be, must be considered ontologically-ethically *wrong*: it does not respect letting-be and consequently, it violates Being.

²⁰⁹ Lawrence J. Hatab notes that the balancing of ethical claims can be understood in the sense of a modified notion of Aristotle's *phronēsis*. He shows that *phronēsis* can be understood as a mode of disclosure of appropriate courses of action in the midst of possibilities that fosters successful living. See *Ethics and Finitude: Heideggerian Contributions to Moral Philosophy*, p. 120-124

²¹⁰ Martin Heidegger, 'Letter on Humanism' in *Basic Writings*, p. 262

In an ontological-ethic there can be no 'rule' or 'formal principles' that can be applied to address our environmental concerns; only a general approach that can be actualized in particular cases and in different ways. As an ontological-ethic can elicit conflicting standpoints, it requires an engaged openness to each particular situation and it will generate a contextually specific response. Living well is a dynamic condition, which differs across human lives and circumstances.²¹¹ It cannot be understood in isolation from a particular social, cultural and historical situation. This does not mean that ontological-ethical decisions can be arbitrary, or that nothing can be ruled out. On the contrary, such decisions are engaged, responsive and responsible, informed by a particular context and guided by *physis*. Accordingly, an ontological-ethic is eminently practical: it is our very mode of access to the world's possibilities.

Authenticity recognizes that our interpretation of the world and ourselves is always limited and incomplete and remains open to the Being of beings. However, there has to be something to be open to if our lives are to be meaningful. If meaning and value arise in our various transactions with other-than-human entities, then the more diversity of other entities there are on the earth and the more opportunities that we have for authentic encounters with this diversity, the richer our lives will be. Thus, although our very existence requires us to kill, destroy and modify our world in order to live, a respectful consideration of other beings is a necessary prerequisite for any action towards another being. When we do have to use another being for our own well-being it must be done with consideration, respect and care. This means that we must seek to minimize our impact on the existence of others and that any use must bring-forth what is required for human needs in a respectful, responsible way. The necessity to kill an animal for food, or to chop a tree to build a dwelling, requires us to attend to them respectfully as

²¹¹ This point has been made by Lawrence J. Hatab, in relation to inter-personal relations and is equally valid in terms of human-other-than-human relations, see *Ethics and Finitude: Heideggerian Contributions to Moral Philosophy*, p. 122

meaningful things, recognizing that this is not the *only* meaning that they have. In a finite world, our freedom to kill, destroy or modify must always be responsive to balancing the possibilities inherent in the others we encounter. For example, cutting a tree to build a dwelling is an ontological-ethical decision: it involves giving consideration to the possibilities inherent in the tree and balancing these possibilities. We must understand that when the tree becomes a home, it can no longer Be anything else. Gone are its possibilities for Being: a place to climb and hide within; something whose leaves fall to the ground and nourish the soil; a habitat for a variety of other entities; a source of motivation for a work of art; an entity with a root structure that holds its part of the earth together; a producer of oxygen for the processes of life, to name but a few. If we decide to chop down the tree, it is done so after respectful consideration of the possibilities inherent in the tree and the decision is made with regard to our specific, contextual situation.²¹²

In order to transcend the principle of interchangeability inherent in technological disclosure, Heidegger discusses the importance of seeing other entities as 'things' and not 'objects'.²¹³ When we acknowledge others as things we take a non-essentialist, non-reductionist approach: we affirm possibility to be higher than actuality; we recognize uniqueness as more significant than uniformity; that absence is as important as presence. When we attend to entities as 'things' we are open to their presence as gathering and giving a meaningful world. When we view other entities as 'objects', unlimited, interchangeable resources for human consumption, we no longer listen to Being. When we conceal the boundary of *physis* in bringing-forth a world, the Being of things, and eventually the existence of those things

²¹² In his paper 'Moral considerability and universal consideration', Tom Birch also argues for the necessity of respectfully attending to all beings before we engage in any action, and that when we do have to use an other, it is done with appreciation, respect and care, see *Environmental Ethics*, Volume 15, 1993, p. 313-332

²¹³ See Martin Heidegger, 'The Thing' in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, p.165-186

themselves, is denied us. The annihilation of the other-than-human, through destruction or concealment, is the obliteration of our meaning and possibilities, and thus, we are diminished as human beings. In contrast, an ontological-ethic is a mode of dwelling that opens up possibilities and enriches our world, as the destiny of Being is the destiny of our humanity.

Embracing an ontological-ethic is the necessary pre-requisite for understanding our world in a new way. A new sense of 'reality' cannot be willed, but an ontological-ethic that changes how we comport ourselves towards other-than-human entities is the first step toward recovering a meaningful world. Heidegger has always maintained that everything essential and meaningful in human experience and history has issued from shared, meaningful practices. This sustains his idea that "only a god can save us", in the sense of something that is greater than the individual and individual concerns, such as a culturally renewing event that will draw people together in order to foster shared, meaningful practices.²¹⁴ Our 'environmental crisis' may be such an event, as it brings us face to face with our shared vulnerability and finitude. It has the potential to provide us with new practices that come together as a new paradigm that re-orientates our world. It may provide us with the shared, meaningful concern that gives our present age its focus.

That our 'environmental crisis' has the potential to bring people together to integrate the relations of people and their environments in a mutually sustaining way, is evident from such events as the 'First National People of Colour Environmental Leadership Summit', convened in October 1991, in Washington DC. The summit provided a context for support and a forum for

²¹⁴ Martin Heidegger, 'Only a God Can Save Us: Der Spiegel's Interview with Martin Heidegger on September 23, 1966', in *Philosophy Today*, 1976, p. 277. When Heidegger uses the word 'god' he uses it in a non-religious sense, to refer to that which transcends individual human beings and brings meaning and significance to a world. The word 'god' was also used by the Ionian Greek thinkers in a non-religious way; see John Burnet, *Early Greek Philosophy*, fourth edition, London: Adam and Charles Black, 1945, p. 14.

discussion for African, Native, Latino and Asian American, Canadian, Central and South American, Puerto-Rican and Marshall Island delegates who, working by consensus, drew up seventeen 'Principles of Environmental Justice'. The most important thing that came out of the summit was the bonding of people in this common cause, people who have been kept divided by a societal system that requires a hierarchy of separation in order to keep itself in power.²¹⁵

What is also significant about this coming-together is that it did not deny the truth of all the conflicting views that were expressed, nor did it try to bring everything under the control of a totalizing discourse in order to provide a 'universal' hegemonic solution. A totalizing discourse and a denial of situated truths are both oppressive to preserving diverse cultures and practices. The multi-racial dialogue provided the opportunity for people to understand their historical and cultural differences and begin to build a common environmental justice discourse to try and embrace ideas as seemingly polarized as 'whales as our brothers' and 'cities as ecologically sound environments'.²¹⁶ Such an approach is consistent with Heidegger's notion of contextual, situated truths and fosters a 'unity in difference' approach to being-in-the-world.

The current hegemonic enterprise is a powerful force and any new practices that seek to disclose an environmentally sound world can always be subverted and mis-used by it. The danger of falling back into the 'fallenness' of inauthentic existence is always a possibility. For example, under the guise of a concern for the environment we are inundated by a myriad of 'eco-friendly', 'organic', 'green' and 'environmentally-friendly' products that

²¹⁵ See Giovanna Di Chiro, 'Nature as Community: The Convergence of Environment and Social Justice', in *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature*, p. 305-309 for details of this event.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 312

perpetuate the hegemonic, ordered, technologically driven, production-consumption industry, which discloses all beings as resources.²¹⁷ Such a situation is a case whereby “the misuse of language in idle talk, slogans and phrases destroys our authentic relation to things”. The ‘environmental crisis’ has also spawned retail outlets that sell a particular view of nature, such as ‘*The Nature Company*’, which again serves to disclose and re-enforce ‘nature’ as a resource and ourselves as consumers.²¹⁸ Without a corresponding transformation in our thinking, the shift to ‘eco-marketing’ serves to replicate the technological disclosure of entities. Thus, there is always the danger of errancy and the constant need to question what may be concealed by any disclosive practice.

8

²¹⁷ Some of these products may be derived from practices that are more thoughtful and caring towards the other-than-human realm. However, it is evident from reading the information on the products, or attending to what is concealed by the available information, that this is not always the case. The danger remains in that they operate from out of the current hegemonic enterprise.

²¹⁸ See Jennifer Price, ‘Looking for Nature at the Mall: A Field Guide to the Nature Company’, in *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature*, p. 186-203; On the rise of the ‘eco-store’, see Sally Deneen, ‘Dawn of the Eco-Shop’, *E: The Environmental Magazine*, Earth Action Network: Norwalk, CT, March-April, 1993, p. 24-28.

Praxis

An ontological-ethical dwelling calls on us to fundamentally change our way of Being-in-the-world. For the most part, Western populations live in towns and cities, removed from direct contact with *physis*. It is therefore necessary for people to become aware of the ways in which all human activity intersects with and impacts on the other-than-human realm. Richard White has pointed out that for many of us, modern work and leisure activities mask this connection.²¹⁹ When work entails sitting in an office, typing on a keyboard, sorting, compiling and analyzing words or figures, sending electronic messages, producing no tangible product, it seems that we touch no living thing and alter nothing but a screen. When leisure consists of shopping, watching a movie, reading a book or playing a computer game, we can seem benign. But to enable this to happen the other-than-human realm has been brought-forth as 'shopping mall', 'office block', 'electricity', 'furniture' 'computer', 'paper' and numerous 'consumer items'. In the process, rivers have been dammed, plants have been killed, animals rendered homeless, trees have been destroyed, mountains quarried. Because we do not face what we alter and destroy, we learn nothing from it.

Accordingly, there is a need to become more attentive to the other-than-human that we use in our lives. We must become aware of the dialectical relation between humanity and other-than-human entities, to see just how deeply all human activity and the other-than-human realm are connected, so that we take responsibility for who we are and what we do. We need to question: 'where did this desk come from, so that I can be a writer?'; 'how does the electricity happen so that I can be someone who works on a computer?', so that we understand that when a particular world is disclosed,

²¹⁹ Richard White, 'Are You an Environmentalist or Do You Work for a Living?: Work and Nature', in *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature*, p. 171-185

a particular way of dwelling, other meaningful possibilities for ourselves and others are covered over and perhaps destroyed.

When we open the space for an ontological-ethic it opens us up to fundamental transformations of the way in which we conduct our lives. Our current social, political and economic systems are concerned with and organized around efficient ordering and control. If people are to have the opportunity to engage in disclosive activities it has implications for such systems. When we open the space for an ontological-ethic it is necessary for people to have the opportunity of encountering *physis* directly in their lived world. We can pave the way by making changes to our lived world, so that *physis* is part of our concerned-dealings in-the-world.

In the texts, *The Timeless Way of Building* and *A Pattern Language*, the authors offer an approach to building a living, working community that supports direct interactions with the other-than-human realm.²²⁰ They acknowledge that living-well is something that evolves between people and place. The fundamental claim is that building should not be done by planners and architects, but by the people of a community. And when we build a thing we can not do so in isolation, “but must also repair the world around it and within it, so that the larger world at that place becomes more coherent, and more whole; and the thing that is made takes its place in the web of nature, as you make it”.²²¹ The emphasis is on building communities that can sustain the whole of people’s lives, so there develops a sense of rootedness in a place. Accordingly, places of significance and meaning, sacred places,

²²⁰ Christopher Alexander; Sara Ishikawa; Murray Silverstein; Max Jacobson; Ingrid Fiksdahl-King and Shlomo Angel, *A Pattern Language*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1977; Christopher Alexander, *The Timeless Way of Building*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1979. I have only sketched a mere outline of the ideas for bringing forth a meaningful world contained in these texts.

²²¹ Christopher Alexander et al., *A Pattern Language*, p. xiii

become an integral part of everyday life.²²² The community is a political community, of between 5,000-10,000 people, so that they have an effective voice, enabling the community to make, implement, sustain and take responsibility for the choices it makes. Each community consists of a mosaic of sub-cultures, so that each person has access to a full variety of ways in which different people interact with the other-than-human realm in the subcultures near her own. This avoids the leveling and homogeneity characteristic of a technological society and enables people to learn from and respect one another's diverse approaches. Growing food, particularly fruit and vegetables, is seen as a fundamental part of human life and can be organized on a family or small group basis. The ideas presented move towards the idea of people disclosing and bringing forth worlds that are meaningful for their particular culture in a way that positively sustains human – other-than-human relations.

Another way of re-inhabiting a world that supports a Heideggerian understanding of human – other-than-human relations is *bioregionalism*.²²³ A bioregion refers to both a “geographical terrain and a terrain of consciousness”: to a place and to the ideas that have developed about how to live in that place, in a way that allows an ecologically and socially sustainable pattern of existence. It means a commitment to the planet, place by place. Learning to live-in-place means shaping a life pattern in a way that enriches both human life and the life of every thing in that place. This does not mean a return to some primitive lifestyle, or utopian provincialism; rather, it “implies an engagement with community and a search for the sustainable mix of economic practices that will enable people to live regionally and yet

²²² The Western tradition and organized religion has served to remove the idea of the sacred out of our practical everyday lives. Our present culture that extols critical detachment, rationality and objectivity, is an anathema to sacredness. The idea of the sacred, divine or holy residing in our everyday places and activities is discussed throughout Heidegger's text *Poetry, Language, Thought*.

²²³ See Peter Berg, 'What is bioregionalism', in *The Trumpeter*, Vol. 8, Issue 1, 1991, p. 6-12

learn from and contribute to a planetary society".²²⁴ As in the previous example, politics for a life-place has to be based on the reality of living there, so that it can make and implement changes in response to its own changing needs and circumstances, instead of in response to some centralized, de-contextualized agency.

I have discussed above that Heidegger maintains that technology is not something that we can overcome, but it can become part of a meaningful world if it is not hegemonic. Consequently, in order to be released from technology as a totalising way of life, we have to think carefully about the technologies we use and develop them in such a way that they do not close down other possibilities. Heidegger provides an example that shows the importance of this by contrasting windmill power-generation with coal-fired power-generation.²²⁵ The windmill cooperates with the wind and accordingly lets it Be, using it without using it up. Thus, 'wind' can still be disclosed in other ways: as something to cool oneself; some thing to dry the washing; some thing that enables flying a kite; some thing that enables the pollination of plants. In contrast, coal-fired power generation requires human beings to set-upon and challenge-forth *physis*, in order to unlock and expose the energy contained in the coal. The coal has to be hauled out of the ground, stored, transported and transformed. It is stored, ready to deliver the sun's warmth that it holds; the sun's warmth is challenged forth for heat, which in turn is ordered to deliver steam, whose pressure turns the wheels to produce power. Throughout the process its possibilities are denied and when it is used up, its possibilities are gone. Consequently, dwelling ontologically-ethically means recognizing that just because we can create a technology, it does not entail that we should. Deep reflection on what having a particular technology means, and consideration of the impact that it has on the

²²⁴ Gary Snyder has made this point in 'The rediscovery of Turtle Island', in George Sessions (ed.), *Deep Ecology for the 21st Century: Readings on the Philosophy and Practice of the New Environmentalism*, London: Shambala, 1995, p. 460

²²⁵ Martin Heidegger, The Question Concerning Technology, in *Basic Writings*, p. 320-322

possibilities for both human and other-than-human-beings, are a necessary part of a respectful relation between ourselves and others.

There is also a need to preserve and foster the practices that resist the technological impetus for order and control that will enable the possibility of alternative ways of dwelling-in-the-world: for example, local knowledge of soils, climate and seasonal changes; collecting and cultivating seeds from diverse plant species, in order to resist the spread and practice of mono-cultures; the ability to fix-what-breaks; the art of making quality and durable artifacts; regular opportunities for people to come together, prepare and share food and swap stories and songs; spending time with children in the outdoors, so they have the opportunity to encounter *physis* as they play and learn about themselves and other entities.

Thomas Sheehan has argued that:

(W)e would be doing being-itself no favours if we just let entities 'be' in the sense of leaving them pristine and untouched, perhaps even unknown. To let entities *be* means to let them *be present*, that is, to take them as endlessly engageable. And we do that by endlessly engaging them, both scientifically and practically, and yes, by letting them be submitted to the domination of the worker in the inevitable humanization of nature and the naturalization of man.²²⁶

My thesis agrees with Sheehan that to let entities *Be* means to let them be present. However, Sheehan maintains that Heidegger's thinking is consistent with the continued progression of technology and affirms humankind's ability and entitlement to transform and exploit the other-than-human. In doing so, he covers over the aspects of Heidegger's work that I have discussed above,

²²⁶ Thomas J. Sheehan, 'Nihilism: Heidegger/Junger/Aristotle', in Bert C. Hopkins (ed.), *Phenomenology: Japanese and American Perspectives*, Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1998, p. 297

that counter such an exploitative relation. Sheehan also seems to accept the prevailing situation as the only 'reality' there is, so that there can be no disclosure of 'reality' apart from a technological one. In so doing, he conceals *Dasein's* being-as-possibility, and thus its possibility of disclosing a different world. As I discussed above, it is this concealing of what is concealed that constitutes the inauthentic existence of *das Man* in our present age. It is that which we must be open to if we are to be granted the possibility of dwelling-in-the-world in a totally different way.

Conclusion

In the Western tradition, the dominant way of disclosing other-than-human entities has been through the methods of scientific and metaphysical thinking, which have been concerned with ontical inquiry. This approach has culminated in the enframing of technology. It has framed 'reality' as a 'world-picture', a world of 'objects', in which we see ourselves as 'subject', the measure and ground of these 'objects', dominating and controlling them. By perpetuating this calculative and controlling way of thinking and accepting this familiar, inherited understanding of a world, we fail to raise the question of Being and thus, we too contribute to the 'forgetfulness of Being'. The necessary consequence of dwelling in such forgetfulness is the situation that we have called an 'environmental crisis'. By continuing to dwell in such forgetfulness we are unable to respond to our current environmental problems, which threaten our very humanity.

Heidegger states that humanity is "always thrown back on the paths that he himself has laid out".²²⁷ The task of thinking is to break these paths and open the way for new perspectives. When we question concerning the environment, the path of questioning shows that the way to address our environmental concerns is through a transformation in our thinking: we must not think in order to dominate, but instead, think in order to understand. It is a thinking that overcomes the forgetfulness of Being that pervades life in our present age and uncovers what has always been there, but concealed.

Attending to our environmental concerns requires us to dwell authentically, in a way that is open to Being, so that we dwell in a world that is a context of meaning, recognizing that our meaning arises from our connectedness with the other-than-human. This realization affirms the need to care for and save

²²⁷ Martin Heidegger, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 157

other-than-human entities, which are essential for our humanity. In authenticity we exist in truth: we are true to our human-way-of-being and to other-than-human beings. In authenticity we dwell in a way that makes both possible.

Although our very existence requires us to kill, destroy and modify other-than-human entities in order to live, these are situated, contextual ontological-ethical decisions. A respectful consideration of all other beings as *meaningful things* is a necessary prerequisite to any disclosure, which must be attuned, responsively engaged and informed by the boundary of *physis*. We must also be considerate of and responsive to balancing the possibilities inherent in the others we encounter, recognizing that a particular way of disclosing an entity is not the *only* meaning that it has. Thus, although there can be no final closure on what other-than-human entities *are*, we must care for and save them if they are to *Be* anything at all.

References

- Adorno, Theodor and Horkheimer, Max, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, John Cumming (trans.) London: Verso, 1997
- Alexander, Christopher, *The Timeless Way of Building*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1979.
- Alexander, Christopher; Ishikawa, Sara; Silverstein, Murray; Jacobson, Max; Fiksdahl-King, Ingrid and Angel, Shlomo *A Pattern Language*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1977
- Benso, Silvia, 'On the Way to an Ontological Ethics: Ethical Suggestions in Reading Heidegger', in *Research in Phenomenology*, volume 24, 1994, p.159-188
- Berg, Peter, 'What is bioregionalism', in *The Trumpeter*, Vol. 8, Issue 1, 1991, p. 6-12
- Birch, Thomas H., 'Moral considerability and universal consideration', in *Environmental Ethics*, Volume 15, 1993, p. 313-332
- Boelen, Bernard J., 'The Question of Ethics in the Thought of Martin Heidegger', in *Heidegger and the Quest for Truth*, Manfred S. Frings (ed.), Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1968, p. 76-105
- Burnet, John, *Early Greek Philosophy*, fourth edition, London: Adam and Charles Black, 1945
- Carson, Rachel, *Silent Spring*, London: Penguin, 1962
- Chanter, Tina, 'Metaphysical Presence: Heidegger on Time and Eternity' in Arleen B. Dallery & Charles E. Scott (eds.), *Ethics and Danger: Essays on Heidegger and Continental Thought*, Albany N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1992, p. 125-138

- Concise Oxford Dictionary*, 10th edition, revised, Judy Pearsall (ed.), Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2001
- Deneen, Sally, 'Dawn of the Eco-Shop', in *E: The Environmental Magazine*, Earth Action Network: Norwalk, CT, March-April, 1993, p. 24-28
- Di Chiro, Giovanna, 'Nature as Community: The Convergence of Environment and Social Justice', in *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature*, New York: W. W. Norton & Company Inc., p. 298-320
- Dickens, Charles, *Hard Times*, London Oxford University Press, 1974
- Feenberg, Andrew, *Questioning Technology*, London: Routledge, 1999
- Foltz, Bruce V. and Frodeman, Robert, (eds.) *Rethinking Nature: Essays in Environmental Philosophy*, Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2004
- Foltz, Bruce V., 'On Heidegger and the Interpretation of Environmental Crisis' in *Environmental Ethics*, 1984, Volume 6, Issue 4, p. 326-338.
- Gibson, James J., *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception*, London: Lawrence Erlbaum, 1986
- Grange, Joseph 'On The Way Towards Foundational Ecology' in *Soundings*, 1977, p. 135-149
- Guignon, Charles B., *The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger*, Charles B. Guignon (ed.), Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1993
- Hatab, Lawrence J., *Ethics and Finitude: Heideggerian Contributions to Moral Philosophy*, Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers Inc., 2000

Hayles, N. Katherine, 'Searching for Common Ground' in *Reinventing Nature?: Responses to Postmodern Deconstruction*, Michael E. Soulé and Gary Lease, (eds.), Washington D.C.: Island Press, 1995

Heidegger, Martin, 'On the Essence and Concept of Physis in Aristotle's Physics B, 1', Thomas Sheehan, Trans., in *Pathmarks*, William McNeill (ed.), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998

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

Heidegger, Martin, 'The Question Concerning Technology' in *Basic Writings, from Being and Time (1927) to The Task of Thinking (1964)*, David Farrell Krell (ed.), New York: HarperCollins, 1977, 1993

Heidegger, Martin, 'The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking' in *Basic Writings, from Being and Time (1927) to The Task of Thinking (1964)*, David Farrell Krell (ed.), New York: HarperCollins, 1977, 1993

Heidegger, Martin, 'Letter on Humanism' in *Basic Writings, from Being and Time (1927) to The Task of Thinking (1964)*, David Farrell Krell (ed.), New York: HarperCollins, 1977, 1993

Heidegger, Martin, 'What Calls for Thinking?' in *Basic Writings, from Being and Time (1927) to The Task of Thinking (1964)*, David Farrell Krell (ed.), New York: HarperCollins, 1977, 1993

Heidegger, Martin, 'Modern Science, Metaphysics and Mathematics' in *Basic Writings, from Being and Time (1927) to The Task of Thinking (1964)*, David Farrell Krell (ed.), New York: HarperCollins, 1977, 1993

Heidegger, Martin, 'On the Essence of Truth' in *Basic Writings, from Being and Time (1927) to The Task of Thinking (1964)*, David Farrell Krell (ed.), New York: HarperCollins, 1977, 1993

Heidegger, Martin, 'The Way to Language' in *Basic Writings, from Being and Time (1927) to The Task of Thinking (1964)*, David Farrell Krell (ed.), New York: HarperCollins, 1977, 1993

Heidegger, Martin, 'The Origin of the Work of Art' in *Basic Writings, from Being and Time (1927) to The Task of Thinking (1964)*, David Farrell Krell (ed.), New York: HarperCollins, 1977, 1993

Heidegger, Martin, '*The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*', William Lovitt (trans.), London: Garland Publishing Inc., 1977

Heidegger, Martin, 'The Turning' in '*The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*', William Lovitt (trans.), London: Garland Publishing Inc., 1977

Heidegger, Martin, 'Science and Reflection', in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, William Lovitt (trans.), London: Garland Publishing Inc., 1977

Heidegger, Martin, 'The Age of the World Picture' in '*The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*', William Lovitt (trans.), London: Garland Publishing Inc., 1977

Heidegger, Martin, 'Only a God Can Save Us: Der Spiegel's Interview with Martin Heidegger on September 23, 1966', in *Philosophy Today*, 1976, p. 268-284

Heidegger, Martin, *The End of Philosophy*, Joan Stambaugh (trans.), London: Souvenir Press, 1975

Heidegger, Martin, 'The Thing' in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, Albert Hofstadter (trans.), New York: Harper Row, 1971

Heidegger, Martin, 'Poetically Man Dwells' in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, Albert Hofstadter (trans.), New York: Harper Row, 1971

- Heidegger, Martin, 'Building Dwelling Thinking' in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, Albert Hofstadter (trans), New York: Harper Row, 1971
- Heidegger, Martin *What is Called Thinking?* Fred D. Wieck and J. Glenn Gray, (trans), London: Harper & Row , 1968
- Heidegger, Martin, *Being and Time*, John Macquarrie & Edward Robinson (trans.), Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1967
- Heidegger, Martin, 'Memorial Address', in *Discourse on Thinking*, John Anderson and F. Hans Freund (trans.), New York: Harper & Row, 1966
- Heidegger, Martin, 'Conversation on a Country Path', in *Discourse on Thinking*, John Anderson and F. Hans Freund (trans.), New York: Harper & Row, 1966
- Heidegger, Martin, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, Ralph Manheim (trans.), London: Yale University Press, 1959
- Heisenberg, Werner, *The Physicist's Conception of Nature*, Arnold J. Pomerans (trans.), Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1958,
- Manes, Christopher, 'Nature and Silence' in *Environmental Ethics*, Volume 14, Winter 1992, p. 339-350
- McKinley, Daniel 'The New Mythology of Man in Nature', in *The Subversive Science: Essays Towards An Ecology Of Man*, Paul Shepard and Daniel McKinley (eds.), New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1969
- Olwig, Kenneth R., 'Reinventing Common Nature: Yosemite and Mount Rushmore – A Meandering Tale of a Double Nature', in William Cronon (ed.), *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature*, New York: W. W. Norton & Company Inc., p. 379-408

- Plumwood, Val, 'Feminism and Ecofeminism: Beyond the Dualistic Assumptions of Women, Men and Nature', in *The Ecologist*, Volume 22, No. 1, 1992, p. 8-13
- Price, Jennifer, 'Looking for Nature at the Mall: A Field Guide to the Nature Company', in *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature*, p. 186-203
- Rodman, John, 'The Liberation of Nature?' *Inquiry* 20, 1997, p. 83-131
- Sayre, Kenneth M., 'An Alternative View of Environmental Ethics', in *Environmental Ethics*, 13, 1991, p. 195-214
- Sheehan, Thomas J., 'Dasein', in *A Companion to Heidegger*, Hubert L. Dreyfus and Mark A. Wrathall (eds.), Oxford: Blackwell, 2005
- Sheehan, Thomas J., 'Nihilism: Heidegger/Junger/Aristotle', in Bert C. Hopkins (ed.), *Phenomenology: Japanese and American Perspectives*, Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1998, p. 273-316
- Shepard, Paul, 'Five Green Thoughts', in *Encounters with Nature: Essays by Paul Shepard*, Florence R. Shepard (ed.), Washington D.C., Island Press, 1999, p. 117-134
- Shepard, Paul, *The Others: How Animals Made Us Human*, Washington D.C.: Island Press, 1996
- Shepard, Paul, *Nature and Madness*, Athens, Georgia: The University of Georgia Press, 1982;
- Snyder, Gary, 'The rediscovery of Turtle Island', in George Sessions (ed.), *Deep Ecology for the 21st Century: Readings on the Philosophy and Practice of the New Environmentalism*, London: Shambala, 1995, p. 454-462

Stone, Christopher D., *Should Trees Have Standing?: Toward Legal Rights for Natural Objects*, California: W. Kaufmann, 1974

Thomson, Iain, 'What's wrong with being a technological essentialist? A response to Feenberg', in *Inquiry*, Volume 43, Issue 4, 2000, p.429-444

Thomson, Iain, 'From the Question Concerning Technology to the Quest for a Democratic Technology: Heidegger, Marcuse, Feenberg', in *Inquiry*, Volume 43, Issue 2, 2000, p 203-215

White, Richard, 'Are You an Environmentalist or Do You Work for a Living?: Work and Nature', in *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature*, p. 171-185

Zimmerman, Michael E., 'Rethinking the Heidegger-Deep Ecology Relationship' in *Environmental Ethics*, 1993, Volume 15, Issue 3, p. 195-224

Zimmerman, Michael E., 'Toward a Heideggerian *Ethos* for Radical Environmentalism' in *Environmental Ethics*, 1983, Volume 5, Issue 2, p. 99-131