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Poetic Becoming: Building with Heidegger

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Poetic Becoming:
Building with Heidegger

Senior Project Submitted to
The Division of Social Studies
of Bard College

by
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Annandale-on-Hudson, New York

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For Oma

Table of Contents

Preface	1
Introduction	5
I. Homeless	12
Thinking Against Humanism, Metaphysics, and Animal Rationale	14
Dwelling in Language, Ek-statically Sustaining <i>die Lichtung</i>	18
Being's Withdrawal	22
II. Imperiled	31
What is Technique?	33
What is <i>Ge-stell</i> ?	42
<i>Ge-stell</i> 's Domination	47
The Possibility of an Alternate Destiny	51
III. Saved	57
Overcoming the Peril	61
The Venturesome Poet	73
Dwelling in the Save	82
Conclusion	91
Bibliography	95

Preface

Struck with the belief in justice and full of naivete, I began my undergraduate studies as a Human Rights major, intending to follow the path towards a law degree. Then the questioning began—not just about the atrocities of human rights violations that happen around the world, everywhere, all the time—but also about the concept of “human rights” itself. I realized I truly had no idea what “human rights” actually meant. It became increasingly harder to imagine fighting for “human rights” without first defining “rights” or the “human being.” Although I was still concerned with the injustices that manifest in the world, I questioned the language surrounding these injustices, I wanted to define the terms. Once I shifted my focus to trying to make sense of the “human being,” an even larger question opened itself up: “What is Being?” The question haunted me, like it probably haunts most undergraduate students undergoing the existential rite of passage. Nonetheless it was there, staring me in the face. And as if the gods, or demons, heard my questioning, Martin Heidegger was thrust into my life.

I took a course on Heidegger not entirely certain of what I was getting myself into. But as the class progressed something changed in me. I was thinking in a way I had never thought before and it felt incredibly terrifying and thrilling. I was scared of where Heidegger’s writing would take me. Sometimes it led me into very dark places. But I was exhilarated by this discomfort, a feeling that I was standing on the edge of a cliff looking down. Heidegger’s writing created a space for me to rethink what “Being” is and what the parameters of the “human being” are. He put into words the questions that I felt in my bones. He addressed the question of alienation in a way that was meaningful for me because his emphasis was always explicitly on language; the problem of language was how I wound up here in the first place.

The rest of my undergraduate experience became consumed with these questions: of Being, the human being, belonging, language, alienation, and multiplicity within the self. For me these questions of alienation were selfishly rooted in my own sense of multiple selfhood, as my personal background is very much one of being in-between. Identity politics aren't my favorite, but where you are situated in the world does indeed have material effect. As a mixed-race person originating from ancestors who were both colonizers and colonized, as someone who only fluently speaks English despite it not being my ancestors' native tongue, I have always been cognizant of my liminality and groundlessness. I have never really felt I belong to anyone or anywhere; but the place where I always felt the most at home is in writing and reading poetry— perhaps because poetry itself is a kind of in-between.

Poetry allows for the individual to reflect on material suffering and injustice, it heals the wounds caused by violence against the self. You can grieve with poetry, you can mourn in poetry, poetry is prayer insofar as it keeps open the possibility of grace. Poetry returns agency to the individual, particularly the marginalized individual, by allowing the individual self to reclaim their own identity and sense of belonging despite all of the worldly efforts made against this reclamation. Poetic language is insurrectionary and empowering, it comes out of the world of experience but imagines and creates new worlds we may one day belong to; it is world-making.

Initially I intended for this project to place Heidegger into conversation with Gloria Anzaldúa, a brilliant queer Mestiza writer whose poetry and thinking speaks to these particular questions of alienation and in-betweenness. But as I began writing I realized I was not ready to take on such a massive challenge. I was struggling enough to write about Heidegger; how was I to take on Anzaldúa too? My heart wanted to write about Anzaldúa; I was naturally drawn to a woman who looked like me, who I deeply admired, and whose words I ate up. But I knew I had to write

about Heidegger in order to address the philosophical question I began with, knowing Anzaldúa's words and spirit would carry me along the project.

The process of writing about Heidegger has not only been intellectually challenging but ethically complicated. There were many moments I felt like a sellout— “I should be writing about anti-colonial, intersectional feminist theory,” I would think to myself. Often, I felt embarrassed to tell people I was writing about Heidegger because of his Nazi association. It is no secret that Heidegger is a problematic figure, he joined the Nazi party in 1933. The more I read his philosophy the less his decision to join the party made sense to me. Of course, Nazism never makes sense in my mind, but so much of his writing stands so flagrantly opposed to Nazism. I do not wish to play down his engagement with Nazism, nor cast it aside, since this project is not about Heidegger as a Nazi. Although I don't believe you can ever entirely divorce the writing from the writer's personal beliefs, this essay is not about Heidegger as a figure. In this essay I am concerned with alienation, meaning, and poetry, and I provide a reading of Heidegger's works to address these concerns. As I previously stated, his writing was the first to radically shift the way I think about these things. Thus, my thesis was born out of this introduction, and lives just as naïvely as I began.

She remained faceless and voiceless, but a light shone through her veil of silence. And though she was unable to spread her limbs and though for her right now the sun has sunk under the earth and there is no moon, she continues to tend the flame. The spirit of fire spurs her to fight for her own skin and a piece of ground to stand on, a ground from which to view the world— a perspective, a homeground...

— Gloria Anzaldúa

*Borderlands/La Frontera:
The New Mestiza*

The map must be of sand and can't be read by ordinary light. It must carry fire to the next tribal town, for renewal of spirit.

In the legend are instructions on the language of the land, how it was we forgot to acknowledge the gift, as if we were not in it or of it.

Take note of the proliferation of supermarkets and malls, the altars of money. They best describe the detour from grace.

Keep track of the errors of our forgetfulness; the fog steals our children while we sleep.

—Joy Harjo
“A Map to the Next World”

Introduction

This project maps the thinking of Martin Heidegger on the question of being-in-the-world. It asks what it means to exist as a human being, in a world of alienation and meaninglessness. It peers into how meaning and language have decayed, and alienation has come to hold sway. It makes a claim on the true essence of the human being, and how the human being can once again exist unalienated from their Being, in a thoughtful world full of meaning and revelatory language. And it says that this world of restored meaning and careful thinking only opens itself up to us, the human being, in poetry. Truly there is no beginning nor end; rather this map illustrates a series of points along the various paths of human existence that twist, turn, intersect, and diverge ways. If followed, some of the paths on this map lead to dense cities of alienation and barren deserts of meaninglessness. But other paths take us to the edge of the sea, where the water meets the shore and the beam of sunlight reflecting off of the expansive ocean and glimmering back into our eyes tells us what it means to be as a human; to our mother's touch or our father's smile, where we feel still and whole in the fullness of gaiety and care; to our favorite patch of trees, where the soil always smells rich of springtime even in the dead of winter; or to our bathtub, where we close our eyes and water fills our ears, all noise drowned out but in such tranquil silence we hear so clearly. These are the moments I feel the most present inside of this world, yet entirely outside of it—perhaps, that is what it feels like to be cognizant of your own Being. All of these paths, in their divergence, disparateness, and entanglement, are meaningful insofar as they belong to Being. The path that leads us into alienation is just as important as the one that leads us into reconciliation because they all speak to the wide array of being-in-the-world.

By reading between and across a variety of Martin Heidegger's texts and piecing them together, this project illustrates the danger of a meaningfulness world and what it could look like to re-imagine meaning. My thesis is that Heidegger's thinking sheds light on the profound alienation in the modern world that is deeply rooted in the reification of language and deterioration of its meaning, the rise of technique, and the will to power. In the face of such losses, we attempt to acquire control and reassert ourselves, but we mistakenly do so by treating everything, including other human beings, as mere means to accomplish our human ends. Such willing only drives us further away from our belonging to Being, from our essence, and from meaning—furthering our existence into a meaningfulness state of alienation. But Heidegger's philosophy does not conceive of this perilous, alienated destiny of the modern age as a doomed and unchangeable fate. He introduces a more essential and primordial way of being-in-the-world, and this way lies in poetry.

Because the thesis of this essay is deeply rooted in the thinking of Heidegger, and the essay itself provides a deep analysis of some of his texts, it is largely articulated in his language. That I adopt Heidegger's language is not to say that I don't provide my own interpretation; the ways in which I piece together a map of various works and read a thesis statement out of this interplay, opens up the space for my own reading of Heidegger's thinking.

The structure of this essay is organized into three sections and each section focuses on a particular stage of being-in-the-world: the first two illustrate forms of alienation, and the final introduces an alternative way of thinking that reconciles with Being and our belonging in this world. Crucial to the entire argument is the idea that the human being essentially belongs to Being. In such belonging, the human being's job is to care for and shepherd Being, by thinking toward Being in language. Being always unconceals itself in the world, but if Being is not thought toward or cared for properly by the human being, it unconceals itself in perilous ways. The consequence

of these perilous ways of unconcealing is a severed relationship between the human being and Being; because the human being belongs to Being, this severing leads to a loss of belonging, i.e., alienation. These perilous ways of the human being's relationship to Being, happen when the human being abandons their essential role as the shepherd of being and tries to act as master. As earlier noted, these paths often intersect, run parallel, and part ways. Being can unconceal itself simultaneously in different ways and multiple ways; this is because Being operates distinct from limited human scales of space and time. Being is both everywhere and nowhere. Out of its own nonlinear dimensionality, Being does not have a singular destiny of unconcealing in this world. This holds open the possibility of a save from its perilous unconcealing.

Despite the nonlinearity of Being's unconcealment in the world, and thus Being's relationship with the human being, I choose to map the stages of this relationship in a specific order. The essay is broken down into three chapters, each unfolding a particular stage of being-in-the-world: "I. Homeless," "II. Imperiled," and "III. Saved." The first is the most basic state of alienation, the second is the most extreme form of alienation (that inherently includes the first), and the final is a saving from alienation and a restoration of belonging in the world.

The first chapter is titled "Homeless" because in his 1946 "Letter on Humanism," Heidegger gives the name "homelessness" to a particular kind of alienation and a condition of living within the modern world. Homelessness signifies the stage of being-in-the-world that unfolds when the human being falls out of their essential "dwelling." The idea of dwelling is crucial to homelessness because homelessness is precisely what happens when the human being loses their dwelling place. In this letter, Heidegger writes that "language is the house of [Being]. In its home human beings dwell."¹ The role of the human as the dweller of language is to think

¹ Martin Heidegger, "Letter on Humanism," p. 239; [145].

toward Being, in language. But when Being is not thought and when man does not stand in the clearing in relation to Being, then language is treated as a mere means to an end. The human being loses their essential dwelling place. In many ways I see homelessness as the most basic manifestation of alienation in the world, the alienation of modern mundane living, brought about by utilitarian language, a loss of thinking in the world, and a general attitude of the will to master.

“Homeless” contains three parts: 1. “Thinking Against Humanism, Metaphysics, and Animal Rationale,” 2. “Dwelling in Language, Ek-statically Sustaining *die Lichtung*,” and 3. “Being’s Withdrawal.” In the first part of the chapter, “Thinking Against Humanism, Metaphysics, and Animal Rationale,” I explore the ways in which metaphysics and humanism contribute to the neglect of properly thinking toward Being in its essence. In “Dwelling in Language, Ek-statically Sustaining *die Lichtung*,” I address what this “proper essence” of Being is and how Being, language, and the human being essentially relate to one another. In this portion of the chapter I will tease out the idea that language houses Being and is the dwelling place of the human being. Furthermore, I will address the role of the human being in this dwelling. And lastly, in “Being’s Withdrawal” I will deepen our understanding of how exactly the loss of dwelling— i.e., homelessness—has come about, and how Being has withdrawn from the world in the face of homelessness.

The second chapter, “Imperiled,” deals with the most extreme form of alienation in the world: the kind that is brought about by modern technique. For this reason, this chapter will be primarily grounded in Heidegger’s “Question Concerning Technique.” In this text, Heidegger traces the ways in which modern technique’s essence, *Ge-stell*, has become the dominant way that Being unconceals itself, or makes itself manifest to us, in the modern age. Heidegger writes that “technology is in its essence a destiny within the history of being and of the truth of being, a truth

that lies in oblivion.”² *Ge-stell* covers up the truth of Being and in the reign of *Ge-stell* all beings come to relate to one another as objects to be placed and ordered for the furthering of ends. Under the reign of *Ge-stell* thrives the will to mastery, and in such a way the human being is imperiled in the highest sense, for the human being is the furthest away from their essential dwelling. This is what Heidegger refers to as the “peril” of Being. In many ways the peril of homelessness is different from *Ge-stell*’s peril, and throughout this chapter I highlight the differences between the two. Nevertheless, they both function as the primary modes of modern alienation, both driving the human being out of their dwelling place.

This chapter is made up of four parts: “What is Technique?,” “What is *Ge-stell*?,” “*Ge-stell*’s Domination,” and “The Possibility of an Alternate Destiny.” The first section defines and situates technique within Heidegger’s thinking, unpacking the distinction he makes between the old ways of technique and the new. Technique was not always bound up with the will to master and treatment of all that is as mere means. Heidegger argues that this is development of modern technique manifests precisely in modern technique’s essence: *Ge-stell*. The second section asks after *Ge-stell*, defining what *Ge-stell* is and how exactly all beings come to relate *solely* as means to ends and objects to be ordered under the unfolding of *Ge-stell*. This brings us to the third part of the chapter “*Ge-stell*’s Domination.” In this section I discuss the extremity of *Ge-stell* as not only the exclusive way that beings relate but also the exclusive way in which Being unconceals itself. Because of its extremity, *Ge-stell* is the highest peril of our relation to Being. Finally, in “The Possibility of an Alternate Destiny,” I introduce the idea of a potential saving from the peril of being-in-the-world. The extremity of *Ge-stell* as the destiny of Being’s unconcealment makes the danger of technique manifest, but out of the danger of technique comes forth the possibility of

² Martin Heidegger, “Letter on Humanism,” p. 259; [171].

an alternative way of relating to Being, a different destiny of Being, which Heidegger refers to as ‘the saving.’

The third chapter, “Saved” explores how a save may grow from out of this peril that has engulfed being-in-the-world. This chapter works between several essays in the collection of Heidegger’s works titled *Poetry, Language, Thought*. In this chapter I will explain the importance of the save arising from the peril, and the function of the human being in overcoming the peril and bringing-forth the save. Heidegger tells us that “the same poet, [i.e., Hölderlin] from whom we heard the words ‘But where peril is, grows/ What saves also.’ tells us: ‘. . . poetically dwells man on this earth.’”³ Here we are given new light to the dwelling of the human being as not only a linguistic dwelling, but more essentially a poetic dwelling. For reasons that will be made explicitly clear, poetry is language in its highest essence. Poetry, as opposed to the language of utility or jargon, speaks to language as the house of Being and the dwelling place of the human. Therefore, poetry is the saving. It is only from its poetic essence that the save holds such radical potential for bringing-forth restoration of the relation between the human being and dwelling. The saving comes out of the experience of alienation but opens up a radically different way of being-in-the-world that returns Being to its essence.

“Saved” is composed of three sections: “Overcoming the Peril,” “The Venturesome Poet,” and “Dwelling in the Save.” The first section of the chapter establishes the peril as the site of the save and the human being’s role in overcoming the peril. Although the human being is crucial in the saving, their role is not one of mastery, but rather one of thoughtful care and attentiveness. Thus, “The Venturesome Poet” is about the heroic poet who goes into the peril, listens and looks attentively, and hears the poetic call of the saving, sees its flashing light from out of the perilous

³ Martin Heidegger, “Question Concerning Technique,” p. 30; [35].

darkness, and responds accordingly. This section also redefines poetry within the framework of the saving, positing the poetic as that which saves and restores the dwelling of the human being. In the last section, “Dwelling in the Save,” we explore dwelling as a question of belonging. Human beings dwell poetically in their belonging to Being, thus poetry as the saving brings us back to our dwelling from out of our alienated way of being-in-the-world.

Indeed, our world seems to be fraught with estrangement, isolation, and meaninglessness. Sometimes, in our openness, we become overpowered by the sense of dread of that comes with living in such an alienated world. Sometimes, we close ourselves off to everything in order to cope with such pain and loss. It’s a defense mechanism of grief. But sometimes, out of our open sensitivity to existence, we feel not only the alienation of reality, but the interconnectedness of the real. Opening ourselves up to the world of Being can lead to poetic creation. And out of poetic creation we can build a new world, we can become poetic again.

I. Homeless

In Heidegger's "Letter on Humanism," he situates the relationship between Being and language as one that is profoundly interconnected, writing that "language is the house of [Being, and] in its home human beings dwell."⁴ He tells us that the human being, as the dweller of this home, must sustain the relationship between language and Being. How the human being (*Dasein*) may sustain this relationship is by thinking toward, and thus caring for Being; caring for Being is essential to Heidegger's understanding of *Dasein*. Thus, when the human being no longer carefully thinks toward Being, and attempts to become the master of all beings and Being— failing to make the necessary distinction between beings and Being because all becomes posited as means to the ends of mastery—the relationship between language and Being is severed. The human being is the one who suffers from this severing, for the home that houses the human being's essence (i.e. language) crumbles, driving the human away from the Being they belong to. Heidegger gives the name *homelessness* to the split that unfolds between the human and their house of Being, and in this chapter the question of homelessness will be my primary concern.

By way of investigating the claim that language houses Being and is the dwelling place of the human, I will work through Heidegger's rich vocabulary, teasing out the linguistic nuances in order to arrive at a clear understanding of what exactly it could mean, and how the human being finds themselves expelled from this home. Heidegger illustrates Being in its relation to language in a rich and highly particularized vocabulary. Many people are often turned off by Heidegger's very specific language and writing style, accusing him of being intentionally difficult and inaccessible. I do not wish to invalidate these claims, but I am drawn to the language he explores

⁴ Martin Heidegger, "Letter on Humanism," p. 239; [145].

precisely because of its specificity. His emphasis on language opens up the space in which words can reclaim their agency and language can bring-forth meaning once again. Furthermore, in our meditation on language, language can bring the meaning of Being to us (or us to Being).

Heidegger does not “use” difficult language, rather his writing thinks deeply about language, and particularly about the language of Being. The purpose of this linguistic meditation is not accessibility or utility, and I do not mean this in an elitist way. Being, or more specifically, the thinking of Being, is always available to all of us. Insofar as we are human beings, we are all able to think about language and the primordial power it holds to draw us back into the immanent and let Being shine-froth. Why I say there is no accessible or utilitarian “point” is because Heidegger is pushing away any “teleological,” purposive ends; his meditations on language and Being are not for the sake of positing value, concrete outcomes, and tangible findings. For that would be precisely the kind of thinking (i.e., scientific-positivism or metaphysical thinking) that Heidegger is against. He sees these categories of thought as consumed by the will to master and universalize— driving the human being further away from their essence and into homelessness. Thus, this exploration is not necessarily “useful” or “productive.” The end of the pursuit lies in itself, for to think carefully about language and Being is to dwell in the house of Being.

In the first section I will focus on Heidegger’s critique of humanism and metaphysics that he presents in his letter. Specifically, how these two modes of thinking misunderstand the essential nature of the human being and neglect properly thinking towards Being by failing to distinguish between Being and beings.

The next section I will ground Heidegger’s understanding of the nature of the human being, language, and Being in their essential relation to one another. To do this I will turn to his passage

that posits language as the house of Being and the dwelling place of the human. This section will address the responsibility of the human's dwelling and what it means to dwell.

In the final section I will ask the question of the loss of dwelling, i.e., homelessness. This section will explore how homelessness arises from the absence of thinking toward Being and the obsession with value, order, and the will to mastery. When Being is not thought by the human being in language, we lose our proper dwelling. In such a way Being withdraws from the world and we become homeless.

Thinking Against Humanism, Metaphysics, and Animal Rationale

Although I will be moving between multiple works of Heidegger's in an attempt to investigate language as the house of Being and the human being's homelessness, the "Letter on Humanism" will occupy a central position in this investigation. This text is a response to a French school teacher, Jean Beaufret, who posed the question: "How can we restore meaning to the word humanism?"⁵ Heidegger takes issue with Beaufret's question, arguing that it "proceeds from [his] intention to retain the word 'humanism.'"⁶ Generally speaking he takes issue with all "True, '-isms," as he calls them. But 'humanism' is a particularly a fraught notion for Heidegger, and he proceeds to extensively critique it.

Heidegger assures Beaufret that his critique of humanism is not a devaluing of humankind; it does not "promote the inhumane [nor deprecate] the dignity of the human being," but is a *reevaluation* of the human being.⁷ He opposes humanism because he does not think that it "[sets] the humanitas of the human being high enough," rather it neglects what he finds to be essential to

⁵ Martin Heidegger, "Letter on Humanism," p. 241; [147].

⁶ Ibid, 241; [147].

⁷ Ibid, 251; [161].

the human being.⁸ He writes, “the sole implication is that the highest determinations of the essence of the human being in humanism still do not realize the proper dignity of the human being,” and “to that extent the thinking in *Being and Time* is against humanism.”⁹ In part, his opposition to humanism has much to do with its conceptualization of the human being as mere ‘*animal rationale*.’ Heidegger is arguing that by defining the human being as *animal rationale*, metaphysics and humanism neglect the dignity of the human. Heidegger argues that they think “of the human being [only on] the basis of animalitas ... not in the direction of his humanitas.”¹⁰ By neglecting to think toward one’s humanitas, which is to say toward its essence (which for Heidegger is certainly not animalitas), metaphysics and humanism fail to think toward the truth of the human being. And for Heidegger, the truth of Being dwells in the house of language.¹¹

“Animal rationale” derives from the Greek ζῷον λόγος ἔχον¹² (*zoon logon echon*), but according to Heidegger is not a direct Latin translation. Instead, he suggests that its meaning has been filtered through the lens of metaphysics.¹³ The metaphysical conditioning of “animal rationale” has deteriorated the original meaning, thus losing sight of *zoon logon echon*:

The position which looked at the human with the definition “animal rationale” as its guide saw them in the sphere of other Daseins [Daseinenden] with them in the mode of life (plants, animals) and indeed as a being which has language (logon echon), which addresses and discusses its world—a world initially there for it in the dealings it goes about in its praxis, its concern taken in a broad sense. The later definition “animal rationale,” “rational animal,” which was indifferently understood simply in terms of the literal sense of the words, covered up the intuition which was the soil out of which this definition of human being originally arose.¹⁴

⁸ Ibid, 251; [161].

⁹ Martin Heidegger, “Letter on Humanism,” p. 251; [161].

¹⁰ Ibid, 245-246; [155].

¹¹ Ibid, 246; [155].

¹² ζῷον λόγος ἔχον translates to *zoon logon echon*, or a living being that has logos. (Stuart Elden, “Reading Logos as Speech: Heidegger, Aristotle and Rhetorical Politics,” p. 282)

¹³ Martin Heidegger, “Letter on Humanism,” p. 246; [153-154].

¹⁴ Martin Heidegger, *Ontology: The Hermeneutic of Facticity*, p. 23.

The primordial spirit or “intuition” of *zoon logon echon* indicates that the human being is a linguistic being, or a being that is endowed with speech. Heidegger does not deny this claim, as the above passage shows, it in fact places emphasis on the human being as a particular kind of being: *Dasein*. The problem is that metaphysics takes its translation of “animal rationale” literally. Consequently, the focus is shifted to “animal,” shedding light on a tangential issue Heidegger takes with metaphysics: “Metaphysics does not think the difference between Being and beings. Metaphysics does not ask about the truth of Being itself. Nor does it therefore ask in what way the essence of the human being belongs to the truth of Being.”¹⁵

The “Letter on Humanism” is thus a response not only to Jean Beaufret, but to the metaphysical and humanist traditions; these traditions ultimately do not ask after Being in the way Heidegger attempts to. The stated defects Heidegger sees in metaphysics are critical to understanding what exactly he is doing in this text and in his broader philosophical thinking. The distinction between Being and beings is of the utmost importance to Heidegger and is a foundation upon which his thought lies. In *Being and Time*, he asserts that *das Sein des Seins ist nicht selbst ein Seiendes* (“the Being of entities ‘is’ not itself an entity.”)¹⁶ Beings is its essential truth is not a thing; Being is both everywhere and nowhere, unable to be pinned down and mastered by the human being. By failing to explicitly make the distinction between beings and Being, metaphysics cannot and does not ask after truth of Being. And if the truth of Being is ignored then too is the *Wesen* of the human being.¹⁷ The oblivion of the distinction between beings and Being, and the

¹⁵ Martin Heidegger, “Letter on Humanism,” p. 246; [154].

¹⁶ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 26.

¹⁷ In footnote 14 of *Technique and the Turn*, “The Question Concerning Technique,” the translators write: “‘*Wesen*’” is the archaic verb from which stem the grammatical formations of the past tenses of *sein*, to be. It is still commonly employed as a substantive translating the Latin *essentia*, essence. Heidegger too uses it in that way, but with an important difference that is discussed in ‘The Origin of the Work of Art’ at p. H 39. But he also uses *wesen* as a verb: a being is said to *wesen* when it manifests itself in the truth of its own way of being. We shall leave the verbal *wesen* untranslated. See also the explanation Heidegger gives in this essay at pp. H 29 ff.” (Martin Heidegger, “Question Concerning Technique,” p. 10.)

subsequent shortcomings in thought, contribute to the rise of homelessness. When Being is posited as an object it is seen as something to be mastered, no longer does the human being think from care and in language in its essential sense. Instead, the will to will dominates in a language of utility. In such a way, the human being is driven out of their *Wesen*, becoming alienated from their truth.

With Heidegger, I find that the thinking of, about, and towards Being is a crucial part of being human. To meditate on Being is to ponder about ourselves and where we come from. So, what happens when this kind of thinking is not being thought? What happens when the truth of Being is ignored, or when it becomes corroded by fictional systems of value and the mastery of *techne*? The result is we are no longer to dwell in language, in the house of being, and we become *homeless*.

Thus far, we have situated the “Letter on Humanism” as a text that—as opposed to the dominant thinking of metaphysics and humanism—1. distinguishes between Being and beings, 2. asks after the truth of Being, and 3. attempts to understand how the *Wesen* of the human being belongs to Being’s truth and dwells in language. By way of my investigation of the claim that “language is the house of Being [and] in its home human beings dwell,”¹⁸ I will offer a reading of Heidegger’s thinking through of the above tasks. Heidegger’s emphasis on the need to think about the above tasks is in response to a general lack of thought—and such a lack is the driving force behind homelessness.

¹⁸ Martin Heidegger, “Letter on Humanism,” p. 239; [145].

Dwelling in Language, Ek-statically Sustaining *die Lichtung*

Before understanding how homelessness is a loss of the human being's dwelling and a neglect of Being and language, we must ground these terms within Heidegger's understanding of their essential relation:

Language is the house of [Being]. In its home human beings dwell. Those who think and those who create with words are the guardians of this home. Their guardianship accomplished the manifestation of [Being] insofar as they bring this manifestation to language and preserve it in language through their saying.¹⁹

At the most rudimentary level, this passage tells us that there is a fundamental relation between language and Being, as language is the home that Being is housed in. Furthermore, in this home dwells the human being, and it is the human being—the thinking being—who guards this home and thus preserves Being in language.

Out of his rejection of *animalitas* and embrace *humanitas*, he introduces the concept of the human being's 'ek-sistence.' Heidegger posits, that “what the human being is—or, as it is called in the traditional language of metaphysics, the essence of the human being—lies in [their] ek-sistence.”²⁰ This concept of 'ek-sistence' is not equivalent to the traditional, Platonic notion of *existentia*, “which means actuality in contrast to the meaning of *essentia* as possibility.”²¹ But what is this ek-sistence? And how exactly does the *Wesen* of the human being lie in their ek-sistence? In the following passage Heidegger addresses these questions:

Metaphysics closes itself to the simple essential fact that the human being essentially occurs in [their] essence only where [they are] claimed by [Being]. Only from that claim 'has' [the human being] found that wherein [their] essence dwells. Only from this dwelling does [the human being] 'have' 'language' as the home that preserves the ecstatic for [their] essence. Such standing in the clearing of [Being] I call the ek-sistence of human beings.²²

¹⁹ Martin Heidegger, “Letter on Humanism,” p. 239; [145].

²⁰ Ibid, 247; [156].

²¹ Ibid, 248; [156].

²² Ibid, 247; [155].

Again, we are given another critique of metaphysics. Insofar as metaphysics does not distinguish between beings and Being, it is implausible that metaphysics could be open to the ‘simple essential fact’ of the human being’s essence manifest only in its being claimed by Being. For Heidegger, the *Wesen* of the human being has nothing to do with notions of an “immortal soul, the power of reason, or the character of a person.”²³ The *Wesen* of the human being is the ability to dwell—to dwell is to be human. Within the human’s dwelling they are granted language, and language enables the human to care and think toward Being. In such a way language preserves both the human being and Being’s *Wesen*.

As the passage on ek-sistence shows, the words that indicate ownership (i.e., “has”/“have”) are parenthetically inscribed. This is an intentional move, as the parenthesis resist the modern discourse that upholds ‘man’ as master. Language does not belong to the human being, the human being belongs to language. Heidegger rejects the idea that human *Wesen* is defined by “the power of reason” not only because he simply thinks that it is incorrect, but also because it adheres to *τέχνη* (techne). And for Heidegger, technical mastery, alongside homelessness, is how we have found ourselves in the peril of Being’s unconcealing, an idea that I will unfold in the following chapter.

The *Wesen* of the human unfolds linguistically—when the human being is claimed by Being, their *Wesen* is given to them from Being, through language. In this regard, language is the home that houses and preserves human *Wesen*. This process — of a human being that is claimed by Being discovering the dwelling place of their *Wesen*, that dwelling place being language — is also understood by Heidegger as “standing in the clearing of [Being].”²⁴ This ek-static standing

²³ Ibid, 247; [156].

²⁴ Ibid, 247; [155].

out, into the clearing [*die Lichtung*] of Being, is what he refers to as the ek-sistence of human beings. For Heidegger, ek-sistence is what distinguishes humans from other beings.²⁵ In Western thinking, he is illustrating a new way to conceive of the human as a being separate from other ‘beings,’ by the human potential to stand in the clearing of Being—the potential to ek-sist.

How are we to imagine *die Lichtung* and how *Dasein* stands in *die Lichtung*, as the ek-sisting one? To begin with, “the human being is, and is human, insofar as [they are] the ek-sisting one.”²⁶ Meaning, to be human is to stand in *die Lichtung* and sustains the ek-static relation. Heidegger tells us that “the clearing itself is [Being].”²⁷ And in this open clearing of Being, the human being stands out. *Dasein* stands out into the clearing because “[Being] itself, which as the throw has projected the *Wesen* of the human being into ‘care,’ is as this openness. Thrown [*Entwurf*] in such a fashion, the human being stands ‘in’ the openness of [Being].”^{28, 29} It is also important to take note of the word “sustain.” As the ek-sisting one, *Dasein*’s act of sustaining *die Lichtung* is comparable to their guarding of the linguistic house of Being.

As the ek-sistent one, the human being is also ‘being-in-the-world.’ Heidegger postulates that “for us the ‘world’ does not at all signify beings or any realm of beings but the openness of [Being].”³⁰ In this sentence, Heidegger is distancing himself from the traditional understanding of

²⁵ Existence is from Latin *existere/existere* meaning to “step out” or “stand forth.” The notion of standing is important for Heidegger’s thinking of *Dasein*, and he uses this concept of standing in a variety of ways. Some examples include: *Bestand* (standing reserve), *Gegenstand* (object; standing-against), *Ausstehen* (standing-out; withstanding), *Innerstehen* (a knowing standing), *Inständigkeit* (a standing in), *Transzendenz* (transcendence; standing over or across). Furthermore, the use of stand shows his shift away from traditional existence/essence divide and toward the notion of *ek-sistence* as a standing out into *die Lichtung*.

²⁶ Martin Heidegger, “Letter on Humanism,” p. 266; [180].

²⁷ *Ibid*, 253; [163]

²⁸ *Entwurf*, meaning a sort of outline, drafting the direction in which you are going, is used by Heidegger to express the destinal, thrown projection. What throws forward in the projection is not the human being but Being itself. *Sein* itself sends *Dasein* on destiny into the ek-sistence of *Dasein* that is *Dasein*’s *Wesen*. Therefore, *Dasein* is this ecstatic projection. Equiprimordially with *Dasein*’s thinking of Being is the thrownness of *Dasein*.

²⁹ Martin Heidegger, “Letter on Humanism,” p. 266; [180].

³⁰ *Ibid*, 266; [180].

‘world’ and its relation to beings; thereby separating himself, once again, from metaphysics. As Heidegger tells us, the world is primordially the openness of Being. Thus, *Dasein* and the world happen equiprimordially; there is no human world without *Dasein*, and there is no *Dasein* without the world.

To *be-in-the-world* is to dwell. *Dasein*, in their essential dwelling, may build out of this dwelling and into the world through thinking: “thinking builds upon the house of [Being], the house in which the jointure of [Being], in its destinal unfolding, enjoins the essence of the human being in each case to dwell in the truth of [Being]. This dwelling is the essence of ‘being-in-the-world.’”³¹ Here, we are provided with another formulation of being-in-the-world as dwelling in the truth of Being. I understand the ek-sistence of *Dasein* to mean standing in *die Lichtung*, out into the truth of Being, and ek-statically sustaining it. Although Heidegger’s thinking often appears to passively construct human experience—for example, the human being is *claimed* by Being and is *given* language—there is an inherent responsibility of being-in-the-world. This active responsibility is to think toward Being, and in thinking toward Being, sustain the clearing of Being. Heidegger writes that “as ek-sisting, the human being sustains *Da-sein* in that he takes the *Da*, the clearing of [Being], into ‘care.’”³² As stated previously, the concept of care is closely related to guardianship. It is important we remember that in the primary quote of interest: “Language is the house of [Being]. In its home human beings dwell. Those who think and those who create with words are the guardians of this home. Their guardianship accomplished the manifestation of [Being] insofar as they bring this manifestation to language and preserve it in language through their saying.”³³ We are told that the guardians are thinkers, and they create with words. This

³¹ Ibid, 272; [188-189].

³² Ibid, 249; [158].

³³ Ibid, 239; [145].

linguistic creation, or saying, is the synonymous with thinking. What he means by saying is not a mere act of speaking. The saying that is the thinking of Being is a revelation of Being in its truth: “thinking in its saying merely brings the unspoken word of [Being] to language... The usage of ‘bring to language’ employed here is now to be taken literally. Being comes, clearing itself, to language.”³⁴ Through thinking and saying, Being is brought to language, with its unspoken word. Thinking is thought and said through *Dasein*, therefore *Dasein* is the guardian of *die Lichtung* and the dweller of the house of Being.

Heidegger gives the name “shepherd” to *Dasein* in their role of guardianship: “the human being is not the lord of beings. The human being is the shepherd.”³⁵ This formulation is vital to understanding his complication of the categories of activity and passivity. To care for, to guard, to shepherd, and to think, are all deeds that challenge the active-passive binarism: agency lies with the actor, but the acting resists attitudes of mastery and lordship. Part of this caring and shepherding is a *letting be*: to think Being is to let Being think.³⁶ Although I do not wish to belabor, it is essential to highlight once more that as human beings, *we must think Being* — begging the question: what happens when we do not think Being?

Being’s Withdrawal

Our exploration has, to varying degrees, touched upon Heidegger’s carrying out of the following projects: 1. distinguishing between Being and beings, 2. asking after the truth of Being,

³⁴ Martin Heidegger, “Letter on Humanism,” p. 252; [162].

³⁵ Ibid, 260; [172].

³⁶ ‘The thinking of Being,’ is a double genitive. There are two plausible readings: 1. To think of Being, 2. Being’s thinking. In the former, ‘Being’ functions as the object of thought, and in the latter, ‘Being’ is the thinking subject. These two modes of interpretation can be read simultaneously in the Heideggerian framework. As it is the duality of the statement that sheds light on how Heidegger conceives of thinking and Being, and the immediacy of this dynamic relation.

and 3. attempting to understand how the *Wesen* of the human being belongs to Being's truth—i.e., the dwelling of the human being. The first point is what opens up the space for thinking towards Being; without this distinction, the type of thinking Heidegger is asking for becomes impossible. The space that this distinction opens up or uncovers, is to a certain extent, the clearing of Being. The clearing of Being is the truth of Being, and Being clears itself in thinking. This brings us to the second point, as *die Lichtung* is the truth of Being, and it is in this clearing— the truth of Being—that *Dasein* stands out into. Insofar as the human being ek-statically stands out into *die Lichtung*, and sustains it, the human being's *Wesen* belongs to Being's truth— this is the dwelling of the human being.

These thought-trains matter because they are thinking Being. Part of Heidegger's objection to metaphysics, and ultimately "philosophy," is that they do not think Being and are blind to the aforementioned points. Returning to his letter, Heidegger illustrates the consequences of such blindness and thoughtlessness— a thoughtlessness that, although philosophy and metaphysics are guilty of, is additionally a result of the modern condition. He addresses this consequence by the term: "*homelessness*." The causation of homelessness is more complex than the truth of Being not being thought, therefore necessary questions of inquiry include: what is being thought instead of Being and its truth, and what type of thinking leads to homelessness?

A massive preoccupation that has taken hold of metaphysics' thinking and in effect has covered up the truth of Being, is the search for what is knowable and provable in alignment with 'correctness,' a kind of scientific-positivism. In Heidegger's essay, "Plato's Doctrine of Truth," he suggests that metaphysics defines the essence of truth as correctness (of gaze, apprehension, representation, et cetera) as opposed to ἀλήθεια. *Αλήθεια (aletheia)* means truth as unconcealment and is a critical term to this project. Insofar as Being makes itself manifest to us in the world, it

unconceals itself. When we, as human beings, dwell essentially—which is to say in the truth of Being— Being unconceals in its proper *Wesen*. But when the truth of Being is concealed by the reductive equating of truth as the accurate representation of what is seeable and knowable, Being does not unconceal itself to us in its true *Wesen*. Instead of thinking toward Being, we are misdirected into the inquiry of beings and their “truth,” but we aren’t even doing that really, because our idea of “truth” is so skewed by the discourse of mastery. Heidegger argues that this conception begins with Plato and is displayed in its most extreme consequence through Nietzsche’s “determination of truth as the incorrectness of thinking.”³⁷

This misguided philosophical preoccupation has much to do with the influence of scientific discourse and the notion of praxis [*πρᾶξις*]:

“Philosophy” has been in the constant predicament of having to justify its existence before the “sciences.” It believes it can do that most effectively by elevating itself to the rank of a science. But such an effort is the abandonment of the essence of thinking. Philosophy is hounded by the fear that it loses prestige and validity if it is not a science. Not to be science is taken as a failing that equivalent to being unscientific. Being as the element of thinking, is abandoned by the technical interpretation of thinking.³⁸

As this passage illustrates, “philosophy” has been corroded by scientific values, and thus turns away from the essence of thinking. Heidegger tells us that the essence of thinking is simple, and “through its simple essence, the thinking of [Being] makes itself unrecognizable to us.”³⁹ Due to the simplicity of the thinking of Being,⁴⁰ we are kept from it; as opposed to being drawn to the simple, to the thinking of Being, we look only for that which is ‘philosophically’ or scientifically

³⁷ Martin Heidegger, “Plato’s Doctrine of Truth,” p.179; [139].

³⁸ Martin Heidegger, “Letter on Humanism,” p. 249; [146].

³⁹ Ibid, 275; [192].

⁴⁰ Although the thinking of Being has a simple essence, it is “simplest and highest simultaneously” (Letter 239; [145]). The multiplicitous nature of Being is made apparent not only in terms of “simplicity” and “highness,” but also spatially: “Being is essentially farther than all beings and yet nearer to the human being than every being (i.e., rock, beast, work of art, machine, angel, or God). Being is the nearest. Yet the nearest remains the farthest” (252; [162]).

deemed successful in *πραξις*. I would also argue that beyond a measure of success, there is an element of readiness, accessibility, and mastery. What is easily seen with the eye is the world of appearance. Under the visible world may lie a spring of originary Being, but it is covered up by appearance. We are fixated on what is seeable and knowable, in part, because we are concerned with what is able to be mastered. Metaphysics is unable to distinguish between Being and beings, and focuses primarily on beings and on that which is knowable, thus does not think Being. But this is not a problem that remains within the walls of “philosophy.” It has become a problem of the world because Being is concealed everywhere under the will to mastery.

When Being is not thought by the human being it does not unconceal itself to the human being in its true *Wesen*; Being withdraws from the world when it is not thought. In turning away from the thinking of Being in its simple essence, we also turn away from language as the house of Being. “Thinking attends to the clearing of [Being] in that it puts its saying of [Being] into language as the home of ek-sistence;” thinking is how *Dasein* cares for Being. Thus, the relationship between Being and language is severed when the thinking being, *Dasein*, is not thinking toward Being.⁴¹ Being no longer brings itself to the clearing—to the place in which the human being dwells as the ek-static one—through language.

Accompanying scientific thinking and *πραξις* comes an attitude of appropriation and mastery. Thinking that is consumed with beings and the world of appearances, tends to uphold an attitude of “man” as master. Humanism often falls victim to this line of thought, championing the idea that “man” (which defaults to white-male) has the potential to create himself, and destine the world he wishes to live in. The desire to master first themselves and then the is the primary attitude of the modern world. Often the notion mastery denotes physical conditions of bondage, but not

⁴¹ Martin Heidegger, “Letter on Humanism,” p. 274; [192].

necessarily the immaterial world of thinking and language. Heidegger pushes back against the common idea that language is “man’s” tool. Language is not a reified tool that the human being controls and dominates, only to further endless ends of ordering and mastery. Language, like Being, is not an object at all. Rather, language is situated in the position of dominance in its relation with the human being. This dominance is not to be seen in a belittling or negative sense, for this relation is one of care. Only by way of language is Being’s truth unconcealed to the human being, language cares for the human being in letting the human dwell. The human being similarly shows care by listening to the language of Being and responding in thinking. It is a relationship of ek-static sustaining.

When we fail to think of the *Wesen* of language as a revelation of Being, only positing language as a means to further ends, a tool of mundane utility or empty rhetoric, language declines and “falls out of its element:”

Much bemoaned of late, and too much lately, the decline of language is, however, not the grounds for, but already the consequence of, the state of affairs in which language under the dominance of the modern metaphysics of subjectivity almost irremediably falls out of its element. Language still denies us its essence: that it is the house of the truth of being. Instead, language surrenders itself to our mere willing and trafficking as an instrument of domination over beings.⁴²

In our sheer willing and attempts to impose mastery over the world, over thought, and over language, language denies us its *Wesen* as our dwelling place. In the denial of the *Wesen* of language, we are also denied the *Wesen* of ourselves. Just as language is the house of Being, it is also “the home of human essence.”⁴³ And “only because language is the home of the essence of the human being can historical humankind and human beings not be at home in their language, so

⁴² Ibid, 243; [150].

⁴³ Ibid, 274; [191].

that for them language becomes a mere container for their sundry preoccupations.”⁴⁴ When we neglect language as the house of Being and treat language as utilitarian means to ends, we are no longer at home in language. When we are not at home in language, we are *homeless*. In our homeless state, idle talk has begun to dominate Being. We may understand “idle talk” as another causation of homelessness. Heidegger states that “the widely and rapidly spreading devastation of language not only undermines aesthetic and moral responsibility in every use of language; it arises from a threat to the essence of humanity.”⁴⁵ The threat to humanity is the peril that is homelessness—a peril that is rooted in a thoughtless causation.

Homelessness is the result of an attempt to universalize the world. The attempt of worldly universalization, and thus an imposition of mastery, takes place when we turn away from Being and, like metaphysics, think only toward beings. Homelessness happens when we turn away from our *Wesen* as the shepherd of Being, and try to act as the lord of Being. World is to be understood as both humanity and the open clearing of Being. For Heidegger, the collective world is not a world of biology, nor is it a world of nationalism—it is a world of *language*. What Heidegger means by language is something thoughtful and powerful; language is common, meaningful, and destinal. Despite the commonality, particular to each home resides a specific language and dialectic, in each home there are nuanced customs [*Sitten*] and culture. Different languages are going to cultivate diverse conceptions of *Dasein*; and these differences are to be honored, as they house Being. “Language” is not only a metaphorical dwelling in which Being resides, but also the place in which are situated in the world, the place we call “home.” In this sense, Being is not universal, therefore, we need not to infringe upon the homeland of others, nor seek to impose a

⁴⁴ Ibid, 274; [191].

⁴⁵ Martin Heidegger, “Letter on Humanism,” p. 243; [150].

universal conception onto them. When we attempt to universalize and enforce a mastery of rationale over the world—or even forms of physical mastery — we forget Being in its true *Wesen*, Being and language withdraw from the world.

The attempt at universalization is a threat to the *Wesen* of humanity; as language and being recede from the humanity, the world becomes a homeless place for *Dasein*. The human being is homeless because they lose the dwelling place of their essence. Estranged from Being and language, the human being is also alienated from themselves. Heidegger writes that “homelessness so understood consists in the abandonment of beings by [Being]. Homelessness is the symptom of the oblivion of [Being]. Because of it the truth of [Being] remains unthought.”⁴⁶ Not only does the truth of Being remain unthought in the language of idle talk and metaphysics, it also remains unthought in the dominant nihilist discourse. In nihilism there is no common sense to implicate what is right or wrong and true or false; therefore, there can be no truth of Being in nihilism. Nihilism offers a plethora of discordant values that are all competing with one another and prohibiting the existing of a highest value. And in nihilism, *there is no meaning, belonging to anything*. Thus, we come to see that nihilism is another facet of the same portrait of homeless, a destiny of alienation. Language cannot be our home within nihilist modes of thinking, in this discourse there is no such thing as homeland.

The problem for Heidegger is that “we let everything expire in a nihilism we invented for ourselves with the aid of logic.”⁴⁷ In this dissent we hear different aspects of his argument woven together: the aid of logic that has led to the conception of the human being as “animal rationale,” to the scientific corrosion of philosophical thought, and to the modern obsession with mastery. Undoubtedly Heidegger issues with ‘logic.’ But he explicitly notes that when he speaks against

⁴⁶ Ibid, 258; [169].

⁴⁷ Ibid, 264; [178].

‘logic,’ he is not arguing for irrationality. In actuality, he is pushing back against the position of lordship that has led to destinal homelessness. He is asking for a more rigorous investigation into concepts such as, “‘humanism,’ ‘logic,’ ‘values,’ ‘world,’ and ‘God.’”⁴⁸ He is calling upon us to be more critical of the fabricated valuing and devaluing that we take in oblivion as given and a priori. Heidegger writes:

Every valuing, even where it values positively, is a subjectivizing. It does not let beings be. Rather, valuing lets beings be: be valid- solely as the objects of its doing... to think against values therefore does not mean to beat the drum for valuelessness and nullity of beings. It means rather to bring the clearing of the truth of [Being] before thinking, as against subjectivizing beings into mere objects.⁴⁹

Being lets being be, and as Being withdraws and subjectivizing takes hold, beings are turned into objects solely as means for furthering ends. By thinking against values and logic, Heidegger is thinking towards truth and *Wesen* of Being, language, and the human being. He is trying to restore a home in the face of homelessness. Valuing is a fictional ordering, it reifies and places and approaches the world as only means to an end. In this state of sheer will, the agency of beings and their thinking is corroborated— particularly that of the human being— for an end of mastery and validity. We find the fingerprints of ‘ordering’ and ‘valuing’ all over the concept of *animal rationale*; this concept does nothing else but drive us out of our house of Being and into the pandemic of linguistic poverty and essential alienation. Heidegger writes that “expelled from the truth of being, the human being everywhere circles around himself as animal rationale.”⁵⁰

We have arrived at a situation in which Being has withdrawn, concealed by the will to master and the obsession with valuing. Language has denied us its essence insofar as we treat it as a mere means to further ends, a tool at our disposal. And in such withdrawal of Being and denial

⁴⁸ Ibid, 264; [178].

⁴⁹ Ibid, 265; [179].

⁵⁰ Ibid, 260; [172].

of language, we have lost our dwelling and are undergoing the peril of destinal homelessness—alienated from our essence and circling around ourselves everywhere as *animal rationale*.

II. Imperiled

Destinal homelessness is the condition in which *Dasein* lives in the modern world. In many ways, the words ‘alienation’ and ‘worldlessness’ share spirit with Heidegger’s homelessness.⁵¹ What mutually exhilarates alienation, worldlessness, and homelessness, is an estrangement from the immanence that animates existence. Heidegger would refer to this immanence as *Being*. Somehow, we have cut ourselves off from the flow of Being, and in doing so, dissociated from a part of ourselves: the part of ourselves that belongs to Being. Although seemingly abstract, this says something about the concrete material conditions of the human being.

In the “Letter on Humanism,” Heidegger puts forth a portrait of homelessness that is driven by the human being (*Dasein*) forgetting their role as the shepherd of Being and attempting to act as the master of Being. By acting as master, *Dasein* drives themselves away from the Being they belong to and its language that they are housed in, and into alienation. But the implications of attempting mastery extend further than the mastery of Being, and this is where the material consequence comes into play. Mastery also means mastery over other beings, human beings, and nonhuman beings alike. The will to master doesn’t just exist in an abstract theoretical realm, insofar as it is actually *willed*, there are tangible, repercussions for all the players. When situating the will to master and universalize within the framework of destinal homelessness, we find that it manifests itself in what is named “technique.” The unfolding of modern technique *actualizes* the will to master as the dominant way in which *Dasein* relates to *all beings* in the modern age.

Heidegger introduces the concept of technique in his letter, writing that “technology is in its essence a destiny within the history of being and of the truth of being, a truth that lies in

⁵¹ “Worldlessness” is a reference to Arendt’s term for modern alienation, she develops the concept of wordlessness in her book, *The Human Condition*.

oblivion.”⁵² Technology, or more precisely modern technique, as a destiny of truth lying in oblivion is in many ways the thesis of this chapter. In the letter, Heidegger briefly entangles technique with the various causes of homelessness (i.e., metaphysics and humanism, correctness as “truth,” scientific thinking and praxis [πραξις], dogmatic values systems and “logic”) because technique activates the *will to master* within these causes so to speak. Heidegger’s letter shows the ways in which homelessness arises when the human being forgets Being in their pursuit of mastery, and within this portrait technique is mentioned in passing. But in his essay “Die Frage nach der Technik” (“The Question Concerning Technique”), Heidegger further develops the concept of technique. Although homelessness is never explicitly mentioned in this text, there is an obvious bridge between homelessness and technique. In “The Question Concerning Technique,” he gives a different title to homelessness in the modern age: namely, the ‘age of *Ge-stell*.’ Both homelessness and the age of *Ge-stell* signify an era in which everything has become subsumed under a means to ends agenda, all (Being, human beings, and nonhuman beings alike) become opportunities for mastery. Beings are unable to shepherd Being in such an age, and thus as Being abandons us we find ourselves homeless, caught in an age of *Ge-stell*’s destiny.

In this chapter I will illustrate: 1. What technique is, 2. Exactly what *Ge-stell*—technique’s *Wesen*—is and how it is that beings relate in an age of *Ge-stell*, 3. How *Gestell* has come to dominate in the modern age, becoming the destiny (*Geschick*) of Being, which is to say that it is the exclusive way of unconcealing, 4. The extremity of *Ge-stell* as the *Geschick* of Being makes the danger of technique manifest. But within the danger of technique opens the possibility of another way of relating to Being, or an alternative destiny of Being, which Heidegger calls the saving.

⁵² Martin Heidegger, “Letter on Humanism,” 259; [171].

What is Technique?

At the outset I want to make three things explicitly clear. First, modern technique is a particular way in which beings relate to one another, specifically that *all* beings become means to an end. In “The Question Concerning Technique,” Heidegger writes that “we ask after technique when we ask what it is.”⁵³ When we ask after technique and what it is, we are given two answers: “One says: technique is a means to ends. The other says: Technique is a doing of man.”⁵⁴ But these two facets of technique are to be thought together, insofar as ends are posited and means are appropriated to achieve ends, there is a human actor instigating such a doing. Therefore, technique also includes an implementation of sorts. It is not only an attitude of means to ends, but further a carrying out by means of tools and machinery (i.e., technology). The composition of technique encompasses all of these factors—means and end application of human action and implementation as seen in technological development—in concert with one another. “To what technique is, belong the readying and use of tool, implement, and machines, belongs what is readied and used itself, belong the needs and ends they serve. The whole of these arrangements...is technique.”⁵⁵ It is important to underscore that the composition of technique does not lie solely on the machinery or instruments. Rather, Heidegger is emphasizing that we not only build machinery and posit beings as “objects,” but that we see it through that the machines we build and the beings we objectify are carried out as means to serve our ends as self-appointed masters. In such a way, the will of ‘man’ becomes dominant, setting ‘man’ over and against all beings, including other humans.

The second point acknowledges that the means to an end approach is undoubtably nothing new, it was embodied in the past of technique as well. But in the manifestation of technique today,

⁵³ Martin Heidegger, “Question Concerning Technique,” p. 3:[5].

⁵⁴ Ibid, 3; [6].

⁵⁵ Ibid.

the mastery of means to the completion of ends is its sole and highest concern. It is increasingly the case that human beings are unable to look at, for example, a rock and let it be as it is as a “rock.” For the most part, the study of rocks is not pursued to merely learn about their history as autonomous nonhuman beings (tracing the rocks’ ancestry, learning whether they were underwater or formed by tectonic collision, discovering which volcano is their birthplace). If the study of rocks is being funded, it is most likely that what is learned about the mineral composition of a rock is not for the sake of learning about the autonomous rock-being as an end in itself, but for the sake of furthering ends in the name of utility. “How can this rock be *used* as an *object* to further human ends?” Whether that end be a piece in a stone wall or mineral extraction, it is defined exclusively by its use-value. Thus, we must distinguish the broader manifestation of means to an end in the past against the poignant and all-encompassing manifestations of such a will of mastery today.

The final point is that technique is a way of unconcealing. Importantly so, there are various ways of unconcealing. In the past technique unconcealed one way, and today technique unconceals very differently.

I will not address these points as they are chronologically listed, in fact I will begin with the question of unconcealing. The chronology is of little significance because these are not linear happenings, as the following analysis will show these three points regarding technique are complexly entangled with one another. I highlight these points because they are of the utmost importance in not only understanding what Heidegger’s portrait of technique is, but also understanding how technique has become the only way Being is unconcealed in the modern age of *Ge-stell*, the age of destinal homelessness.

To say that technique is an unconcealing, we must first call into question what an unconcealing entails. The meaning of “unconcealing” can be traced back to ἀλήθεια (*aletheia*), the

Greek word for the disclosure of truth. Unconcealing brings-forth truth. It is a bringing-forth that “brings out of concealedness forth into unconcealedness,”⁵⁶ it brings something forward and anew. Furthermore, “bringing-forth *ereignet sich* only insofar as something concealed comes into the unconcealed. This coming rests and soars in what we name unconcealing.”⁵⁷ Thus, there is an interlaced happening between unconcealing and bringing-forth.

The Greek word *ποίησις* (*poiesis*) denotes a bringing-forth into existence something which before was not. Heidegger posits that for the Greeks the kinds of *ποίησις* include: the making of something with hands or as Heidegger calls it “hand-workly making,” artistic or poetic creation, and *φύσις* (*physis/nature*) as “the arising-from-itself (*das von-sich-her-Aufgehen*).”⁵⁸ These are all ways of bringing-forth; through bringing-forth come “the grown thing of nature as well as the made thing of handwork and the arts, each to their shining-forth.”⁵⁹ Simply put, *ποίησις* happens when something that did not exist before (i.e. a particular work of art) is created and thus brought into the world of existence. The artwork came from concealedness into unconcealedness, just as does the blossoming of a flower or the birth of a hymn. Thus, the bringing-forth—whether that be of ‘hard-workly making,’ the arts, or *φύσις*—is a kind of unconcealing.

How technique fits into the equiprimordial relationship of *ποίησις* and *ἀλήθεια*, the bringing-forth from concealment into unconcealment, is not immediately clear. Heidegger himself raises the question we are asking: “what does the essence of technique have to do with unconcealing?” A question to which he answers “all.”⁶⁰ Technique, including modern technique, *is* an unconcealing insofar as technique brings-forth something into existence that did not exist

⁵⁶ Martin Heidegger, “Question Concerning Technique,” p. 8; [11].

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 9; [12].

before. Naturally there are different ways of bringing-forth, unfolding as various forms of unconcealing. This difference is not to be ignored, for “the unconcealing that dominates modern technique, does not unfold itself in a bringing-forth in the sense of *ποίησις*.”⁶¹

In what follows, I will reproduce a series of examples provided by Heidegger that illustrate modern technique as a different kind of unconcealing than that of technique in the past or *ποίησις*. These examples will also demonstrate the manifestation of “the current representation (*Vorstellung*) of technique, according to which it is a means and a human doing, [and] can therefore be called the instrumental and anthropological determination of technique.”⁶² As previously stated, the means to an end approach is nothing new but it takes omnipotent hold of technique as it manifests today. Thus, Heidegger distinguishes this ‘current *Vorstellung*’ of technique as “something thoroughly other and new,” against the “older hand-workly technique.”⁶³

In Heidegger’s examples, he contrasts the “new” versus “old” way of technique, writing: “naturally, a radar-station is less simple than a weather-vane. Naturally the readying of a radar-station requires the cooperation of various labor-processes of technical-industrial production. Naturally a sawmill in a [secluded] Black Forest Valley is a primitive means in comparison to the hydroelectric power-works in the Rhine river.”⁶⁴ The weather-vane and the sawmill are both technologies that we produce to achieve an end of sorts. The weather-vane tells us the direction that the wind is blowing, and we make decisions in accordance with the knowledge provided by such a technology. The weather-vane’s telling my inform decisions from agriculture to travel. The weather-vane moves with, not against the wind, the wind and the weather-vane are brought-forth together. In the case of the sawmill, the presence of control and disharmony against are more

⁶¹ Ibid, 11; [14].

⁶² Ibid, 3; [6].

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid, 3-4; [6].

visible, insofar as it is a technology that works logs into lumber that will be used to further ends. But still, the sawmill works with what the trees gives. Even the sawmill, as it re-forms logs into lumber, is much more straight-forward than the power-works in its singular task.

The primary distinction Heidegger is making is that a weather-vane allows us to know the weather and have some understanding of it. Whereas the end of the hydro-electric power-works on the Rhine is not determining the direction that the river flows. The aim of such technology is to actually change how, why, and where it flows. The difference is entirely summed up in that “the hydroelectric power plant is not built on the Rhine river as is the old wood bridge that for centuries has bound shore to shore. Rather the river is built into the power plant.”⁶⁵ We no longer work with the autonomous nonhuman lifeforms and beings such as the wind, soil, forests, or rivers, we work *into* them—we place demands on them and attempt to change them drastically to fit our own ends. What the weather-vane tells us doesn’t really matter because we can simply seed the clouds and cause precipitation. And we do this through technique insofar as we build machines and place our wills into them so that the machine may become a means to our end of mastery. In the manifestation of technique that insists a will to master, a panoptic instrumentalization unfolds. Although all technique exemplifies a means to an end narrative, present day technique takes this instrumentalization to entirely different level.

The four Aristotelian causes tell us more about the different kinds of unconcealing and how we have today arrived at an instrumentalized means-ends determination of technique; for “where ends are pursued, and means are employed, where the instrumental dominates, there sways *Ursächlichkeit*, causality.”⁶⁶ These four causes are outlined by Heidegger in this order: 1. *causa*

⁶⁵ Ibid, 12; [15].

⁶⁶ Ibid, 4; [7].

materialis, 2. *causa formalis*, 3. *causa finalis*, 4. *causa efficiens*.⁶⁷ Heidegger employs the creation of a silver cup to explain each cause.⁶⁸ *Causa materialis* is the material (*ὕλη*) out of which something is made; in the case of a silver cup, the *causa materialis* is the silver. The second cause, *causa formalis*, indicates the form into which the material is set into (*Gestalt*); the form of a cup as opposed to the form of a spoon, ring, et cetera). *Causa finalis* is the end or final cause, “e.g. the sacrifice through which the needed cup is determined with respect to form and stuff.”⁶⁹ Heidegger places *causa efficiens* last to stress this particular cause, which is the effect, “the finished actual cup, the silversmith.”⁷⁰ Why this stress is significant will soon become apparent.

After outlining the four causes, Heidegger posits that “what technique represented (*vorgestellt*) as means is, uncovers itself when we trace the instrumental back to the fourfold causality.”⁷¹ But in order to understand how technique uncovers itself as a means to an end, we must ask questions like: Why exactly are there four, and not three or five causes? And how is it that these causes belong together in such an incorporated manner? Heidegger argues that we may begin to ground the current determination of technique as a means to an end only by first asking these questions.

At work in our understanding of causality lies an assumption of causation qualified only insofar as it generates productive effects: “One has been accustomed for a long time to represent (*vorstellen*) cause as what works (*das Bewirkende*). Here working is: attaining results, effects.”⁷² We measure “cause” by the palpable and subsequent effects, and it is *causa efficiens* “that determines all causality in a measure-giving way.”⁷³

⁶⁷ Ibid, 5; [7].

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid, 5; [7-8].

⁷¹ Ibid, 5; [8].

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid.

Heidegger suggests that we have casted aside the technical final cause, *causa finalis*, and focus only on the effectiveness as a measure of finality. He tells us that the four causes for the Greeks were understood as dependent and necessarily accompanying; they were “ways of being-responsible that belong with one another.”⁷⁴ For the Greeks, the idea of cause was not grounded necessarily in the notion of effectiveness, but instead a kind of mutual *responsibility*: “what we name *Ursache* and the *Romans* name *causa*, is called by the Greeks *αἴτιον*, what is responsible (*verschuldet*) for something else.”⁷⁵ Each cause is responsible for the other: the silver is obliged to that which makes up the silver; the cup (form) is similarly indebted to the silver (material); but the outer-look (*εἶδος*) of the cup as a cup, or ‘sacrificial instrument’ to use Heidegger’s terminology, as opposed to presenting itself as a spoon or ring, means that the sacrificial instrument is beholden to its outer-look as a cup. Thus, “the silver into which the outer-look as cup is let in, the outer-look into which the silver appears, are both in their ways co-responsible for the sacrificial instrument.”⁷⁶ There is a thankful symbiosis between these causalities insofar as they let each other be.

The co-responsibility of *causa materialis* and *causa formalis* is entangled with the third cause insofar as the effect is what enables the cup to be defined as ‘sacrificial instrument:’ “what defines, ends (*beendet*) the thing.”⁷⁷ But an end does not mean a ceasing of existence, for it is from the end that it may begin to be as it is set or effected, “to be what it will be after its being-set-forth.”⁷⁸ This moment of ending or completion correlates to *τέλος*— which Heidegger argues is often mistranslated as “aim” or “purpose.” For the notion of “aim” and “purpose” would be more in alignment with the measure of effectiveness. Instead, “the *τέλος* is responsible for what as stuff

⁷⁴ Ibid, 5; [8].

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid, 6; [8-9].

⁷⁷ Ibid, 6; [9].

⁷⁸ Ibid.

and what as outer-look are together responsible for the sacrificial instrument.”⁷⁹ Responsible togetherness is central to this portrait of causality, and *causa efficiens* remains the last cause in this entanglement of responsibility. The silver-smith plays a role in the responsibility of “the lying-ready-before-us,” but not because the silver-smith “by working, works out the finished sacrificial cup as the effect of a making.”⁸⁰ The role of the human was not to reach an ultimate end from mere means. Rather, the silver-smith “takes into account and gathers” *causa materialis, formalis, and finalis* as counterparts of responsibility.⁸¹

Heidegger makes the claim that the Greek’s hardly had a name for this *causa efficiens* because for them, within the framework of the four causes, the role of the human was no more important than the material, form, or end. The human played a role in the making, but in no way did it dominate as the primary cause as it does in the modern configuration of technique. Modern technique upholds *causa efficiens*—an idea of cause that was not even present in the minds of the Greeks according to Heidegger— as technique and vice versa. This is a radically different view from that in which “the four ways of being-responsible bring something into appearance.”⁸² As opposed to the technical togetherness of the four causes, modern technique commits a fallacy of misplaced concreteness, conflating a part (*causa efficiens*) as the whole (four cause system of togetherness).

The four causes do not master something into being, instead “they let it come-forth in presence. They release it therein and leave it in so, namely in its completed advent. Being-responsible has the ground-trait of this letting-in in the advent. In the sense of such letting-in,

⁷⁹ Ibid, 6; [9].

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid, 7; [10].

being-responsible is a *Ver-an-lassen*.”⁸³ By breaking down *Veranlassen* (the German word expressing “to cause, occasion, to bring about”) into *Ver-an-lassen*, Heidegger is playing with the word, restoring it to its root meaning of “completing a letting-in.”⁸⁴

Ver-an-lassen, a letting come forth, is the way in which the four causes, acting responsibly together, bring something to appearance. Consequently, we arrive at a thought-train as follows: “the ways of *Veranlassung*, the four causes, play...within bringing-forth;”⁸⁵ and bringing-forth or ποιήσις is rooted in unconcealing or ἀλήθεια. Bringing-forth, which we know is a kind of unconcealing, “gathers in itself the four ways of *Veranlassung* — causality — and sways through them. In their domain belong purpose and means, belongs the instrumental.”⁸⁶ Purpose, means, and instrumentality are components of technique’s particular way of bringing-forth, and in its bringing-forth, technique makes its way through unconcealing. This is a fact of all technique, past and present. Wherein lies the difference is that for the Greeks the four causes were balanced and mutually responsible, but today *causa efficiens* has come to be seen as the primary responsible agent, the master over all bringing-forth.

Despite the meaningful distinctions that prevail between past and present technique, all technique is a way of unconcealing and bringing-forth. Today, we abstract this bringing-forth as an anthropological doing, instrumentalization at the hand of the human, and we place our will to master in the machine. But still, technique remains an unconcealing.

⁸³ Ibid, 7; [10]

⁸⁴ Footnote 12 in “Question Concerning Technique,” p. 7.

⁸⁵ Ibid, 8; [11].

⁸⁶ Ibid, 9; [12]).

What is *Ge-stell*?

We have put forward that technique is a way of unconcealing, and modern technique a new way of unconcealing in which beings relate as means to an end. But we have yet to show the precise method through which beings enact this relation. We have said that humans place their will to master in the machine, but we have not illustrated exactly how. To do so, we will turn toward the *Wesen* of modern technique. The *Wesen* of modern technique will tell us more about technique's unconcealment, for the realm of unconcealment is where the *Wesen* of technique lies; "technique *wrest* in the domain where unconcealing and unconcealedness, where ἀλήθεια, where truth happens."⁸⁷

Heidegger calls the *Wesen* of modern technique *Ge-stell*.⁸⁸ *Ge-stell* ordinarily "signifies the likes of a stand, a rack, a supporting framework. But Heidegger means nothing of that kind."⁸⁹ He breaks the word down into two parts: the first component, *ge-*, expresses a totality or completeness of the second component, *stellen*, which is a setting in place.⁹⁰ *Ge-stell* thus expresses a complete setting in place.

Stellen is at the core of Heidegger's portrait of technique, for "the unconcealing that sways in modern technique is a summoning (*herausfordern*), that puts (*stellt*) to nature the demand to deliver energy that can be furthered (*herausgefördert*) and stored up as energy." The approach of *stellen*, a putting into place, stands in stark contrasts to the bringing-forth of ποιήσις. Modern technique unconceals as an ordering (*Bestellen*) of beings (i.e. other human beings or "nature") as means in which energy is 'effectively' produced and stored up as an end. Heidegger asks: "But

⁸⁷ Ibid, 10; [13].

⁸⁸ Ibid, 19; [23].

⁸⁹ Footnote 20 in "Question Concerning Technique," p. 15.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

does not this hold also true for the old wind-mill? No. Her wings of course turn in the wind, they remain submitted immediately to its blowing. But the wind-mill does not disclose energies of air-current so as to store them up.”⁹¹ In layman’s terms, this distinction may be boiled down to one of exploitation and selfishness—modern technique unconceals everything as something to be selfishly exploited.

Heidegger carries us through a sequence of instances that depict this exploitative ordering and unconcealing of modern technique:

A tract of land is summoned into the furthering of coal and ore. The earth-kingdom unconceals itself now as coal-reserve, the soil as ore-storage. Other is the appearance of the field that formerly the peasant ordered (*bestellte*), in which ordering (*bestellen*) still was: caring and tending. The doing of the peasant does not summon the arable soil. In the sowing of corn, it submits the seed to the forces of growth, and heeds their thriving.⁹²

The land is summoned as a means to pursue further ends of ‘productive’ exploitation. In this summoning of modern technique, the earth is reified solely as raw material. In the past, the ordering (*bestellen*) was one of tender care. Seen from the perspective of the four causes, the sowing of corn is a bringing-forth that is affected not merely by the farmer, but by the ‘forces of growth.’

Meanwhile the ordering (*Bestellung*) of fields also has fallen into the wake of another kind of ordering (*Bestellen*) that defies (*stellt*) nature. It defies (*stellt*) her in the sense of summoning. Agriculture is now motorized nutrition-industry. The air is put (*gestellt*) to delivering nitrogen, the soil to ore, the ore e.g. to uranium, and this to atomic energy, which can be released for destruction or peaceful use.⁹³

No longer is ordering a process of mindful care and attentive cultivation, togetherness is disrupted by an ordering of standing-against, an ordering that ‘defies (*stellt*) nature.’ “The unconcealing that

⁹¹ Ibid, 11; [14].

⁹² Ibid, 11; [14-15].

⁹³ Ibid, 11; [14-15].

dominates modern technique, has the character of putting upon (*Stellen*) in the sense of summoning”⁹⁴ because the air, soil, et cetera, is put in such a way that its energy may be summoned from it.

This summoning furthers itself in an auto-cyclical, insatiable manner: “It furthers in that it discloses and exposes (*herausstellt*). But this furthering remains put (*abgestellt*) in advance to another furthering, i.e. to driving forward to the greatest possible use at the smallest expense.”⁹⁵

The continuous process of putting (*Stellen*) and summoning materially unfolds as follows:

The coal furthered in the coal-reserve is not put (*gestellt*) simply to be present somewhere. It is stored, i.e. in place (*Stelle*) for the ordering (*Bestellung*) of the sun-warmth accumulated in it. The latter is summoned into heat, which is ordered (*bestellt*) to deliver steam, the pressure of which drives the drive through which the factory remains driven.⁹⁶

All ordering of *Ge-stell* has intention in the sense of mastery but not attention in the sense of care; careful cultivation has become a complex arrangement of aggressive transformation. Theoretically the process unfolds like so:

The energy concealed in nature is unlocked, the so disclosed is transformed, the so transformed is stored up, the so stored up is distributed again, and the distributed is switched-over anew. Disclosing, transforming, storing-up, distributing, switching-over are ways of unconcealing.⁹⁷

Systematically, energy is manipulated in a repetitive and manifold process: ‘unlock,’ ‘disclose,’ ‘transform,’ ‘store-up,’ ‘switch-over.’ More than a process of ordering, this system is way of unconcealing, specifically the way of *Ge-stell*’s unconcealment.

⁹⁴ Ibid, 12; [16].

⁹⁵ Ibid, 12; [15].

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Ibid, 12; [16].

Heidegger gives the name *Bestand* to that which is ordered within the realm of *Ge-stell's* unconcealment.⁹⁸ The systematized procedure of unlocking, disclosing, transforming, storing-up, and switching-over, exhibit that “everywhere [what is summoned] is ordered (*bestellt*) to stand (*stehen*) in place (*zur Stelle*) at its place (*auf der Stelle*), and indeed to stand so as itself to be orderable (*bestellbar*) for a further ordering (*Bestellen*).” Heidegger’s example of coal illustrates the ordered (*Bestellte*) as *standing* in place to be ordered furthered; coal stands in place in order for it to accumulate heat, and the said heat will eventually be ordered to produce steam, which will be ordered to keep the factory running. Although “the ordered has its own stand (*Stand*),” (and is therefore called *Bestand*) does not necessarily mean that *Bestand* is self-standing.⁹⁹ From the perspective of *Bestand*, the ordered is not self-standing because “it has its stand only from out of the ordering (*Bestellen*) of the orderable (*Bestellbar*).”¹⁰⁰ It does not order itself, it “stands” in only to be ordered, and in the realm of *Ge-stell*, the orderable has no agency— we must not forget that this is a tyranny of means and ends.

If *Bestand* does not order itself, then who carries out the ordering?: “Who accomplishes the summoning putting-upon, through which what one names the actual (*Wirkliche*) is unconcealed as *Bestand*?”¹⁰¹ Heidegger resolves the question positing that is it man. It may seem obvious that the human is the one who carries out the ordering of *Bestand*, the human has, after all, taken it upon themselves to occupy the role as master and *cause efficiens*. The human realizes the ordering

⁹⁸ In Footnote 18 the translators provide us with a helpful defining of *Bestand*: “Its components ‘be-’ (as in ‘bespeak’ ‘betray’ etc.) and ‘stand’ are quite familiar in English anyhow. Its verb root is *bestehen*, the main senses of which are: to persist through, to insist upon, to consist of, all formations of the latin *sistere*, to cause to stand...If *Bestand* is now to be the name for ‘the mode of presence of all that is touched by the unconcealing that summons’ ...it cannot be reduced to a temporal determination, but must rather be understood on a par with the likes of *Gegenstand*, *Zeug*, and *Kunstwerk*. *Be-stand* designates the kind of *Stand* in which beings stand under the sway of *Be-stellen*.” (Martin Heidegger, “Question Concerning Technique,” p. 13)

⁹⁹ Ibid, 13; [16].

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, 14; [17].

¹⁰¹ Ibid, 14; [17].

of *Ge-stell*, but not because the human is ‘master’— “modern technique as ordering (*bestellend*) unconcealing is no mere human doing.”¹⁰² Rather the human plays an essential role in the ordering unconcealing because the human is summoned by *Ge-stell* to order *Bestand*; “only insofar as [the human] is already summoned to further the energies of nature, can this ordering (*bestellende*) unconcealing happen.”¹⁰³ Although the unconcealing of *Ge-stell* appears reliant on the human being’s to order “the actual as *Bestand*,” it is important to reiterate that this unconcealing is not a human doing.¹⁰⁴ Heidegger asks: “does this unconcealing happen somewhere beyond all human doing? No. Still it does not happen only *in* man, nor in a measure-giving way *through* him.”¹⁰⁵

Not only is *Ge-stell* a setting and putting into place that summons nature and material beings to be ordered, further ordered, and unconcealed as *Bestand*, *Ge-stell* also summons the human being to order: “Gestell is the gathering of this putting (*Stellen*) that puts (*stellt*), i.e. summons man to unconceal the actual in the way of ordering (*Bestellen*) as *Bestand*.”¹⁰⁶ In such a way, the human being is summoned to stand within the realm of *Ge-stell*. Now, we have come to an understanding of *Ge-stell*—the *Wesen* of modern technique—that is far more precise. *Ge-stell* is a kind of unconcealing that unfolds within the *Wesen* of modern technique, yet “*Ge-stell* is nothing technical, nothing machine-like. It is the way in which the actual unconceals itself as *Bestand*,”¹⁰⁷ and in *Ge-stell*’s domain, all beings come to relate as *Bestand*.

¹⁰² Ibid, 15; [19].

¹⁰³ Ibid, 14; [17].

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, 15; [19].

¹⁰⁵ Ibid, 19; [23].

¹⁰⁶ Ibid, 16; [20].

¹⁰⁷ Ibid, 19; [23].

Ge-stell's Domination

As the *Wesen* of modern technique, “*Ge-stell* brings man on the way of that unconcealing through which everywhere, more or less perceptibly, the actual becomes *Bestand*.”¹⁰⁸ In “What is *Ge-stell*?” we developed this happening, with the exception of one component: the bringing on a way. This ability of *Ge-stell*, to bring the human on a way, is critical in our grasp of *Ge-stell*. It is *Ge-stell's* bringing on a way, its sending, that characterizes it as a destiny: “bringing on a way, we call: sending (*schicken*). We name the gathering of the sending that brings man on a way of unconcealing: *destiny* (*das Geschick*).”¹⁰⁹ In the German word for destiny, *Geschick*, we hear sending, *schicken*; and as a destiny, *Ge-stell* sends the human being into its domain, in which all is unconcealed as *Bestand*. In other words, “as the summoning into ordering (*Bestellen*), *Ge-stell* destines into a way of unconcealing.” *Ge-stell* has come to dominate in the modern age, becoming the destiny of unconcealment, which is to say that *Ge-stell* is the *exclusive* way of unconcealing. What is at stake in *Ge-stell's* domination is homelessness insofar as the human being relates to all beings as *Bestand*. In this purely ‘teleological’ relation, the human being loses sight of the immanent web of Being they belong to. No longer does the human being, *Dasein*, dwell in the house of Being. *Die Lichtung* is entirely closed up by the unconcealment of modern technique, in which *Ge-stell* reigns and all becomes *Bestand*. Because Being is unable to be mastered, we abandon it, living in the oblivion of truth that is the domination of *Ge-stell's* destiny.

How does the exclusivity of *Ge-stell* as the destiny of unconcealment ensue? It begins with the summoning call of *Ge-stell*. The human is summoned by *Ge-stell*, and as a destiny of unconcealment, *Ge-stell* brings the human into its domain: “[destiny] brings man at any time on a way of unconcealing, man goes, thus on the way, always forward to the edge of the possibility of

¹⁰⁸ Ibid, 20; [24].

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

pursuing and carrying on only what is unconcealed in ordering (*Bestellen*), and of taking all measures from there.”¹¹⁰ Brought on a way into the realm of *Ge-stell*, the human being carries out the ordering of *Ge-stell*—not because the human being is servile to *Ge-stell*, but because the human belongs to the destiny of unconcealment. And since the human measures all from the unconcealed, “the other possibility closes itself up: That man lets himself sooner and more and steadily more incipiently into the essence of the unconcealed and into the unconcealedness of the unconcealed, so as to experience as his essence the needed belonging to unconcealment.”¹¹¹ The embrace of *Ge-stell*'s unconcealing destiny comes easily to the human. Mainly because unconcealment is where the human being finds freedom, “for man becomes free precisely insofar as he belongs in the domain of destiny.”¹¹² We may visualize the realm of unconcealment as *die Lichtung* of Being, where both the truth of Being and the human being's *Wesen* lie. Because this destinal domain of unconcealment is exclusively one of *Ge-stell*—in which *all* becomes ordered as *Bestand*—all other possibilities of unconcealing close up when the human fully embraces the *Geschick* of *Ge-stell*.

Closed off from the other possibilities of unconcealment, “man is imperiled from out of destiny.”¹¹³ But “the destiny of unconcealment is as such in each of its ways and therefore necessarily *peril*,” meaning that all unconcealing holds within it the possibility of peril.¹¹⁴ Particularly, “the peril that man goes astray in the unconcealed and misunderstands it.”¹¹⁵ Tending back to the four cause, we remember that indeed the bringing-forth of *ποίησις* was an unconcealing

¹¹⁰ Ibid, 21; [25].

¹¹¹ Ibid, 21; [25-26].

¹¹² Ibid, 20; [24].

¹¹³ Ibid, 22; [26].

¹¹⁴ In Footnote 27, the translators make the decision to translate “*Gefahr*” to peril as, their reasoning, which I find quite illuminating, follows: “Note that the German word *Gefahr*, which signifies ‘danger,’ is formed from the same root word as *erfahren*, ‘to experience,’ the concluding word of the previous paragraph: *fahren*, ‘to go, travel, fare.’ To preserve the word play, we translate it as ‘peril,’ which is a formation of the same root as ‘experience.’ In Greek: *πεπράω*.” (Martin Heidegger, “Question Concerning Technique,” p. 22)

¹¹⁵ Ibid, 22; [26].

of responsibility and care. Technique was not always consumed by *causa efficiens*, once *causa efficiens* was only one part of a four-part unconcealing, but somehow the intoxicating obsession with cause and effect took hold. It is no coincidence that this similarly unfolded within the demise of “philosophy” in the last chapter. Insofar as metaphysics and humanism became solely concerned with the mere fulfilment of valuable ends such as correctness of gaze and scientific merit, subsequently leading to a withdrawal of Being and truth (ἀλήθεια).

The decisive turn is that although the risk of going astray is always present, for “the destiny of unconcealment is in itself not some one peril, but *the* peril,” there is greater peril in the swaying of destiny toward *Ge-stell*.¹¹⁶ Heidegger suggests that the peril of *Ge-stell*, which is the highest peril, manifests in two respects: 1. the human being is taken only as *Bestand* and 2. the human being deceptively assumes the position as master of beings and Being. The former manifests itself when the unconcealed approaches the human being exclusively as *Bestand*, placing the human “within objectlessness (*das Gegenstandlose*) only still the orderer (*Besteller*) of *Bestand*, — man goes to the outermost edge of the precipice, namely where he himself is to be taken as only still *Bestand*.”¹¹⁷ The latter aspect of peril arises when the same human that is so threatened by *Bestand*’s hold, “props [themselves] up in the *Gestalt* of lord of the earth. Thus, the semblance spreads that all one encounters, stands (*bestehe*) only insofar as it is a product of man’s making. This semblance produces in time a last deceptive semblance.”¹¹⁸ The human equates themselves as ‘lord of the earth’ and places all that has been ordered as *Bestand* under their agency as so ‘lord.’ But this is a falsity, and it furthers the drive toward all being ordered as *Bestand*, misunderstood as mere means.

¹¹⁶ Ibid, 22; [26].

¹¹⁷ Ibid, 22; [26].

¹¹⁸ Ibid, 22; [26-27].

This peril produces the false assumption that everywhere the human encounters themselves, “*meanwhile contemporary man in truth precisely no longer encounters himself, i.e. his essence, anywhere.*”¹¹⁹ The human being becomes homeless, this is not a question of when the human encounters themselves, it is a matter that the human no longer ever encounters themselves:

Man stands so decisively in the following of the summoning of *Ge-stell*, that he does not perceive the latter as a claim, that he overlooks himself as the one who is claimed, and thereby in every way also overhears how far, from out of his own essence, he ek-sists (*ek-sistiert*) in the domain of an address and therefore *can never* encounter only himself.¹²⁰

The ability to recognize the summoning call of *Ge-stell* for what it is, is entirely suspended. This peril is autopoietic, it reproduces itself in the mere nature of *Ge-stell*'s unconcealing. For one it summons the human to order all as *Bestand*, but eventually the human goes astray in the weeds of *Bestand* and objectlessness. So far astray has the human gone, that this summoning call has been forgotten, the human abstracts themselves as ‘lord of the earth’ and all ordering is misunderstood to be under human mandate. This viscous cycle drives the human being away from their essence, and far removed from the house of Being, the human being becomes homeless.

The ramifications of *Ge-stell* extend further than imperiling the human's relation to themselves and to the actual. *Ge-stell* relentlessly orders, thus, “as destiny it points into unconcealing in the manner of ordering (*Bestellen*).”¹²¹ By attempting to order the unconcealment itself, *Ge-stell* dispels all other prospects of unconcealment, but most importantly, “*Ge-stell* conceals that unconcealing which lets what is present come-forth in appearance in the sense of $\pi\acute{o}\iota\eta\sigma\iota\varsigma$.”¹²² In concealing $\pi\acute{o}\iota\eta\sigma\iota\varsigma$, *Ge-stell* is not only concealing a former mode of unconcealing,

¹¹⁹ Ibid, 23; [27].

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²² Ibid, 23; [27].

Ge-stell is also concealing ἀλήθεια. By concealing unconcealing (ἀλήθεια), “*Ge-stell* misplaces (*verstellt*) the shining and swaying of truth. The destiny that destines into ordering (*Bestellen*), is therewith the outermost peril.”¹²³ Although *Ge-stell*—as a destiny of unconcealing and modern technique’s essence—is the highest peril, Heidegger emphasizes that “imperiling is not technique” and “the transformed signification of the word ‘*Ge-stell*’ becomes perhaps a little more familiar to us when we think *Ge-stell* in the sense of destiny (*Geschick*) and peril (*Gefahr*).”¹²⁴

The Possibility of an Alternative Destiny

The extremity of *Ge-stell* as the *Geschick* of Being makes the danger of technique manifest, concealing unconcealing as such. Yet somehow within technique’s peril opens the possibility of another way of relating to Being, or an alternative destiny of Being. Heidegger refers to this alternative destiny as “the save.” Heidegger’s language of the save within the peril is borrowed explicitly from the words of the late poet Hölderlin,¹²⁵ which Heidegger quotes as follows: “But where peril is, grows/ What saves also.”¹²⁶ In this section, we will seek out this alternative destiny that Heidegger refers to as the save, opening up the possibilities that were previously closed off by *Ge-stell*.

When Heidegger writes that “the destiny of unconcealment always sways man through and through,”¹²⁷ he does not mean that the human becomes servile to destiny. Instead, the human listens and hears (*hören*) the destiny of unconcealment; in this hearing, the human being becomes “obedient” (*hörender*) to destiny.¹²⁸ The significance of the word “obedience” in this occasion is

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ The exact words are found in Hölderlin’s hymn, “Patmos:” “Wo aber Gefahr ist, wächst/ Das Rettende auch.” (Friedrich Hölderlin, “Patmos,” p.191-195.)

¹²⁶ Martin Heidegger, “Question Concerning Technique,” p. 24; [28].

¹²⁷ Ibid, 20; [24].

¹²⁸ Ibid.

lost in translation, for Heidegger is playing with the shared etymology of “to hear,” *hören*, and “to be obedient,” *hörender*. The obedience of the human in the sway of destiny’s unconcealment, can be clarified by a return to the idea of “summoning.” The human is summoned and called by the destiny of unconcealment (which in modern age, is the call of *Ge-stell*), insofar as we listen, we become free. The *Wesen* of freedom for Heidegger is “not primordially bound to the will, nor indeed to the causality of human willing.”¹²⁹ Freedom rather holds an intimate standing with unconcealing of truth:

All unconcealing comes out of the free (*das Freie*), goes into the free, and brings into the free. The freedom of the free (*das Freie*) consists neither in the unboundness of the will to choose (*Willkür*), nor in the binding of mere laws (*Gesetze*)...Freedom is the domain of the destiny that at any time brings unconcealment on its way.¹³⁰

All destinal unconcealment is freeing, for freedom is a fundamental part of unconcealment. This means that even the unconcealing of *Ge-stell* comes out of and goes into the free (*das Freie*). Heidegger is putting forth an idea of freedom that is vastly different than the accomplishing human choice or will: freedom is a realm, freedom is *die Lichtung*.

There is radical potential that lies in the freedom of unconcealment. Heidegger states, “the essence of modern technique rests in *Ge-stell*. The latter belongs in the destiny of unconcealment,” and “these sentences (*Sätze*) say something other than the often sounding talk that technique is the fate (*Schicksal*) of our age, wherein fate means: the unavailability of an unalterable course.”¹³¹ Destiny is not a fixed fatalistic doom, as unconcealment it belongs to the free and thus is malleable, even when under the dominion of *Ge-stell*. But how may we experience the freedom that lies in technique?

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Ibid, 21; [25].

¹³¹ Ibid, 21; [25].

Heidegger says that simply in thinking about *Ge-stell*, we undergo *Ge-stell* as an unconcealing destiny. In this reflective experience, “we already dwell within the free (*das Freie*) of destiny...when we open ourselves properly to the *essence* of technique, we find ourselves unexpectedly under a claim that frees.”¹³² By thoughtfully acknowledging *Ge-stell* as that which summons us, we don’t fall into the deceptive trap of *Ge-stell*’s peril that veils its summoning call as something outside of ourselves and not of our own doing. We recognize the call as something that belongs to technique’s destiny, a destiny that we too belong to. This open dwelling “in no way shuts us into a dull compulsion blindly to carry on with technique, or, what is the same, helplessly to rebel against it and to condemn it as devil’s work.”¹³³ For Heidegger, freedom is found not through fighting nor blind submission; it is found in unconcealing and can be properly restored by way of the save.

We know that Heidegger’s idea of the save is delivered from Hölderlin’s hymn, “Patmos,” (i.e., “But where peril is, grows/ What saves also.”) but beyond a referential significance, what exactly does “the save” signify? Heidegger expounds upon this question for us, writing that “‘to save’ is: to pull something back into its essence, so as first to bring that essence to its proper shining.”¹³⁴ We recall that truth for the Greeks, in the sense of ἀλήθεια, is a shining. Therefore, “if the essence of technique, *Ge-stell*, is the outermost peril, and if at the same time Hölderlin’s word says the truth, then the domination of *Ge-stell* cannot exhaust itself in misplacing (*verstellen*) all lighting of every unconcealing, all shining of truth.”¹³⁵ *Ge-stell* as the outermost peril is an unconcealing, and although it may conceal the unconcealing of ἀλήθεια as such, is incapable of stifling every blitz of shining truth. The implications of this are great, for then “the essence of

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Ibid, 24; [28].

¹³⁵ Ibid.

technique must rather harbor (*bergen*) in itself the growth of what saves.”¹³⁶ Although *Ge-stell* is extreme in its reign, and the possibility of a save within the peril appears to be paradoxical, we must keep in mind that these happenings are not opposing forces of ‘good’ and ‘evil.’ Value gradation is precisely what Heidegger is resisting in his thinking, for valuing inevitably becomes type of ordering. To simplify into polarized categories would be not only a grave mistake but also a repetition of past error. Rather these happenings are unfolding as entangled ways of Being, out of the destiny of ἀλήθεια comes ποίησις, the four causes, and technique; out of which consequently arises the essence of modern technique, *Ge-stell*, which is the highest peril; but within this peril lies what can traverse us through it, out of it, and into the saving.

Before delving into the saving, I want to briefly turn back toward homelessness. After all, we began our inquiry of technique to deepen our understanding of homelessness. Thus, the saving is not just a possible save from *Ge-stell*’s dominion, it is also a save from the destiny of homelessness that bound with domination of modern technique’s *Wesen*. Visually, I conceptualize the genesis of homelessness like a tree. The branches are the various ideological causes that lead homelessness: including but not limited to, humanism, metaphysics, scientific positivism. And the fruits represent these ideologies’ knowledge production: correctness of gaze as “truth, praxis, dogmatic “logic” and value, et cetera. Prolifically reaching, these branches and their fruits twist at some moments and part ways at others, extending out into manifold directions; but no matter the distance deviated from one another, they originate from a single trunk. I posit the trunk as technique because lodged within technique is the so called ‘telos’ of means to an end. Out of technique, the *will to master* emerges. But technique, even in its reign of *Ge-stell* remains a mode of unconcealment. Therefore, the roots of this tree are ἀλήθεια, and this is why both homelessness

¹³⁶ Ibid.

and *Ge-stell* are destinies of unconcealment; because they are both parts of the same tree, rooted in ἀλήθεια. For, “where something grows, there it roots, from there it thrives. Both happen concealed and still and in their time.”¹³⁷ The peril of *Ge-stell*'s domination, and subsequently homelessness, as the exclusive destiny of unconcealing is entrenched in ἀλήθεια. And insofar as *Ge-stell* is modern technique's *Wesen*, we must return again to the question of technique, asking after its meaning once more.

Technique as a signifier may be traced back to the Greek word τεχνικός, meaning “what belongs to τέχνη.”¹³⁸ Curiously enough, τέχνη (techne) is the name assigned to both handworkly craft as well as the fine arts; thus, τέχνη is poetic, as it dwells in the bringing-forth and making of ποίησις. Heidegger asserts that “once not only technique bore the name τέχνη. Once τέχνη was also that unconcealing that brings-forth truth in the splendor of what shines. Once τέχνη was also the bringing-forth of the true in the beautiful (*das Schöne*).”¹³⁹ Somewhere along the way, technique was not properly heard, and so *Ge-stell* assumed the domain of technique's unconcealment, τέχνη and ποίησις long ignored and forgotten. But when we actually hear technique, and when we *really* listen, we hear τέχνη, which means that we hear ποίησις. In this way, the save is in the peril.

Precisely out of and within *Ge-stell*, as the *Wesen* of technique, emerges the possibility of what saves:

Hence all depends on whether we give thought to this emergence and guard it thoughtfully. How does that happen? Above all in this way, that we look at the *Wesende*¹⁴⁰ of technique, instead of staring at the technical. As long as we represent (*vorstellen*) technique as instrument, we remain hanging on to the will to master it. We drive past the essence of technique.¹⁴¹

¹³⁷ Ibid, 24; [28].

¹³⁸ Ibid, 9; [12].

¹³⁹ Ibid, 29; [34].

¹⁴⁰ “*Wesend* is the active present participle of *wesen*.” (Footnote 26 in the “Question Concerning Technique,” 21.)

¹⁴¹ Ibid, 27-28; [32].

Attentiveness is essential, being thoughtful is a kind of care, out of which we find the glimmer of truth shine forth. We must go beyond the semblances of mere appearance, past the instrumental manifestations of technique and into technique's essence. By fixating solely on 'technique as instrument' we reproduce the will of mastery, and never unconceal the concealment; "however, if we ask how the instrumental *wes* as a kind of causality, then we experience this *Wesende* as the destiny of an unconcealing."¹⁴² Thus, the thoughtfulness of the human being is part of this unconcealing. Because of this, "we are called upon to hope in the growing light of what saves."¹⁴³ How is it that we may bask in the glow of the saving? "Here and now and in small ways, so that we guard the saving in its growth. This includes that at all times we keep looking into the outermost peril."¹⁴⁴ To guard the saving in its growth depends on our attentiveness to the peril, only then can we hear its call and see its light.

Human action alone can most certainly never stave off or obliterate the peril of *Ge-stell* that threatens all unconcealing to be ordered as *Bestand*; "but human deliberation can give thought to this, that what saves must be of a higher essence than, but at the same time akin to the imperiled."¹⁴⁵ It is in deliberate thinking and careful listening that we hear *ποίησις* as the save from the peril.

¹⁴² Ibid, 28; [32].

¹⁴³ Ibid, 29; [33].

¹⁴⁴ Ibid, 29; [33].

¹⁴⁵ Ibid, 29; [34].

III. Saving

In the unconcealment of Being, chronology is not linear. Being does not subscribe to the limited human time scale we operate within no matter how adamantly we attempt to impose human dimensionality onto Being. Because of the nonhuman time scale of Being, Being's unconcealment should not be thought of in terms of sequential stages.

Both homelessness and *Ge-stell* are ways in which Being perilously unconceals itself. But insofar as Being is outside of human temporal schema, it is not a question of whether homelessness happens before *Ge-stell's* domination or vice versa. Homelessness may very well happen as a part of *Ge-stell's* reign, just as *Ge-stell* might unfold within homelessness. Therefore, although homelessness and *Ge-stell* stand on their own as particular destinies of Being, in no way are the two mutually exclusive. Quite the contrary, *Ge-stell* and homelessness point to nuanced aspects of the *same* unconcealment of Being.

Despite this vast share between homelessness and *Ge-stell*—as both signify the perilous ways in which Being destines its unconcealment—their particularities are essential to deepening our insight into the perilous state of Being we have arrived to. A state in which the will to mastery has covered up Being whilst decaying the dwelling place of *Dasein*, and we saw the examples of such a decay in the manifestations of modern technique approaching all beings as mere means to ends. The precise differences between homelessness and *Ge-stell* lies in the particular manifestation they point to within Being's unconcealing destiny. Peering into homelessness and *Ge-stell's* respective particularities illuminates the multiplexity of the peril, giving way to a well-rounded portrait of the decayed world that becomes when the human being only posits themselves as master. When there is nothing that is not seen as the doing of the human being, a world fully of the human's making with no escape. A world in which language declines and meaning becomes

veiled by the will to will: nothing matters except whatever will the human being sets for themselves. The particular manifestations of homelessness and Ge-stell can deepen our understanding of how a save may grow from this perilous situation the world has found itself in.

Homelessness in its particularity can be traced back to ‘language as the house of Being.’ In the first chapter, we investigated Heidegger’s positing of this linguistic home, in which the human being, *Dasein*,¹⁴⁶ essentially dwells. As the dweller of the house of Being, *Dasein* must care after this house, as the shepherd of Being. By thinking toward Being as distinct from beings, *Dasein* is affecting care. This thoughtfulness is also how *Dasein*, as the one who belongs to Being, ek-statically sustains *die Lichtung* (clearing of Being). This thoughtful sustaining is not entirely an act of “selfless” care, as it benefits *Dasein* insofar as it attends to *Dasein*’s essence. But it most certainly is not an act of selfish mastery either. In caring after Being, the will to self-assertion is absent; for the human being does not stand *against* Being but rather *with and in* Being, thoughtfully dwelling in language.¹⁴⁷

The moment that the human being attempts to place their standing outside and against Being, they no longer dwell in the house of Being. In such a way, the human being becomes homeless. Homelessness thus points to a moment of Being’s destiny that severs the relationship between the *Dasein* and Being; which is to say the relationship between language, thinking, and Being. As a destiny of thoughtlessness, language is taken over by both meaningless chatter and pretentious jargon, becoming a “tool” of utility and mastery. Language in its essential closeness to Being— not as high speech or simple communication— but as revelation of being, is forgotten. The house of Being falls apart, leaving *Dasein* homeless. Homelessness is a perilous phase of

¹⁴⁶ I will move between the “*Dasein*” and “the human being” interchangeably in this chapter.

¹⁴⁷ Martin Heidegger, “What Are Poets For?,” p. 138.

Being's unconcealing destiny in which the Being is forgotten by the human being, the unconcealing is concealed by forgetfulness.

Ge-stell's domination unfolds as another moment of Being's perilous unconcealing. The particularity of *Ge-stell* is, like homelessness, bound up with the will to master. But *Ge-stell's* mastery is more specific in *how* it masters. *Ge-stell*, as the *Wesen* of modern technique places the human being in a position in which they relate to all beings as *Bestand*. In other words, under the reign of *Ge-stell* all beings lose their particular stands and become mere standing-in-reserve. They become solely means to an end—and the end for *Ge-stell* is stand-less ordering, to the extent that Being's unconcealing itself is seen as a thing to be ordered.

As perilous aspects of a common destiny, *Ge-stell* and homelessness inform one another. At first it may seem that the human being plays a corresponding role in the shaping of destiny. Eventually it becomes apparent that in actually the human being is not an informant but is rather *informed*; as *Ge-stell* and homelessness alienate *Dasein* from *Dasein's Wesen*. *Dasein* subsequently loses their linguistic home and free standing within the openness of Being. Yet even as *Dasein's Wesen* is alienated from *Dasein*, *Dasein* remains *Da-Sein*— which is to say that *Dasein* continues to belong to Being. And no matter how forgotten Being has become, how far down Being is buried in concealment, it remains as what *West*: Being prevails as Being. I don't think it is possible for the human being to ever depart from Being; to the extent that the human being is a being, they belong to Being. So even as the human being in the peril falls away from Being and out of conscious dwelling, there is always potential for the save.

In this chapter the save will be the primary point of inquiry. In the first section I will address the precise role of the human being in overcoming the peril and re-interrogate the peril as *the site* of saving. Although we touched upon the ways in which the save grows from the peril in the

previous chapter, in this chapter we will deepen and clarify this by digging further into the “Question Concerning Technique.”

The site of the save and the role of the human in the saving go hand in hand. The human being plays a crucial role in overcoming the peril, of course not as lord of Being nor as the single most powerful agent of change. Rather in *Dasein*'s ability to care for, think toward, and belong to Being. As already stated, *Dasein* belongs to Being, and Being is housed in language, thus the human being is a linguistic being. Not in the manner of zoon echon logon as “animal rationale,” for the human being does not *possess* language as a mere tool to further ends, rather the human being *dwells* in language. But the human being does not dwell in language just any way. Heidegger writes: “the same poet, [i.e., Hölderlin] from whom we heard the words ‘But where peril is, grows/ What saves also.’ tells us: ‘. . . poetically dwells man on this earth.’”¹⁴⁸ The human being dwells *poetically*.

It is only from its poetic essence that the save holds such radical potential for bringing-forth restoration of the relation between *Dasein* and dwelling. The dwelling of the human being is a poetic dwelling, and so it is fitting that the save from the peril is a poetic save. Furthermore, as homelessness tells us the peril is in part a linguistic degradation. As the primordial language of being, as opposed to debased understanding of language as solely a means to an end, poetry in its essence bring-forth language in its proper light. That the save grows out of the peril is imperative to understanding the essence of the saving as poetics.

The remainder of the chapter will tend to the poetic save giving way for the human being to once again ek-statically sustain *die Lichtung*. I will focus specifically on “...Poetically Man Dwells...” (“...dichterisch wohnt der Mensch...”), which was, on “Heidegger’s account: ‘[a]

¹⁴⁸ Martin Heidegger, “Question Concerning Technique,” p. 30; [35].

lecture, given on October 6th, 1951, at Blüherhöhe,' printed in the first number of *Akzente, Zeitschrift für Dichtung*.¹⁴⁹ I will also turn to a number of essays that accompany "...Poetically Man Dwells..." in the collection of Heidegger's essays titled *Poetry, Language, Thought*. By working between these texts, we will establish what Heidegger means by "poetry" within this poetic dwelling. Which of course means that we must address what he also means by "dwelling" and how exactly human being "dwells poetically."

The peril deceives the human being into believing they are master, when in fact they will not and cannot ever master Being. In actuality the peril masters all beings (human and nonhuman beings alike). The peril makes manifest its power over the human being by placing *Dasein* out of its dwelling and into the undignified orderability of *Bestand*. Poetics, as the saving, goes through the peril and effectively draws *Dasein* back into *die Lichtung* and house of Being, i.e., language.

Overcoming the Peril

When Heidegger writes about the peril, he is specifically speaking about *Ge-stell*. I have taken it upon myself to expand the meaning of the peril to include homelessness. I find this expansion justifiable because homelessness is quite frankly a perilous destiny of unconcealment. Homelessness is perilous for reasons we have posited countless times: it comes out of a will to mastery and furthers this masterful will in its unfolding. And as I posited above, homelessness and *Ge-stell* are in many ways a shared phenomenon. But because Heidegger writes precisely about the peril in terms of *Ge-stell* in the "Question Concerning Technique," the following *textual* analysis will be thinking along the lines of *Ge-stell*. When it comes time for interpretation, I will

¹⁴⁹ Martin Heidegger, "Question Concerning Technique," p. xxv.

weave into question homelessness. For me, the interplay of the two crucial because I am interested in a saving from not only the dominion of *Ge-stell*, but the problem of homelessness too.

To reorient ourselves lets work our way back into the “Question Concerning Technique” and the problematic interiority of *Ge-stell*. *Ge-stell* is so committed to ordering that it misplaces its own essence, *Stellen*, into the orderable: “the essence of *Gestell* is the putting (*Stellen*), gathered in itself, that traps (*nachstellt*) the truth of its own essence in forgottenness.”¹⁵⁰ *Ge-stell*, in forgetting its own essence to the tyranny of *Bestand*, begins to order itself as *Bestand*. The entrapped truth of *Ge-stell*'s essence “misplaces itself (*sich verstellt*), in that it unfolds itself into ordering (*Bestellen*) as *Bestand* all that is present, erects itself in *Bestand*, and dominates as *Bestand*.”¹⁵¹ I read ‘misplacing’ (*Vorstellung*) as key move in understanding what exactly how the peril unfolds itself. The peril is both *Ge-stell* and Being. The peril is Being itself because *Ge-stell* is a particular way in which Being unconceals itself, *Ge-stell* is a way that Being makes itself manifest to us under the reign of modern technique and the will to mastery. *Ge-stell* not only misplaces its own *Wesen*, namely *Stellen*, but also misplaces the truth of Being's *Wesen*. This misplacing is how the peril unfolds itself in the most perilous sense. Heidegger expresses this in the following passage:

Gestell *west* as the peril. But does the peril therewith already announce itself as the peril? No. Perils and needs oppress man exceedingly everywhere at every hour. But the peril, namely being itself (*das Sein selbst*) imperiling itself in the truth of its essence, remains covered and misplaced (*verstellt*). This misplacing (*Verstellung*) is what imperils most in the peril. In accordance with this misplacing (*Verstellung*) of the peril through the ordering (*Bestellen*) of *Gestell*, it always still and always again seems as though technique were a means in man's hand. But in truth the essence of man is now ordered (*bestellt*) to give a hand to the essence of technique.¹⁵²

¹⁵⁰ Ibid, 32; [37].

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² Ibid.

The peril, which is not Being in its *true* essence but rather Being as “unconcealed” to us in its concealment (i.e., concealed by the ordering of *Bestand*), also lead the human being to a misplaced understanding of agency. The human being is led to believe that they hold technique in their hand, when in actuality they are oppressed by the peril. The human being in their oppressed and undignified state of being put into place as *Bestand*, as an orderable means to the end of *Ge-stell*, is actually giving assistance to the perilous unconcealment as such. This news, although disheartening, is not entirely bleak; for it means that the human being is a potential actor of change.

Again, I tirelessly reiterate that the human being cannot assist in transformation of the peril as ‘master.’ If the peril is Being itself, then it can’t simply be overcome by the human being “if this were so, [the human] would be the lord of being (*des Seins*).”¹⁵³ We know very well that the human being is not the lord of Being but is the shepherd. Insofar as “the essence of technique, *Gestell* as the peril in being (*im Sein*), is being itself (*das Sein selbst*), then technique will never let itself be mastered by a human doing, positive or negative, merely posed on itself (*auf sich gestellt*).”¹⁵⁴ The human being indeed has a role in overcoming *Ge-stell*’s destiny, but only insofar as the human being is Being’s caring shepherd, and not a misguided authority figure.

That the human being is the shepherd of Being, an idea that we introduced in the first chapter, is of the utmost importance. Within Heidegger’s conception of shepherding is the sentiment of belonging. The human being, in their true essence, belongs to Being. But this belonging is dynamic insofar as it is not merely a passive ‘I belong to’ but an active ‘I belong to and thus care after my belonging.’ *Dasein* and Being share a spirited relationship, sustained by thinking and dwelling. At the same time, Being has “destined itself in *Gestell* as the essence of

¹⁵³ Ibid, 33; [38].

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

technique.”¹⁵⁵ This destining does not negate the belonging of *Dasein* to *Sein*. Instead it means that “the essence of technique cannot be led into the transformation of its destiny without the help of the essence of man.”¹⁵⁶ The caring shepherding of *Sein* by *Dasein* is needed in the face of careless mastery.

Heidegger addresses this need of the human being, asserting that the way in which the human being will be needed is in the “corresponding of [their] essence to this getting-over.”¹⁵⁷ Because the human being belongs to Being, they also belong to *Ge-stell* as a way of Being’s unconcealment. Thus, the human being cannot simply dissent against *Ge-stell*, for that would create only more internal dissonance and no “getting-over,” as Heidegger calls the overcoming of the peril. To avoid further strife and think toward possible savings, “the essence of man must first open itself to the essence of technique, which as an *Ereignis* is something wholly other than the going forward of man affirming and furthering technique and its means.”¹⁵⁸ To open up is neither an acceptance of *Ge-stell*’s mastery or fateful defeat; it is a correspondence. Only by first opening up to the peril can the human being acknowledge the peril’s existence as something it stands within, recognizing that no longer are they essentially dwelling in the house of Being, but are homeless and severed from their essence. To a certain extent this *Ereignis* is metaphorically comparable to the first step of AA— admittance, acknowledgement, a recognition of powerlessness in order to get-over this powerlessness. But Heidegger writes that before this recognition can happen, before “an essential relation to found itself between technique and man with respect to the essence of technique, modern man must first of all beforehand find the way

¹⁵⁵ Ibid, 33; [38].

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid, 34; [39].

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

back to the breadth of his essential space.”¹⁵⁹ In the demand that the human being must first find a way back to their essential space before overcoming the peril, we hear a resonance to the “Letter on Humanism.” In the letter, we are told that “if the human being is to find his way once again into the nearness of being he must first learn to exist in the nameless.”¹⁶⁰ In other words, before the human being can overcome homelessness and once again dwell ek-statically in *die Lichtung*, returning to the house of Being, the human must learn to exist in the nameless. I interpret the “nameless” as another way of saying “essential breadth.” In order to get-over the peril of both *Ge-stell* and *homelessness* the human being must find a way out of the chatter and mastery and into a more primordial realm of existence.

Heidegger always seems to be looking for a “way” (*Weg*); a way through, across, into, towards, et cetera— but to my knowledge never a way around. I understand the finding of a way as thinking. For Heidegger, thinking carves a path *through* the thick of existence and on the way towards Being. Thinking is *the way* for the human being. But thinking must go *into* and think *through* the peril. In part, this is why the save lies in the peril. Thinking cannot merely go around, the peril and into the saving, because it is only out of the perilous destiny of Being that a way can be found back into Being’s truth. In fact, it is precisely in thinking that the truth of Being opens itself to us once again:

In the face of the essential homelessness of human beings, the approaching destiny of the human being reveals itself to thought on the history of [Being] in this, that the human being find his way into the truth of [Being] and set out on this find.¹⁶¹

In thinking, the truth of *Ge-stell*’s unfolding unveils itself to us; we see that we are in fact not the lord of beings and Being, but ourselves under *Ge-stell*’s domination. This thoughtful recognition

¹⁵⁹ Ibid, 34; [39].

¹⁶⁰ Martin Heidegger, “Letter on Humanism,” p. 243; [150].

¹⁶¹ Ibid, 260; [172].

opens ourselves up to the danger that we must go through to get to the saving, thus this revelation is a prerequisite to finding our way back into the truth of Being.

Heidegger makes the necessity of thinking explicitly clear: “therefore what is needed first is this, that beforehand we give thought to the *essence* of being (*des Seins*) as what is worthy-of-thought, that beforehand, so thinking, we experience how far we are called first to trace a path for such experience and to open it in what has so long been impassable.”¹⁶² But to think about the essence of Being, is also to think about language. For “language is the incipient dimension within which the essence of man is first capable at all of corresponding to being (*dem Sein*) and to the claim of being, and in this corresponding to belong to being (*dem Sein*).”¹⁶³ Language as the house of Being and the abode of *Dasein*’s true essence, is the realm in which this budding correspondence between *Dasein* and *Sein* may emerge. And “*this incipient corresponding, properly carried out, is thinking*. In thinking we first learn to inhabit the domain in which getting-over the destiny of being (*des Seinsgeschickes*), getting-over *Gestell*, *sich ereignet*.”¹⁶⁴ Therefore, the role of the human being in the getting-over of the peril is thinking-correspondence. Thinking is correspondence, and correspondence is opening oneself back up to Being. This opening up may be thought of in two ways: 1. Recognition of the peril as the peril, 2. Thinking toward Being in its true essence.

Thinking is imperative, not only in the issue of the peril at hand, but in the experience of the human being, for “as long as we do not thoughtfully experience what is, we can never belong to what will be.”¹⁶⁵ Simply experiencing alienation from Being under the reign of the will to mastery is not enough, it will not bring about a saving. A saving arises only if *Dasein* carefully

¹⁶² Martin Heidegger, “Question Concerning Technique,” p. 34; [39-40].

¹⁶³ *Ibid*, 35; [40].

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid*.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid*, 41; [46].

meditates on this experience and acknowledges that it is a destiny not extraneous to their existence; they too belong to the perilous destiny of the modern age. Belonging to the peril means that they too can belong to the save in that the save is situated within the peril.

We have reiterated that ‘where the peril grows also grows what saves,’ “but where is the peril? What is the site (*Ort*) for it?”¹⁶⁶ The peril does not *West* as a specific site, “insofar as the peril is being itself (*das Sein selber*), it is nowhere and everywhere. It *has* no site as something other than it itself. It is itself the siteless space (*ortlose Ortschaft*) of all presence. The peril is the epoch of being (*des Seins*), *wesend* as *Gestell*.”¹⁶⁷ Heidegger posits that the peril cannot be articulated as a set of coordinates, its site is the site of Being’s unconcealment which unfolds everywhere. To this point I want to push back against Heidegger. I agree that Being unconceals in every corner of the world, for Being is multidimensional and thus exceeds boundaries constructed and policed by the human being. Yet I would argue that Heidegger only really considers what we refer to as the “West” in his thinking. How indigenous communities think about Being is inherently different, and arguably more in correspondence with Being’s truth. Nonetheless, the will to mastery is inflicted upon these communities whether or not they are the individuals willing power in the Western sense of the word. Thus, most are subjected to this encroaching will to mastery that seems devoted to permeating every crevice of the world, even if they are not on board with it. Only under this rational do I agree that Being’s unconcealment unfolds everywhere as the peril, keeping in mind that there are many ways in which Being destines itself into unconcealing.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid, 36; [41-42].

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

We have thoroughly addressed the ‘where’ of the peril (as both everywhere and nowhere) and the ‘what’ of peril (as *Ge-stell* and homelessness), but we have yet to properly address the ‘how’ of the peril as the save:

The peril itself is, when it is as the peril, what saves. The peril is what saves, insofar as out of its concealed turning essence it brings what saves. What is it “to save” (*retten*)? It says: To release, to make free, to free, to spare, to shelter (*bergen*), to take under protection, to keep-in-trust (*wahren*).¹⁶⁸

Seemingly paradoxically, the peril actually becomes what saves, sets free, protects, and ‘keeps-in-trust. What is this ‘keeping-in-trust’ that Heidegger speaks of? Heidegger’s specific language of the ‘keeping-in-trust’ as the turning from the peril into the save (*die Rettung*) can be traced back to Lessing. Heidegger writes that “Lessing still uses the word ‘*Rettung*’ in an emphatic way in the sense of justification (*Rechtfertigung*): to set back (*zurückstellen*), to keep in the right, in the essential. What properly saves is what keeps-in-trust, the keeping-in-trust (*das Wahrende, die Wahrnis*).”¹⁶⁹ The keeping-in-trust is a grace that dwells in the *Wesen* of peril, “namely the grace of the turn of the forgottenness of being (*des Seins*) into the truth of being (*des Seins*).”¹⁷⁰ The keeping-in-trust is the swift move from perilous unconcealment into the save. But the turn from “the forgottenness of being (*des Seins*) to the keeping-in-trust of the essence of being (*des Seins*), *ereignet sich* only if the turning peril in the hidden essence of forgottenness first once properly comes to light as the peril that it is.”¹⁷¹ To a certain extent the save is a remembrance of Being’s true essence, but only insofar as Being’s true essence is acknowledged by *Dasein* as being forgotten under *Ge-stell*’s perilous reign.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid, 36; [41].

¹⁷⁰ Ibid, 37; [42].

¹⁷¹ Ibid, 35; [40].

The turn lies in more than an acknowledgement of forgetting, the forgottenness of Being's *Wesen* actually turns itself into the keeping-in-trust. Heidegger outlines this as follows: "the self-denial of the truth of being (*des Seins*) that traps itself (*sich nachstellend*) in forgottenness harbors the still ungranted grace that this self-entrapment (*Sichnachstellen*) turns itself, that in such a turn the forgottenness turns itself and becomes the keeping-in-trust of the essence of being (*des Seins*)."¹⁷² Furthermore, this ungranted grace is granted only by Being; for "Being (*Sein*) does not ever run in a causal nexus of effects...Being itself (*das Sein selber*) sends itself" into the saving."¹⁷³ And only in Being's own time does Being swiftly unconceals itself. This development from forgottenness into the saving of keeping-in-trust happens quite abruptly. Heidegger writes:

The turn of the peril *ereignet sich* suddenly. In the turn suddenly clears itself the clearing of the essence of being (*des Seins*). This sudden self-clearing is the lightning-flash (*das Blitzen*). It itself brings itself in its own brightness, which it brings-in with itself. When in the turn of the peril, the truth of being (*des Seins*) flashes (*blitzt*), the essence of being clears itself. Then the truth of the essence of being (*des Seins*) turns-in.¹⁷⁴

Suddenly, the *Wesen* of Being in its truth reveals itself as a flash of light. The language of *die Lichtung* resounds in this unfolding. Being clears itself as the clearing, *die Lichtung*; Being's truth shines forth out of truthlessness (*Verwahrlosung*) as a flash of light. Being lights itself as the grace, Being's *Wesen ereignet sich* from its own concealedness.¹⁷⁵

Not long ago we examined the misplacement of *Ge-stell* as the highest peril insofar as *Ge-stell* misplaces both its own *Wesen* (i.e., *Stellen*), as well as the true *Wesen* of Being. *Ge-stell's* destining is so forgetful that it "even misplaces (*verstellt*) this its own misplacing (*verstellen*), just

¹⁷² Ibid, 37; [42].

¹⁷³ Ibid, 37; [43].

¹⁷⁴ Ibid, 37-38; [43].

¹⁷⁵ Ibid, 37; [43].

as the forgetting of something forgets itself and pulls itself away in the wake of forgottenness.”¹⁷⁶ Yet somehow, in all this misplaced forgetting, “*Ge-stell*, clears itself the ray-of-light (*Lichtblick*) of world, flashes the truth of being (*des Seins*).”¹⁷⁷ *Ge-stell* as Being’s unconcealment becomes what saves only after it “clears itself in its essence as the peril.”¹⁷⁸ Considering there is no one destiny of Being’s unconcealment, destiny is never to be understood in terms of a “fully ordained doom”¹⁷⁹ or fixed fate. “In *Ge-stell* as an essential destiny of being (*des Seins*), still *west* a light of the lightning of being (*des Seins*),” there still glimmers a possibility of another way of unconcealing.¹⁸⁰

But do we, in our thinking as *Dasein*, glance into the misplacement and “see the lightning-flash of being (*des Seins*) in the essence of technique?”¹⁸¹ Heidegger asks: “do we correspond to the glance through a look that looks into the essence of technique, and in this essence becomes aware of being itself (*das sein Selbst*)?”¹⁸² To glance is to correspond, to “glance into what is, such is the lightning of the truth (*Wahrheit*) of being (*des Seins*) in truthless being (*in das wahrlose Sein*).”¹⁸³ To glance into the unconcealment is to see *das Blitzen* of truth insofar as the *Wesen* of “technique [clear’s] itself as *Gestell*... we recognize how, in the ordering (*Bestellen*) of *Bestand*, the truth of being (*des Seins*) as world remains denied...we notice that all mere willing and doing in the way of ordering (*Bestellen*) persists in truthlessness (*Verwahrlosung*).”¹⁸⁴ To glance is to ‘thoughtfully experience what is,’ opening ourselves up to the potential of what can and will be.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid, 39; [44].

¹⁷⁷ Ibid, 39; [45].

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸¹ Ibid, 42; [47].

¹⁸² Ibid.

¹⁸³ Ibid, 40; [45].

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

It is in this thoughtful, corresponding glance out of our homeless, stand-less state and into the peril of Being that the lighting-flash (*das Blitzen*) makes itself manifest to us. The lighting-flash “comes out of stillness as stillness itself... What does it still? It stills [Being] (*das Sein*) in the essence of world.”¹⁸⁵ What does it mean to say that Being is still? Heidegger’s stillness is like silence, it is the nameless that the human being must once again learn to dwell in and listen to. When Heidegger writes that “Being is still waiting for the time when It itself will become thought-provoking to the human being,”¹⁸⁶ we hear two things: 1. Being still remains anticipatory of the human being’s thinking toward It, and 2. Being is still, it is silent, and in this stillness it awaits the thoughtful listening of the human being. Those who hear Being ringing out of its silence, and see Being in its true *Wesen* flash from the darkness that is its peril, are brought into the stillness of *Being* in the world. And “so that world, worlding, be the nearest of all the near that nears, in that it brings the truth of being (*des Seins*) nearer to the essence of man and so brings man to belong to *Ereignis*.”¹⁸⁷ In thinking and correspondence, Dasein opens themselves to the peril and is thus drawn closer to the *Wesen* of Being.

In such a circumstance Being’s truth seems to be once again thought provoking to the human being, “but if the truth of being has become thought-provoking for thinking, then reflection on the essence of language must also attain a different rank.”¹⁸⁸ In the homelessness peril, we know that language as the house of Being is deteriorated by the language of utility and mastery. Homelessness means that “language still denies us its essence: that it is the house of the truth of being. Instead, language surrenders itself to our mere willing and trafficking as an instrument of

¹⁸⁵ Ibid, 42; [47].

¹⁸⁶ Martin Heidegger, “Letter on Humanism.” p. 246; [144].

¹⁸⁷ Martin Heidegger, “Question Concerning Technique,” p. 42; [47].

¹⁸⁸ Martin Heidegger, “Letter on Humanism.” p. 243; [150].

domination over beings.”¹⁸⁹ If language continues to be thoughtlessly ignored in its true *Wesen* as Being’s dwelling place, then we can never expect a save. For language must be restored to its true *Wesen* if we hope to once again dwell in *die Lichtung*, *ek-statically* sustaining the relationship between Being and language.

How can language be uplifted out of the destitution it has found itself in, within the entrapment of the perilous unfolding of destiny? Poetry *west* as language in its true relation to Being, thus the poetic restores language as the house of Being, in which the human being may dwell. As the perilous “destiny that sends truth, being remains concealed. But the destiny of world is heralded in poetry, without yet becoming manifest as the history of being.”¹⁹⁰ Poetry carries with it the *Wesen* of truth, it “brings the true in the brightness of what Plato names in *Phaedrus* τὸ ἐκφανέστατον¹⁹¹ the most purely shining-forth.”¹⁹² Poetry is the messenger of Being’s truth, and the poet carries out this message only insofar as the poet first hears the call of Being from its silent ringing. We find ourselves again returning to the quote that says that “the same poet, from whom we heard the word: ‘But where peril is, grows/What saves also.’ tells us: ‘. . . poetically dwells man on this earth.’”¹⁹³ From Hölderlin’s own poetic heralding, we hear that the dwelling of the human being is a poetic dwelling. As a binging-forth, the poetic *west* through all unconcealment, even that of the peril. Now we hear the saving as that which springs from the peril in a poetic light. It is only timely that now we address the saving as a poetic save.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid, 243; [151].

¹⁹⁰ Ibid, 258; [170].

¹⁹¹ “τὸ ἐκφανέστατον” references Phaedrus 250d, and translates to “*das Hervorscheinendste*, in English, the most radiant, that which most shines forth.” (John Sallis. “Twisting Free: Being to an Extent Sensible,” p. 1).

¹⁹² Martin Heidegger “Question Concerning Technique ,” p. 30; [35].

¹⁹³ Ibid.

The Venturesome Poet

In “Imperiled,” we peered into the innately bound relation between ποίησις (*poiesis*: bringing-forth) and ἀλήθεια (*aletheia*: truth as unconcealedness). The inherent intimacy between the two is because ποίησις only happens insofar as something is brought-forth out of concealment into unconcealment; thus, ποίησις rests upon truth, i.e., ἀλήθεια. Now, I pose the question: what is the ‘poetic’ within the framework of the saving? To attend to this question, we must recall ποίησις in its originary meaning as posed by the Greeks. As we have already mapped out in our investigation into τέχνη (*techne*), there are three particular ways that ποίησις materially manifests itself: 1. Φύσις (*physis*: nature), 2. hand-workly making, 3. the arts. In our investigation of τέχνη, we learned that once τέχνη was the name assigned to both hand-workly craft as well as the fine arts, once it “was also the bringing-forth of the true in the beautiful (*das Schöne*).”¹⁹⁴ We traced the staggering ways in which out of τέχνη arose technique, which somewhere along the masterful way developed into modern technique—and up until now we have been tracing the perilous reign of *Ge-stell* as modern technique’s *Wesen*. But what if we start with the peril, and work our way back? What if we find that within the peril of *Ge-stell* as modern technique’s *Wesen*, we hear τέχνη, and in τέχνη, as a bringing-forth of *das Schöne*, we hear ποίησις, and thus we hear the ἀλήθεια of Being? It is one thing to pose this tracing as a ‘philosophical’ inquiry, but it is another to actually correspond one’s thinking to this path from the peril into the save, insofar as the save is the true unconcealment of Being. The poet is the one who corresponds their thinking with the bringing-forth of *das Schöne* out of the concealment into unconcealment.

Before we get to this figure of the ‘poet,’ we need a better grasp of what is meant by ‘poetry’ within the framework of dwelling and saving. Poetry falls under the third category of

¹⁹⁴ Ibid, 29; [34].

ποίησις: the arts. In his essay “The Origin of the Work of Art,” Heidegger writes that all art is essentially poetry “as long as we mean that those arts are varieties of the art of language, if it is permissible to characterize poesy by that easily misinterpretable title.”¹⁹⁵ If the essence of ‘art’ is poetry, then the essence of particular forms of art such as “architecture, painting, sculpture, and music,” is grounded in poesy.¹⁹⁶ Broadly speaking, poesy *wes* throughout many forms of artistic creation as “one mode of the lighting projection of truth. i.e., of poetic composition in this wider sense.” Poetic composition generally encompasses all modes of artistic production— from a sculptural piece to symphonic work. But Heidegger argues that “the linguistic work, the poem in the narrower sense, has a privileged position in the domain of the arts” because it is the most directly akin to language.¹⁹⁷ Thus, we draw the distinction here between the broader poesy and the narrower poetic. The former as the *Wesen* of art and the poetic, and the latter as actual linguistic composition.

The affinity between language and poetry is of the highest significance when shedding light on either in their true *Wesen*. For “language itself is poetry in the essential sense,” and poetry dwells within the realm of language.¹⁹⁸ In this dynamic relation, language and poetry nourish one another. Poesy, as the *Wesen* of art and the poetic, “takes place in language because language preserves the original nature of poetry.”¹⁹⁹ We are told that poetry is the nature of art. But what is this original nature of poetry that Heidegger speaks of? Heidegger’s answer to this question is that “the nature of poetry... is the founding of truth.”²⁰⁰ The founding of truth as the nature of the poetic holds up on the basis that poetry is always grounded in ποίησις as the brining-forth of ἀλήθεια.

¹⁹⁵ Martin Heidegger, “The Origin of the Work of Art,” p. 71.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid, 72.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

Heidegger refers to poetry, in its truth-founding nature, as an “illuminating projection.”²⁰¹ The language of poetry as an “illuminating projection” echoes both *die Lichtung* and the lightening-flash (*das Blitzen*) of the saving, and this resonance is no coincidence. The corresponding language comes out of a shared characteristic between all of these luminous happening, and it rests precisely in that *they are* luminous happenings. Truth in the sense of ἀλήθεια shines-forth as *das Schöne*, truth is brought out of the darkness of the concealment and into the glimmering light of unconcealment. Thus, when Heidegger says that poetry is an ‘illuminating projection,’ he is rejecting the conceptions that posit poetry merely as “an aimless imagining of whimsicalities and... a flight of mere notions and fancies into the realm of the unreal.”²⁰² For Heidegger, poetry is something far different than mere expression in the form of frivolous prose that is birthed solely out of an imagined world of fantasy. What poetry is, is the unfoldment of the “unconcealedness of...the Open;” poetry, as the illuminating projection, lets the unconcealing of the Open to happen, “and indeed in such a way that only now, in the midst of beings, the Open brings beings to shine and ring out.”²⁰³

The illuminating projection of poetry is the disclosure of the Open, i.e., the unconcealment of being. Poetry *projects* the human being into the Open of what *Is*— into Being—which is both the peril and the saving. The poetic illumination clears the way of Being and lights *die Lichtung*; thus, “truth, as the clearing and concealing of what is, happens in being composed, as a poet composes a poem.”²⁰⁴ Who are these poets, who venture into the Open, composing poetry that truth shines forth from? How does this truth shine forth? How does this poetry speak?

²⁰¹ Ibid, 70.

²⁰² Ibid.

²⁰³ Ibid.

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

For Heidegger the poet is an important figure, but only in that the poet listens attentively to language in its true *Wesen*; “for, strictly, it is language that speaks. Man first speaks when, and only when, he responds to language by listening to its appeal.”²⁰⁵ To be a poet and poeticize rests entirely on the ability to listen and hear language’s appeal, which is the call of Being. More often than not, the human being does not listen nor hear this appeal. In the unfolding of the peril as *Ge-stell* and homelessness, the human being does not listen to the call of Being. In part, because the human forgets their role as the caring shepherd, ignores their *Wesen* as the one who ek-statically, thoughtfully sustains the relationship between Being and language. Heidegger writes that “man acts as though he is the shaper and master of language, while in fact language remains the master of him. When this relation of dominance gets inverted, man hits upon strange maneuvers. Language becomes the means of expression.”²⁰⁶ In the destiny of Being’s forgottenness, the human being neglects language in its true *Wesen*. But the poet, as the one who actually listens, hears the ringing call of Being’s language out of the concealment, and responds to this call by way of poetic composition. Therefore, “the responding in which man authentically listens to the appeal of language is that which speaks in the element of poetry.”²⁰⁷

What comes along the disclosure of truth, ἀλήθεια, is freedom. If we recall from the previous chapter, “all unconcealing comes out of the free (*das Freie*), goes into the free, and brings into the free. The freedom of the free (*das Freie*) consists neither in the unboundness of the will to choose (*Willkür*), nor in the binding of mere laws (*Gesetze*)...Freedom is the domain of the destiny that at any time brings unconcealment on its way.”²⁰⁸ *Das Freie* is the open, it is the domain in

²⁰⁵ Martin Heidegger, “...Poetically Man Dwells...,” p. 214.

²⁰⁶ Ibid, 213.

²⁰⁷ Ibid, 214.

²⁰⁸ Martin Heidegger, “Question Concerning Technique,” p. 21; [25].

which unconcealment *wes*. The poet, in their nearness to *das Freie* is freer than the one who remains bound to the will to mastery and thoughtlessly captivated under the spell of *Ge-stell*. In the Open, the poet hears language more carefully in its true *Wesen*, and is thus liberated from the linguistic ordering of *Bestand*. Heidegger writes:

The more poetic a poet is—the freer (that is, the more open and ready for the unforeseen) his saying—the greater is the purity with which he submits what he says to an ever more painstaking listening, and the further what he says is from the mere propositional statement that is dealt with solely in regard to its correctness or incorrectness.²⁰⁹

What the poetic does is the clear the way for language to be free once again. The human being, whose *Wesen* dwells in language, is also freed by this freeing. Heidegger tells us that *das Freie* has nothing to do with free will nor in the kind of Kantian freedom that comes with aligning the personal will to universal law. The will of the human being under the reign of *Ge-stell* is somewhere in between the two. Within *Ge-stell's* destining the human being assumes their will as mastery in accordance with *Ge-stell's* will of ordering; although the human may misunderstand the carrying through of their masterful will as their free will, that is not entirely the case. But paradoxically enough, even when the human being wills as master in the era of *Ge-stell*, the human still remains free. This is because the human being belongs to Being's destiny, even if that be a perilous one. The human being may not be dignified as so ordered as *Bestand*, but there is a certain kind of freedom that comes with the alignment of the will with Being's destiny.

Nonetheless, the freedom of the poet is far greater than the freedom of the one who wills mastery can ever be, precisely because the poet wills in accordance with the truth of Being. In “What Are Poets For?” the modern human “is called the one who wills” and insofar as their

²⁰⁹ Martin Heidegger, “...Poetically Man Dwells...,” p. 214.

“willing remains mere self-assertion, they will nothing. They will nothing, in this sense, because they are more willing.”²¹⁰ The poet’s “willing wills nothing of this kind.”²¹¹ Heidegger turns to an improvised poem of Rilke’s and, for lack of a better word, poeticizes about this poem. I don’t wish to enter into this wildly dense analysis of the poem, nor the poem itself, in this paper. But I do want to take note of a particular aspect Heidegger’s analysis that captures his own understanding of the willing of the poet as something entirely other than the willing of the modern human. Heidegger, as he does with many poems he finds to be ‘illuminating projections’ grabs hold of a specific word and truly tries to listen to it. One of these words that resonates with Heidegger is the word “venture.” I find “venture” to position itself as that which distinguishes the modern human and their masterful willing from the poet and the poetic willing. My understanding is that the poet is the one who ventures into the unconcealment of Being, and “because these more venturesome ones,” namely poets, “venture Being itself and therefore dare to venture into language, the province of Being, they are the sayers.”²¹²

As the venturesome ones— the ones willing to enter the unknown and unconcealed, the ones who listen to language in this nameless space— are able to bring-forth unconcealment. This willing is radically distinct from than the sheer will to will that dominates the modern human being:

The more venturesome will more strongly in that they will in a different way from the purposeful self-assertion of the objectifying of the world. ...The willing of the more venturesome is the willingness of those who say more sayingly, those who are resolved, no longer closed off in the parting against the will as which Being wills beings.²¹³

²¹⁰ Martin Heidegger, “What Are Poets For?” p. 138.

²¹¹ Ibid.

²¹² Ibid, 134.

²¹³ Ibid, 138.

The saying of the poet is a kind of singing for Heidegger, and it sings out of the Open and into the world. Poetic saying opens up the clearing, conceals and invites those who too wish to listen in. Thus, “the more venturesome are the poets, but poets whose song turns our unprotected being into the Open.”²¹⁴

In the epoch of the peril, the poets are those who open themselves up to Being’s unconcealment. As attentive listeners, they hear the silence of Being ringing out of its stillness. With open eyes they see the shining-forth of Being’s truth from out of the concealment. Poets venture into the peril and bring with them the save, “as the singers of soundness, the more venturesome ones are ‘poets in a destitute time.’”²¹⁵

But the poetic, we must remember, does not fly above the world as something “other-worldly.” It very much belongs to this world, and the history of Being unfolded in the world of beings, it speaks to the ways in which Being makes itself manifest to us beings. I am reminded of Hannah Arendt’s portrayal of the activity of thinking in her text *Between Past and Future*, thinking as “remembrance and anticipation” and “settling down in the gap between past and future;” the “path paved by thinking” is a “track of non-time.”²¹⁶ I relate this to the thinking of the poet because the poet’s thinking is not afraid to dwell in the peril, but it also shines-forth with the glimmer of what can be. Poetic thinking belongs to the world, comes out of the world, yet also imagines the possibility of new world making. Indeed, I stated that Being does not subscribe to the linear and limited human scale that we try to impose onto it—but neither does poetic thinking. Poetic

²¹⁴ Ibid, 137.

²¹⁵ Ibid, 139.

²¹⁶ Hannah Arendt, *Between Past and Future: Eight Exercises in Political Thought*, p. 13.

thinking, in its liminal state, carves the path of non-time, betwixt and between what has been, what is, and what will be.

Poetic thinking is the kind of thinking that Heidegger describes in the final lines of his “Letter on Humanism,” it is the “thinking gathers language into simple saying. In this way language is the language of [Being], as clouds are the clouds of the sky. With its saying, thinking lays inconspicuous furrows in language.”^{217, 218} The saying of poetic thinking paves an inconspicuous path through language. But not just any path: a furrow. A furrow is a trail in which seeds are planted, and these seeds may one day grow just as the growing of φύσις that brings-forth *das Schöne* into the world.

As we are told the poet dwells on earth. But out of this earthly dwelling, the poet looks up toward the clouds of the sky. From this upward glance, the poet:

Calls all the brightness of the sights of the sky and every sound of its courses and breezes into the singing word and there makes them shine and ring. Yet the poet, if he is a poet, does not describe the mere appearance of sky and earth. The poet calls, in the sights of the sky, that which in its very self-disclosure causes the appearance of that which conceals itself, and indeed *as* that which conceals itself. In the familiar appearances, the poet calls the alien as that to which the invisible imparts itself in order to remain what it is—unknown.
219

Unlike the representation of beings in the peril (i.e., as *Bestand* and mere means to an end and objects to be ordered) poetic thinking brings-forth beings in their true *Wesen*. Poetry not only unconceals beings out of their concealment as semblances, but lets them ‘shine and ring.’ Insofar

²¹⁷ I can’t help but hear another resonance between Heidegger and Arendt in this line. I am reminded of the closing words of Arendt’s essay, “Truth and Politics:” “Conceptually, we may call truth what we cannot change; metaphorically, it is the ground on which we stand and the sky that stretches above us.” (Hannah Arendt, “Truth and Politics” in *The New Yorker*.)

²¹⁸ Martin Heidegger, “Letter on Humanism,” p. 276; [194].

²¹⁹ Martin Heidegger, “...Poetically Man Dwells...” p. 223.

as language is reified within the homeless peril it becomes an appearance too. So too in the poetic calling is language liberated from the trafficking of concealment.

Furthermore, by making visible the alien in the familiar, the unconcealing of poetry is *das Unheimliche* (the uncanny). In Freud's "The 'Uncanny,'" he quotes Schelling, telling us that the uncanny manifests in the act of an unconcealing: "'unheimlich' is the name for everything that ought to have remained... secret and hidden but has come to light."²²⁰ The uncanny happens when what is unknown shines-forth, out of the familiar; when what is homely (*heimlich*) becomes unhomely (*unheimlich*). The human being may find refuge from homelessness in the poetic save, but their dwelling can be restored only after the "homely" — the familiarity of what *is* as it appears within the peril— is unconcealed, made unhomely. Only then can our *Wesen* be freed, restored to its proper dwelling place. Paul Celan's words in "The Meridian" perfectly sum up this poetic, uncanny movement that guides the human to freedom. Celan says: "Perhaps — I am only speculating — perhaps poetry, like art, moves with the oblivious self into the uncanny and strange to free itself." Poetry moves with us, it carries us, into the uncanny, revealing to us what saves.

The poetic, in its ability to bring us back home to our essential dwelling, composes images that are not just reiterations of the appearances we confront in the familiar world. These images peer into the familiar but unveil the inconspicuous that is furrowed within the homely. Thus, "poetic images are imaginings in a distinctive sense: not mere fancies and illusions but imaginings that are visible inclusions of the alien in the sight of the familiar."²²¹ Poetic thinking 'gathers language into simple saying,' and the "poetic saying of images gathers the brightness and sound

²²⁰ Freud Sigmund "The 'Uncanny,'" 224.

²²¹ Martin Heidegger, "...Poetically Man Dwells..." 223.

of the heavenly appearances into one with the darkness and silence of what is alien.”²²² Poetry mediates the perilous split between ourselves and our Being because it reaches between the known and unknown, into the secrets of the familiar, and makes these mysteries about ourselves, our world, and our Being known to us. “When the poetic appropriately comes to light, then man dwells humanly on this earth, and then—as Hölderlin says in his last poem— ‘the life of man’ is a ‘dwelling life.’” Poetry reconciles the alienation brought with the peril of homelessness and *Ge-stell* by restoring language and Being. Restored to its poetic *Wesen*, language calls to us out of the peril of Being. Insofar as poetry is the saying of this call it is the saving of the peril, for its disclosure opens up our dwelling place once again.²²³

Dwelling in the Saving

The question of dwelling is really a question of belonging. Where do we, as human beings, belong? What do we belong to? We belong to Being but we dwell in our belonging on earth. In destinal homelessness we lose our home on this earth, becoming alienated from both Being and language. Poetry saves us from our homelessness and reminds us of what it means to belong: “poetry does not fly above and surmount the earth in order to escape it and hover over it. Poetry is what first brings man onto the earth, making him belong to it, and thus brings him into dwelling.”²²⁴ Poetic creation is not an escape from the danger that is Being’s perilous unconcealment on this earth. Poetry hears the call of Being’s unconcealment, confronts the peril, ventures into and, and speaks out of it, addressing us. Those who hear the call, opening themselves up to listening, also

²²² Ibid, 223-224.

²²³ Ibid, 227.

²²⁴ Ibid, 216.

open themselves up to dwelling in the save. The saving happens when we dwell in our proper dwelling: the poetic. As Hölderlin first says and Heidegger says further, “full of merit, yet poetically, man/ Dwells on this earth.”²²⁵

Heidegger dedicates a lecture to Hölderlin’s words that ‘man dwells poetically,’ and this lecture eventually became an essay. In this lecture and essay, Heidegger is not merely conducting an investigation into the phrase at hand, but is engaged in a rich and attentive dialogue. Naturally, his inquiry remains situated within his own philosophical framework, densely related to the terms and questions he finds thought-provoking. But it is no secret that many of Heidegger’s questions are inspired by and drawn from his reading of Hölderlin’s works. In this particular case, he builds upon the words of Hölderlin, expanding the meaning of the Hölderlin’s verse to meet his own philosophy of language and alienation. In 1946 Heidegger wrote “The Letter on Humanism” in which he explores the alienation of the modern human through what he calls homelessness. It is homelessness because struck by alienation the human being loses their essential dwelling place, their home, i.e., language. Five years later, in 1951, he lectures on the poetic dwelling of the human being as what is essential to being human. There is a line that runs through the two, they speak together. In the former we hear the problem, in the latter we hear the potential solution, but in both we hear Hölderlin’s inspiration resound.

I am concluding with an exploration of Heidegger’s exploration of the poetic dwelling of the human being, because I see it as the victory of the saving— the true *causa finalis* if you will. But as the grand ‘finale’ it is both an end a beginning. As both a paradoxical end and beginning, poetry stays true to its unmanageable nature, refusing the human dimensionality of space and time.

²²⁵ Ibid, 216.

Poetry can be here-ish and there-ish and now-ish and never-ish and we can still always belong to it. I think poetry is the closest we have to a manifestation of Being in our world, it is the nearest we can ever be to dwelling in Being. For this reason, it is a thoughtful pursuit that does not just end on paper as nothing more than a philosophical musing, it continues to unfold in life, all around us, as long as we humans exist as earthy dwellers.

Heidegger tells us that the phrase ‘poetically man dwells’ “speaks of man's dwelling. It does not describe today's dwelling conditions. Above all, it does not assert that to dwell means to occupy a house, a dwelling place.”²²⁶ The problem of ‘homelessness’ in the context of Heidegger’s thinking is not applicable to say, Los Angeles’ Skid Row. No doubt the issue of housing security that is rooted in deep structural failings is an incredibly important and, in my opinion, a more pressing question. But it is also a different question than the one we are asking here. ‘Dwelling’ in this line of thought does not signify apartment we return do at the end of the workday, or the house we do or do not have over our head. To dwell is to be human for Heidegger, and poetic dwelling is the highest of all dwelling.

The move from ‘dwelling’ as signifying an abode to ‘dwelling’ meaning the way in which the human *welt* as the human is a poetic move. Poetry liberates language, freeing it from the ordering of grammar, shallow eloquence, and daily speech that meets mere utilitarian ends. In the poetic space, words break out of the small boxes they are placed into, meanings delimited by. The word “dwelling” can be a physical home in the poetic, but it can also be the essential dwelling of the human being. Heidegger says that when “Hölderlin speaks of dwelling, he has before his eyes the basic character of human existence,” and Heidegger does too. Both thinkers “[see] the ‘poetic,’

²²⁶ Ibid, 212.

moreover, by way of its relation to this dwelling, thus understood essentially.”²²⁷ Dwelling posited as the primordial condition of human life is essentially grounded in poetry precisely because poetry is what lets dwelling *be* this dwelling; “in such a way... dwelling rests on the poetic.”²²⁸

Because of the way in which poetry frees language, “the phrase, ‘poetically man dwells’ says: poetry first causes dwelling to be dwelling.”²²⁹ And because of the way in which poetry frees us, “poetry is what really lets us dwell.”²³⁰ Poetry not only frees us and language, enabling us to once again dwell in language, poetry *builds* our dwelling: “poetic creation, which lets us dwell, is a kind of building.”²³¹ Heidegger writes:

Thus we confront a double demand: for one thing, we are to think of what is called man's existence by way of the nature of dwelling; for another, we are to think of the nature of poetry as a letting-dwell, as a—perhaps even *the*—distinctive kind of building. If we search out the nature of poetry according to this viewpoint, then we arrive at the nature of dwelling.²³²

The twofold inquiry is in many ways one demand, insofar as the human being’s existence is dwelling and the poetic is precisely what builds this particular kind of human dwelling. Building is essential to the question of the poetic as human dwelling, thereby it is Heidegger’s idea of ‘building’ that we shall now take up. Heidegger’s introduction of ‘building’ into the poetic dwelling of the human being is not something that Hölderlin does: “for Hölderlin indeed speaks of man's dwelling and his merit, but still he does not connect dwelling with building, as we have just done... Accordingly, Hölderlin does not speak of poetic dwelling as our own thinking does.

²²⁷ Ibid, 213.

²²⁸ Ibid, 212.

²²⁹ Ibid, 213.

²³⁰ Ibid.

²³¹ Ibid.

²³² Ibid.

Despite all this, we are thinking the same thing that Hölderlin is saying poetically.”²³³ As earlier addressed, Heidegger intently listens to Hölderlin’s words and responds in accordance to his own thinking, which he calls ‘our thinking.’ Heidegger’s introduction of the notion of building expounds upon Hölderlin’s idea of the human’s poetic dwelling. It’s a move that thinks out of language, a kind of poetic building in its own right. So, what is this ‘building’ exactly? And why is it so important to human dwelling?

In Heidegger’s essay “Building Dwelling Thinking,” he asks a similar question: What “does *Bauen*, building, mean?”²³⁴ It comes as no surprise that to answer this question he embarks on an etymological inquiry. His quest tells us that to build primordially means to dwell: “the Old English and High German word for building, *buan*, means to dwell. This signifies: to remain, to stay in a place. The real meaning of the verb *bauen*, namely, to dwell, has been lost to us.”²³⁵ Dwelling is the way the human being *wes*t in the world, but building (*Bauen*) in its original meaning is a kind of dwelling. Building is thus a way of Being in the world:

Bauen originally means to dwell... The old word *bauen*, to which the *bin* belongs, answers: *ich bin, du bist* mean: I dwell, you dwell. The way in which you are and I am, the manner in which we humans *are* on the earth, is *Buan*, dwelling. To be a human being means to be on the earth as a mortal. It means to dwell.²³⁶

To be as you are (*du bist*) is to dwell, it is to build. Heidegger’s thinking digs up and resurrects and resurrects *bauen* in its original sense of the word, the meaning “which says that man *is* insofar as he *dwells*.”²³⁷

²³³ Ibid, 216.

²³⁴ Martin Heidegger, “Building Dwelling Thinking,” p. 144.

²³⁵ Ibid.

²³⁶ Ibid, 145.

²³⁷ Ibid, 145.

Heidegger's thinking about building goes even further back than Old English and High German. Although not explicitly linked, Heidegger's conception of building as the poetic dwelling of the human being is obviously rooted in ποίησις (poiesis). As a careful bringing-forth in the form of either Φύσις (*physis*: nature), hand-workly making, or the arts, ποίησις is a kind of building. In Heidegger's following words on bauen, we hear the bringing-forth of Φύσις shine: "*bauen* however *also* means at the same time to cherish and protect, to preserve and care for, specifically to till the soil, to cultivate the vine. Such building only takes care—it tends the growth that ripens into its fruit of its own accord. Building in the sense of preserving and nurturing is not making anything."²³⁸ But building is not limited to the bringing-forth of caring for nature and nurturing the earth. Building also may be understood as works that are constructed, Heidegger writes that "shipbuilding and temple-building, on the other hand, do in a certain way make their own works. Here building, in contrast with cultivating, is a constructing."²³⁹ He explicitly posits building on the basis of Latin etymology, saying that "Latin *colere*, *cultura*, and building as the raising up of edifices, *aedificare*—are comprised within genuine building, that is, dwelling."²⁴⁰ Yet it is not hard to hear prominence of ποίησις in Heidegger's positing of building as the cultivating of nature and constructing edifice. Building in this way is the bringing-forth of ποίησις.

We seem to have found ourselves in a complicated web of terms and relations to say the least. Dwelling is poetic, but dwelling is also somehow building, and building is cultivating and caring, which also is a kind of bringing forth of ποίησις. It has all become slightly confusing in its entanglement, but Heidegger succinctly distills it all into a clarifying three-point summary. He says that "if we listen to what language says in the word *bauen* we hear three things," namely: "1.

²³⁸ Ibid.

²³⁹ Ibid.

²⁴⁰ Ibid.

building is really dwelling,” “2. dwelling is the manner in which mortals are on the earth,” and “3. building as dwelling unfolds into the building that cultivates growing things and the building that erects buildings.”²⁴¹ But it is important to note that for Heidegger the building that dwelling unfold in is not just any kind *aedificare*. In a prior example, he cites the cultivating-building of dwelling in its Wesen (i.e., ‘the manner in which mortals are on the earth’) as ‘shipbuilding’ and ‘temple-building.’ These examples may seem a bit far-out and random. When I first read it, I myself thought “*shipbuilding? really?*” However, in this instance there is a method to Heidegger’s madness, for he is pushing back against kinds of building that further the ends of *Ge-stell*, *Bestand*, and the masterful will:

Not every building is a dwelling. Bridges and hangars, stadiums and power stations are buildings but not dwellings; railway stations and highways, dams and market halls are built, but they are not dwelling places...These buildings house man. He inhabits them and yet does not dwell in them, when to dwell means merely that we take shelter in them.²⁴²

Although in the final line Heidegger says that the difference lies in physical sheltering versus essential dwelling, there is definitely another distinction at play. The building and buildings that Heidegger mentions are that of modern technique. He does not mention the humbly built abode of the peasant nor the weathervane atop this home. He fails to mention the sawmills of the Black Forest nor the carved footpath that hypothetically leads to said sawmill. This is intentional, because for Heidegger these are the manifestations of technique in alignment with *ποίησις*. Therefore, Heidegger is distinguishing here between the building that unfolds within the peril versus the save.

This difference—between the building that unfolds under the will to master and the building that unfolds in the poetic willing—insists that building is not reduced down to a means

²⁴¹ Ibid, 146.

²⁴² Ibid, 144-145.

to an end; for such reduction would be a continuation of *Ge-stell*'s ordering. Although "we attain to dwelling, so it seems, only by means of building,"²⁴³ "building is not merely a means and a way toward dwelling—to build is in itself already to dwell."²⁴⁴ Poetic building is an end itself because it is dwelling: to build is to dwell. Hence, poetic building is not an ordering of *Bestand*, it is a "letting dwell," a caring cultivation.

Heidegger heeds that "*only if we are capable of dwelling jf, only then can we build*"²⁴⁵ As human beings, our *Wesen* dwells in the house of Being, in language. Insofar as poetry lets language shine-forth in its truest sense, as the language of Being, it the highest form of language. We belong to the bringing-forth of Being's unconcealment, thus we belong to ποιησις. The poetic, as a way in which truth is brought-forth, is a certain kind of unconcealment—it is the unconcealment of Being and language in their true *Wesen*. The human being hears the poetic call of Being and language in thinking, and insofar as the human being carefully listens and answers, they are a poet—they *build* poetically. In this poetic building (caring, cultivating, thinking) the human being dwells in their true *Wesen*, the human being dwells poetically. We are all capable of this essential dwelling and building, but in the perilous destiny *Ge-stell* and homelessness, we are driven out of home and into alienation. Poetry reaches into the alienated peril and calls to us, invites us to dwell in language once again and reconcile our relationship with Being. But all of this depends upon one thing: that we learn to listen and hear the call.

²⁴³ Ibid, 143.

²⁴⁴ Ibid, 145.

²⁴⁵ Ibid, 157

*It begins where it ends,
 I descend into black earth,
 dark primordial slime,
 no longer repellent to me,
 no confining
 The four winds
 Fire welds splinter with splinter
 I find my kindred spirits*

— Gloria Anzaldúa
 “Canción de la diosa de la noche”

*Poetry is the way we help give name to the nameless so it can
 be thought. The farthest external horizons of our hopes and
 fears are cobbled by our poems, carved from the rock
 experiences of our daily lives.*

— Audre Lorde
 “Poetry is Not a Luxury”

*If we want thought different from the present, then thought must veer
 toward art.
 To be a thing at all—a rock, a lizard, a human— is to be in a twist.
 How thought longs to twist and turn like the serpent poetry!
 Or is art veering toward thought? Does it ever arrive?
 The threads of fate have tied our tongues.
 Tongue twisters inclined towards nonsense.
 Logic includes nonsense as long as it can tell the truth.*

— Timothy Morton,
 “Beginning After the End”

Conclusion

Human existence always wavers between estrangement and becoming. To posit oneself as “human” inherently estranges the “other:” the inhuman. The “other” is comprised of nonhuman beings, which includes actual human beings, insofar as there are communities of people in this world treated as if they were non-people. But this inhuman “other” also includes Being itself. And our understanding of the self as “human” necessitates this exclusion. If you remove the other, the concept of the “human” dissolves. It is only out of this exclusion we become “human.” We need this exclusion to set ourselves over and above all else. And to be the dominant one is so often what defines the human within the discourse of where we refer to as the “West.” But within such policed boundaries of humanness we cut ourselves off from “belonging” to, within, and alongside the inhuman. These hard-drawn boundaries, between the human and the inhuman, alienate the human being from its actual essence: belonging to Being. This is because Being, what I understand to be the immanent ebb-and-flow of existence, is constantly posited as outside human existence; something inhumane, outside of our world. The boundaries are ways of ordering of the world and controlling existence—a kind of *Ge-stell* and *Bestand*. These boundaries, that enable us to become “human,” alienate actual human existence from other human and nonhuman beings, the world, Being, and ourselves. We are born into an alienated world, and expected to subscribe to normalized estrangement of Being insofar as we are “human beings.” But there always remains possibility of new-world making. Poetry holds open the potential of insurgent reclamation of what it means to be human in this world.

The claim that we are born into the world already alienated from our Being is my own claim. I don’t have the knowledge to speak on whether or not Heidegger would agree with that statement. But I do think that Heidegger would agree that we are born into a world that is ridden

with alienation; and because we belong to the world, we belong to this way of estrangement as well. This sentiment on alienation has been a main premise of this project. In “Homeless” I looked at one way of alienation: one that manifests from linguistic degradation, the loss of thinking in the mundane world, the decay of thought in philosophy, and the will to mastery that has taken hold. This kind of alienation denies the human their dwelling in language—their essential dwelling in the world. Being and language withdraw from the world, and the human is left homeless. “Imperiled” peers into a different kind of alienation, one that encompasses homelessness, but builds upon it. At its core, the peril is the unhinged manifestation of the will to will in the world—namely, *Ge-stell*. Under *Ge-stell*'s reign, the human being loses not only their dwelling place but their also their stand. Along with all other beings, the human being becomes mere *Be-stand*.

The peril materializes in its highest form out of the rise modern technique. Simply put, the peril is the result of our need to know, control, and order the world. Indeed, the peril is a way that Being unconceals itself. But what this really tells us is that this perilous way of Being is far greater than the actions or thoughts of a single individual could ever affect. Being unconcealment is everywhere and nowhere, it is impossible to pin down. If we understand the peril—that is to say rampant alienation—as a structural issue in the world, as I do, then we need far more than a singular person to take the red pill. The problem of alienation, which is implicitly bound to the ravenous will and decline of language/thinking, can only be addressed through language and thinking. But not just the repetition of the same language and thinking that caused the problem in the first place.

The language of the saving is poetic language—it is language in its fullest essence and expansive reach. Poetic language is necessarily informed by the experience and struggle of being-in-the-world. In the words of Lorde: poetry is “carved from the rock and experience of our daily

lives.”²⁴⁶ The poet *actually* thinks about estrangement and the loss of language and meaning in the world. But from this peril of Being, the poet responds thoughtfully, full of meaning, and *in* language. I say that this response is insurrectionary because it emerges from out of the struggle of becoming: poetry unconceals itself precisely in the tension between estrangement and becoming. I don’t want to say that poetry ‘mediates’ or ‘resolves’ this tension, because I don’t think that such disintegration is the “end” of poetry. Poetry is an end only insofar as it is a beginning. It does not think away the problem, it thinks with the problem, it thinks *in* the problem. And only from out of the problem can it bring-forth the possibility of a new kind of world-building.

I chose to explore the question of alienation through Heidegger’s writing because I find that it offers profound insight on the manifestation of modern alienation in the world. But more importantly, how we may begin to think our way out of it. His articulation of homelessness and technique puts into words the deeply breathed estrangement that has seeped into the air of this world. By way of his concept of “dwelling” he illuminates what it means to belong, or not belong, in a new light. His thinking also challenges the reader’s own thinking. The way he builds with language invites the reader into the words, to listen more attentively. I find this not only inspiring but also constructive. Heidegger’s perspective on poetry is where I find myself most in agreement with him as a thinker. Yet the position that poetics is a kind of “saving” so to speak, is also where I find the most freedom in this essay to deviate away from the ‘Heideggerian’ line of thought. I suppose poetics lends itself to this kind of freedom, and that’s precisely why the saving lies in poiesis.

For good reason, poetry has always been a way of living and a survival tactic and survival tactic for marginalized peoples. Poetry can allow for *all* humans to heal with the material wounds

²⁴⁶ Audre Lorde, “Poetry Is Not A Luxury.”

caused by the estranged reality of living in the world. But for those pushed to the furthest margins of the world, excluded from the category of “human,” subjected to the full force of a masterful will, denied their dwelling place and home, and left with no place of belonging, poetry is essential. Poetry opens up a true space of belonging; one not fraught with the ego of the master or the oppression of the world. It is born out of this oppression, but from this birth comes a new world. And in this world, the human may begin mend the caesuras caused by estrangement and violent becomings. In the poetic space, the human being is returned to their dwelling place that they truly belong to. Poetry allows the human to become again, basking in the clearing of Being, a magical light that heals the wounds of embodiment.

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