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

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

Contents

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

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[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.

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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

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[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

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[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

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[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

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[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

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[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,

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[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

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[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 lead 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

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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,

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[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

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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.

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[28] When employing the term metaphysics, Heidegger is referring to traditional Western thinking that has been concerned with the being*ness* 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.

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[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,

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[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

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[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,

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[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 'being*ness*' of entities.[42] Ontical inquiry focuses on substances and their essential properties, in order to ascertain that which 'stands-under' (*sub-stantia*) 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

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[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

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[49]Originary 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

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[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

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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.

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[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 being*ness* 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 being*ness* 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

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[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.

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[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