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Deep Ecology and Heideggerian Phenomenology

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DEEP ECOLOGY AND HEIDEGGERIAN PHENOMENOLOGY

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
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Deep Ecology and Heideggerian Phenomenology
Matthew Antolick
ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the connections between Arne Naess's Deep Ecology and Martin Heidegger's Phenomenology. The latter provides a philosophical basis for the former. Martin Heidegger's critique of traditional metaphysics and his call for an 'event' ontology that is deeper than the traditional substance ontology opens a philosophical space in which a different conception of what it is to be emerges. Heidegger's view of humans also provides a basis for the wider and deeper conception of self Arne Naess seeks: one that gets rid of the presupposition that human beings are isolated subjects embedded in a framework of objects distinct from them.

Both Heidegger and Naess illustrate how the substance-ontological dogma affects human culture, encouraging humans to live as if they were divorced from their environmental surroundings. When humans live according to an atomistic conception of themselves as independent from their context, alienation results, not only from each other, and not only of humans from the surrounding environment, but from themselves as well.

This thesis focuses on Heidegger's employment of the conception of *poiesis* or self-bringing-forth as clarifying the "root" of such ecosystemic processes as growth,

maturation, reproduction, and death. Thus, Heidegger's call to phenomenology – “to the things themselves” – is a call away from the objectifying dichotomies through which substance ontology articulates the world into isolated components.

It is the purpose of this thesis to demonstrate not only the connections between the later Heidegger and Naess, but also to argue in favor of their claims that traditional philosophical perspectives regarding humans, the environment, and ethics need to be re-appropriated in a new way in order to avoid further ecological degradation and provide for the health and well being of the future generations that will inevitably inherit the effects of our present actions.

Chapter One: Heidegger's Phenomenology

A. Technology

What is the Essence of Technology?

Heidegger's analysis of technology is not a simple examination of technological method. It is a phenomenology of the technological mode of being. His phenomenology always strives for deeper probing. Deeper probing focuses on a question in a questioning manner. In the *Introduction to Metaphysics*, the question is: "why are there beings at all instead of nothing?"¹ In *The Question Concerning Technology*, it is: what is the essence of technology? Although the question is not explicitly formulated as such, it constitutes the focus of the essay.

In the first paragraph of QCT, Heidegger speaks of questioning in general. "Questioning builds a way. We would be advised, therefore, above all to pay heed to the way, and not to fix our attention on isolated sentences and topics. The way is a way of thinking."² The goal of such questioning is what he calls a "free relationship": one that allows the human essence to open itself to the essence of technology.

It is important to note that the question (of both IM and QCT) can be read in at least two ways. The direction of the question – what it is asking - will be taken in accordance with the comportment of the questioner. A logical positivist, for instance,

¹ Martin Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 2000). 1

² Martin Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology* (New York, Harper and Row, 1997) 3

will focus on the clear-cut *facts* of the question, while tending to dismiss questions of *value* as a completely different type of enterprise.

We must start where we are, and be content, in the meantime, with clear-cut answers - but not *too* content. We can note for starters that the question “what is the essence of technology” can also be read in a way that “transcends” (a better way of putting it is perhaps “probes beneath”) a typical positivist reading. Whether or not the question is a deeper probing is not a matter of changing words or syntax within the question’s explicit formulation. It is a matter of comportment: a mode of seeing or an angle from which one reads or sees.

What is it to “probe beneath positivism?” First we should ask: is this what Heidegger intends? It appears to provide an answer as to why Heidegger, when speaking of questioning, simultaneously urges the reader not to get hung up on isolated details. He seems to be making an implicit claim: genuine questioning is blocked by such a focus.

Secondly, is positivism equivalent to the technological mode of being? The answer to this question could constitute an essay in itself, and we’ve not the room for it here. But we can for now note a strong similarity between positivism and technological thinking: The positivist comportment could be characterized as an *urge* fix and resolve the issue, making it precise and testable. Clear-cut precision means to be free from confusion and ambiguity. Technology, too, certainly involves an increase of calculation over indefiniteness, and a dislike of ambiguity.

One might ask at this point: is “freedom” freedom *from* the ambiguous? From mystery? Both positivism and technological thinking share a common tendency toward clear-cut answers and pre-ordered knowledge frameworks. And Heidegger, in QCT,

states that “Everywhere we remain unfree and chained to technology, whether we passionately affirm or deny it.”³ Putting what has been said so far together, it seems we cannot close the issue so quickly. We must remain with the question for the time being: “Is freedom *from* ambiguity really freedom?”

We as modern Americans tend to answer this question in the affirmative. Heidegger saw the technological quantification of everything as a “will to mastery” which “becomes all the more urgent the more technology threatens to slip from human control.”⁴ Control, mastery, clear-cut-rigidity, pre-formed knowledge frameworks: all are strands in the web called “technological mastery.” Technology appears to be about human power, but over what?

A basic answer is: power over being thwarted. Perhaps this is too basic. A more detailed answer is: power over anything that disrupts human means-end activity. As means-end activity, technology is “instrumental.” Heidegger says “the instrumental definition of technology is so correct that it even holds for modern technology,” in addition to the “old, handiwork technology.” This answer is obviously deeper than “calculators and computers.” But it is not the deepest.

Again and again throughout his philosophical career, Heidegger returns to the theme of multiple possibilities – possible readings, possible paradigms. This is true not only for QCT alone, but for the entire range of his writings, from *Being and Time* to *The Anaximander Fragment* to *The Principle of Reason* to *Gelassenheit* and beyond. It takes various forms.

³ Ibid. 4

⁴ Ibid. 5

We see this play of possibilities at an early point in QCT. Heidegger claims the instrumental definition of technology is “correct,” but *not* necessarily *true*: that there is a difference.

But suppose now that technology were no mere means, how would it stand with the will to master it? Yet we said, did we not, that the instrumental definition of technology is correct? To be sure. The correct always fixes upon something pertinent in whatever is under consideration. However, in order to be correct, this fixing by no means needs to uncover the thing in question in its essence. Only at the point where such an uncovering happens does the true come to pass. For that reason the merely correct is not yet the true.⁵

Although there is indeed a difference between correctness and truth, this difference is not dichotomous: there is not an absolute distinction. Correctness is connected with truth, albeit derivatively. The realization of the derivative nature of the “correct” brings with it a realization that there is more than one possible way of reading and understanding “correctness.”

It is easy to fall into the same mistaken gaze on the “what” rather than upon “that” which brings the “what” to presence. Obviously, this “that which brings to presence” cannot be any particular *what*. We started with a fairly straightforward question - “what is the essence of technology?” – and have seemingly stumbled into a discussion of multiple-possible readings. We rightfully ask, with Heidegger, “But where have we strayed to?”⁶ Are we off track? What is it to be *on* track? If to be “on track” is to be “correct,” then not only do we already have an answer to this question, but we can also get a hint as to the correctness-seeking comportment from which such a question springs.

In turn, our position right here and now in this examination of Heidegger’s take on technology sheds light not only on his claim, cited above, that “questioning builds a

⁵ Ibid. 5-6

⁶ Ibid. 12

way” and that we should “pay heed” to it, but also on Heidegger’s statement, slightly later in QCT, that “So long as we do not allow ourselves to go into these questions, causality, and with it instrumentality, and with the latter the accepted definition of technology, remain obscure and groundless.”⁷

What remains “obscure” if we do not allow ourselves these questions? The answer to this question is the answer to “what is the essence of technology?” We can thus make a preliminary statement to help us on the way: *correctness is something different from (but not utterly separate from) truth.*

It seems we could circle about forever. But if with our questioning we are indeed *building* a way, as Heidegger says, then we must somehow manage to keep pushing forward. But Heidegger also says that what we are actually after is a *return*. This type of questioning requires something of that *resoluteness* of which Heidegger speaks so pervasively in *Being and Time*. So many questions; nonetheless we must ask another: towards “what” is this “way” leading which is being constructed by us in our questioning comportment?

Technology as a Mode of Revealing

“What technology is,” says Heidegger, “when represented as a means, discloses itself when we trace instrumentality back to fourfold causality.”⁸ Of fourfold causality, he states “they differ from one another, yet they belong together.”⁹

We are questioning concerning technology, and we have arrived now at *aletheia*, at revealing. What has the essence of technology to do with revealing? The answer: everything. For every bringing-forth is grounded in revealing. Bringing-

⁷ Ibid. 7

⁸ Ibid. 6

⁹ Ibid. 8

forth, indeed, gathers within itself the four modes of occasioning – causality – and rules them throughout. Within its domain belong ends and means, belong instrumentality. Instrumentality is considered to be the fundamental characteristic of technology. If we inquire step by step, into what technology, represented as means, actually is, then we shall arrive at revealing. The possibility of all productive manufacturing lies in revealing...*Technology is therefore no mere means. Technology is a way of revealing.*¹⁰

Technology, as instrumental (and causal) is a *bringing-forth*. That is, technology is a way of bringing things to presence in an instrumental (means-ends) manner. But such bringing-forth is not *merely* instrumental. All bringing-forth, says Heidegger, is “*poiesis*,”¹¹ through which “the growing things of nature as well as whatever is completed through the crafts and the arts come at any given time to their appearance.”¹²

Within the questioning span between causality and revealing [*aletheia*], Heidegger progresses through a trail of concepts: 1) *Legein* – “to consider carefully,” which, he claims¹³, has its roots in *aphophainesthai* – “to bring forward into appearance”¹⁴; 2) *Hypokeisthai* – “lying before and lying ready” – as that for which the four causes, as four ways of being responsible, are responsible, insofar as such characterizes “the presencing of something that presences”¹⁵; 3) *Ver-an-lassen* – “an occasioning or inducing to go forward” of something “into its complete arrival”¹⁶; which leads to 4) *Physis* – “the arising of something from out of itself” which is also a “bringing

¹⁰ Ibid. 12; my emphasis

¹¹ This altered spelling will be maintained throughout this thesis. It is spelled this way (with the added ‘i’), in order to distinguish it, as a concept, from the merely *poetic*. Whereas poetry is a way of bringing forth, it is something done by humans, and is thus a mode of *techne*, or aided bringing forth, as Julian Young puts it in his excellent work *Heidegger’s Later Philosophy*, Cambridge University Press, 2002. See especially pages 37-44, where Young charts two “kinds” of poiesis, namely *phusis* and *techne*. Taking this model as a conceptual ground, poetry as it is regularly understood appears as derivative of *poiesis*. When speaking of *poiesis* in this paper, *poetry* will be used (differentiated by italics), whereas ‘poetry’ will accord with the usual definition of the word.

¹² Ibid. 10-11

¹³ Heidegger’s etymological adventures, not to mention his historical-conceptual tracings, are far from controversial. See especially Paul Friedlander’s *Plato, Vol. I*, (New York, Pantheon Books, 1958).

¹⁴ Ibid. 8

¹⁵ Ibid. 9

¹⁶ Ibid.

forth, *poiesis*.¹⁷ The revealing, then, of which technology is a mode, is a bringing-forth which “comes to pass only insofar as something unconcealed comes into unconcealment.”¹⁸

Heidegger then produces a genealogy of the word “technology,” tracing it to the Greek *technikon*, and *techne*, which he says is “the name...for the activities and skills of the craftsman,” as well as “for the arts of the mind and the fine arts.” As such, says Heidegger, *techne* “belongs to bringing-forth, to *poiesis*.” Thus, “*techne* is a mode of *aletheuein*.”¹⁹

It is here that Heidegger, in his apparent straying from the (main) question of technology, is found to have been “on track” all along, when he writes of *techne*:

It reveals whatever does not bring itself forth and does not yet lie here before us, whatever can look and turn out now one way and now another. Whoever builds a house or a ship or forges a sacrificial chalice reveals what is to be brought forth, according to the perspectives of the four modes of occasioning. This revealing gathers together in advance the aspect and the matter of ship or house, with a view to the finished thing envisioned as completed, and from this gathering determines the manner of its construction. Thus what is decisive in *techne* does not lie at all in making and manipulating, nor in the using of means, but rather in the aforementioned revealing. *It is as revealing, and not as manufacturing, that techne is a bringing forth.*²⁰

According to Heidegger, it is only by focusing on technology as a mode of revealing that the essence of modern technology will show itself to us. It will not do merely to ground the human employment of modern apparatus in scientific method. Modern science, in turn, would not be what it is if not for the use of such apparatus, but we could just as easily reverse the direction of this attempted grounding. The relationship between science and technology is rather a mutual one: this is what gives

¹⁷ Ibid. 10

¹⁸ Ibid. 11

¹⁹ Ibid. 13

²⁰ Ibid. 13; my emphasis

modern technology its distinction. With fourfold causality, we do much better to ask: what unites them from the beginning? The question streamlines our inquiry.

The poet and the technician or maker both reveal. But they are different – though not absolutely. Whereas the poet reveals in a manner that allows “the arising of something from out of itself,” the latter, according to Heidegger, reveals in a manner that *challenges* – that is, “The revealing that rules in modern technology is a challenging [*Herausfordern*], which puts to nature the unreasonable demand that it supply energy that can be extracted and stored as such.”²¹ Such challenging, he calls an “expediting” [*Fordern*] – a “driving on to the maximum yield at the minimum expense.”²²

Here we arrive at Heidegger’s distinction between the windmill whose sails “turn in the wind” but “are left entirely to the wind’s blowing,”²³ and the hydroelectric plant on the Rhine through which “the Rhine itself appears as something at our command” – “a water power supplier” whose essence derives not from the river, but “out of the essence of the power station.”²⁴ He makes a similar distinction between the peasant farmer who “places the seed in the keeping of the forces of growth and watches over its increase”²⁵ and a tract of land which is mined for ore through which “the earth now reveals itself as a coal mining district.”²⁶

The windmill and the peasant farmer allow that which presences to come forth from itself just as it is in itself. The typical human-centered focus on the matter offers a picture of the wind as a mere means to human ends. Here, human intentionality is the

²¹ Ibid. 14

²² Ibid. 15

²³ Ibid. 14

²⁴ Ibid. 16

²⁵ Ibid. 15

²⁶ Ibid. 14

cause and driving force of the action, whereas, in the more *poetic* sense of bringing forth, the wind remains wind, and the peasant farmer plants and harvests according to the seasons, “in keeping with the forces of nature.” In contrast, the mining operation and the power plant cause earth and river to be revealed as something other than that which each is, respectively, in itself – that is, as *solely* a thing of use for human beings. Heidegger calls these latter modes of revealing “standing reserve”:

What kind of unconcealment is it, then, that is peculiar to that which comes to stand forth through this setting-upon that challenges? Everywhere everything is ordered to stand by, to be immediately at hand, indeed to stand there just so it may be on call for further ordering. Whatever is ordered about in this way has its own standing. We call it the standing-reserve [Bestand]. The name standing reserve assumes the rank of an inclusive rubric. It designates nothing less than the way in which everything presences that is wrought upon by the challenging revealing. Whatever stands by in the sense of standing reserve no longer stands over against us as object.²⁷

What does it mean for something to no longer stand “over-against us as an object”? Something that stands “over against” us has its own standing. But, as standing reserve, it “has its standing only from the ordering of the orderable.”²⁸ Characteristic of the technological mode is a blurring of the distinction between “ordered” and “existent.” A mode of thinking comes to pass in which things as revealed through human ordering are taken to be things as they are in themselves. The process of ordering is forgotten: we *forget* that we see things in an ordered fashion because they have been ordered by human beings according to instrumental value schemes. But if *ordering as standing reserve* is a mode of technology, and technology is a mode of *revealing*, is not standing reserve, too, a mode of revealing?

²⁷ Ibid. 17

²⁸ Ibid.

Standing can be seen as an effect²⁹ of challenging forth. As such, it too involves an “unreasonable demand.” But what is the reason that this demand opposes in order to be called “unreasonable?” We know it is not reason in the typical sense of rational ordering. The predominance of such ordering, in fact, is what characterizes standing reserve as “unreasonable” in the first place.

Enframing [*Ge-stell*]

The “reason” at work here is, perhaps, “reason” in the sense of harmony and balance: the growth cycles of plants, the waxing and waning of the moon, the progression and recession of tides, the beating of the heart. Natural things in themselves, when we pay attention to them, are found to have an order of their own: not one simply imposed upon them by human imagination. A farmer can scream at his corn to grow faster, but he must ultimately yield to seasonal growth patterns. These points surely deserve more explanation, but we leave them for the time being.

Heidegger is questioning technology precisely because the modern technological mode of being does not comply with such natural “reasonable” rhythms and cycles. Instead, technology “challenges” nature out of phase with natural cycles. But Heidegger is clear about the fact that such setting-upon does not derive strictly from technology. Technology is a mode of revealing, of *poiesis*. As such, this setting upon is not a strictly human doing, for to say such would be to assume a causal framework in which humans are the source of that revealing – the very thought pattern that Heidegger sees as problematic of the technological mode of thinking.

²⁹ We say “effect,” because the technological/instrumental of thinking employs means-ends frameworks within which the words “cause” and “effect” have their meaning. Causality takes place within a concealment of the *poetic*.

Just as (and perhaps because) setting upon cannot be derived from technology, so too, neither can it be derived solely from human activity. Although technology “is a means to an end” and “a human activity” and these two belong together, revealing reveals itself as something more primordial. Technology and means-end human activity are modes of revealing, not the other way around (in the terms of which is more primordial).

Man does not reveal out of his own self-activity. Revealing occurs through, but not out of, man, viz. as an effect of which man is the cause. Nevertheless, something takes place in the technological shift from *poetic* self-revealing to *challenging* (and the resulting standing reserve). This “something” is *Ge-stell* [Enframing]: “that challenging claim which gathers man thither to order the self-revealing as standing-reserve.”³⁰

Enframing means the gathering together of that setting-upon which sets upon man, i.e. challenges him forth, to reveal the real, in the mode of ordering, as standing reserve. Enframing means that way of revealing which holds sway in the essence of modern technology and is itself nothing technological. On the other hand, all those things that are so familiar to us and are standard parts of an assembly, such as rods, pistons, and chassis, belong to the technological. The assembly itself, however, together with the aforementioned stockparts, falls within the sphere of technological activity; and this activity always merely responds to the challenge of Enframing itself or brings it about.³¹

Heidegger is careful to distinguish between mere technological things and the technological activity out of which such “things” come to be. We are not to assume rational order as a primordially accurate reading of “the way things are.” To do so is to forget Heidegger’s analysis of the original meanings of *phusis*, *aletheia*, and *poiesis*, meanings that presuppose a mysterious openness that calculative thinking in the instrumental thought mode automatically rules out (or attempts as much as possible to diminish). And yet, this ordering is a result of a setting-upon that challenges humans to

³⁰ Ibid. 19

³¹ Ibid. 20-21

reveal things as part of an pre-ordered structure. We note briefly that this is the original meaning of *Ge-stell*: a bookrack, a skeleton, scaffolding. But Heidegger sees multiple-possible ways of reading this concept. The meanings of *Ge-stell* just listed are all noun forms. Heidegger is questioning beneath isolated sentences and topics, which means he is questioning beneath the isolated elements of which dictionary definitions are made. He is seeking to get at the activity invoked through this word – and not only the word, of course, but the phenomena to which it points. Challenging is, of course, something done – but by what (or whom)?

The word *stellen* [to set upon] in the name *Ge-stell* [Enframing] not only means challenging. At the same time, it should preserve the suggestion of another *Stellen* from which it stems, namely, that producing and presenting [*Her-* und *Dar-stellen*] which, in the sense of *poiesis*, lets what presences come forth into unconcealment. This producing that brings forth – e.g., the erecting of a statue in the temple precinct, and the challenging-ordering now under consideration are indeed fundamentally different, and yet they remain related in their essence. Both are ways of revealing, of *aletheia*. In Enframing, that unconcealment comes to pass in conformity with which the work of modern technology reveals the real as standing-reserve. This work is therefore neither only a human activity nor a means within such activity...It remains true, nonetheless, that man in the technological age is, in a particularly striking way, challenged forth into revealing.³²

Enframing “should preserve the suggestion of another *Stellen*” – *poiesis* (as letting be) – but it does not. It rather “banishes man into that kind of revealing which is an ordering.” Such ordering “drives out every other possibility of revealing,” and, says Heidegger, “Above all, Enframing conceals that revealing which, in the sense of *poiesis*, lets what presences come forth into appearance.”³³ Self-revealing gets concealed and re-named as a human-activity within a calculable order. Such order is the realm within

³² Ibid. 21

³³ Ibid. 27

which, mentioned above, “Whatever stands by in the sense of standing reserve no longer stands over against us as object.”

As soon as what is unconcealed no longer concerns man even as object, but does so, rather, exclusively as standing reserve, and man, in the midst of objectlessness, is nothing but the orderer of the standing reserve, then he comes to the very brink of a precipitous fall; that is, he comes to the point where he himself will have to be taken as standing-reserve. Meanwhile man, precisely as the one so threatened, exalts himself to the posture of lord of the earth. In this way the impression comes to prevail that everything man encounters exists only insofar as it is his construct. This illusion gives rise to one final delusion: it seems as though man everywhere and always encounters only himself...*In truth, however, precisely nowhere does man today any longer encounter himself, i.e. his essence.* [QCT 27]

This is a rich passage. Particularly interesting is where Heidegger locates anthropocentrism: precisely at the “point” where *poetic* bringing-forth into the self-standing of the object as object *no longer concerns humans*. He thus implicitly locates a direct connection between the concealment of poetic bringing forth and the self-exaltation of human beings to “lord of the earth” status. This latter, it seems safe to say, is also a form of concealment. There is thus a direct correspondence between the concealment of *poetic* bringing-forth and anthropocentrism.

But, again, technology does not *cause* this anthropocentrism. Technology is a mode of revealing. The key to understanding this tendency of humans to exalt themselves as “lords of the earth” has to do, rather, with the comportment through which they employ technological methods, a comportment that conceals the original mode of revealing that gives rise, through *poetic* self-arising, to humans, their ideas, and their employment. That “all of this” is a human doing, says Heidegger, is an “*impression* that comes to prevail,” [my emphasis], *not* an apprehension of things as they are in themselves. Such apprehensions can come about, if at all, only through an understanding

of the essence of technology as *poiesis*. It is for this reason that Heidegger makes a distinction between technology and its essence.

It is important also to note that this concealment is not just a concealment by humans of the nature of self-revealing *poiesis*. Insofar as *poiesis* is the essence of all bringing-forth, *it is also the essence of concealment*. Heidegger says “the challenging Enframing not only conceals a former way of revealing, bringing-forth, but it conceals revealing itself and with it that wherein unconcealment, i.e. truth, comes to pass.”³⁴ This is, then, a *double-concealment*, for the same reason that technology is not something done solely out of human activity, but, rather, something that occurs *through* humans. The occurrence of a double-concealment is possible on the basis of *poiesis* as the essence of concealment.

Heidegger also brings notice to the connection between Enframing as an ordering-revealing and modern scientific theorization which “pursues and entraps nature as a calculable coherence of forces.”³⁵ But the ambiguity remains: who or what challenges, entraps, and pursues? Perhaps the only proper answer is that it is essentially *not* a “who” or a “what” that does so. The closest answer we gain from the above-cited passage is, again, *poiesis*. We want an answer to our “who?” and “what,” and (no wonder) it seems Heidegger does not give us one, except perhaps to ask “Does this revealing happen somewhere beyond all human doing?” and answer “No. But neither does it happen exclusively in man, or decisively through man.”³⁶

³⁴ Ibid. 27

³⁵ Ibid. 21

³⁶ Ibid. 24

B. *The Thing* and Uniform Distancelessness

In order to attain a better grasp of what Heidegger attempts to reveal in QCT, it helps to concentrate on something that has come up more than once in our investigation: the phenomenon of objectlessness, or the no-longer-standing-over-against-us characteristic of the “object” within the technological sphere of Enframing. This theme is developed most fully in *The Thing*.³⁷

Heidegger begins the essay with a discussion of the effects of technological development on *distance*:

All distances in space and time are shrinking. Man now reaches overnight, by plane, places which formerly took weeks and months to travel... The germination and growth of plants, which remained hidden throughout the seasons, is now exhibited publicly in a minute, on film... Man puts the longest distances behind him in the shortest time. He puts the greatest distances behind himself and thus puts everything before himself at the shortest range... Yet the frantic abolition of all distances brings no nearness... Short distance is not in itself nearness. Nor is great distance remoteness.³⁸

Insofar as “distance” is regarded in terms of *a* space between two objective designations (points), distance and objectness are codependent (and this definition is thus “correct”). The technological abolition of distance is thus, for Heidegger, an abolition of objectness. The thing that no longer stands over against us as an object has no self-standing, and thus no distance from us in any measure, be it near or far. “Everything gets lumped together into uniform distancelessness” in which “everything is equally near and equally far”³⁹ – mere positions on a space-time grid.

What is it to be “near”? In order to answer this question, it is necessary to question into the nature of a “thing.” “But what is a thing? Man has so far given no

³⁷Martin Heidegger, “The Thing,” *Poetry, Language, Thought*. (New York, Harper Colophon Books, 1971)

³⁸ *Ibid.* 165

³⁹ *Ibid.* 166

more thought to this question than he has to nearness.”⁴⁰ Through the abolition of distance, the nature of “thing” has been concealed and forgotten. We may already notice a connection here between the “nature” of the thing and *poiesis*, in QCT. The two conceptions, in a way, are pointing to the same phenomenon, though not a phenomenon in the sense of something that can be directly signified. *Uniform distancelessness* thus corresponds to the thing in the sense of standing-reserve: as cut off from its essence – as a lack of preservation.

Being “cut-off” can also be read in more than one way. Dreyfus, in his *Being In the World*, describes distance as a function of Da-sein’s spatiality, which “depends on Dasein’s concerned being-in-the-world.” An object is “near” when it is brought into Dasein’s “referential nexus,” and thus “de-distanced.” Distance, rather than being a purely mathematical concept, is on this reading related to Da-sein’s activity within a world. “The degree of availability is the nearness of concern.”⁴¹

Heidegger uses a jug for an apt example of a “thing.” Its essence consists in more than its objectness. To say so, however, seems to contradict a point subtly established in our analysis so far. We said that when something no-longer stands over-against us as an object, its *thingly* essence gets concealed. It is important to realize the difference, however, between object-*representation* and objectness. Something actually standing “over-against” us stands in itself, apart from our representation of that thing as object. Its objectness is not dependent on our representational activity as such:

As a vessel, the jug is something self-sustained, something that stands on its own. This standing on its own characterizes the jug as something that is self-supporting, or independent. As the self-supporting independence of something

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Hubert Dreyfus. *Being in the World: A Commentary Heidegger’s Being and Time, Division I.* (Massachusetts, MIT Press, 1991). 130-131

independent, the jug differs from an object. An independent, self-supporting thing may become an object if we place it before us, whether in immediate perception or by bringing it to mind in recollective representation. However, the thingly character of the thing does not consist in its being a represented object, nor can it be defined in any way in terms of the objectness, the over-againstness, of the object.⁴²

The point being made here is identical to the points regarding technology as a mode of revealing in the sense of *poiesis* in QCT. That which is *thingly* in the thing does not derive from the thing as thing, but from “something” deeper. In the same way, the making of the thing is not the cause of the thingly nature of the thing, just as the essence of technology is nothing technological.⁴³ “The making, it is true, lets the jug come into its own. But that which in the jug’s nature is its own is never brought about by its making.”⁴⁴ Letting-come-into-its-own is *poiesis* - of *techne* as a mode of *aletheuein* (revealing) - like the peasant farmer who “places the seed in the keeping of the forces of growth and watches over its increase.”⁴⁵

Uniform distancelessness results from human attempts to *master* distance. It is the same with the self-exalting of humans as “lord of the earth.” In technological/calculative thinking, the *poetic* essence of the thing is held inferior to (and thus forgotten and replaced by) representations. Here, “science represents something real, by means of which it is objectively controlled,” and this only because

Science always encounters only what *its* kind of representation has admitted beforehand as an object possible for science...It is said that scientific knowledge is compelling. Certainly. But what does its compulsion consist in? In our instance it consists in the compulsion to relinquish the wine-filled jug and to put in its place a hollow within which a liquid spreads. *Science makes the jug thing into a non-entity in not permitting things to be the standard for what is real.*⁴⁶

⁴² Heidegger, “The Thing,” *Poetry*, 166

⁴³ ...and “The being of beings “is” itself not a being.” [see *Sein und Zeit* 6; German]

⁴⁴ Heidegger, “The Thing,” *Poetry*, 168

⁴⁵ Heidegger, *Question*, 15

⁴⁶ Heidegger, “The Thing,” *Poetry*, 170; my emphasis

Obviously, we see the same ambiguity surfacing again with this analysis of the thingliness of the thing. We typically refer only to inanimate objects like rocks and cars as “things.” But Heidegger is trying to convey a wider meaning of “thing,” much in the same way Meister Eckhart used it: the cautious and abstemious name for something that is at all.⁴⁷ Furthermore, “the meaning of the name ‘thing’ varies with the interpretation of that which is – of entities.”⁴⁸

With this last sentence we finally get an at least partial grasp of how interpretation and multiple-possible readings play through Heidegger’s thinking. Insofar as interpretation grounds the meaning of “thing,” its meaning will appear “ambiguous” to the positivist or technological mindset seeking conceptual rigor and clarity. Ambiguity, then, is problematic only from the standpoint that demands such clarity: a world pre-ordained and fit for human understanding, manipulation, and use. The fact that we are asking “But when and in what way do things exist as things?” is itself a symptom of the uniform distancelessness characterizing the modern technological appropriation of world. “This is a question we raise in the midst of the domination of the distanceless.”⁴⁹

C. The Thing and Dwelling

We observed that nearness is not a function of calculable distance. And Heidegger himself states, in *Building, Dwelling, Thinking*, that “nearness and distance can become *mere distance*, mere intervals of intervening space.”⁵⁰ Since calculable

⁴⁷ See especially Martin Heidegger, *The Principle of Reason* (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1991)

⁴⁸ Heidegger, “The Thing,” *Poetry*, 176

⁴⁹ *Ibid.* 181

⁵⁰ Martin Heidegger, “Building, Dwelling, Thinking,” *Basic Writings* (New York, HarperCollins Publishers, 1993). 357; my emphasis

distance is codependent with objective representation, we may assert that nearness is also not a function of something being close to or far away (in measurable space) from an individual.

What is nearness? To discover the nature of nearness, we gave thought to the jug near by. We have sought the nature of nearness and found the nature of the jug as a thing. But in this discovery we also catch sight of the nature of nearness. The thing things. In thinging, it stays earth and sky, divinities and mortals. Staying, the thing brings the four, in their remoteness, near to one another. This bringing-near is nearing. Nearing is the presencing of nearness. Nearness brings near – draws nigh to one another – the far and, indeed, *as* far. Nearness preserves farness. Preserving, farness, nearness, presences nearness in nearing that farness. Bringing near in this way, nearness conceals its own self and remains, in its own way, nearest of all.⁵¹

It is indeed because “nearness preserves farness” that the modern technological conquest of distance has resulted in uniform distancelessness.

The technological mode of thinking results from a series of abstractions. The first abstraction results in “mere distance.” From this, “a further abstraction can be made, to analytic-algebraic relations. What these relations make room for is the possibility of the purely mathematical construction of manifolds with an arbitrary number of dimensions.” The “space” rendered from these abstractions, in turn, “contains no spaces and no places.”⁵² Mathematics is thus, it may be said, “twice removed from reality.” And yet it comes to dominate what counts as “real thinking” in the present technological era.

We are pushing beneath abstractions, towards the primordial “that” which is no particular thing, but from which, nevertheless, all things are. The above cited paragraph gives us a nexus from which a more thorough understanding of the technological can be gleaned. There are several important themes for our purposes here: 1) The fourfold of

⁵¹ Heidegger, *Poetry*, 177-78.

⁵² Heidegger, *Basic Writings*, 357

earth, sky, divinities, and mortals 2) Dwelling, 3) Staying/gathering/bringing near, and 4) Preserving and man as the “shepherd of Being,”

The Fourfold

Heidegger’s “Fourfold” is comprised of “earth,” “sky,” “divinities,” and “mortals.” According to Heidegger,

Earth is the serving bearer, blossoming and fruiting, spreading out in rock and water, rising up into plant and animal... The sky is the vaulting path of the sun, the year’s season’s and their changes, the light and dusk of day, the gloom and glow of night, the clemency and inclemency of the weather, the drifting clouds and the blue depth of the ether... The divinities are the beckoning messengers of the godhead, the god appears in his presence or withdraws into his concealment... The mortals are the human beings. They are called mortals because they can die. To die means to be capable of death as death. Only man dies, and indeed continually, as long as he remains on earth, under the sky, before the divinities... When we speak of [any one of these], we are already thinking of the other three along with them, but we give no thought to the simple oneness of the four.⁵³

Heidegger’s “Fourfold,” is so rich with possible interpretations that it is simply not possible to give a fully adequate treatment of it here. For our purposes, it is the last sentences of the above cited passage that bear perhaps the greatest importance. The “four” of the fourfold are together in a “simple oneness.” That is, one cannot think of any of these “four” in isolation from the other three. “The simple oneness of the four we call the *fourfold*.”⁵⁴

The point of this sentence has already been expressed above. For instance, in QCT, one is to “pay heed” to the questioning way by *not* fixing our “attention upon isolated sentences and topics.” The same goes for the fourfold, and, perhaps, for the same “reasons.” To “pay heed” is to read “fourfold” with a stress on the *-fold*.

Obviously then, a reading that instead stresses the *four-* will be one that fixes attention

⁵³ Ibid. 351

⁵⁴ Ibid. 352

“upon isolated sentences and topics,” having an atomistic interpretive approach in common with such attention. Such is precisely the state of affairs in which

Our thinking has of course been long accustomed to *understate* the essence of the thing. The consequence, in the course of Western thought, has been that the thing is represented as an unknown X to which perceptible qualities are attached. From this point of view, everything *that already belongs to the gathering essence of this thing* does, of course, appear as something that is afterward read into it.⁵⁵

Dwelling

But our interests in this section regard the “thing” and what it is to be a “thing.”

The thingly nature of the thing is essentially tied to what it is, for Heidegger, to *dwell*.

[D]welling itself is always a staying with things. Dwelling, as preserving, keeps the fourfold in that with which mortals stay: in things... Staying with things, however, is not something attached to this fourfold preservation as a fifth something. On the contrary: staying with things is the only way in which the fourfold is accomplished at any time in simple unity. Dwelling preserves the fourfold by bringing the essence of the fourfold into things. But things themselves secure the fourfold *only when* they themselves *as* things are let be in their essence.⁵⁶

“Building is really dwelling.” This statement is in line with what we said above regarding the *poetical* essence of the “thing.” As with the fourfold, we must question this statement in terms of an investigation into “that” which unites the two, that from out of which “Building as dwelling unfolds into the building that cultivates growing things and the building that erects buildings.”⁵⁷

Secondly, says Heidegger, the event where *dwelling* “recedes behind the manifold ways in which dwelling is accomplished, the activities of cultivation and construction,” is essentially connected with the event where these activities “claim the name of *bauen*,

⁵⁵ Ibid. 355

⁵⁶ Ibid. 353

⁵⁷ Ibid. 350

building, and with it the matter of building, strictly for themselves.”⁵⁸ We can see a strong connection here between this recession of dwelling behind building and humans as “lord of the Earth.” Humans subdue *dwelling* to their own projects, (seemingly) *lording* over dwelling.

Third, and on the basis of the first two examples,

However hard and bitter, however hampering and threatening the lack of homes remains, the proper plight of dwelling does not lie merely in a lack of houses. The proper plight of dwelling is indeed older than the world wars with their destruction, older also than the increase in the earth’s population and the condition of the industrial workers. The proper dwelling plight lies in this, that mortals ever search anew for the essence of dwelling, that they must ever learn to dwell.⁵⁹

Staying/Gathering/Bringing Near

How does one “learn to dwell?” “What” is “it” that must be learned? We find that like the four of the onefold fourfold, building and dwelling, challenging and letting-be, there is “something” which both *dwelling* and “staying/gathering/bringing near” share in common.

In his investigation of the jug, Heidegger says:

Our language denotes what a gathering *is* by an ancient word. That word is: thing. The jug’s presencing is the pure, giving gathering of the one-fold fourfold into a single time-space, a single stay. The jug presences as a thing. The jug is the jug as a thing. But how does the thing presence? The thing things. Thinging gathers. Appropriating the fourfold, it gathers the fourfold’s stay, its while, into something that stays for a while: into this thing, that thing.⁶⁰

There is thus a *poetic* essence to “thing,” “thinging,” “gathering,” “staying,” and “bringing near.” Heidegger demonstrates the *thingly* and *thinging* nature of the *thing* through his depiction of the “bridge” that, as thing, “gathers the earth and landscape

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Heidegger, *Poetry*, 174

around the stream.” It is thus “a thing of its own kind; for it gathers the fourfold in such a way that it allows a site for it.”⁶¹ The identity of the thing is constituted out of a relationship with the site it opens up through its presencing. It is important to note Heidegger’s stress on the *way* such gathering happens, rather than *that* this or that action “is” or “is not” a gathering.

We have taken note of Heidegger’s depiction of the technological: that it results in an “objectless” and “uniform distancelessness.” And yet his language: that the “*thing* things” and “thinging gathers,” seems to suggest that there is indeed something that the thing does on its own. Is this statement in conflict with the nature of *poiesis*? This is one reading, but it is not the *only* one.

Man as the “shepherd” of Being

That “Man is the shepherd of Being” is certainly one of Heidegger’s most famous and significant statements. Heidegger says man is “thrown” from Being itself into the truth of Being so that he might “guard the truth of Being, in order that beings might appear in the light of Being as the beings they are.”⁶² To be a guard is, for Heidegger, to allow things to appear in the light of being. Guarding and shepherding, then, is allowance of the *poetic*, as in *gathering*, *preserving*, and the *bringing-near* of the *four-* in the *fourfold*. “To spare and preserve,” says Heidegger, “means to take under our care, to look after the fourfold in its essence.”⁶³ Further,

Since Being is never the merely precisely actual, to guard being can never be equated with the task of a guard who protects from burglars a treasure stored in a building. Guardianship of Being is not fixated upon something existent. The

⁶¹Heidegger, *Basic Writings*, 334-35

⁶²Ibid. 234

⁶³ Ibid. 353

existing thing, taken for itself, never contains an appeal of Being. Guardianship is vigilance, watchfulness for the has-been and coming destiny of Being, a vigilance that issues from a long and ever-renewed thoughtful deliberateness, which heeds the directive that lies in the manner in which Being makes its appeal. In the destiny of Being, there is never a mere sequence of things one after another: now frame, then world and thing; rather, there is always a passing by and simultaneity of the early and late.⁶⁴

We have been following a trace whose source lies in the mystery of *poetic* coming to presence. The “simultaneity” mentioned in the last sentence of the above passage should bring to mind the apparent tension between the “thinging” of the *thing* and *poiesis*: “apparent,” precisely because the regarded presence or absence of the tension is grounded in a particular *interpretation* of Being.

But in order to understand this simultaneity of tension and no-tension with regard to the relationship between *thinging* and *poiesis*, it is necessary to proceed one “step” further.

D. Responding and Releasement

We are questioning Being. Such questioning is “thinking.” To “think Being” can mean to think *about a thing* called “Being”: an object for thought. This definition, like Heidegger himself says so many times, is “correct,” but it is not the only one. Heidegger says

To think “Being” is to respond to the appeal of its presencing. The response stems from the appeal and releases itself toward that appeal. The responding is a giving way before that appeal and in this way an entering into its speech. But to the appeal of Being there also belongs the early uncovered has-been (*aletheia*, *logos*, *phusis*) as well as the veiled advent of what announces itself in the possible turnabout of the oblivion of Being (in the keeping of its nature).⁶⁵

The same “simultaneity of early and late” appears here as well. In turn, QCT closes with an examination of a line by Holderlin: “Where the danger is, grows/ The

⁶⁴ Heidegger, *Poetry*, 184

⁶⁵ *Ibid.* 183

saving power also.”⁶⁶ There is an essential relationship between what it is to “shepherd” Being and what it is to “hear” the “appeal of Being.” To hear, as shepherd, is to respond to a call (from Being) to somehow take part in the “turnabout of the oblivion of Being.”

This “oblivion of Being” is the objectless and uniform-distancelessness of the technological mode, a mode where the object “no longer stands over-against us,” where the fourfold is no longer gathered in the sense of the *-fold*, but rather “mastered” as isolated grid components in the service of humans as “lord of the earth.”

Humans think, but their thoughts are not their own. To claim thoughts as possessions is akin to hoarding a treasure – the “treasure” of which the mistaken-hearer of the appeal of Being attempts to guard from burglars. “Thinking, in contrast, lets itself be claimed by Being so that it can say the truth of Being. Thinking accomplishes this letting.”⁶⁷

Thus, thinking, in the turnabout, is released from the enslavement of being an effect of which humans as such are the cause. It is not something that humans make. Such a notion is a direct expression of the technological “lording” mode in which objectlessness replaces the self-standing *poetic* nature of things as such. Ironically it is this objectlessness that makes possible the claiming of individual humans of thinking as their own creation and right: where naming rules the named.

“Naming rules the named” in the same way “science encounters only what its kind of representation has admitted beforehand...”⁶⁸ The scientific and technological mode of being is characterized by a prior rule giving that sets into order by way of *revealing* that which is subsequently ordered as having always been that way: it brings

⁶⁶ Heidegger, *Question*, 34

⁶⁷ Heidegger, *Basic Writings*, 218

⁶⁸ Heidegger, *Poetry*, 170

forth the ordering act as rather an apprehension of the “way things are.” But “more important than instituting rules is that man find his way to his abode in the truth of Being. This abode first yields the experience of something we can hold on to. The truth of Being offers a hold for all conduct.”⁶⁹

The offered “hold” is not a set of rules. If there is an essential link between “thing,” *poiesis*, “shepherd,” and *releasement*, it is the mutual requirement by all of these of *responding*. *Responding* means listening to the call of Being: a turning of my attention (and priorities) beyond myself as an isolated subjectivity. It is a move away from the “lording” tendencies of humans who, thrown into technological revealing, reveal the “meaning” of existence in terms of means-end production figures, always having the “data” to back them up.⁷⁰ With this mode of thinking – the thinking of Being – correctness is no longer the hallmark of rightness:

As a response, thinking of Being is a highly errant and in addition a very destitute matter. Thinking is perhaps, after all, an unavoidable path, which refuses to be a path of salvation and brings no new wisdom. The path is at most a field path, a path across fields, which does not just speak of renunciation but already has renounced, namely, renounced the claim to a binding doctrine and a valid cultural achievement or a deed of the spirit. Everything depends on the step back, fraught with error, into the thoughtful reflection that attends the turnabout of the oblivion of Being. The step back from the representational thinking of metaphysics does not reject such thinking, but opens the distant to the appeal of the trueness of Being in which the responding always takes place.⁷¹

We can ask, again: what is responding? It is hoped that by now, however, we know not to expect a “correct” answer in the form of a strict delineated concept offered solely to satisfy and fill the space of this “what.” We also know, in turn, that responding,

⁶⁹ Ibid. 262

⁷⁰ That is, until recently. Chapter Two provides ample data from the science of ecology, showing that, contrary to popular belief, there are, it seems, natural checks on just how far human technologizing activity can go in guaranteeing a world of, by, and for human beings.

⁷¹ Heidegger, *Poetry*, 185

releasement, and *poetic* revealing are not accomplished solely by human doing: to say so is to remain in the technological mode of humans as “lord.”

Heidegger says “A mere shift in attitude is powerless to bring about the advent of the thing as thing, just as nothing that stands today as an object in the distanceless can ever be simply switched over into a thing.”⁷² Neither the revealing of the thing as it is in itself, nor the shift in attitude necessary to allow such revealing to occur, is something we can do on our own. Although to say so seems to leave the matter dangling in uncertainty, perhaps everything that has been said so far regarding correctness and certainty will provide the patience needed to wait for a more satisfactory illumination in the third chapter.⁷³

⁷² Ibid. 182

⁷³ See Chapter 3 for a much more in-depth discussion of “releasement” as delineated in Heidegger’s *Discourse on Thinking*.

Chapter Two: Deep Ecology

A. Introduction

Ecology is “the scientific study of the interrelationships among organisms and between organisms, and between all aspects, living and non-living, of the environment.”⁷⁴ The origin of the term is not completely solid, though it has been traced to the nature writings of Theophrastus (c372-287 BC). The etymology of the term derives from the Greek word *oikos* meaning “household, home, or place to live.” German zoologist Ernest Haeckel coined it in reference to the relationship between an animal and its “organic or inorganic environment.” Ecology is thus the study of the relationships between organisms and their environment (and each other).

On September 3, 1972, at the third World Future Research Conference in Bucharest, Romania, the Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess, coined the term *Deep Ecology* (hereafter referred to as ‘DE’) by differentiating between what he called “shallow” and “deep” ecological views. The former involve concern for environmental matters solely insofar as human interests are involved. Naess labeled this “standard view of conservationists” *shallow ecology*, which he describes as “mainly an anthropocentric, individualistic, Western movement, concerned with the health and affluence of people in the developed countries.”⁷⁵ A shallow focus is *narrow*, but not completely unethical. “The limitation of the shallow movement is not due to a weak or unethical philosophy,”

⁷⁴ Michael Allaby, *The Oxford Dictionary of Ecology* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1998). 136

⁷⁵ See Louis P. Pojman, *Global Environmental Ethics*. (California, Mayfield Publishing Company, 2000). 176

says Naess, “but to a lack of explicit concern with ultimate aims, goals, and norms.”⁷⁶

The word “shallow” nevertheless has an understandably derogatory tone.

David Rothenberg states in the Introduction to Naess’s *Ecology, Community, Lifestyle*,

More precisely, [DE] is the utilization of basic concepts from the science of ecology – such as complexity, diversity, and symbiosis – to clarify the place of our species within nature through the process of working out a total view.⁷⁷

DE does not, as a reaction to shallowness, constitute a rejection of social activism.

Naess himself states that in DE, “unlike academic philosophy, decisions and actions count more than generalities.”⁷⁸ But nor does it reject philosophical reasoning: it *combines* abstract philosophical formulations with prescriptions for concrete action. The *focus* of action in shallow ecology is at issue.

DE is an *ecological philosophy* or *ecophilosophy*. Naess’s word is “*ecosophy*.” The combination of abstract reasoning and concrete action hints at DE’s symbiotic and non-exclusionary character. The science of ecology is observational or descriptive, whereas an *ecosophy* is action oriented. “Without an *ecosophy*, ecology can provide no principles for acting, no motive for political and individual efforts.”⁷⁹

Naess himself calls his *ecosophy* ‘Ecosophy T’, thereby distinguishing it from other *ecopsophies*. The possibility of more than one *ecosophy* reflects the diversity of organisms and phenomena in the *ecosphere*:

Rather than talking about reality or the world, *ecosophical* thinking proceeds in terms of nature, and humanity’s relation to nature. An attempt is made to defend our spontaneous, rich, seemingly contradictory experience of nature as more than

⁷⁶ Arne Naess & David Rothenberg, *Ecology, Community and Lifestyle* (New York, Cambridge University Press, 1989) 33

⁷⁷ *Ibid.* 3

⁷⁸ *Ibid.* 77

⁷⁹ *Ibid.* 41

subjective impressions. They make up the concrete contents of our world. This point of view, as every other ontology, is deeply problematic – but of great potential value for energetic environmentalism in opposition to the contemporary near-monopoly of the so-called scientific world-view.⁸⁰

A “total view” is to replace the narrow and limited attitudes of citizens in modern industrial societies. “Total view” corresponds with “the relational, total-field image” of *self* presented by DE. *Ecocentrism* replaces anthropocentrism: as such, DE is a “rejection of the man-in-environment image,”⁸¹ doing away with the strictly atomistic view of the self, or ‘self’ according to the technological worldview.

Organisms [are] as knots in the biospherical net or field of total relations. An intrinsic relation between two things A and B is such that the relation belongs to the definitions or basic constitutions of A and B, so that without the relation, A and B are no longer the same thing. The total-field dissolves not only the man-in-environment concept, but every compact thing-in-milieu concept – except when talking at a superficial or preliminary level of communication.⁸²

A “total view” is identification with not just one’s own species, but *all forms of life*. Further, the meaning of “self-realization” is *widened* out of its typically self-centered rendering to include other species, the environment and the *ecosphere*. Thus, as one cares for the environment, one cares for oneself.

DE endorses “not a slight reform of our present society, but a substantial reorientation of our whole civilization.”⁸³ There is an intrinsic connection between DE and nonviolence (in the Gandhian sense): as such, violent revolutions are not consistent with its purpose. “*The direction is revolutionary, the steps are reformatory.*”⁸⁴ DE aims at changing the dominant worldview and social structure of modernity. The reasons

⁸⁰ Ibid. 35

⁸¹ Arne Naess. “The Shallow and the Deep, Long-Range Ecology Movements,” *Deep Ecology for the 21st Century* (Boston, Shambhala, 1995). 151

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid. 45

⁸⁴ Ibid. 156; author’s emphasis

behind the alignment between DE and nonviolent change become clearer upon consideration of self-widening, explained below.⁸⁵ We can say for now that the relationship between DE and nonviolence mirrors the symbiosis expressed through organic relations (between beings or between being and environment) within the total ecosystem.

Naess and Sessions formulated the basic principles of any *ecosophy*. Their goal was to represent the “basics,” which are “meant to express important points which the great majority of supporters accept, implicitly or explicitly, at a high level of generality.”⁸⁶ These principles “guide those who believe ecological problems cannot be solved only by technological ‘quick-fix’ solutions,” in achieving effective non-violent direct action in the direction of fundamental change.⁸⁷

The generality of the points allows for specifics to be worked out on individual bases: the point is to provide a tool for realizing commonality, rather than a calculus of differentiation. This eight-point platform is:

1. The well-being and flourishing of human and non-human life on Earth have value in themselves (synonyms: intrinsic value, intrinsic worth). These values are independent of the usefulness of the non-human world for human purposes.
2. Richness and diversity of life forms contribute to the realization of these values and are also values in themselves.
3. Humans have no right to reduce this richness except to satisfy vital needs.
4. The flourishing of human life and cultures is compatible with a substantially smaller human population. The flourishing of non-human life *requires* a smaller human population.
5. Present human interference with the non-human world is excessive, and the situation is rapidly worsening.

⁸⁵ Elucidated in section E of this chapter.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid. 4

6. Policies must therefore be changed. These policies affect basic economic, technological, and ideological structures. The resulting state of affairs will be deeply different from the present.
7. The ideological change will be mainly that of appreciating life quality (dwelling in situations of inherent value) rather than adhering to an increasingly higher standard of living. There will be a profound awareness of the difference between bigness and greatness.
8. Those who subscribe to the foregoing points have an obligation directly or indirectly to try to implement the necessary changes.⁸⁸

Point number one is an ecosophical nexus. The good of any non-human entity is independent of our valuations of it (e.g., for profits, resources, or other strictly human purposes). The other points flow out of and unite around this conception. Additional viewpoints range from political (increased self-determination and diminished centralization of governmental structures)⁸⁹ to personal (the “profound human ignorance of biospherical relationships,”⁹⁰ stress on a humble, questioning attitude) to transpersonal (peace and nonviolence⁹¹, concern for future generations). “Profound ignorance” is not an assertion of human stupidity. It rather signifies an open and humble attitude, expressed by Naess where he says “the smaller we come to feel ourselves compared to the mountain, the nearer we come to participating in its greatness. I do not know why this is so.”⁹²

The ecological movement relies upon the results of research in ecology and more recently in conservation biology...But to the great amazement of many, the scientific conclusions are often statements of ignorance: ‘We do not know what long-range consequences the proposed interference in the ecosystem will beget,

⁸⁸ Ibid. 68

⁸⁹ Stephen Bodian. “Simple In Means, Rich In Ends,” *Deep Ecology for the 21st Century* (Boston, Shambhala, 1995). 32

⁹⁰ Arne Naess. “The Shallow and the Deep, Long-Range Ecology Movements: A Summary,” *Deep Ecology for the 21st Century* (Boston, Shambhala, 1995) 153; this sentence does not say that Naess advocates ignorance. A remembrance of ourselves as still having much to learn brings about a sense of “profound ignorance” more akin to awe, rather than stupidity.

⁹¹ Arne Naess. “The Deep Ecology ‘Eight Points’ Revisited,” *Deep Ecology for the 21st Century* (Boston, Shambhala, 1995). 213

⁹² Naess and Rothenberg, *Ecology*, 3

so we cannot make and hard and fast changes.’ Only rarely can scientists predict with any certainty the effect of a new chemical on even a single small ecosystem...The study of ecosystems makes us conscious of our ignorance.⁹³

B. The Ethical Landscape of Deep Ecology

One possible take on deep ecological ethics involves seeing it as an extension of traditional ethics. The range of ethical consideration is widened from its traditionally human focus to include animals (as in Singer), plants (as in Taylor), and ecosystems (DE). But there is more than one take on the meaning of “widening” as well. One could view it as a linear extension or broadening of the meaning of *patient*, so that more possible recipients of the effects of an action are considered: the typical take on animal rights views it as an avoidance of *speciesism*: not withholding any right from animals that we could not justifiably withhold from humans.

But the linear model still remains human centered, thus falling under the “shallow” categorization of ecology. DE rather approaches ethical expansion from the side of the agent: the agent as *subject* is expanded to include animals, plants and ecosystems *as itself*: but not in a selfish, human centered, or “me”-oriented sense. The ethical patient is not separate. *Self is originally wide*.

The intensity of identification with other forms of life depends on milieu, culture, and economic conditions. The ecosophical outlook is developed through an identification so deep that one’s *own self* is no longer adequately delimited by the personal ego or organism. One experiences oneself to be a genuine part of all life. Each living being is understood as a goal in itself, *in principle* on equal footing with one’s own ego. It also entails a transition from I-it attitudes to I-thou attitudes – to use Buber’s terminology...This does not imply that one acts, wishes to act, or consistently *can* act in harmony with the principle of equality. The statements about biospheric equality must be merely taken as guidelines.⁹⁴

⁹³ Ibid. 26-27

⁹⁴ Ibid. 174; author’s emphasis

The concept of *intrinsic value* is extremely important for ecophilosophical purposes. Widened consideration entails recognition of others as goal-directed and striving to flourish, in contrast to a purely *instrumental value* that is human centered and ascribes value to non-human life only insofar as there is some benefit to be had for humans by doing so. Traditionally, intrinsicity and instrumentality are kept substantially separate. In the total-field view of DE, this and other “separations” are not necessarily eliminated per se, but *softened* and *opened*.

Perceptive readers will notice here a parallel to Kantian ethical terminology: ends (intrinsic) and means (instrumental). Both formulations of the Categorical Imperative show up in Naess’s work. The first is in a discussion of technology where he asks “...should we not subscribe to the following norm: ‘Choose a level of standard of living such that you realistically may desire that all fellow humans reach the same level if they want?’”⁹⁵ Naess mentions humans explicitly, here, but it is not hard to realize that if this norm were to be consistently and universally sought, the well-being of non-human organisms would be substantially increased.

The second formulation appears within an extension of Naess’s above-quoted discussion of self-widening, which simultaneously expands upon the “softening” of the “substantial” divide between intrinsicity and instrumentality:

Even under conditions of intense identification, killing occurs. The Indians in California, with their animistic mythology, were an example of equality in principle, combined with realistic admissions of their own vital needs. When hunger arrives, brother rabbit winds up in the pot. ‘A brother *is* a citizen, but oh, so temptingly nutritious!’ – This example is too easy: the complicated rituals which surround the hunt in many cultures illustrate how closely people feel bound to other beings, and how natural it is to feel that *when we harm others, we also harm ourselves*. Non-instrumental acts develop into instrumental... Immanuel Kant’s maxim ‘You shall never use another person only as a means’ is expanded

⁹⁵ Ibid. 100

in Ecosophy T to ‘You shall never use any living being only as a means.’...A lack of identification leads to indifference.⁹⁶

Intrinsicity and instrumentality are interdependent in the manner of organisms in symbiosis. This is the conception of “identification” in DE. To substantiate it into a statement of pure sameness is to fall into a wider atomism, but atomism nonetheless. By contrast, *identification* in DE is fluid and dynamic, similar to how things are rooted in *Logos* in the Heraclitean conception of the term: things have identities, but not strictly out of themselves as individuals qua individuals. In the same way, neither *ought* and *is*, nor *value* and *fact*, are substantially distinct.

Our opinions as to what is or *ought* to be done are highly dependent upon our *hypotheses* as to how the world is organized. Applied to ecological relationships, this implies that our norms are dependent upon our beliefs regarding the interdependency relations within the biosphere.⁹⁷

Interdependency relations entail as well an interdependency of self-realization(s). A identifies with the other (B) to such a degree that “when B seeks a just treatment, A supports the claim.”⁹⁸ All of the interdependencies cited thus far point again to some-*thing* that unites them. This “thing” is no substantial thing: it is more mysterious than any neatly boxed or categorized “it.”

These considerations set the stage for observing another Kantian parallel in Naess’s ecosophy: of “beautiful actions,” expressed where Naess states: “Where solidarity and loyalty are solidly anchored in identification, they are not experienced as moral demands; *they come out of themselves*.”⁹⁹ Such actions serve as an alternative to

⁹⁶ Ibid. 174; author’s emphasis

⁹⁷ Ibid. 74; author’s emphasis

⁹⁸ Ibid. 172

⁹⁹ Ibid. 172; my emphasis

both selfishness *and altruism*, since both revolve around a narrow conception of ethical actor or agent.

Inspired by Kant, one may speak of ‘beautiful’ and of ‘moral’ action. Moral actions are motivated by acceptance of a moral law, and manifest themselves clearly when acting against inclination. A person acts beautifully when acting benevolently from inclination. Environment is then not felt to be something strange or hostile which we must unfortunately adapt ourselves to, but something valuable which we are *inclined to* treat with joy and respect, and the overwhelming richness of which we are inclined to use to satisfy our vital needs.¹⁰⁰

A conception of ethics beyond both selfishness and altruism obviously involves an other-than-normal conception of *value*. DE entails a move away from both atomistic and anthropocentric value conceptions. “It is misleading terminology to maintain that values humanly conceived as valuable are such *for human beings*.”¹⁰¹ This difference is linked to both to interdependency relations between is/ought, intrinsic/instrumental and I/thou, as well as the self-emergence of beautiful actions.

Actually, both interdependence and self-emergence take part in a mirroring of ecosystemic reality: the latter is explicitly related to *intrinsic value* in that something with ‘a value of its own’ has this value out of itself – but not, as discussed above, out of itself qua-individual. It is self-emergence in a similar sense to Heidegger’s notion of *phusis* as a mode of *aletheia*.¹⁰² Not only is such a conception more dynamic (and thus closer to ecosystemic reality): it provides a deeper account of the valuable than anything possible out of a traditionally atomistic ethical framework.

We have seen that what was originally perceived as conceptual dichotomies with substantially separated elements gets re-worked in DE into interdependency relations.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid. 85

¹⁰¹ Ibid. 177; author’s emphasis

¹⁰² See Chapter One. This issue is a major theme of Chapter Three, in which the connections between Heidegger’s account of *poiesis* and *DE* are explicitly discussed.

Such goes not only for particular conceptual pairs *within* ethics and ontology as separate fields, *but for ethics and ontology themselves*:

It is, I think, important in the philosophy of environmentalism to *move from ethics to ontology and back*. Clarification of differences in ontology may contribute significantly to the clarification of different policies and their ethical basis...In an analysis that begins with concrete contents, the is-ought and fact-value dichotomies don't look quite as they did from where Hume started, namely as factual and value *affirmations*...J. Baird Callicott (1982) says that 'ecology changes our values by changing our concepts of the world and of ourselves in relation to the world. It reveals new relations among objects which, once revealed, stir our ancient centers of moral feeling.' (p. 174) The stirring is part of a gestalt, and as such not to be isolated from the objects.¹⁰³

What is the consequence of this claim for an ethic (i.e. normative system)? The point is not novel: "the validity of norms depends upon the validity of non-normative assumptions, theories, postulates, and observations."¹⁰⁴ For this reason, it is important to articulate the connection between stated norms (ethics) and the ontological claims or assumptions from which they are apparently derived. *Derivation*, of course, is here grounded in interaction and interconnectedness; it is not just a one-way extraction. Connections need to be articulated. When such articulation is neglected, "each norm tends to be taken as absolute ultimate. This reduces or eliminates the possibility of rational discussion."¹⁰⁵

This new relation to the world, based in ecosystemic interdependence, constitutes a move away from instrumentality. "*It is most advantageous to the ecological movement that as few as possible norms should be purely instrumental.*"¹⁰⁶ DE's critique of instrumentality opens the way for an account of technology, the topic of the following section.

¹⁰³ Naess and Rothenberg, *Ecology*, 67

¹⁰⁴ Ibid. 43

¹⁰⁵ Ibid. 43-44

¹⁰⁶ Ibid. 76

C. Deep Ecology and Technology

Naess writes, concerning our societal role in the global community, “*No matter which one of the great philosophies one considers to be valid, our current role would be evaluated negatively.*” A role in which environmentalism takes precedence, however, “has no philosophical system to fear.”¹⁰⁷ The issue for us is the seeming negativity towards technology of this hypothetical evaluation. It’s important to keep the deep ecological explication of *value* (from the previous section) in mind through what follows.

Much of Heidegger’s take on technology is relevant here. Like Heidegger, Naess laments a world in which the tool has become the owner. “The cog wheels have brought us into the very machinery we thought was our slave,” says Naess, sounding a lot like Heidegger speaking of humans as standing reserve.¹⁰⁸ Further,

The technological developments in modern industrial societies have resulted in continuous pressures towards a kind of lifestyle repugnant not only to supporters of the deep ecology movement but to those in most alternative movements...Some of the reasons for such a confrontation are fairly obvious: modern industrial technology is a centralizing factor, it tends towards bigness, it decreases the area within which one can say ‘self-made is well made’, it attaches us to big markets, and forces us to seek an ever-increasing income. The administrative technologies are adapted to the physical technologies and encourage more and more impersonal relations.¹⁰⁹

A technological society, it appears, inhibits many of the actions and attitudes necessary for lifestyle consistent with ecosystemic processes. Diversity is superceded by centralization, calculated bigness replaces a deeper *greatness*, instrumental justifications for production replace self-making the self-emergence of life and personal relationships take second place to an impersonal social structure in which competition outweighs community, openness, and a deep appreciation of the other.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid. 86

¹⁰⁸ Ibid. 24

¹⁰⁹ Ibid. 92

The nature of competition is peculiar in itself. A competitive society has the appearance of diversity, but upon closer inspection, reveals itself to the one who probes as a rather homogenous state of affairs. Competition is a driving force towards centralization. Not only that: once competition becomes a value to a society (as in the United States, where competition is all too often held to be the actualization of Jeffersonian democracy), alienation and elitism result, as each individual individualizes himself against the other: the other becomes a possible hindrance to personal prestige.

As far as the relationship between competition and production is concerned, one need only think of the shift Heidegger discusses from *techne* to manufacturing. One needs only to think of the difference between specialized craftworks (e.g. no two sculptures exactly alike) and the Fordian calculation of individual component constructions on an assembly line: productivity and efficiency take precedence – meditative sculpting is a hindrance to high profits. That one does it fast is more important than doing it well: machines and computers are careful *for* the workers. As a result, workers work *for* the machines.¹¹⁰

Centralization is not a simply domestic factor. It functions on the global level as well. Naess asks “When a technical advance is made in a leading industrial country, is it *natural* that the thousands of cultures and sub-cultures on this globe ultimately adapt themselves to one group’s ‘progress’?”¹¹¹ The ecological equivalent would be all animals in a watershed community acting like the ducks. Why does this happen? Upon what assumptions are such actions likely based?

¹¹⁰ This are of course other ways to characterize this relationship. Chapter Three will clarify why I have chosen this particular path.

¹¹¹ Ibid. 94

These questions are difficult to answer, especially in light of the totalizing effect of technological societies over generations. It is one thing to locate a conscious decision by a citizen: the moment where she proclaims technical progress as the purpose of life. It is quite another when such an ideal forms the structure of life into which a person is born, grows up, and is educated to accept that one who has no money has no life. Heidegger's conception of *thrownness* is one way of getting at this cross-generational totalization. Something similar perhaps is behind Naess's comment that "the general trend of modern technological developments has perhaps *not* been masterminded by anybody, by any group or any constellation of humans. It may have developed largely 'by itself'."¹¹²

If technology has "developed largely 'by itself,'" it is not to be taken in the same sense as an organism's self-development, but rather as a function of a perpetuated ideology: "a deeply grounded ideology of production and consumption."¹¹³ Technical progress is often justified in terms of its being useful for culture: think of the advertisements for cellular phones and cars where the father gets the laboring mother to the emergency room just in time to save the baby, thanks to his superior satellite network and his trusty Jeep. In all distortions of the truth, a kernel is necessarily preserved. This truth is that "Technical progress is never purely technical: the value of technical change is dependent upon its value for culture in general."¹¹⁴

Such advertisements amount to praising the corporations who provide these services. The hidden shift from corporations serving culture to humans in service of corporations is certainly at issue. As Naess writes:

¹¹² Ibid. 96

¹¹³ Ibid. 104

¹¹⁴ Ibid. 33

The degree of self-reliance for individuals and local communities diminishes in proportion to the extent a technique or technology transcends the abilities and resources of the particular individuals or local communities. Passivity, helplessness, and dependence upon ‘megasociety’ and the world market increase.¹¹⁵

There is a striking correspondence between technocracy and hedonistic philosophy. Our dependence on corporate technological advancements colors our pleasure and leisure time, however, to the degree that most people assume that these must be purchased. The assumption is widespread that, without money, there can be neither leisure nor pleasure. A core tenet of DE is the adoption of what Naess calls “voluntary simplicity.” Obviously, the less I depend upon purchasable gadgets for my leisure and pleasure, the less I have to work to pay bills, and the more leisure time (and pleasure time) I have available to me: which is the point of going to work in the first place. DE stresses the fact that people need much less than they believe: but such an idea, though good for individuals, is bad for corporations and markets. The advertising industry was perhaps developed for the purpose of influencing citizens to buy more than they actually need..

DE stresses a redefinition of the meaning of “progress” from increasing GNP to life quality. There is data backing up the need for such a redefinition. In the United States, the number of people describing themselves as “very happy” dropped from 35% in 1957 to 30% in the mid 1990’s, even though the same period witnessed a doubling of income per capita.¹¹⁶ There is no direct correlation between material wealth and overall well-being, as many advertising campaigns would have us believe.

¹¹⁵ Ibid. 103

¹¹⁶ Christopher Flavin, *State of the World Report 2002* (New York, The Worldwatch Institute, 2002). 17

Naess characterizes our present industrialized society as a “technocracy” in which people are “more occupied with subordinate ends (buildings) over fundamental ones (homes).”¹¹⁷ Heidegger’s distinction between building and dwelling certainly comes to mind here. Concern solely with building arises from an instrumental filtering of nature into means-ends production frameworks, whereas *dwelling* is a preservation of essence. The parallel in Naess is “self-emergence” and “intrinsic value.”

The more the ability to dwell on intrinsic value diminishes, the faster consciousness turns from immediate experience to planning for the coming time. Although the intrinsic values are ostensibly still the central themes, the procurement of effective of effective means is the principle occupation. The undesirable consequences of this become more and more aggravated as the individual consumer has less and less to do with production. The techniques are ‘improved’ constantly, requiring great sacrifices of time and energy. Unnoticed, the time spent upon goals withers away. The headlong rush after means takes over: the improvements are illusory.¹¹⁸

There is no inherent price tag on nature or human beings. “Cost-benefit analysis breaks down in the case of rights.”¹¹⁹ What is the price of breaking your arm? Such a situation drives the point home. The “breakdown” occurs due to the link between value and self-emergence discussed in the previous section. That which is inherently valuable in itself cannot at the same time be solely instrumentally valuable. There is no absolute separation between ontology and ethics. Likewise, there can be no separation between technical proliferation and its ethical consequences. Technological progress does not occur ‘in a vacuum.’

A critical attitude towards technology seems to involve a suggestion towards the necessity of action and change. But upon what basis? There are two issues: 1) Such change is possible; 2) Such change *should* occur. Both of these are entailed by Naess’s

¹¹⁷ Naess and Rothenberg, *Ecology*, 97

¹¹⁸ Ibid. 97

¹¹⁹ Ibid. 125

statement that “Contrary to expectation, urbanized life has not killed human fascination with free nature, but only made the access more difficult and promoted mass tourism.”¹²⁰

The situation is not hopeless. But an objection to the vagueness or lack of prescriptions could be raised: ‘what exactly are we to do about this?’

What demand is the deep ecologist expected to satisfy with this question? Some demands are consistent with nature, and can thus be met; others are not. Naess writes:

The Future in Our Hands is actively associating consciousness and lifestyle change with direct action. Attempts at a change in lifestyle cannot wait for the implementation of policies which render such change more or less required. The demand for a ‘new system’ *first* is misguided and can lead to passivity. The same applies to personal lifestyle change *first*, and consequent isolation from political action. These two changes must proceed simultaneously. Changes have to be made from the inside *and* from the outside, all in one.¹²¹

Fine: but for the seeker of more explicit answers, some statements can still be offered. Society “cannot adopt different aims and values unless the way of production is altered.”¹²² One obvious way to achieve production shift in an originally demand-driven economy is through demand shift. The power of boycotts and product information campaigns derives from the original rootedness of market progress in demand. Ironically, so too does the advertising industry. But there are many ways to achieve such a shift. The next section investigates more in depth the common qualities the any deep ecological activism will share insofar as it qualifies as an ‘ecosophy’.

¹²⁰ Ibid. 177

¹²¹ Ibid. 89

¹²² Ibid. 132

D. The Eight Point Platform

The following section is a commentary on the principles of Naess's Eight Point Platform. Each point is considered in its own light. But the inter-connectedness of the points (again, flowing from the first point) is worth notice.

The well-being and flourishing of human and non-human life on Earth have value in themselves (synonyms: intrinsic value, inherent worth). These values are independent of the usefulness of the non-human world for human purposes.

In his essay "The Viable Human," Thomas Berry writes

The basic orientation of the common law tradition is toward personal rights and toward the natural world as existing for human use. There is no provision for recognition of nonhuman beings as subjects having legal rights. To the ecologists, the entire question of possession and use of the earth, either by individuals or by establishments, needs to be profoundly reconsidered. The naïve assumption that the natural world exists solely to be possessed and used by humans for their unlimited advantage cannot be accepted. The earth belongs to itself and to all the component members of the community.¹²³

Berry points out the mistaken nature of the assumption that the earth exists solely for *present* human use. Present social and economic reality reveals humans as self-proclaimed privileged possessors of natural (animal, plant, and mineral resources), and even other people, as revealed through the many instances throughout history of slave trading, sweat-shop labor, and harsh working conditions – pure examples of Heidegger's *standing reserve*. As possessors, the earth, along with its inhabitants and resources, become possessions – things owned and present for consumptive use.

¹²³ Thomas Berry. "The Viable Human." *Deep Ecology for the 21st Century*. (Boston, Shambhala Press, 1995). 12

DE challenges the inherent use standpoint, a challenge Naess endorses where he writes, “The earth does not belong to humans.”¹²⁴ Furthermore, in the deep ecological approach,

Humans only inhabit the lands, using resources to satisfy vital needs. And if their non-vital needs come in conflict with the vital needs of nonhumans, then humans should defer to the latter. The ecological destruction now going on will not be cured by a technological fix. Current arrogant notions in industrial (and other) societies must be resisted.¹²⁵

A fundamental aspect of ‘intrinsic value’ includes allowing “all entities (including humans) *the freedom to unfold in their own way unhindered by the various forms of human domination.*”¹²⁶ There is a fundamental distinction between vital needs and created needs (wants): between what we truly need and what we merely *think* (or are *influenced* to think) we need. The former are intrinsic to flourishing, the latter are not and may, when carried too far, actually hinder flourishing.

Fritjof Capra writes: “The most important task for a new school of ethics will be to develop a non-anthropocentric theory of value, a theory that would confer inherent value on non-human forms of life.”¹²⁷ Intrinsic value, as noted above, does not derive from the individuality of that particular organism, but is *deeper* than the individuality of the individual.

Richness and diversity of life forms contribute to the realization of these values and are also values in themselves.

¹²⁴ Arne Naess. “The Deep Ecological Movement: Some Philosophical Aspects.” *Deep Ecology for the 21st Century*. (Boston, Shambhala Press, 1995). 74

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Fritjof Capra, “Deep Ecology: A New Paradigm,” *Deep Ecology for the 21st Century*. (Boston, Shambhala Press, 1995). 20

Naess speaks of a “core democracy in the biosphere.”¹²⁸ This introduces a necessary “diversity of both human and non-human life.”¹²⁹ Diversity lends itself to the strength of an ecosystem, such as a wild forest, where a greater number of species leads to greater resilience to disease, more mutual resources for the inhabiting organisms of the area, and overall ecosystemic integrity. Naess thus formulates “Maximum diversity! Maxim symbiosis!” as a core representative tenet of the deep ecological approach.

Core democracy refers to much more than the organisms in a single environmental niche. Change and interference, such as a lightning strike causing a wildfire in a wooded area, are integral aspects of the biosphere. Nevertheless, we can assert that the *maximization of diversity* and symbiosis includes a *preservation of otherness*. Rather than deriving nature from the *single axiomatic point* of human benefit, DE, encourages maximization of diversity. “What is at issue here is precisely the question of the *integrity* of nonhuman species and individuals in terms of their “otherness” and difference from humans, and a respect for the ongoing *integrity* of wild evolutionary processes.”¹³⁰ The idea is to minimize human instrumental interference as much as possible, only causing disturbances for *vital* needs and interests.

Deep Ecology thus involves a move away from viewing the other as “enemy,” and thus away from the Hobbesian paradigm that the state of nature is fundamentally hostile to human flourishing – “a state of war with any and all others.”¹³¹

¹²⁸ Arne Naess. “Simple In Means, Rich in Ends” *Deep Ecology for the 21st Century* (Boston, Shambhala Press, 1995). 29

¹²⁹ Ibid. 29

¹³⁰ George Sessions. “Deep Ecology and the New Age Movement.” *Deep Ecology for the 21st Century*. (Boston, Shambhala Press, 1995). 304

¹³¹ Thomas Birch. “The Incarceration of Wilderness: Wilderness Areas as Prisons.” *Deep Ecology for the 21st Century*. (Boston, Shambhala Press, 1995). 342

The preservation of otherness amounts to vastly different circumstances than current trends towards the humanization of nature. *Humbleness* and *openness* replace the currently dominant attitude which George Sessions calls “arrogance towards nature.”¹³²

Humans have no right to reduce this richness and diversity except to satisfy vital needs.

Current trends in human consumerism are unsustainable, a fact “clearly seen in the damage done to major elements necessary for the continued well-being of the planet.”¹³³ When the soil, the air and the water have been extensively depleted, human needs cannot be fulfilled. On the flip side, the current (too) intense focus on *present* fulfillment leads to greater and greater lack of fulfillment for the future generations who will inherit the effects of our present practices. Gary Gardener notes:

the loss of forests, wetlands, and coral reefs to social decay in the world’s most advanced nations...warn us of creeping corrosion in the favored development model of the twentieth century. That model, used by developers as well as industrial nations, is materials-intensive, driven by fossil fuels, based on mass consumption and mass-disposal, and oriented primarily toward economic growth – with insufficient regard for meeting people’s needs. In 1992, the U.N. Conference on Environment and Development (the Earth Summit) challenged this model and offered a comprehensive alternative. It called the human family to a new experience – that of *sustainable development*.¹³⁴

Thomas Berry cites unsustainable trends as resulting directly from “a human-centered norm of reality and value.”¹³⁵ A wider (deeper) view is needed. Again, to say so is *not* to be anti-human, but *anti-anthropocentric*, in the sense that current practices are based on fundamentally flawed conceptions of both human and non-human nature.

Andrew McLaughlin emphasizes the distinction between vital and non-vital needs. “This distinction is denied by the consumerism inherent in industrialism. To lose

¹³² Ibid. 304

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Flavin, *State of The World Report 2002*. 4

¹³⁵ Thomas Berry. “The Viable Human.” 10

sight of it is to become trapped within an endlessly repeating cycle of deprivation and temporary satiation.”¹³⁶ Our current consumerist culture, fueled through advertising and manipulative psychological tactics, puts enormous stress on replacement purchases. A constant growth economy maintains momentum through constant sales. Long-term durable goods cut into total sales. Not only that: Deep, long-term satisfaction with current possessions is actually *detrimental* to overall economic growth. Today, helping corporations to increase profits is even equated with American “patriotism,” demonstrating the fusion of ideology and technology in the interests of a constant growth economy.

The flourishing of human life and cultures is compatible with a substantially smaller human population. The flourishing of non-human life requires a smaller human population.

Present human interference with the non-human world is excessive, and the situation is rapidly worsening.

The Population Explosion by Paul and Anne Ehrlich, holds the following claim:

In short, human numbers and human behavior must be brought into line with the constraints placed upon *Homo sapiens* by the limits of Earth and the laws of nature. People who think those can be ignored or evaded are living in a dream world. They haven’t reflected on the four *million* years it took for humanity to build a population of two billion people, in contrast to the forty-six years in which the second two billion appeared and the twenty-two years it will take for the arrival of the third two billion. They have overlooked the most important trend of our time.¹³⁷

The issue of population growth is tied directly to deep ecologists’ concern for future generations. The predominant human focus up to the present has been reproduction for the survival of the species. Due to vast improvements in nutrition,

¹³⁶ Andrew McGlauglin. “The Heart of Deep Ecology,” *Deep Ecology for the 21st Century* (Boston, Shambhala, 1995). 87

¹³⁷ Paul Ehrlich and Anne Ehrlich, *The Population Explosion*. (New York, Simon and Schuster, 1990). 44

public health (such as hand washing and sanitation), immunization and antibiotics, “what had been a billion people around 1800 became 1.6 billion in 1900, 2.5 billion by 1950, and 6.1 billion by 2000.”¹³⁸ Such exponential growth increases coupled with increases in consumption (and corresponding waste and pollution) levels, means unchecked population growth is a real problem, especially for future generations. “We should collectively recognize that an increase in human numbers is not in the best interest of humans, much less the rest of life.”¹³⁹

A call for population reduction is a call for balance. “Humans have modified the earth over their entire history and will probably continue to do so. At issue is the *nature* and *extent of such interference*.”¹⁴⁰

Policies must therefore be changed. These policies affect basic economic, technological, and ideological structures. The resulting state of affairs will be deeply different from the present.

Much of the relevance of this point has already been discussed in the previous two sections on ethics and technology. Due to the lack of a substantial divide between ontology and ethics, we see justifications for change in the actuality of current affairs. The burden of proof falls not on environmentalists, but on the perpetrators of technocratic ideologies: those who claim that material wealth *does indeed* lead to happiness, despite massive evidence to the contrary, such as that revealed in the Worldwatch Institute’s *State of The World Report (2002)*.

Policy changes proceeding from deep-self appeals and concern for future generations will differ greatly from current present-centered consumer focuses. The

¹³⁸ Flavin, *State of the World Report 2002*. 129

¹³⁹ Andrew McGlaughlin. “The Heart of Deep Ecology.” 88

¹⁴⁰ Arne Naess. “The Deep Ecological Movement: Some Philosophical Aspects.” 69

currently blurry line between vital needs and mere wants must be clarified. Human rights will be seen as more than instrumental “rights to...”

The ideological change will be mainly that of appreciating life quality (dwelling in situations of inherent value) rather than adhering to an increasingly higher standard of living. There will be a profound awareness of the difference between bigness and greatness.

When argumentation shifts from short-term to long-term, axioms necessarily shift as well. Arguments are constructed upon foundational assumptions that are deeper and broader in terms of ethical consideration: they consider non-humans (and more) as worthy ethical subjects (considered as possible ethical patients).

In order to uncover deeper assumptions, the deep ecologist asks “deeper questions.”¹⁴¹ “In DE, we ask whether the present society fulfills basic human needs like love and security and access to nature, and, in so doing, we question our society’s underlying assumptions.”¹⁴² In America, at present, there exists the strange combination of an amazingly high number of affluent citizens with staggering rates of depression and anxiety. Deep ecologists view this correlation as a result of a collective (ideologically influenced) emphasis on the *quantity* of possessions - the trademark of an “ultimately unsatisfying consumerism”¹⁴³ - over a simpler and deeper *quality* of life. McLaughlin writes:

With a focus on quality, people can see that existing patterns of labor and consumption are not satisfying, but rather involve chronic dissatisfaction. Moving towards an appreciation of the *quality* of life, instead of quantities of things, leads to an *increase* in happiness, not a decrease. This is fundamental, since people are more apt to change when they experience change as improvement, rather than a grudging submission to necessity. As long as

¹⁴¹ Stephen Bodian. “Simple in Means, Rich in Ends: An Interview with Arne Naess,” *Deep Ecology for the 21st Century*, (Boston, Shambhala, 1995) 27

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Andrew McLaughlin. “The Heart of Deep Ecology.” 89

environmentalism seems to require only denial and sacrifice, its political effectiveness will be lessened. Deep Ecology seeks a more satisfactory way of living, an increase in vitality and joy [author's emphasis].¹⁴⁴

Old paradigms are “inadequate for dealing with the problems of our overpopulated, globally interconnected world.”¹⁴⁵ For the deep ecologist, our crisis is a “crisis of perception.”¹⁴⁶ DE proposes a change not just in policy, and attitude: it goes deeper by rooting the necessity of these changes in a different philosophical account of how we as experiencing subjects (actively) perceive (and *construct*) “reality.”

The paradigm that is now receding has dominated our culture for several hundred years, during which time it has shaped our modern Western society and has significantly influenced the rest of the world. This paradigm consists of a number of ideals and values, among them the view of the universe as a mechanical system composed of elementary building blocks, the view of the human body as a machine, the view of life in society as a competitive struggle for existence, the belief in unlimited material progress to be achieved through economic and technological growth, an last but not least, the belief that a society in which the female is everywhere subsumed under the male is one that follows a basic law of nature. In recent decades, all of these assumptions have been found to be severely limited and in need of radical revision.¹⁴⁷

The already cited link between ethics and ontology, as well as intrinsic value grounded in self-emergence, all have a role to play as realizations in the progression out of the traditional mechanistic ontology.

Those who subscribe to the forgoing points have an obligation directly or indirectly to implement the necessary changes.

“The planet that ruled itself directly for the past millennia is now determining its future through human decision.”¹⁴⁸ Deep ecologists recognize the greater value of the larger community of life. At the same time, they do not take lightly modern human

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Fritjof Capra. “Deep Ecology: A New Paradigm.” 19

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid. 19-20.

¹⁴⁸ Thomas Berry. “The Viable Human.” 10

claims to technological superiority. Superiority of technological ability is not equivalent to superiority of the human species itself, or the right to plunder all others. If anything, this “higher” standpoint places an ethical responsibility upon the humans to preserve the other specie apparently not so endowed.

Once we grant that a change from an anthropocentric to a biocentric sense of reality and value is needed, we must ask how this can be achieved and how it would work. We must begin by accepting the fact that the life community of all living species is the greater reality and the greater value, and that the primary concern of the human must be the preservation of this larger community. The human does have its own distinctive reality and its own distinctive value, but this distinctiveness must be articulated within the more comprehensive context. The human ultimately must discover the larger dimensions of its own being within this community context. That the value of the human being is enhanced by diminishing the value of the larger community is an illusion, the great illusion of the present industrial age, which seeks to advance the human by plundering the planet’s geological structure and all its biological species.¹⁴⁹

“The earth belongs to itself and to all the component members of the community.”¹⁵⁰ This attitude is the opposite of one in which, for instance, technology reveals ecosystems as ordered resource pools set in place specifically for human use. We thus return to Naess’s fundamental distinction between ‘shallow’ and ‘deep’ ecologies. The “necessary changes” cited above must go deeper than mere modification of industrial or legislative procedures, or new regulations of the same economic processes.

Efforts are made to mitigate the evils consequent to this industrial-commercial process by modifying the manner in which these establishments function, reducing the amount of toxic waste produced as well as developing more efficient modes of storing or detoxifying waste. Yet all of this is trivial in relation to the magnitude of the problem. So, too, are the regulatory efforts of the government; these are microphase solutions for macrophase problems.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid. 12

¹⁵¹ Ibid. 16-17

Naess's characterization of deep-ecological attitudes as "simple in means but rich in ends"¹⁵² points to a move away from top-down inclinations towards ecological-mindedness. The heart of the critique of shallow ecological approaches to environmental problems is connected to avoidance of excessive restrictions on a populace in order to simulate action in the "right" direction. When changes are deep and wide enough, people act on natural (practically spontaneous) inclinations rather than out of a sense of abstract duty or the fear of punishment, resulting in "beautiful actions."

I have an extreme appreciation of what Kant calls "beautiful actions" (good actions based on inclination), in contrast with actions which are performed out of a sense of duty or obligation. The choice of the formulation "Self-realization!" is in part motivated by the belief that maturity in humans can be measured along a scale from selfishness to an increased realization of Self, that is, by broadening and deepening the self, rather than being measured by degrees of dutiful altruism.¹⁵³

Stress on duty or guilt emphasizes the narrow substantial self which DE seeks to re-define and overcome. The narrow-self lacks an inclination toward beautiful acts: she thus needs some form of legislation or regulation to keep her in check. Deep Ecology aims to move away from coercion and towards self-enlightened actions – actions motivated from within, and performed through inclination and conviction. A "move away" from narrowness corresponds directly with the widening of the Self that is the subject of the following section. Like the *Being of beings*, the beauty of a beautiful act is deeper than the particularity of the agent's identity. The "deeper" quality of such acts corresponds to a "deeper" self that performs them: the subject of the next section.

¹⁵² Naess. "The Deep Ecological Movement: Some Philosophical Aspects." 82

¹⁵³ Ibid.

D. Deep Self and Self-Realization

Fritjof Capra says “the most important task for a new school of ethics will be to develop a non-anthropocentric theory of value.”¹⁵⁴ The previous section dealt briefly with the shortcomings of traditional value theories. Their deficiencies are due to their focus on the narrow self which deep ecology seeks to widen. DE does not seek to merely extend traditional ethical frameworks to include non-human beings; these ethical frameworks *themselves* are problematic. Their problems are traceable to the narrowness of the self (subject) that adopts and employs such frameworks – to whom such frameworks *make sense* – as well as to presuppositions of substantial objective presence. We are thus dealing with a shift in perception, rather than a mere extension of the bounds of the same ethical paradigm.

John Rodman critiques Peter Singer’s ethics in such a light. Rodman calls Singer’s approach “a kind of zoocentric sentientism,”¹⁵⁵ resulting from a mere widening of anthropocentrism in which “we are asked to assume that the sole value of rain forest plant communities consists in being a natural resource for birds, possums, veneer manufacturers, and other sentient beings.”¹⁵⁶ Singer’s ethics thus amounts, for Rodman, to a kind of “moral extensionism” which tends

...to perpetuate the atomistic metaphysics that is so deeply embedded in modern culture, locating intrinsic value only or primarily in individual persons, animals, plants, etc. rather than in communities or ecosystems, since individuals are our paradigmatic entities for thinking, being conscious, and feeling pain... Many of the attempts to make [such claims to intrinsic value] plausible have, however, tried to extend the sphere of intrinsic value and therefore of obligatory moral concern by assimilating (parts of) nature to inappropriate models, without rethinking very thoroughly either the assumptions of conventional ethics or the

¹⁵⁴ Fritjof Capra. “Deep Ecology: A New Paradigm.” 20

¹⁵⁵ John Rodman. “Four Forms of Ecological Consciousness Reconsidered.” *Deep Ecology for the 21st Century*. (Boston, Shanbhala Press, 1995). 125

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

ways in which we perceive and interpret the natural world. It is probably a safe maxim that there will be no revolution in ethics without a revolution in perception.¹⁵⁷

The transformations within religion are but one strand of the development, to be sure. But, as with all religious influence, the impact of this transformation has been a profoundly deep one. Sessions also considers the impact of changes in intellectual traditions, particularly “the intellectual strand in Greek and Western culture” which

...also exhibits a similar development from early ecocentric animistic Nature religions, the Nature-oriented (but less animistic) cosmological speculations of the Pre-Socratics, to the anthropocentrism of the classical Athenian philosophers. Beginning with Socrates, philosophical speculation was characterized by “an undue emphasis upon man as compared with the universe,” as Bertrand Russell and other historians of Western philosophy have observed... With the culmination of Athenian philosophy in Aristotle, an anthropocentric system of philosophy and science was set in place that was to play a major role in shaping Western thought until the seventeenth century. Aristotle rejected the Pre-Socratic ideas of an infinite universe, cosmological and biological evolution, and heliocentrism. He proposed instead an Earth-centered finite universe wherein humans, by virtue of their rationality, were differentiated from, and seen as superior to, animals and plants. Aristotle promoted the hierarchical concept of the “Great Chain of Being,” in which Nature *made* plants for the use of animals, and animals were *made* for the sake of humans (*Politics* I.88)¹⁵⁸

Such are the roots of the Modern European intellectual tradition, according to Sessions. It is no surprise that science and the scientific method also follow suit. “The Scientific Revolution also overturned the age-old organic view of the world as a living organism and replaced it with a mechanistic clockwork image of the world as a machine.”¹⁵⁹ But most deep ecological theorists will tend to cite Descartes as the Father of the atomism of self. His mind-body dualism resulted in a view that “only human had minds (or souls): all other creatures were merely bodies (machines).”¹⁶⁰ Descartes firmly

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid. 159-160

¹⁵⁹ Ibid. 161

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

held to the belief that the new science would make humans the “masters and possessors of nature.”¹⁶¹

The historian Lynn White, in his essay *The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis*, writes of how the beginnings of agricultural technology is marked by a change in peasant and farmer attitudes towards nature: an onset of a viewpoint in which “Man and nature are two things, and man is master.”¹⁶² Indeed, human attitudes towards ecology have always been strongly influenced by religion. The Christian defeat of Paganism, which White calls “the greatest psychic revolution in the history of our culture,”¹⁶³ incited the reign of “the most anthropocentric religion the world has seen.”¹⁶⁴

White’s points serve as a potential spur to a more ecologically conscious Christian attitude towards nature, to be sure. But outside of the Christian scope, his criticisms merely point to the same culprit that DE seeks to overcome: the prevalence of a narrow self. DE seeks to reawaken “the immediate experience humans have of the world” which is, according to Naess and Sessions, among others,

In terms of manifolds of gestalts, as opposed to the “abstract structures” of reality we find, for instance, in musical notation and science, or of the world as we are culturally conditioned to perceive it in terms of individual entities “externally related” to one another. The latter [is]...the “supermarket view.”...It is crucial...for members of the Deep Ecology movement to articulate reality in terms of gestalt perception and ontology, for the competing claims of developers and environmentalists are often based on egoistic “marketplace” perception, as opposed to ecological gestalts.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² Lynn White. “The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis.” *Environmental Ethics: Readings in Theory and Application*, 2nd Edition. (New York, Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1998). 18

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ George Sessions. *Deep Ecology for the 21st Century*. (Boston, Shambhala Press, 1995). 192-193

The *spontaneity* of the Gestalt experience is important here. It manifests a tie to all of the most important aspects of DE: the total-field image, the natural process of growth, the widening of self and the meaning of deep and wide ethical consideration. It is why Naess says, quoted above, that “Our problem is not that we lack high levels of integration (that is that we are immature and therefore joyless) but rather that we glorify immaturity.” The narrowness of self that DE seeks to overcome through widening is *not* an intrinsic narrowness, just as substantial objective presence is not the sole primordial source of what it is to exist “in” a world. Self is rather intrinsically *wide*. And this is why DE is a reaction to *non-thought*.

The preservationist will admit that there are trees in the forest. But the forest as a whole is an extremely valuable superordinate gestalt and clearly vulnerable to “development,” whatever the fraction of the area that is destroyed. An atomistic view of reality is arrived at by systematically “delearning” the gestalt view which dominates the child’s experience... Clearly, the economics of industrial societies are such that most consequences of gestalt ontology are viewed as undesirable. The atomistic view helps to value the forest in terms of market prices, of extrinsic parts, and tourism. “A tree is a tree. How many do you have to see?”... The “delearning process (of not taking spontaneous experiences of superordinate gestalts seriously) makes life progressively less rich, narrowing it down to a mass of externally connected details. The more people are adapted to the supermarket concept, the more dangerous is the appeal to the correctness of majority opinion... There are many causes of such a mistaken policy, but one cause seems to be the lack of clear and forceful thinking in terms of wholes, rather than fragments.¹⁶⁶

Deep Ecology approaches the problem from the angle of self. It considers that the scope and definition of the self may lie at the heart of the problem, rather than merely assuming our current notions of self as givens. The “lack of clear and forceful thinking in terms of wholes, rather than fragments” is seen to lie at the heart of “evil” acts. As narrowness gives way to wideness, immaturity gives way to maturity, isolation gives way to richness, anthropocentrism gives way to a beautifully diverse world of creatures, and

¹⁶⁶ Ibid. 245

selfishness gives way to openness, understanding, and love: the qualities ethical theorists have strived for all along.

Chapter Three: Deep Ecology and Heideggerian Phenomenology

A. The Ontological Transformation

The previous chapter concludes with a remark that seems to defy the boundary between ontology and ethics. But this “defiance” is an issue only if such a boundary really exists. It is clear from our investigations into Heidegger’s thought that Heidegger aims at a transformation of ontology. Heidegger and Naess clearly agree on the need for such a transformation.

The assertion of a boundary between ontology and ethics that “*really* exists” is an assertion of a *substantial* boundary, and thus at least implicitly an assertion of *substance*. Insofar as the traditional concept of substance is Heidegger’s target, an undermining of substance is an undermining of substantial categorical boundaries as *primordial*. That is: Heidegger and Naess both assert that substance ontology is not *primordial* ontology.

“Substance,” as Heidegger points out in the *Letter on Humanism*, is a blanket translation of *ousia*. By calling it a “blanket” translation, Heidegger is pointing to the homogenizing effect of the word “substance” that *conceals* the deeper meaning of *ousia*, “a word that designates the presence of what is present and at the same time, with puzzling ambiguity, usually means what is present itself.”¹⁶⁷ Such “ambiguity” is thus lost in the translation from *ousia* to *substance*. But this loss, we will see, is much more significant than a mere bad choice of words.

¹⁶⁷ Martin Heidegger, “Letter on Humanism,” *Basic Writings*, (New York, HarperCollins Publishers, 1993). 133

Analogous to the relation between *ousia* and *substance* is the relationship between the *true* and the *merely correct*. Heidegger says in *The Question Concerning Technology* that

The correct always fixes upon something pertinent in whatever is under consideration. However, in order to be correct, this fixing by no means needs to uncover the thing in question in its essence. Only at the point where such an uncovering happens does the true come to pass. For that reason the merely correct is not yet the true. Only the true brings us into a free relationship with that which concerns us from out of its essence.¹⁶⁸

The mistake of the technological worldview is a taking of the “correct” for the “true.” Heidegger says that the correct does indeed fix on something “pertinent” or “true.” But there is a difference between fixing upon the true and *being* the true. Something “correct” adheres to a rule structure. But what is it that makes a structure “true”? What is the *truth* of a *true* structure?

We see an example of the difference between the correct and the true in the account of Rosa Parks, the African-American woman who refused to move to the back of the city bus on December 1, 1955 in Montgomery Alabama. Parks took her stand in the face of the Jim Crow era and its racist laws and regulations, a stand that not surprisingly resulted in her arrest. Now according to the laws of the day, the arrest of Rosa Parks was certainly *correct*. But were the laws upon which such correctness is founded *true*? To ask this question is to question *beneath* the correctness of the matter: an instance of the *deeper* questioning that Heidegger and Naess advocate as necessary for the ontological transformation out a mere correctness that masquerades as the true.

In a similar manner, we are “correct” in defining the “value” of a natural area in cost-benefit analysis terms. One need only think of the frequent debates between Gifford

¹⁶⁸ Heidegger, *Question*, 6

Pinchot, the founder of the “wise-use” movement, and John Muir, the founder of the Sierra Club and a well-known *preservationist*. For Pinchot, it was “wise” to use the resources a land area had to offer, and pointless to let that area be. For Muir, natural wilderness areas were *intrinsically valuable*, meaning that the human cost-benefit conception of the “value” of such areas was not the deepest possible conception.

The technological worldview falters when it treats its own definition of the real as something more than a particular definition for a particular purpose. That the technological definition of the real becomes a *worldview* means that it usurps the primordial, putting itself in the place of that which underlies it and allows it to come forth as a perspective at all. But “that” which “allows” is *not a thing*. Identification of the primordial with some deeper thing is exactly the substance-ontological mistake targeted by Heidegger and Naess as the source of the distortion of the modern technological definition of the real: “the metaphysical determination according to which every being appears as the material of labor.”¹⁶⁹

But if we are to keep our inquiry in line with Heidegger’s inquiry, we cannot stop at “material for labor.” We must ask: upon what is “the metaphysical determination according to which every being appears as the material of labor” based? Heidegger identifies a deeper basis in the *mathematical*. In *Modern Science, Metaphysics, and Mathematics*, he speaks of a will to axiomatic knowledge grounded in unshakeable propositions. Such serves as the ground-plan for both science and the application of technological know-how in the modern era.

¹⁶⁹ Heidegger, “Letter on Humanism,” *Basic Writings*, 243

Heidegger is careful to point out that “mathematics itself is only a particular formation of the mathematical.”¹⁷⁰ The Greek expression *ta mathemata* means what can be learned and, at the same time, what can be taught. In our modern age, especially in public grade school education, “teaching” is done by assisting students in the memorization and subsequent recitation of data: facts, formulae, names, dates, important events. But the Greek conception is different:

Learning is a kind of grasping and appropriating. But not every taking is a learning... To take means in some way to take possession of a thing and have disposal over it. Now, what kind of taking is learning? *Mathemata* – things, insofar as we learn them... The *mathemata* are the things insofar as we take cognizance of them as what we already know them to be in advance, the body as the bodily, the plant-like of the plant, and so on... [G]enuine learning is therefore an extremely peculiar taking, a taking where one who takes only takes what one basically already has. Teaching is a giving, an offering; but what is offered in teaching is not the learnable, for the student is merely instructed to take for himself what he already has. If the student only takes over something that is offered he does not learn. He comes to learn only when he experiences what he takes as something he himself really already has. True learning occurs only where the taking of what one already has is a *self-giving* and is experienced as such.¹⁷¹

The mathematical eventually became, according to Heidegger, “a project of thingness which, as it were, skips over things.”¹⁷² It does so no doubt due to the idea that what is taught is what is already known beforehand. Moreover, “the project first opens a domain where things – i.e., facts – show themselves.”¹⁷³ That is: upon the basis of the mathematical as what is already known beforehand, the mathematical becomes a compartment through which things appear as “this” or “that.” Through the lens of the mathematical, “things now show themselves only in the relations of places and time

¹⁷⁰ Martin Heidegger, “Modern Science, Metaphysics, and Mathematics,” *Basic Writings* (New York, HarperCollins Publishers, 1993). 273

¹⁷¹ Ibid. 275

¹⁷² Ibid. 291

¹⁷³ Ibid.

points and in the measures of mass and working forces. How they show themselves is prefigured in the project.”¹⁷⁴

Heidegger’s examination of the prefiguring of acceptable knowledge concerns the prefiguring of the “true.” He is not attempting to reveal the application of mathematical knowledge as faulty: there is far too much evidence in support of the effectiveness of mathematical method in problem solving, scientific experimentation, and so-called “mastery” of nature by humans. The problem lies in the assumption that such successes point to the mathematical comportment as *the* comportment: as the *one* way of grasping the *real*. To put it another way: while Heidegger clearly acknowledges the *correctness* of mathematical method, he doubts the mathematical as *primordially true*.

This doubt of the primordial nature of mathematical comportment, and of the scientific and technological worldviews that draw upon the mathematical comportment in which nature is represented in terms of a uniform grid-like structure of distinct things, leads Heidegger, in *The Thing*, to question *beneath* the mathematical as well:

An independent, self-supporting thing may become an object if we place it before us, whether in immediate perception or by bringing it to mind in a recollective representation. However, the thingly character of the thing does not consist in being a represented object, nor can it be defined in any way in terms of the objectness, the over-againstness, of the object...What in the thing is thingly? What is the thing in itself? We shall not reach the thing in itself until our thinking has first reached the thing as thing.¹⁷⁵

Heidegger’s deeper inquiry and Naess’s deeper questioning are both challenges to the modern scientific “way of representing...that pursues and entraps nature as a calculable coherence of forces,”¹⁷⁶ insofar as this way of representing comes to be regarded as *primordial*: as *the* way of representing. Insofar as *representation* is the

¹⁷⁴ Ibid. 292

¹⁷⁵ Heidegger, “The Thing,” *Poetry*, 167-168

¹⁷⁶ Heidegger, *Question*, 21

apprehension of a specific object by a specific subject, the challenge is posed towards *representing itself* as primordial.

We have already discussed Heidegger's conception of technology as a mode of *revealing*.¹⁷⁷ *Revealing*, in turn, is that of which technology is a mode. Heidegger shows the root of the technological in *techne* which, as belonging to bringing-forth (*poiesis*), is a mode of *aletheia*. As such, "Technology comes to presence [*West*] in the realm where revealing and unconcealment take place, where *aletheia*, truth, happens."¹⁷⁸ We thus find ourselves closer to the "root" of our inquiry. What is the "realm" where *aletheia* happens?

B. Ereignis

Heidegger's phenomenology reveals substance ontology as rooted in a prior ontology. The theory of being (onto-logos) is made possible by an event which itself cannot be understood in substance ontological terms, and so has to be understood in terms of *event ontology*. The ontology prior to substance ontology is thus not an ontology based upon a substantial or axiomatic ground in the way some think that Descartes' *Meditations on First Philosophy* is rooted in the certainty of the "I think." The prior ontology to which Heidegger is pointing is rather an *event ontology*. That is: it is an ontology based upon the event of unconcealment (*aletheia*) – the "realm" where *aletheia*, truth, happens.

In *Being and Time*, Heidegger distinguishes between the *readiness-to-hand* and *presence-at-hand* of things. The former is a presence in usage, whereas the latter is a

¹⁷⁷ See Chapter One, 6-7.

¹⁷⁸ Heidegger, *Question*, 12-13

conspicuous presence as *object*. In the famous example of the workshop, the hammer only becomes conspicuous when the flow of production in the workshop is disrupted, e.g. by the breaking of the hammer. *Readiness-to-hand* is an event that when disrupted leads to the conspicuous *presence-at-hand* of the object. “Usage” designates a flow of activity that yields an objective representation in the event of the disruption of that flow of activity.

Such “conspicuous presence” means the objective presence (over-againstness) of the object as object for a subject. The conspicuous object stands over-against the subject whom upon the event of the disruption not only notices the hammer as an object, but also herself as disrupted from the previous flowing of activity. The disruption thus results not only in the objective presence of the object to a subject, but also the objective presence of the subject to herself. There is thus a mutual objective presence of both object and subject as distinct, whereas prior to the disruption there was a flow of activity in which such a distinction was not an issue.

Such mutual objective presence is embedded within a grid framework of objective representations. This grid framework is the same framework through which the mathematical compartment renders reality into a “calculable coherence of forces”: the representation of a set of specific objects by a specific subject. The homogeneity of the conspicuous objective presence of the *present-at-hand* and the presence of objects within the mathematical grid is important for our present discussion in that *both* the *presence-at-hand* of the conspicuous hammer *and* the objective presence of object to subject (and subject to itself) are phenomenologically revealed as founded modes of being (not

primordial). Objecthood is shown to be derivative from a more primordial way of being which can only be captured in terms of an *event ontology*.

But what is an *event ontology*? “Event” is the English word for the German *Ereignis*: the opening of a clearing in which entities can appear as “this” or “that.” The stress is placed on *opening* and *clearing* as the *activity* out of/through which the appearance of entities as “this” or “that” takes place. It is in these terms that we claim the event ontology to be prior to any possible substance ontology. In turn, it is upon this basis that we question *beneath* any particular “this” or “that.” We are not interested in the *givenness* of entities, but rather *what brings such givenness about*. Our question is a question of *origin*.

It is upon such a basis that Heidegger asserts:

The fact that physiology and physiological chemistry can scientifically investigate man as an organism is no proof that in this “organic” thing, that is, in the body scientifically explained, the essence of man consists. That has as little validity as the notion that the essence of nature has been discovered in atomic energy. It could be that nature, in the face it turns towards man’s technical mastery, is simply concealing its essence. Just as little as the essence of man consists in being an animal organism can this insufficient definition of man’s essence be overcome or offset by outfitting man with an immortal soul, the power of reason, or the character of a person. In each instance essence is passed over, and passed over *on the basis of the same metaphysical projection*.¹⁷⁹

“Metaphysical projection” designates any projection insofar as it holds any particular conception of the being of beings as *primordial*. It is *metaphysical* (in the *substance metaphysical* sense) if it suggests that a projection is something other than a projection within a particular cultural context for a particular purpose, e.g. the projection that claims that the cost-benefit analysis of a wilderness area reveals it as being *primordially* a resource pool for humans. Metaphysics, as confined within the grid

¹⁷⁹ Heidegger, “Letter on Humanism,” *Basic Writings*. 228-229; my emphasis

representation of objective presence, tends to reduce the underlying event of *clearing* to either “outward appearance” of an object to a subject or the *projection* of a subject, i.e. “a result of categorical representation on the part of subjectivity. This means that the truth of Being as the clearing itself remains concealed for metaphysics.”¹⁸⁰

Claiming that the *event ontology* is prior to any substance ontology undermines the substantial representation of any objective conception as *ground*. If such undermining applies to the objective presence of any object for a subject, it must also apply to the objective presence of a subject *to itself*. It is upon this basis that Heidegger rejects the Cartesian founding of metaphysics upon the ‘*I think*’ (*cogito*). Thus, if *event ontology* is prior to any substance ontology in terms of any objective representation serving as a substantial-metaphysical ground, event ontology must also be prior to the traditional metaphysical notion of the *subject*.

It is for this reason that *Da-sein* cannot be understood in any *substantial/metaphysical* sense. Upon the positing of *event ontology* as prior to substance ontology, it becomes necessary to re-define the notion of the subject: this is the reason why Heidegger abandons the word “subject” in favor of “*Da-sein*.” *Da-sein* instead becomes rendered in terms of *event ontology*. As such, *Da-sein* means an openness to the event of clearing (*Ereignis*) in which entities appear as “this” or “that,” or, as Thomas Sheehan puts it, “openness”¹⁸¹ or the “dative of givenness.”¹⁸²

We might be tempted to ask at this point if, as the “dative of givenness,” *Da-sein* is the *clearing* for *Ereignis*, or is *Ereignis*, as the “event of clearing,” the clearing for *Da-*

¹⁸⁰ Ibid. 235

¹⁸¹ Thomas Sheehan. “Kehre and Ereignis: A Prolegomenon to *Introduction to Metaphysics*,” *A Companion to Heidegger’s Introduction to Metaphysics* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 2001) 5

¹⁸² Ibid. 7

sein? But a more interesting (and relevant) question would be to ask what this question presupposes. On closer inspection, the question appears to expect satisfaction of one or the other side of an *either-or*. But does not such *either-or* questioning stem from a rootedness in substance metaphysics in which concepts are distinguished as points on a grid? That is: in light of what we have established so far with regard to questioning *beneath* objective representations rooted in substance metaphysics, does such an *either-or* questioning impose an *actual* demand upon us for an answer?

Heidegger's phenomenology reveals such mutual exclusivity as a function of the substance metaphysics to be overcome. If our investigation into the *origin* of givenness takes us *beneath* substance metaphysics, it takes us not only beneath the substantiality of objective representations, but also beneath the substantiality of rigid *distinctions between* such objective representations, e.g. the apparently "substantial" distinction between ontology and ethics with which we opened the present chapter.

The conception of reality according to an *event ontology* that is prior to any substance ontology allows room for the possibility of *reciprocity* "between" the *givenness* of *Ereignis* and the *openness* of *Da-sein*. Thus, the event ontology serves as the proper theoretical foundation for our assertion of the relatedness between Heidegger's phenomenology and Deep Ecology. Naess writes in *Ecology, Community and Lifestyle* that *ecophilosophy* (*ecosophy*) utilizes "basic concepts from the science of ecology – such as complexity, diversity, and symbiosis – to clarify the place of our species within nature through the working out of a total view."¹⁸³ The kind of event ontology we have identified in Heidegger's writings, not the traditional substance ontology, allows for such utilization.

¹⁸³ Naess. *Ecology, Community and Lifestyle*, 3

It is important to note that “total” in the sense of Naess’s idea of a “total view” is not an isolated totality. An isolated totality is a feature of the substance ontology to be overcome. Rather, read in terms of the event ontology, “The world provides us with a flood of information, but that which represents itself as living entities is characterized by a certain natural life, which comes to us as a conviction that *identity is inherent only in the relationships which make up the entity.*”¹⁸⁴ We may thus assert (at first tentatively) that *symbiosis* expressed through ecosystemic relationships is an expression of the *reciprocity* between the *givenness* of *Ereignis* and the *openness* of *Da-sein*. “We are searching for the nature, in itself, of the openness that surrounds us.”¹⁸⁵ We could also just as easily assert this reciprocity as an expression of organic *symbiosis*.

The main point of Heidegger’s critique of the substance ontological comportment is that any particular description of an event *reifies* that event into a closed conception. The inability of any particular word to encompass that of which it is an expression is due to the fact that “a word does not and never can represent anything; but signifies something, that is, shows something as abiding into the range of its expressibility.”¹⁸⁶ That is: there is “something” *deeper* than any particular word that, though it gets expressed by/through words, is never contained in any particular word. What “we have designated by a word never has that word hanging on it like a name plate.”¹⁸⁷

Our question is a question of origin. The *origin* of all objects is itself no object, just as the being of being is not a being. The inexpressibility of the *origin* of *Ereignis* is thus due to its non-objective character. “Just as the openness of spatial nearness seen

¹⁸⁴ Ibid. 6; my emphasis

¹⁸⁵ Martin Heidegger. *Discourse on Thinking: A Translation of Gelassenheit*. (New York, Harper & Row, 1966). 65-66

¹⁸⁶ Ibid. 69

¹⁸⁷ Ibid. 70

from the perspective of a particular thing exceeds all things near and far, so too is Being essentially broader than all beings, because it is the clearing itself.”¹⁸⁸ Both *Ereignis* and *Da-sein* have this “non-objective” character. As involved in reciprocal relatedness neither *Ereignis* nor *Da-sein* is an isolated object. But neither are *Ereignis* and *Da-sein* completely unified into some kind of absolute totality or oneness. Both “isolated object” and “absolute totality” are expressions of *substance ontology*. Thus, the interrelatedness of *Ereignis* and *Da-sein*, expressed in terms of an event *ontology*, must mean something other than either “two separate objects related” or “one objective totality” - why Naess writes:

So, understanding the world as a collection of things with constant or changing qualities breaks down when one attempts to render it very precise and apply it in natural scientific or historical research. We must strive for greater familiarity with an understanding closer to that of Heraclitus: everything flows. We must abandon fixed, solid points, retaining the relatively straightforward persistent relations of interdependence. ‘Objective descriptions of nature’ offered by physics ought to be regarded not as descriptions of nature, but as descriptions of certain conditions of interdependence, and therefore can be universal, common for all cultures...Phenomenological viewpoints are valuable for the development of consciousness of a non-instrumental, non-utilitarian content of the immediate experience of nature.¹⁸⁹

Neither Heidegger’s usage of “Being,” nor Naess’s designation of “wide self” as the “goal” of *Self-Realization* designates a closed identity. The *openness* of *Da-sein* that is necessary for the *givenness* of *Ereignis* is interrelated with the *givenness* of *Ereignis* “for” which *Da-sein*, as *openness*, *clears*. So too is the individual seeking *Self-realization* in terms of the “widening” and “deepening” of *Self* interrelated with the *ecosystemic* “totality” with which the individual identifies. Neither the “individual” nor the *ecosystemic* “totality” is an isolated object. As with *Da-sein* and *Ereignis*, each

¹⁸⁸ Heidegger, “Letter on Humanism,” *Basic Writings*, 240

¹⁸⁹ Naess and Rothenberg, *Ecology, Community and Lifestyle*, 50-51

“needs” the other. To read these conceptions in this way is to read them in an *event-ontological* (rather than *substance ontological*) way.

The presence of the world to *Da-sein*, as well as *Da-sein*'s presence to itself, is never complete or perfect. As *open*, *Da-sein* is “exposed and receptive.” As Sheehan puts it: “we know only the *finite* intelligibility of entities.”¹⁹⁰ It is thus the *finitude* of *Da-sein* that opens *Da-sein* to the *givenness* of *Ereignis*. But this is not to say that the openness is something based solely in such *finitude*. If we are to stay with *event ontology*, we cannot base *Da-sein*'s opening in any particularity. Even to call this opening “*Da-sein*'s” is to risk misinterpretation by slipping back into the assuming language of substance ontology: why Naess says the characteristics of things are “not subjective, but, like smell, *bound in an interdependent relationship* to our conception of the world. This is what is meant by calling them ‘relational’ – rather than ‘relative’ or ‘subjective’.”¹⁹¹ *Finitude* is thus not an expression of atomism, but a *relational* expression of the *unity-in-diversity* characteristic of both Heidegger's *event ontology* and Naess's *total view*. “Wide self” means “open self” – the *realization* of *Da-sein*, in *event-ontological* terms, as *openness*.

C. Event Ontology and Ethics

Traditional ethics, as based upon the traditional substance ontology, is typically an *instrumentalist* ethics, grounded in the mathematical grid-framework out of which the *substance ontology* functions. The isolation of fact from value, and the corresponding distinction between them, is made possible through such a framework. Although this distinction makes sense according to the architecture of the substance metaphysical grid

¹⁹⁰ Sheehan, “Kehre,” *Companion*, 12

¹⁹¹ Naess & Rothenberg, *Ecology, Community and Lifestyle*, 48

framework, Heidegger's *event ontology* undermines the inevitability of such a rigid distinction. This becomes clearer in what follows.

We mentioned how Naess speaks of Kant's conception of beautiful actions (in Chapter Two). Such actions are performed not merely out of a strict adherence to rules: *they come out of themselves*. The event ontology that gets expressed in Heidegger's writings, and especially the concept of *Ereignis*, provides a basis for an ethics based in such "beautiful actions" that the traditional substance ontology cannot provide.

"Beautiful actions" express the *categoricalness* of Kant's Categorical Imperative. The Categorical Imperative is not an isolated rule to which an individual subject has a duty. The Categorical Imperative is truly fulfilled when the "commanded" action *comes of itself*. Kant claims that an action performed out of inclination is higher than an action done merely because one has been ordered to do so, or because one will feel guilty if one does not perform the action.

Naess's statement of the need in Deep Ecology to move "from ethics to ontology and back" is founded upon the *interrelatedness* of these two disciplines. Normative values are indeed, as Naess says, based upon non-normative conceptions, although it remains an open question for our discussion whether such a distinction can ever be truly made. The *event ontology* requires an interpretation of this statement that holds the normative and the non-normative as inextricably interwoven as a unity.

Such *interrelatedness* is due to the *mutual origin* of ontology and ethics, fact and value, *Ereignis* and *Da-sein*. In terms of the event ontology, this mutual origin gets expressed in answers to questions like: what exactly *must* *Da-sein* *do*? What is the *imperative* for *Da-sein* according to the event ontology? Heidegger writes:

Only so far as man, ek-sisting in the truth of Being, belongs to Being can there come from Being itself the assignment of those directives that must become law and rule for man. In Greek, to assign is *nemein*. *Nomos* is not only law but more originally the assignment contained in the dispensation of Being. Only such dispatching is capable of supporting and obligating. Otherwise, all law remains merely something fabricated by human reason. More essential than instituting rules is that man find the way to his abode in the truth of Being. This abode first yields the experience of something we can hold on to. The truth of Being offers a hold for all conduct.¹⁹²

Being is always made possible by an *event of truth*. *Da-sein* must be open to *receive* this truth. Truth comes by way of an “assignment contained in the dispensation of Being.” It is upon this event-ontological basis that we get our answer to the question of what *Da-sein* must do: *Da-sein* must both *open* itself to, and *be* the clearing for, *Being*. The event ontology thus provides an answer to what *Da-sein* “must” do in *non-instrumentalist* terms, since instrumentalism, as a function of the substance ontology, remains in the mathematical realm of objecthood and efficient causality:

Today we are too easily inclined either to understand being responsible and being indebted moralistically as a lapse, or else to construe them in terms of effecting. In either case, we bar to ourselves the way to the primal meaning of that which is later called causality. So long as this way is not opened up to us we shall also fail to see what instrumentality, which is based on causality, actually is.¹⁹³

We must now proceed with an investigation into the nature of this “mutual origin” of ethics and ontology: that which is the origin of all origins – the primal source of the event ontology.

D. Poiesis

We spoke (in Chapter One) of the distinction between “challenging” and “bringing forth.” We now have a much clearer conception of the nature of this distinction. Although they are indeed fundamentally different, they nonetheless remain related. What is the nature of this relation?

¹⁹² Heidegger, “Letter on Humanism,” *Basic Writings*, 262

¹⁹³ Heidegger, *Question*, 9

The word *stellen* [to set...] in the name *Ge-stell* [Enframing] not only [suggests setting upon or] challenging. At the same time it should preserve the suggestion of another *Stellen* from which it stems, namely, that producing and presenting [*Her- und Dar-stellen*] which, in the sense of *poiesis*, lets what presences come forth into unconcealment. This producing that brings forth – e.g., the erecting of a statue in the temple precinct – and the challenging ordering now under consideration are indeed fundamentally different, and yet they remain related in their essence. Both are ways of revealing, of *aletheia*. In Enframing, that unconcealment comes to pass in conformity with which the work of modern technology reveals the real as standing-reserve. This work is therefore neither only a human activity nor a mere means within such activity. The merely instrumental, merely anthropological definition of technology is therefore in principle untenable. And it cannot be rounded out by being referred back to some metaphysical or religious explanation that undergirds it.¹⁹⁴

The *challenging-ordering* is Heidegger's conceptualization of the *violence* of modern technology. We identified this “violence” in the first chapter as a “challenging of nature out of phase with natural cycles.”¹⁹⁵ But it is not just a challenging of nature. We also challenge *ourselves* out of phase with our originally expressive nature by viewing ourselves in substance-ontological terms as isolated subjects for which a set of material resource objects presents itself. The naturally wide self is *narrowed* through the rendering of the original wideness of self into isolated points within the mathematical grid framework of substance metaphysics.

The *challenging* of nature out of phase with natural cycles results in a world in which humans observe and handle only objects. Everything gets rendered as *present-to-hand*, designated into specific locations for specific purposes according to what aids the cycles of production and consumption as material for labor. But “modern technology as an ordering revealing...is no merely human doing.”¹⁹⁶ That is: the substance ontology never *annihilates* the underlying event ontology. It rather *conceals* its nature. This

¹⁹⁴ Ibid. 21

¹⁹⁵ See Chapter 1, p9

¹⁹⁶ Ibid. 19

nature falls into oblivion due to the obliviousness of human beings to the *givenness* of *Ereignis*. *Da-sein*, in turn, closes and narrows itself. And since *Da-sein* just is the *clearing* of the “there” in which entities can appear as “this” or “that,” the deformation of *Da-sein* is also the deformation of possibilities of *emergence-into-presence* of all beings.

Ereignis as *givenness* constitutes the underlying essence (or more precisely, as Heidegger uses this term, “essential presencing”) of any particular object in its particularity. It is for this reason that the objectification of nature by the substance ontology results not in any primordial objectification, but rather ultimately in *objectlessness*. That is: the objectification of nature is a loss even of objectness. In the end, all there is nothing but an endless grid of resources on hand for use. Likewise, in rendering *Da-sein* in terms of the Cartesian subject that is actually an *object*, “man everywhere circles round himself as the *animal rationale*.”¹⁹⁷ The substance ontological interpretation of nature thus amounts to an anthropocentric *distanceless homelessness* in which humans encounter only themselves. Everything gets regarded *instrumentally* as strictly *for* humans.

Heidegger employs his phenomenological method in order to view things in themselves just as they show themselves from themselves. In *Being and Time*, we already see the progression from existence as a work world to deeper and deeper levels of investigation that progressively reveal the underlying structures of everydayness. Eventually, in subsequent writings and lectures, Heidegger questions beneath structuring itself, revealing the *event ontology* underlying all possible *substantial* structures: an ontology which is itself no structure, but upon which all possible structures are erected. This “upon which” is not a mere basing of one thing upon another: Heidegger is well

¹⁹⁷ Heidegger, “Letter on Humanism,” *Basic Writings*, 245

aware of the phantom of the *infinite regress* that lurks within such an assumption. It is for this reason that Heidegger's phenomenology is utterly consistent with itself in locating the *origin* of the event ontology in *poiesis*, or *bringing-forth*.

Poiesis as *bringing-forth* is thus the proper answer to our *question of origin*.

Staying with the nature of *poiesis* as *bringing forth* is the way thinking remains *in its element* (as thinking). That is:

Thinking comes to an end when it slips out of its element. The element is what enables thinking to be a thinking. The element is what properly enables: it is the enabling [*das Vermogen*]. It embraces thinking and so brings it into its essence. Said plainly, thinking is the thinking of Being. The genitive says something twofold. Thinking is of Being inasmuch as thinking, propitiated by Being, belongs to Being. At the same time thinking is of Being insofar as thinking, belonging to Being, listens to Being. As the belonging to Being that listens, thinking is what is according to its essential origin. Thinking *is* –this says: Being has fatefully embraced its essence. To embrace a “thing” or a “person” in its essence means to love it, to favor it. Thought in a more original way such favoring [*Mogen*] means to bestow essence as a gift. Such favoring is the proper essence of enabling, which not only can achieve this or that but also can let something essentially unfold in its provenance, that is, let it be... To enable something here means to preserve it in its essence, to maintain it in its element.¹⁹⁸

Da-sein fulfils the essence of its nature by fulfilling the essence of what it is to *think*: to both *open* and *be* the *clearing* for the *givenness* of *Ereignis*. Heidegger refers to this “act of Da-sein” as an act of *listening*, an *embrace*, a *gift*. It is an act of *love*. Naess would certainly employ Kant's ethical language here by calling such acts “beautiful.” This act of Da-sein is clearly *not* an act motivated out of the kind of competitiveness characteristic of the will to power and domination. Thus, “Thinking towers above action and production, not through the grandeur of its achievement and not as a consequence of its effect, but through the *humbleness* of its inconsequential accomplishment.”¹⁹⁹ It is in the same spirit that Naess says “the smaller we come to feel ourselves compared to the

¹⁹⁸ Ibid. 220

¹⁹⁹ Ibid. 262; my emphasis

mountain, the nearer we come to participating in its greatness. I do not know why this is so.”^{200 201}

The meaning of *poetry* as read in terms of the event ontology with regard to language reveals a deeper meaning than the typical interpretation of the “poetic” as “a flight into dreamland” or “a part of literature.”²⁰² Although “man acts as though he were the shaper and master of language...in fact language remains the master of man...For, strictly, it is language that speaks.”²⁰³ Further, “Man first speaks when, and only when, he responds to language by listening to its appeal.”²⁰⁴

Language beckons us, at first and then again at the end, toward a thing’s nature. But that is not to say, ever, that in any word-meaning picked up at will language supplies us, straight away and definitively, with the transparent nature of the matter as if it were an object ready for use. But the responding in which man authentically listens to the appeal of language is that which speaks in the element of poetry. 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 prepositional statement that is dealt with solely in regard to its correctness or incorrectness.²⁰⁵

Heidegger is revealing the meaning of the poetry as the Greeks thought it, i.e. as *poiesis*. The Greek understanding of *poiesis* reveals an understanding of the relationship between natural and human activity. *Poiesis* as *bringing forth* breaks down into *phusis* as *unaided bringing forth* and *techne* as *aided bringing forth*. *Phusis* corresponds to the “natural” activity of what comes forth out of itself, e.g. growing organisms like plants and animals, whereas *techne* designates the activity of what does not come forth strictly of itself, e.g. a painting or a statue. The difference between *phusis* and *techne* as modes

²⁰⁰ Naess and Rothenberg, *Ecology*, 3

²⁰¹ See also Chapter Two, p5

²⁰² Martin Heidegger, “Poetically Man Dwells,” *Poetry, Language, Thought*, (New York, Harper Colophon Books, 1971) 213

²⁰³ Ibid. 215-216

²⁰⁴ Ibid. 216

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

of *poiesis* and *poiesis* itself is that whereas the former two occur in the realm of the visible, *poiesis* itself is, as Julian Young aptly puts it, “utterly mysterious, incomprehensible,” demonstrating that “the Greeks...experienced their world as brought into, and sustained in, being by an overwhelmingly powerful, utterly mysterious force.”²⁰⁶

This “utterly mysterious force” is that which expresses itself in both the bursting forth of the blossom into bloom (*phusis*) and “good art” (*techne*), as well as the *giving* of *Ereignis* and the *opening* of *Da-sein*. *Poiesis* is “what” is *cared for* when “Man is the shepherd of Being. It is in this direction alone that *Being and Time* is thinking when ecstatic experience is experienced as ‘care’.”²⁰⁷ Thus,

[M]an, as the ek-sisting counter-throw [*Gegenwurf*] of Being, is more than *animal rationale* precisely to the extent that he is less bound up with man conceived from subjectivity. Man is not the lord of beings. Man is the shepherd of Being. Man loses nothing in this “less”; rather, he gains in that he attains the truth of Being. He gains the essential poverty of the shepherd, whose dignity consists in being called by Being itself into the preservation of Being’s truth. The call comes as the throw from which the thrownness of *Da-sein* derives. In his essential unfolding within the history of Being, man is the being whose Being as ek-sistence consists in his dwelling in the nearness of Being. Man is the neighbor of being.²⁰⁸

There is thus a distinction between *guardianship* and *ownership*, not between “own” and “not-own.” As Naess puts it, “The own/not-own distinction survives only in grammar, not in feeling...[T]he ideology of ownership has no place in an ecosophy.”²⁰⁹ As such, the “poverty” of the shepherd actually amounts to the “highest dignity” of *Da-sein*’s essence.²¹⁰ Thus, the *poverty* of *Dasein*’s *openness* to the *givenness* of *Ereignis* amounts to the very openness necessary for the *preservation* of *poiesis* as “the primal

²⁰⁶ Julian Young, *Heidegger’s Later Philosophy* (New York, Cambridge University Press, 2002). 41

²⁰⁷ Heidegger, “Letter on Humanism,” *Basic Writings*, 234

²⁰⁸ Ibid. 245

²⁰⁹ Naess and Rothenberg, *Ecology*, 175

²¹⁰ Heidegger, *Question*, 32

mystery of all thinking,²¹¹ and, thus, to a making way for a recovery of the *sacred* through the recognition and remembrance that “whether and how Being is must remain an *open question* for the careful attention of thinking.”²¹² The *watching-over* of this *openness* comes about through the careful sustaining of the *openness* of *Da-sein* in light of the mysterious bringing-forth of *poiesis*. But in order to more deeply understand what this statement means, we must go one “step” further.

E. Releasement

Both Heidegger and Naess are urging their readers towards some kind of self-transmutation. For Naess, this transmutation is *self-realization*, a *widening* and *deepening* of the typical narrowness of the isolated subject for which the world (subject included) presents itself as an object. For Heidegger, this transmutation is an *opening* of *Da-sein* to the primordial *self-giving* of *poiesis* expressed by the *givenness* of *Ereignis*. Although these two transmutations appear different in terms of the language through which each view is expressed, they are the same. The *deep self* of Deep Ecology is the *open Da-sein* of Heideggerian phenomenology, especially as expressed in Heidegger’s later philosophy. *Poiesis* as *bringing forth* is the mutual *origin* of both conceptions. It is this mutuality that serves as the basis for the assertion of their identity.

We must remember however that to understand this “identity” in *substance ontological* terms is to *fail* to understand its nature. The *event ontology* of Heidegger’s thinking provides the proper basis not only for getting at the nature of the *activity* that is

²¹¹ Heidegger, “Letter on Humanism,” *Basic Writings*, 238

²¹² *Ibid.*; my emphasis

being designated by *self-realization* and the *opening* of *Da-sein*, but for understanding just “what is to be done” in order to bring about such a *deepening* and *opening* of oneself. But the expectation of an *instrumental* explanation of “what is to be done” is a misunderstanding of the nature of *poiesis* in the same way that the rendering of a natural area in cost-benefit analysis terms is a misunderstanding of nature. “What is to be done” cannot be laid out in means-ends terms without stumbling headlong into substance ontological terminology. No action of the individual subject qua subject can bring about the kind of *openness* of which both Heidegger and Naess are speaking.

But the question nevertheless persists: what is to be done? Heidegger maintains a virtually consistent avoidance of ethical prescriptions throughout the whole of his philosophical career, from the close of *Being and Time* where he states that we can only know if a path is the only one or even the right one only *after* we have followed it, to the *Letter on Humanism* in which he states:

Whether the realm of the truth of Being is a blind alley or whether it is the free space in which freedom conserves its essence is something each one may judge after he himself has tried to go the designated way, or even better, after he has gone a better way, that is, a way befitting the question...Let us also in the days ahead remain as wanderers on the way into the neighborhood of Being.²¹³

Does not the statement “let us remain” invoke at least some semblance of prescription? It certainly appears that Heidegger is calling upon his readers to *do* something. But even if so, the “catch” lies in *what* he is calling upon his readers to *be*: “wanderers.” In a similar fashion, Naess’s frequent reiterations of “Self Realization!”

²¹³ Heidegger, “Letter on Humanism,” *Basic Writings*, 247

appear to be some sort of exhortation toward a particular *way* of being. But if these statements are indeed exhortative, their nature is peculiar in that we are not given any particular basis as to *why* their respective suggestions *should* be heeded rather than disregarded. But how does one satisfy such demands for proper explanation without employing the *instrumentalist* language characteristic of the technological worldview?

Is Heidegger simply avoiding the issue? Or is he rather remaining consistent with his *event ontology* by refusing to yield to such demands? In *The Question Concerning Technology*, he provides a clue. There are others, to be sure. But the following quotation seems particularly apt for our purposes, especially in light of what we have established with regard to the role of *poiesis* as *bringing forth* in Heidegger's *event ontology*:

All coming to presence, not only modern technology, keeps itself everywhere concealed to the last. Nevertheless, it remains, with respect to its holding sway, that which precedes all: the earliest. The Greek thinkers already knew of this when they said: That which is earlier with regard to the arising that holds sway becomes manifest to us men only later. That which is primally early shows itself only ultimately to men. Therefore, in the realm of thinking, a painstaking effort to think through still more primally what was primally thought is not the absurd wish to revive what is past, but rather *the sober readiness to be astounded before the coming of what is early.*²¹⁴

Within this passage lies not only the rejection of all accusations against Heidegger that his thinking merely demonstrates a kind of rural romanticism that merely aims at a return primitivism, but also the reason behind his refusal to answer the question of “what is to be done?” Namely: there is nothing that anyone can do in and of herself to bring about the coming of what is early. All we can do is wait. The logic of such an assertion bears a striking resemblance to the logic of the farmer who knows that screaming at his corn will not make it grow any faster. There are natural cycles over which we as humans have no control, and in accordance with which we must plant, *wait*, and harvest.

²¹⁴ Heidegger, *Question*, 22; my emphasis

Furthermore, such logic is consistent with the *poetic* nature of the primal *origin* of the *event ontology* to which both Heidegger and Naess stress the importance of a return: *poiesis* is a *self-bringing-forth*. It is for this reason that *techne* is second to *phusis* in the *event ontology* to which Heidegger appeals, and not the other way around.

In like fashion, *Da-sein* opens itself to the *givenness* of *Ereignis* when it *cares* for the *poetic self-bringing-forth* of entities as the *shepherd of Being*. *Caring-for* and *shepherding*, in turn, is a *letting-be*. It is for this reason that *Da-sein* is truly *open* for the *givenness* of *Ereignis* when it *makes-way* for *givenness*. *Da-sein* does not bring such *givenness* about on its own – why Heidegger writes:

If we let the thing be present in its thinging from out of the worlding world, then we are thinking of the thing as thing. Taking thought in this way, we let ourselves be concerned by the thing's worlding being...If we think of the thing as thing, then we spare and protect the thing's presence in the region from which it presences. Thinking is the nearing of world. Nearing is the nature of nearness. As we preserve the thing *qua* thing we inhabit nearness. The nearing of nearness is the true and sole dimension of the mirror-play of the world.²¹⁵

That “thinking is the nearing of world,” indicates that thinking, in its essence, is not the mere result of an individual subject's mental activity; nor is Naess's conception of *self-realization* a realization of a particular subject brought about by the sheer force of that individual's will power. “The step back from one thinking to the other is no mere shift of attitude...for this reason alone: that all attitudes...remain committed to the precincts of representational thinking.”²¹⁶ Rather, the kind of “thinking” that Heidegger and Naess have in mind is, as Heidegger puts it in the *Discourse on Thinking*, a “patient

²¹⁵ Heidegger, “The Thing,” *Poetry*, 181

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*

noble-mindedness” that is “a pure resting in itself of...willing which, renouncing willing, has released itself to what is not will.”²¹⁷

Such a *releasement* to “what is not will,” amounts to the *opening* of *Dasein* that is necessary for the *givenness* of *Ereignis*, the event of clearing in which entities can be this or that. It is within this “region” that the *poetic* nature of beings becomes manifest: the realm where an appreciation of the *intrinsic value* of that which springs forth in and of itself becomes manifest, perhaps, for the very first time. Such is the region in which *thinking becomes thanking*, “that thanking which does not have to thank for something, but only thanks for being allowed to thank.”²¹⁸

²¹⁷ Heidegger, *Discourse*, 85

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*

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