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# **Work and Being: A Hermeneutical Study**

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Submitted to:  
Theology and Religious Studies  
SECL  
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### *Abstract*

The problematic dilemma motivating my thesis is how the contemporary understanding of work fails to regard human production as anything more than a necessary activity. This manifests in various ways, most predominantly in terms of utilitarian conceptions about the purpose of work and how it uses nature as the raw material for human ends.

After an analysis that identifies the philosophical foundations of the contemporary attitude in Enlightenment suppositions and Marx's philosophy of work, I develop an alternative conception of work that discloses its ontological, as opposed to instrumental, nature. Following the hermeneutics of Martin Heidegger and Paul Ricoeur, I show how this ontological constitution suggests that work is more appropriately defined as a thanking activity—i.e., giving thanks to being itself. This is because thanking is fundamentally related to the reflective, or thinking, capacity of human being that inevitably seeks to understand life in relation to an interpretation of the meaning of being. To interpret is, in this respect, a manner of giving thanks to being. Hence, I argue that work's thanking aspect is most evident in terms of how it metaphorically discloses an interpretation of the meaning of being through its artefacts and structures that are integrated into the whole of human doing and thinking. This extends to even the most literal aspects of necessity concerned with biological and economic sustenance.

With respect to the historical conception of the relation between work and thinking, that is generally understood as the division between *vita activa* and *vita contemplativa*, my thesis shows how these two modes of being are united within a broader, ontological description of human activity since these modes require and mutually develop one another. A prime instance of this concerns the area of human vocation which I focus on in my concluding chapter. I contend that vocation is an actualisation of interpretive horizons of meaning. It is, in short, the *praxical* and poetical realisation of theoretical interpretation.

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## **PART 1**

### **METHODS AND APPROACHES**

## I Introduction

‘In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.’ So Genesis [3:19] announces a relation between existence and work that would appear hardly contestable: work is necessary in order to live. Indeed, how could one contest the necessity of work that fulfills the want of material, biological and economic sustenance?

At the same time, nonetheless, the identity between work and necessity is not a complete and satisfactory description. Is there not something much greater to work than toiling in necessity, a punishment perhaps best captured by the mythic figure of Sisyphus who is condemned to roll a rock up a hill repeatedly? While it is appealing to associate work with noble effort, this effort by itself does not summarise the narrative of human struggle but names only an aspect of it. It would seem that beyond this superficial description of work the human will aspire to greater things than longevity and perpetuation of the species. Is not the milieu of work greater than biological metabolism? The second part of the verse from Genesis suggests a provocative question: does not the expectation of death (‘unto dust shalt thou return’), that is co-emergent with the exile from Eden, open, or at least make problematic, the meaning of work which one might be too quick to define by necessity?<sup>1</sup> For if death is the final event of a human life, then does not the toil in between birth and death make work, to quote Ecclesiastes [1:2], ‘vanity’?

Because humans are marked by the capacity to reflect and foresee, work is situated in view of possible ends and consequences. Work is directed beyond mere fulfillment of necessity, if not for eschatological reasons then for the uniquely human capacity to anticipate death, both individually and collectively. Finitude places the immediate toil and effort of work within a larger, narrative milieu. There is, to use Frank Kermode’s phrase, ‘the sense of an ending’<sup>2</sup> that pervades human existence

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<sup>1</sup> Paul Ricoeur offers a similar interpretation of Genesis in relation to existential limitation and possibility; *The Symbolism of Evil*, p. 77 and ‘Thinking Creation’, *Thinking Biblically*, pp. 44-5.

<sup>2</sup> *The Sense of an Ending*, pp. 24-31.



and places the awareness of the actions one undertakes in the moment in an extended view of the possible ending towards which one moves closer. As Martha Nussbaum points out, this narrative sensibility has its roots in the ancient Greek thinking that places the choices one makes in view of the worth of human life: 'Life is made worth living for a human being only by voluntary action; and not simply the low-level action of a child but action shaped overall by adult excellence and its efforts'.<sup>3</sup> For the Greeks, it generally holds true to say that excellence, or virtue (*arete*), discloses 'the sense of ending' that informs and elevates the conduct of human life.<sup>4</sup> The necessity of work is therefore situated in view of something greater than the simple activity of toil and effort which, of course, more dubiously sustains the separation of the free citizen, who has the leisure to think, and the *doulos* (slave), who must fulfill necessity. One can say the attempt to seek the most divine things through human activity in the ancient Greek has a detrimental correlation in terms of neglecting, or at the very least leaving unaccounted, the inclusion of all social distinctions in this divine pursuit.<sup>5</sup> But is this necessarily the price to pay for such lofty aspirations?

It is perhaps needless to say that the current condition of work contrasts greatly to that of the ancient Greeks. However, there is something noteworthy in the ancient Greek orientation towards nature. In general, it seeks to understand nature as a self-presencing of meaning and not simply as a brute state in which human relations are reducible to a fear of extinction. 'Where the ultimately real consists more in the formal order of things than in their actual existence,' observes Louis Dupré of the ancient Greeks, 'the maintenance of the cosmic equilibrium becomes a

<sup>3</sup> *The Fragility of Goodness: Luck Ethics in Greek Tragedy and Philosophy*, p. 321.

<sup>4</sup> Nussbaum analyses this in terms of the early Greek tragedies and following this theme through its varying forms in Plato and Aristotle; *The Fragility of Goodness*. Alasdair MacIntyre looks at the inheritance and change of virtue from the Homeric to the Aristotelian understandings [*After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*, chapters 10-12] and in terms of Aristotle's inheritance of 'Plato's project' that erects 'a defense of the goods of excellence and of the virtues [*Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* pp. 89-90]; cf. Werner Jaeger, *Paideia: the Ideals of Greek Culture*, p. 8.

<sup>5</sup> As Russell Bentley points out, the question of slavery for Aristotle was not a blind class distinction but one he saw as based on the lack of noble desire (*thymos*) to seek a self-sufficient life; 'Loving Freedom: Aristotle on Slavery and the Good Life,' *Political Studies* (1999), XLVII, pp. 100-113. Cf. Nussbaum's thesis that self-sufficiency was the focus of philosophy in order to address luck (*tuche*); *The Fragility of Goodness*, pp. 1-22.

crucial ontological issue'.<sup>6</sup> There is more to be understood in nature than mere process and mechanisation. There is form and harmony which marks out [*dike*] the lawfulness of the cosmos and so calls for an adequate response from human beings.

While this stance towards necessity lies at the inception of Western history, the contemporary attitude towards work seems to have traversed as much conceptual and practical distance from this origin as it has in time. General notions of efficiency (whether referring to cost, time, resource, labour expenditure and even environmental sustainability) tend to dominate perceptions of what work processes and strategies should be beholden to in order to be viable. This approbation of efficiency was foreign to the ancient Greek understanding of work,<sup>7</sup> and the purpose of this historical allusion serves in my introductory remarks to set the hermeneutical tone by which I attempt to deconstruct<sup>8</sup> the suppositions underlying the modern understanding of work, as well as the path by which I will offer a reconstruction of it.

The hypothesis of this study, as characterised above, is that the contemporary manner of understanding work is according to necessity. Necessity means those conditions of existence that need to be fulfilled in order for one to live and the attempt that arises from this understanding to secure an enduring means of control over this struggle. Though this may depend on historical circumstances, my point is that regardless of the variation, there is a fundamental misinterpretation in confining work to necessity alone. In this study I choose to pursue an understanding of work according to a hermeneutical analysis that attempts to resituate it within an ontological depth informed by the works of Martin Heidegger and Paul Ricoeur. I suggest that the primary role that work performs is the actualisation of ontological possibility and therefore is more than necessary. I will encapsulate this ontological depth in referring to work as both necessary and metaphorical; work both responds to necessity but transforms it according to a metaphorical capacity of projecting a

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<sup>6</sup> *Passage to Modernity: An Essay in the Hermeneutics of Culture*, p. 19.

<sup>7</sup> I devote a detailed discussion to this in Chapter VII, The Ancient Greek Understanding of Work.

<sup>8</sup> I refer to deconstruction in the "pre-Derridian" sense, that is, according to Heidegger's understanding of the phenomenological method. Deconstruction [*destruktion*] is part of the retrieval of historical understanding that Franco Volpi describes as 'a dismantling [*Abbau*] and dissection of the essential elements of traditional philosophic construction, in order to effect a truly radical reconstruction [*Wiederaufbau*]'; 'Being and Time: A "Translation" of *Nicomachean Ethics*?' *Reading Heidegger from the Start*, p. 196. Cf. Iain Thomson, *Heidegger on Ontotheology*, p. 7 n2 and Mark Sinclair, *Heidegger, Aristotle and the Work of Art*, pp. 5-6.

meaning that is greater than seeking necessary fulfilment. This twofold relation is what I designate as the hermeneutical nature of work, hermeneutical because it involves an encounter with the most literal domain of work (e.g., toil) that is interpreted according to new possibilities of being. More on my relation and use to hermeneutics will be mentioned in Chapter III.

Given these precursory comments that portray necessity as a limited concept, I can express my thesis. *Work is not undertaken for necessity alone and therefore not for human beings alone, but is primarily an activity that gives thanks to being itself.* Following upon a study of Heidegger and Ricoeur, I will show that thanking more appropriately defines the nature of work because humans are not the efficient, causal agents of work but are responding to the pre-given nature of being. Situating work within the pre-givenness of being means that work is not only in some way made possible by it, but also that we should understand work as that which is directed to being by means of a reciprocal responsibility. I define this reciprocity in terms of work conceived as a manner of giving thanks to the gift of being. The locus of this act of thanks is best epitomised in the notion of human vocation and its ontological significance that mutually appropriates human beings and being to one another.

It is difficult to account for the nuances of an argument in a thesis statement, and I would like to remark that the originality of my study is in part contained in how I will show that the nature of work participates in reflection but is not reducible to it. So, in another sense, my thesis sets out to explode the traditional opposition between the *vita contemplativa (theoria)* and *vita activa (praxis)*. By insisting on the connection between work and thinking, I am saying that work is both motivated by and directed towards reflection but is never identical to the act of reflection itself. Work does indeed involve a manner of knowing, but this mode is specific to technical operations and knowledge (*techne*). This qualification is grounded in the ancient Greek recognition that *techne* is not self-reflexive,<sup>9</sup> and so requires, as part of its whole movement within human existence, a reflective counterpart that provokes

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<sup>9</sup> E.g., see David Roochnik, *Of Art and Wisdom*, p. 158 and Rojcewicz, *The Gods and Technology: A Reading of Heidegger*, p. 191. I have transliterated all ancient Greek text into the Latin alphabet, even in secondary sources, without any diacritical marks. Where sources use the Latin alphabet, I have maintained any diacritical marks in the quotations. For example, where I refer to *techne* another author such as MacIntyre will write *technē*.

it. At the same time, without the sustaining activity of human work, reflection would not only be impossible, but it would also lack a world in and to which it might direct its gaze.

My argument is constructed according to three phases: 1) a *deconstruction* of the modern assumptions of work, showing how they presuppose necessity as the purpose of work; 2) an ontological *reconstruction* of the foundation of work that shows how a certain disproportion within being, and not necessity, motivates work and consequently means that the nature of work is metaphorical (figurative or symbolic); and 3) a *reinterpretation* of use that places work in the role of giving thanks to being rather than as the utilisation of material and resources for human mastery and efficiency. This reinterpreive phase will also consist in a development of the significance of human vocation and related economic questions which arise in relation to this study. I will present a more detailed account of these phases in Chapter II.

In the remainder of the Introduction I address areas fundamentally related to the theme of work: why I do not focus on the philosophy of technology, my use of the terms modern and modernity, why I have not chosen to deal specifically with gender and work and my interpretation of Heidegger and the unity of his works.

### **Work and Technology**

Because the context of this study is within Heidegger's hermeneutics, I do not include the philosophy of technology, though I will from time to time discuss technology when pertinent. In this section, I set out the reasons why I think a demarcation needs to be maintained between my hermeneutical concern for the nature of work and the distinct field of the philosophy of technology (to which Heidegger's well-known essay 'The Question Concerning Technology' is opposed). In general, this boundary has to do with the nature of technological thinking, or what I will refer to henceforward as *technological rationality*, and how it is a specific kind of thinking that is an aspect of work but not identical to it. Despite the technological advances that seem to drive human progress, my contention is that this progression neither possesses a self-reflexive capacity to question its own nature, nor, more importantly, can it ask what the nature and aims of human work might be.

A technological attitude is directed from within its epistemology, something that Mario Bunge identifies as technology's method of remaining dedicated to a rational aim in which it is 'adequate to a preset goal,' making sure at the same time that this goal has been 'chosen or made by deliberately employing the best available relevant knowledge.'<sup>10</sup> But far from seeing this as a problem, Bunge sees the rationality in technology as its greatest strength. Rationality, in this instance, is justified by the practical results obtained.

Nowadays, a practical man is one who acts in obedience to decisions taken in the light of the best technological knowledge . . . And such a technological knowledge, made up of theories, grounded rules, and data, is in turn an outcome of the application of the method of science to practical problems.<sup>11</sup>

Yet, it is clear from such descriptions of technology that rationality cannot step outside its parameters in order to question its manner of intentionality (its preset goal) towards being as such. Bunge's inclusion of 'the best available relevant knowledge' has a decidedly technical tone to it, meaning that one applies the existing technological information in order to determine how to carry out one's technological experiments. Alasdair MacIntyre observes of this kind of reason:

Reason is calculative; it can assess truths of fact and mathematical relations but nothing more. In the realm of practice therefore it can speak only of means. About ends it must be silent.<sup>12</sup>

Similarly, Dupré observes that in this calculative rationality 'all phenomena appear to form part of an integrated system . . . it still does not answer the question: What, if any, is the purpose of the whole?'<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> 'Toward a Philosophy of Technology', *Philosophy and Technology*, p. 62. Similarly, Habermas describes work as being governed by rational choice which in turn is governed by 'strategies based on analytic knowledge. They imply deductions from preference rules (value systems) and decision procedures; these propositions are either correctly or incorrectly deduced', *Towards a Rational Society*, p. 92.

<sup>11</sup> 'Toward a Philosophy of Technology', *Philosophy and Technology*, p. 62.

<sup>12</sup> *After Virtue*, p. 54.

<sup>13</sup> Dupré, *The Enlightenment and the Intellectual Foundations of Modern Culture*, p. 141. See also John Cottingham, *Philosophy and the Good Life* where he shows how mathematics, as the rational, universal language, replaced teleology at the time of Descartes, p. 64 & 71.

It was, of course, Herbert Marcuse who showed that the blindness of the rationality involved in technology is also caught up in a mode of domination.<sup>14</sup> That is to say, the effects of technological progress appear neutral in their facilitation of processes and the apparent closing of distances between things (e.g., mobile communication and even the sequencing of genomes to get closer to "human nature"). However, this neutrality is value-laden, not only placing humans in the role of dominating nature but also in obviously determining a course of effects. The severe risk that is run here is that technical means-ends are in themselves seen to offer the solution to the problems facing us today.<sup>15</sup> There is no need to trouble deeply over human crises as science and technology are seen as rational providers of a solution. Already, human behavior itself is seen to be the target not of education or even therapy but of bio-physical manipulation.<sup>16</sup> It rarely comes to mind that this positing of a solution is itself still bound up in a technological attitude; as such technological solutions can only set themselves up to be the next problem in a chain of cause and effect.

If the rationality of technology, as Bunge describes, is set only towards achieving one goal, it cannot possibly see its ramifications in relation to the remit that

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<sup>14</sup> Marcuse, 'Industrialization and Capitalism in the Work of Max Weber', *Negations: Essays in Critical Theory*, trans. Jeremy Shapiro (Boston, 1968), pp. 223f, as quoted in Habermas' *Toward a Rational Society*, p. 82.

<sup>15</sup> The blindness of a technology-based existence was expressed by Heidegger in 'The Question Concerning Technology', in which he observes that technology's manner of enframing [*Ge-stell*] not only depends on physical science but is itself seen as physical science. Thus, technology is seen as a form of *scienças* that can solve problems in which case human being 'can never take up a relationship to it subsequently.' Dasein is bound up in the enframing in which such questioning comes 'too late', but 'never too late.' *The Question Concerning Technology*, pp. 23-4. Also see Ernst Jünger, 'Technology and the "Gestalt" of the Worker', *Philosophy and Technology*, in which he makes a similar observation to Heidegger, referring to the 'logic' and 'language' of technology which becomes innate to existence and therefore loses transparency (pp. 273-5). Otto Pöggeler observes, 'Today's hope in the power of computers fails to recognize, however, that the demand solely to formulate questions exactly and thus to translate them into language of computers, is inappropriate when faced with the inexhaustibility of the intellect (*des Gesitigen*), 'Hermeneutics of the Technological World', *International Journal of Philosophical Studies* 1:1, (March 1993), p. 43. In short, computers cannot answer the question "why?" Jared Diamond recounts of how technology is blind, referring to the comments of the economist Julian Simon: '. . . if we run out of copper, we'll synthesise copper,' 'Why Societies Collapse: Jared Diamond', interview on local ABC radio, March 2, 2005: <http://www.abc.net.au/pm/content/2005/s1314531.htm>. Andrew Feenberg attempts an analysis of technology in which the critique that it is blind is resolved. Cf. *Questioning Technology*, p. 207.

<sup>16</sup> See Herman Kahn's list of 'the most probably technical innovations' he predicted for the year 2000 (back in 1969) which include improved surveillance, more reliable propaganda, better mood altering drugs and genetic control, in 'The Next Thirty Years: A Framework for Speculation', *Toward the Year 2000: Work in Progress* (Boston, 1969) as quoted in Habermas' *Toward a Rational Society*, p. 117.

lies outside this goal. Indeed, it is possible that it is no longer even responsible for such effects.<sup>17</sup> Fundamentally speaking, the question of the meaning of technology itself, which is not a technical question, is forgotten. It is concealed. It is assumed that the means in and of itself will provide its own justification.<sup>18</sup> In its blindly, positive declaration that technology constitutes the essence of modern humanity, there is, as Heidegger asserts, a failure to see the manner of *techne* itself as a manner of revealing truth. Technological know-how presupposes an interpretation of how one should live,<sup>19</sup> and if this relation is not recognised from within technology, then the interpretation of how one should live is taken for granted or forgotten. Technical means usurps the question of the interpretation of how to be, while the drive constituted by technical rationality is to find more efficient means without reflection on ends.<sup>20</sup>

This phenomenon is apparent when one observes that, for the most part, since Marx the philosophy of work has been replaced by the philosophy of technology. The reduction operating here is one where technology is seen to embrace work in the contemporary age, that somehow the state of technological development has transcended the fundamental relationship between human being and existence that is expressed in the gesture of the human hand that makes (*homo faber*).<sup>21</sup> To be sure, this identity between work and technology, as taken up by such thinkers as Habermas and Marcuse, can provide the grounds for an in-depth critique of technical rationality. But at the same time, this critique forces the question of the nature of work itself to recede, as if we should no longer speak of human work but

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<sup>17</sup> David Lewin, 'Freedom and Destiny in the Philosophy of Technology', *Blackfriars* 87:1011, (September 2006), pp. 515-33.

<sup>18</sup> See, for example, Emmanuel Mesthene, 'How Technology Will Shape the Future', *Philosophy and Technology*, pp. 120-1. He sees technology as in and of itself providing the answers through its slow development of theoretical knowledge. Feenberg, as mentioned above, argues against my critique of technology asserting that it has a 'reflexivity' in that it can embody and address itself to social and cultural values; *Questioning Technology*, pp. 220-2.

<sup>19</sup> Heidegger, 'The Question Concerning Technology', *The Questioning Technology*, p. 27.

<sup>20</sup> David E. Cooper writes, 'The search for scientific truth, for a correct representation that mirrors reality leads, inexorably, to the denial of the need for and possibility of truth – or, what comes to the same thing for Heidegger, truth is finally measured only by results', in 'Postmodernism and "The End of Philosophy"', *International Journal of Philosophical Studies* 1:1, (March 1993), p. 51.

<sup>21</sup> Habermas, therefore, does not distinguish human work from technical, 'purposive-rational action.' See *Towards a Rational Society*, p. 91. This lack of distinction conceals the originary question of the nature of human work.



only technology. In addition, and consistent with Heidegger's thinking, to remain solely at the level of technology is to remain enframed by it. The key to technology, in this respect, is not its resolution but the returning, or stepping back, to the ground that bears still the ontological, hermeneutical question that drives technology to be in the first place: *why work?* Or, as Ricoeur observes: 'If the whole edifice of culture can be seen as one long itinerary starting from action and returning to action, then even the form of the word that is closest to the pragmatic dimension of action contains in itself *in nuce* a critique of labor'.<sup>22</sup> Therefore, this study focuses on the ontological depth that informs the meaningfulness of work since it is this aspect which has been forgotten with the reduction of work to mere necessity.

### **The Question of Modernity**

My use of the term *modernity* is central to encapsulating in a word my hypothesis that work has been reduced to necessity. Specific to the theme of work I use the term to refer to the contemporary problematic that grounds the age. In this case, modernity encapsulates two key philosophical assumptions: 1) the predominance of the subject as an agent who understands its autonomy in terms of control and domination; and 2) the reduction of work to necessity. The presupposition underlying this definition of modernity is that despite any variation that may depart from these two criteria, such variation would exist as an anomaly still held sway by the modern discourse. This presupposition will become more evident when I discuss the second of these two criteria below.

The first point concerns an area fundamental to Heidegger's own thinking that begins with *Being and Time* and the phenomenology of Dasein seeking to de-centre subjective, representational thinking. It culminates in the notion of giving thanks in Heidegger's later thinking that locates reflection in a pious attending towards being.<sup>23</sup>

The second point is the inevitable effect when human subjectivity sees its milieu as one of mechanical processes and value-neutrality. This neutrality is

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<sup>22</sup> 'Work and the Word', *History and Truth*, p. 207.

<sup>23</sup> Rojcewicz, *The Gods and Technology*, p. 52.



characteristically expressed and championed in terms of efficiency and utility. The problem, however, is that efficiency and utility are not easily recognisable as ideologies. Bolstering their viability is a definite role attributed to rationality, wherein it is assumed that the aim of efficiency and usefulness is neutral and coherent. Thus, the *status quo* of the modern pre-understanding is that efficiency is good and its practical application need not be readily challenged, something that Charles Taylor generally refers to as the inducement of mechanism whose 'reification' influences the modern common sense to accept mechanism as the default model.<sup>24</sup>

The exposition of rationality as a neutral, mediating force was, of course, first made popular by Weber and inherited in various ways by such thinkers as Habermas, albeit critically, and his appeal for a rationally mediated society. Weber, for instance, draws the distinction between 'substantive rationality' and 'formal rationality'.<sup>25</sup> The difference between these two forms of reason constitutes the process of disenchantment where rationality slowly gives up the yoke of ideology for a formalised rationality whose ensuing structures are emptied of substantive values.<sup>26</sup> Substantive rationality is one that accepts values as given or 'simply true'<sup>27</sup> whereas formal rationality, for example and with regard to work, appeals to efficiency as a value-free determination, a 'purposive-rational organisation of means'.<sup>28</sup> However, as MacIntyre has demonstrated (whose argument we will recall in Chapter V), utility and efficiency are not neutral but indeed conceal a value: namely, that the human relation to reality can be objectively defined and therefore should be subjected to human will. Critical of Weber's conception of rationality, Habermas refers to 'communicative rationality' that is oriented towards inter-subjective understanding rather than the efficiency of technical, utilitarian

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<sup>24</sup> 'Engaged agency and background in Heidegger,' *The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger*, pp. 321 & 327.

<sup>25</sup> David Kolb provides a concise account of Weber's use of rationality; *The Critique of Pure Modernity*, pp. 10-11.

<sup>26</sup> Habermas, 'Communicative versus Subject-Centered Reason,' *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, pp. 315-16.

<sup>27</sup> Kolb, *The Critique of Pure Modernity*, p. 11.

<sup>28</sup> Habermas, 'Communicative versus Subject-Centered Reason,' *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, p. 316.

rationality.<sup>29</sup> However, because Habermas still favours rationality as the grounding force of human *praxis*—albeit as a mediating discourse between communicative rationality and the flawed subject-centred reason that he claims figures such as Heidegger, Derrida and Foucault reject<sup>30</sup>—he consequently is too ready to accept a reformulation of rationality as the corrective for modernity's unfinished project. No matter how deep and evolving rationality is, it cannot appreciate those discourses outside the rational structure that seek to reform this structure from "without".<sup>31</sup> Communicative rationality operates with an assumption that the greatest referent of human discourse and action is consensus that mediates relations of success and failure. Therefore, there is an assumption that consensus between speaking subjects can adequately appreciate and engage with the human domain of reflection and

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<sup>29</sup> Habermas, 'The Entwinement of Myth and Enlightenment: Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno,' *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, p. 112; 'Communicative versus Subject-Centered Reason,' *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, p. 314; cf. Bronislaw Szerszynski, *Nature, Technology and the Sacred*, p. 179 n2; Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, p. 509.

<sup>30</sup> Jay M. Bernstein, 'The Causality of Fate: Modernity and Modernism in Habermas,' *Habermas and the Unfinished Project of Modernity*, p. 246. It is open to debate as to whether such thinkers in fact take up this critique of the subject in the way Habermas characterises it. For instance, regarding Foucault see James Schmidt, 'Habermas and Foucault,' *Habermas and the Unfinished Project of Modernity*, pp. 147-71. Regarding Heidegger and his critique of metaphysics, which Habermas takes to be the basis of the critique of the subject ['The Undermining of Western Rationalism: Heidegger,' *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, pp. 133-37], it has been argued that Heidegger's critique is also an appropriation of the "thinking subject" in relation to a more ontologised interpretation of the history of metaphysics; see my 'Heidegger and the Appropriation of Metaphysics,' *The Heythrop Journal* (forthcoming) in which I account for the wide ranging debate between scholars such as John Caputo, Richard Rorty, Franco Volpi and others. In short, the three criticisms that Habermas levels at Heidegger—obscuration of public communication, dismissal of science, and the silencing of beings [*Ibid.*, pp. 139-40]—derive from a misinterpretation of Heidegger's criticism of metaphysics. Each point raised by Habermas is debatable within its own sphere of research: for instance, Heidegger's dismissal of science is not a pure and simple dismissal but a cautionary exegesis of its technological determination. Furthermore, Heidegger is not a "technophobe", as Habermas indicates [p. 140], but questions the nature of technology which goes unnoticed in our general use of its products. In support of my position see, for example, Heidegger, 'Age of the World Picture,' *The Question Concerning Technology*, p. 136; Herbert Dreyfus, 'Being and Power: Heidegger and Foucault,' *International Journal of Philosophical Studies*, pp. 7-8; and George Pattison, *The Late Heidegger*, p. 55. Regarding Habermas' characterisation of Heidegger's "destining of Being" as a 'causality of fate' ['Communicative versus Subject-Centered Reason,' *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, p. 316], I respond to this in my aforementioned article in terms of Heidegger's interpretation of metaphysics as a hermeneutically necessary move appropriate for its time and is one that should not be raised to the level of an objective critique.

<sup>31</sup> This, of course, is the crux of his criticisms against Foucault and Heidegger whom he sees as articulating "special discourses" ['Communicative versus Subject-Centered Reason,' *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, p. 308] that attempt to elude subject-centred reason but only fall prey to it in the end. Thus, Habermas will not allow for 'the other of reason' that would claim a higher status than rationality; rather he seeks an articulation of it through his communication based exchange. As a result, what is ex-communicated [*Ibid.*, p. 316] is the uniquely spiritual and ontological radicality of religion and, as I would argue, Heidegger's return to the primordial question of the meaning of being.

experience. Communicative action is a mediating structure that seeks to acknowledge individuals and agreement between them which is beyond their differences.<sup>32</sup> It replaces problematical (or ideological) structures with consensus. But is not consensus itself a distortion of those values and meanings which cannot be easily grasped and translated into everyday common language? And if this is so, is there not as Heidegger warns a deceptive nearness to things and their meaning?<sup>33</sup> In this respect, Habermas' appeal to rationality in his theory of communicative action is tantamount to his earlier thesis that critical theory could be applied as a psychoanalytic critique of society. But where is the critique of the one who analyses?<sup>34</sup> For example, while Habermas critiques Heidegger for succumbing to a 'special discourse' that 'withdraws into Being',<sup>35</sup> one can see the reason for this unconventional meditation insofar as Heidegger is trying to bring attention to the manner of being of things that eludes a purely rational epistemology.<sup>36</sup> On this view, Habermas' communicative theory is still only a mediating structure for a subject-centred world, depriving ontological *apriority* to other things.<sup>37</sup>

This accusation applies also to the interpretation of use as utility and efficiency. In this case, the value of efficiency is allowed to operate as a first-order value that appears self-evident and therefore self-justifying. Who would question whether or not work should be efficient in production and function? The self-evident applicability of efficiency makes it seem as if no other nature of work existed.

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<sup>32</sup> Ricoeur, 'Habermas (1),' *Ideology and Utopia*, p. 227.

<sup>33</sup> 'Building, Dwelling, Thinking,' *Poetry Language, Thought*, p. 165; Michael Haar, 'Attunement and Thinking,' *Heidegger: A Critical Reader*, p. 170.

<sup>34</sup> This, of course, Gadamer's critique of Habermas in the famous debate between them. See, for example, Gadamer, 'What Is Practice? The Conditions of Social Reason,' *Reason in the Age of Science*, pp. 69-79. Ricoeur observes that Habermas' dialectical exchange between critique and ideology is a 'regulative idea' wherein the content of the communication between the two remains unfulfilled; 'Habermas (2),' *Ideology and Utopia*, pp. 249-50. With something like metaphor and religious symbolism the explicitly human and spiritual meaning of discourse is regulated according to a critique that distorts it. In this sense, Ricoeur ventures to say that religious discourse can offer the critique of the current ideology of market economy and technology; 'Habermas (1),' *Ideology and Utopia*, pp. 230-1.

<sup>35</sup> 'The Undermining of Western Rationalism: Heidegger,' *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, p. 139.

<sup>36</sup> Habermas himself admits art has no shaping power in the lifeworld but is merely an object of it; Bernstein, 'The Causality of Fate: Modernity and Modernism in Habermas,' *Habermas and the Unfinished Project of Modernity*, p. 258. Cf. Charles Taylor, 'Engaged agency and background in Heidegger,' *The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger*, pp. 317-36.

<sup>37</sup> Jacques Ellul, *The Technological System*, pp. 131-2, regarding how Habermas' notion of consensus can be shaped ideologically by technological rationality; cf. MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* pp. 2-3; and Pattison, *Thinking About God in an Age of Technology*, pp. 182-3.

In this way, efficiency conceals the “second-order” values motivating it. The concealment is not one of distorting but more of obfuscating, that is in the Heideggerian sense, of placing something else before it that breaks-up or inhibits an encounter with the thing itself.<sup>38</sup> Along these lines, efficiency and utility “stand in front of” work and prevent one from inquiring into a broader understanding of it. Because the protocol of efficiency makes no demand that one reflect on a greater purpose than the fulfilment of ends within a given process, a more dialectical tension is required by which the functionality of work is complimented by a seemingly antithetical force. This comment, of course, anticipates the argument of Chapter V (Deconstructing the Modern Understanding of Work).

Thus, when I speak of modernity I am not being condemnatory of it, nor am I calling for a return to an archaic attitude, or what Ricoeur often refers to as a ‘first naïveté’.<sup>39</sup> My use of the term modernity invokes a hermeneutical situation that expresses both the problematic and the possible solution contiguous to modernity itself. Because the notion of modernity is one that inherently refers to the “now” (*modo*) of history,<sup>40</sup> it encapsulates a moment of interpretation that stakes its sense of present meaning—even urgency and crisis—on how it views the past as having led to and culminated in the present situation.

But what does this say about the fate of modernity whose arrival at some point in the future will itself be referred to as the modern? As David Kolb has pointed out, the earliest occurrences of the modern referred to a distinction from one age to the present—e.g., the Roman and pagan age to the Christian.<sup>41</sup> Thus if the term modern was originally used to mark a definitive break with the past and something new,<sup>42</sup> today this notion of progression has been critically questioned. That is to say, if modernity is a break from the past, it is not a complete break but an intermediary lacuna absent of a viable relation between the history and possibility of human being and that is seeking to be filled. In this spirit Ricoeur therefore observes,

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<sup>38</sup> ‘Origin of Work of Art’, *Basic Writings*, p. 179.

<sup>39</sup> See, for example, *The Symbolism of Evil*, p. 19.

<sup>40</sup> Dupré, *Passage to Modernity*, p. 145; and Kolb, *The Critique of Pure Modernity*, pp. 1-2.

<sup>41</sup> *The Critique of Pure Modernity*, pp. 1-2.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. Foucault, ‘What Is Enlightenment?’ *The Foucault Reader*, pp. 32-50.

'Modernity is neither a fact nor our destiny. It is henceforth an open question'.<sup>43</sup> Ricoeur does not suggest there is one answer to this question or that there is a final point at which the question will no longer remain pertinent. Rather, with the distinction of being "modern" which is inherited by each subsequent age, we have perpetually set before ourselves a hermeneutical exigency that is constantly renewing. This renewal is not futile but productive insofar as this exigency calls us to reinterpret constantly our relation to the past in order to understand the present and future.

### Gender and Work

In this section I account for my lack of treating the theme of gender and work within a hermeneutical study. My aim herein is to show that the subject of gender and work is one that lies outside the hermeneutical scope of this study since it takes Heidegger and his conception of the gender-neutrality of Dasein, or being-there, as its centre.<sup>44</sup> The theme of gender and work constitutes a study in its own right, and its identity generally can be divided into two main areas—the sociological and its concern for equality in the work place and the anthropological study of what constitutes conceptions of gender.

What I have called the sociological concern is not meant to characterise the discipline of sociology *per se* but the sociological concern for women in the workplace. Here, the main focus is inequality in the workplace, according to which various methodologies and models can be utilised in order to assess and potentially resolve this inequality. Contemporary discussions of gender often rely upon the anthropological socio-historical contexts in order to support the need to critique and

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<sup>43</sup> Ricoeur, 'Proclamation and Manifestation', *Figuring the Sacred: Religion, Narrative, and Imagination*, p. 63.

<sup>44</sup> Gender studies might challenge Heidegger's neutral ascription of gender to Dasein, or it might very well see this neutrality as expressing an equality of being. Joanna Hodge takes a more favourable position in relation to Heidegger in using his ontology as a means of clarifying human concerns; *Heidegger and Ethics*, pp. 6-17. Cf. Martha Nussbaum on Plato's comment on gendered language, *The Fragility of Goodness*, p. 3, asterisked footnote. For varying interpretations of Heidegger's ontology in relation to feminism, see *Feminist Interpretations of Martin Heidegger* (State College: Penn State University Press, 2001). Interpretations vary from a critical reception of Heidegger's ontology and its blindness to the feminine (e.g., John Caputo) to reflections on subtler nuances of how his thinking might embrace the feminine through the poetic or a more detailed unfoldment of his ontology (e.g., Carol Bigwood and Trishe Glasebrook).

rethink current assumptions about work and role identification/segregation.<sup>45</sup> Subsequently, such sociological concerns adopt an understanding of gender in order to identify inequality and possible means of its alleviation. Studies of the gender gap in wages, occupational segregation, the segregation of space based on social roles, and in short, any category in which men are perceived as the 'normative group'<sup>46</sup> become the criteria against which equality is defined. Because of this, the focus of resolution is on how such distinctions can be closed or bridged. In contradistinction to the anthropological axis, the sociological concern decisively opts for a conception of gender (i.e., as defined by the social roles based on segregation and subordination) in order to offer a solution.

The anthropological concern mediates between the different interpretations of gender, how it is defined by cultures and how this may, in turn, affect the modern, Western attitude: both in the ways we perceive other cultures and, as importantly, in the ways we perceive ourselves. This last point becomes quite crucial since, while other cultures may express and articulate different conceptions of gender that are not based upon a biological distinction of sex, it is the modern Western institution of academia that primarily seeks to understand such differing conceptions in order to critique and revise Western society. In this sense, gender studies seeks a form of meta-critique that can appreciate the plurality of the interpretations of gender. Thus, one finds in anthropological studies of gender a widening concern that shifts from the practices of subordinating women, for example, to a more descriptive analysis of gender related themes that challenges the views generally taken for granted in how women, men and other genders are perceived in social relations.<sup>47</sup> The former is general to social concerns of equality and liberation, while the latter includes the symbolic and the cosmological in addition to the economic and the political realms. Hence, while it seems consistent to identify gender studies with feminist concerns,

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<sup>45</sup> Karen Korabik, 'Sex and Gender in the New Millennium', *Handbook of Gender and Work*, p. 5. See also a consideration of feminist methodologies; Caroline Ramazanoğlu and Janet Holland, *Feminist Methodologies: Challenges and Choices*, p. 4.

<sup>46</sup> Quote from Korabik, 'Sex and Gender in the New Millennium', *Handbook of Gender and Work*, p. 5. For discussion of the different categories listed above, see Susan Hanson and Geraldine Pratt, *Gender, Work, and Space*, pp. 3-15 and Patricia A. Roos and Mary Elizabeth Gatta, 'The Gender Gap in Earnings', *The Handbook of Gender and Work*, pp. 95-123.

<sup>47</sup> Henrietta Moore, 'Whatever Happened to Women and Men? Gender and other Crises in Anthropology', *Anthropology Theory Today*, pp. 152-3.



this is not necessarily the case, especially within anthropology where gender studies includes those who oppose the definition of gender based on socio-historical contexts (e.g., the nature v. nurture debate). To be sure, those studies which promote an appreciation of difference based on social and historical contexts tend to make mediation the central focus since it provides interpretive latitude that can appreciate and provide the basis for new understandings of roles, sex, and spatial conceptions, all of which can be turned back on history in order to reinterpret the past.<sup>48</sup> Equality is not a defining issue in this sense because it, too, becomes a conception determined by social and historical contexts. But if there is a concept of equality it is in mediating between different interpretations in order to preserve the widest understanding.

Given these two axes within gender studies, what is common to both is the critique and deconstruction of normative gender definitions and how these in turn affect interpretation of other fields, academic, political, social or otherwise.<sup>49</sup> In this sense and in relation to the theme of work, there is a shared territory between

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<sup>48</sup> Moore comments that this mediating role can result in an ambiguity of argument, but she argues that this can be corrected in viewing gender as a performance issue and not a category; 'Whatever Happened to Women and Men? Gender and other Crises in Anthropology', *Anthropology Theory Today*, pp. 155-7 & 168-9.

<sup>49</sup> The notion of "man-hunter and woman-gatherer", for example, is a representation that one is often inclined to project back upon the history and development of humankind, and it is the primary model that comes under fire by feminist anthropologists [R.W. Preucel and Ian Hodder, eds., 'Understanding Sex and Gender', *Contemporary Archaeology in Theory* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), p. 415]. With regard to the theme of work, this model is particularly contentious since it indicates the interpretive prejudice by which one is apt to understand the division of duties and responsibilities in the contemporary world. On this point there are several fronts where gender is being reinterpreted in relation to work. One concerns the role of domestic work and how it is no longer confined to that of the female. With increasing numbers of middle-class women earning larger salaries and playing the role of "the bread winner", the resistance by men to see women as providers has changed considerably [Linda Thomas and Alexis Walker, 'Gender in Families: Women and Men in Marriage, Work, and Parenthood', *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 51, (1989), pp. 851-4; cf. Roderic Beaujot, 'Gender Models for Family and Work', *Horizons*, 8:3, (2006); available at [http://policyresearch.gc.ca/page.asp?pagenm=v8n3\\_art\\_05](http://policyresearch.gc.ca/page.asp?pagenm=v8n3_art_05); accessed July 12, 2006]. This increase, however, does not mean the pay gap between women and men is resolved; and neither does it mean that the current milieu of business practice, philosophy and culture are not infused with prejudices against women [Derek Robinson, 'Differences in occupational earnings by sex', *Women, Gender and Work*, pp. 157-88; Martha Nussbaum, 'Women and equality: The capabilities approach', *Women, Gender and Work*, pp. 45-65]. A symmetrical problem concerns domestic work and its acceptance by women as their manner of contributing to the family, yet such work is not valued by society because it is unpaid [Lourdres Beneria, 'The enduring debate over unpaid labour', *Women, Gender and Work*, pp. 85-109. Sean Sayers argues that no matter how satisfying the domestic role may be for women, there still appears to be a feeling on their part that it is undermined by the perception that work is measured by its direct economic contribution; *Marxism and Human Nature*, pp. 42-43]. In any event, the methods of gender studies and hermeneutics can be used to deconstruct prevailing attitudes. But it is precisely here where they also depart.

hermeneutics and gender studies that can be described as a similar concern to deconstruct a dominant pre-understanding of the way in which the Western contemporary society values what is defined as work. In the end, I believe it will become apparent that my deconstruction of the necessity-based philosophical disposition parallels gender studies' concern to understand new possibilities and modes of gender performance in differing social and historical contexts.

Hermeneutics of the Heideggerian ilk locates the origin of the problematic at the level of the orientation to being itself.<sup>50</sup> This is because the ontological unity of being is that which, at the phenomenological level, is prior to any distinction and in turn allows for distinction to be in the first place. This constitutes Heidegger's ontological difference, that I will discuss in Chapter VI, in which being itself *gives* the relation of being and beings. While this approach to the problem seems to be irrespective of social problems, its philosophical gambit, or risk, is that timely issues, such as the gender gap in the West, occur at the level of theoretical enframing. As phenomenology, Heidegger's thinking attempts to disclose the nature of the initial moment when difference can be thought. This difference is not a particular kind but constitutive of the particular differences that arise subsequently. Heidegger, for example, argues that what characterises the contemporary age is a technological attitude that views everything in terms of efficiency and as the subject of mastery.<sup>51</sup> The implication of this assessment is that whatever means may be used as a corrective to gender issues, they may themselves participate in the kind of technological enframing that Heidegger critiques. More feminine-oriented work models based on an appreciation of expertise of knowledge and occupational satisfaction rather than the male-oriented notion of success, for example,<sup>52</sup> do not question the implementation of its corrective action at the level at which Heidegger offers his thinking. Such correctives would fall prey to the *Gestalt* of the worker which, in this case, reduces something like expertise of knowledge to the overall

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<sup>50</sup> Cf. Joanna Hodge, *Heidegger and Ethics*, p. 6.

<sup>51</sup> E.g., *Basic Concepts*, p. 14.

<sup>52</sup> Cary L. Cooper and Suzan Lewis, 'Gender and the Changing Nature of Work', *Handbook of Gender and Work*, pp. 40-1.



drive for efficiency.<sup>53</sup> If this is so, then gender studies will inevitably lose the distinction it initially wished to secure . . . except as a varied aspect of the technological system and therefore made to conform to and make more efficient technological means.

While the above analysis would seem to indicate an irresolvable conflict of interpretations between hermeneutics and gender studies, at another level it refers to the unique nature of each mode of engagement which, from a hermeneutical point of view, necessarily constitutes the dialectic of philosophical critique and conviction that gives rise to greater clarification.<sup>54</sup> Indeed, if the critique of such philosophical enterprises as Heidegger's is that they are too essentialist,<sup>55</sup> then the opposite claim can be levelled against those philosophies aimed at the implementation of social practice: they relinquish a reflection on a fundamental level in committing towards a plan of action. But this problem is as old as Marx's controversial thesis against the philosophers to change rather than interpret the world.<sup>56</sup> The case should not be a matter of holding one over against the other but seeing how every social practice stems from a philosophical assumption about the nature of reality and how, subsequently, it can never lay claim to trans-historical relevance but is always returned to its interpretive ground.

### Interpreting Heidegger

Because my analysis does not focus on any one moment of Heidegger's intellectual career, one of my key presuppositions concerns the unity of his works and how his later thought is, in fact, constituted by a turn that is not antithetical to his earlier writings.<sup>57</sup> The divide between 'Heidegger I' and 'Heidegger II', as William

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<sup>53</sup> Ernst Jünger coined the phrase 'the *Gestalt* of the worker' where through technology all relations to the world and in the world are mobilised according to 'the realm of work.' See his 'Technology as the Mobilisation of the World Through the *Gestalt* of the Worker', *Philosophy and Technology*, p. 269.

<sup>54</sup> Ricoeur, 'The History of Philosophy and the Unity of Truth,' *History and Truth*, p. 51.

<sup>55</sup> Andrew Feenberg, *Questioning Technology*, p. 14ff.

<sup>56</sup> 'Theses on Feuerbach,' *The German Ideology*, p. 571.

<sup>57</sup> For support of my position, see Dominique Janicaud, 'Overcoming Metaphysics?' *Heidegger: From Metaphysics to Thought*, p. 11, Ricoeur, 'Heidegger and the Question of the Subject', p. 224; Gadamer, 'Martin Heidegger's One Path', *Reading Heidegger from the Start*, pp. 25-7; Frederick A. Olafson, 'The unity of Heidegger's thought', *The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger*, pp. 97-121; and Frede 'The question of being: Heidegger's project', *The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger*, pp. 42-69.

Richardson has made famous, occurs some time around 1935, with the 'Essence of Truth' lectures, and appears *prima facie* as an abandonment of the thinking in *Being and Time*.<sup>58</sup> It is my view, nonetheless, that there is a demand of Heidegger's interpreters to see how the earlier Heidegger is 'contained' by the later.<sup>59</sup> And so specific questions about Heidegger's turn should themselves be viewed hermeneutically, that is, the turn itself is open to interpretation. On this point, Jeffrey Barash notes that the turn was referred to by Heidegger as a 'reversal' and a 'completion'.<sup>60</sup> Reversal does not necessarily mean a contradiction, and the subsequent 'completion' suggests a complement to the initial analytic of Dasein in *Being and Time*. Indeed, Barash emphasises that Heidegger saw that one of the main problems of his earlier work was its reliance on an anthropological description. The subsequent turn from 'man in relation to Being' to 'Being and its truth in relation to man' is not antithetical, but refers to a completion of the analytic of Dasein, that is, of carrying out its implication.<sup>61</sup> In other words, if one of the aims of *Being and Time* (and thinking before the turn) was to disclose Dasein's ontological ground and depth, then Heidegger's later thinking attempts to think from within this originality. It is no longer towards a reformulation but thinking after this reformulation, that is, within it.<sup>62</sup>

This is not to say, nonetheless, that a reading of Heidegger's works is therefore unproblematic. I believe that my analysis and account of the varying debates shall show that I am aware of key difficulties with Heidegger—e.g., his position on metaphysics—while at the same time trying to see his thinking within a

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<sup>58</sup> Heidegger: *Through Phenomenology to Thought*, p. 209ff. As Jeff Malpas and Thomas Sheehan note, this change [*die Wendung*] is not the turn [*die Kehre*] that Heidegger famously speaks of since the turn is not autobiographical; Malpas, *Heidegger's Topology: Being, Place, World*, p. 152 and Sheehan, 'Kehre and Ereignis: A Prolegomenon to *Introduction to Metaphysics*', *A Companion to Heidegger's Introduction to Metaphysics*, eds. Richard Polt and Gregory Fried (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), p. 3.

<sup>59</sup> Dominique Janicaud, 'Overcoming Metaphysics?' *Heidegger: From Metaphysics to Thought*, p. 11.

<sup>60</sup> *Martin Heidegger and the Problem of Historical Meaning*, p. 231.

<sup>61</sup> *Martin Heidegger and the Problem of Historical Meaning*, p. 265. Cf. Mark Sinclair, *Heidegger, Aristotle and the Work of Art*, p. 72.

<sup>62</sup> I address this further in Chapter V (Ontological Disproportion). Part of the problem with *Being and Time* in relation to Heidegger's later thinking, as Jeff Malpas points out, is that it *tends* towards a grounding of meaning in Dasein's subjectivity and so therefore implies a subjectivist/idealist anthropology; *Heidegger's Topology: Being, Place, World*, p. 223. I address this problem in relation to William Blattner's understanding of Dasein's transcendence in Chapter V (Ontological Disproportion). Suffice it to say for now, subjectivism in *Being and Time* is a misreading of Heidegger's project.

larger interpretive framework. In general, I see that there was a reflective momentum in Heidegger's thinking whose inertia could not be overcome until he adequately deconstructed the tradition, a phase which occurred in his earlier works. Arriving "after" Heidegger, as it were, contemporary commentators may take it for granted how challenging his critique was and had to be in order to clear the ground for a new direction. The force of his critique can therefore appear to be axiomatic rather than "instrumental" or necessary for the times. The position that I assume in this study is therefore a synthetic one that reads the diversity of Heidegger's approaches, themes and questions in view of a reinvigoration of the reflective appreciation of being itself.

## II Synopsis of Chapters

Chapter III (A Hermeneutical Approach) provides an account of my application of the methodology of hermeneutics in relation to key themes of givenness and historical retrieval. Martin Heidegger and Paul Ricoeur are the main figures upon whom I rely for an exposition of hermeneutics. To this extent, I explain my use of hermeneutics in relation to them, noting how my mediation of their contrasting views acts as the critical impetus by which I attempt to elaborate an ontology of work into a hermeneutic structure. In short, Ricoeur is hesitant to go with Heidegger's ontology all the way. Ricoeur seeks to emerge from this primordial realm and develop epistemological and hermeneutical structures by which we can see ontology in direct relation to practical action. While Ricoeur often refers to this criticism in relation to language and ethics, it is one that is particularly apt for an ontology of work that seeks to understand the depth of the most productive of human activities.

### **Deconstruction**

Chapter IV (Marx and the Philosophy of Work) is a deconstruction of Marx's philosophy of work. This project consists in seeing how his philosophy overdetermines the relationship of work to necessity, barring any self-interpretive content from it despite the process of objectification central to the development of the self-consciousness of the worker. My critique is by no means new but has been articulated by many of his critics. Where I venture into new territory is in elaborating this critique in terms of its ontological implications. Thus, my interpretation of Heidegger's ontology engages with my interpretation of Marx's conception of *praxis*, and I emphasise that Marx's notion of freedom presupposes a teleological commitment that he cannot, for reasons concerning his repudiation of ideology, accept. In the end, this paradoxically creates a lacuna in which ideological content can manifest, and I attempt to show how this ultimately contradicts his philosophical suppositions—i.e., because there is an ideal content, necessity cannot be the starting point of a philosophy of work.

Chapter V (Deconstructing the Modern Understanding of Work) I analyse the metaphysical foundations of Enlightenment thinking that characterises nature as mechanistic and without inherent meaning. My argument is that the over-determination of necessity is expressed in terms of a general mechanistic and utilitarian philosophical attitude that evaluates the validity of activities according to their usefulness. I attempt to show that this attitude is more or less operative today in terms of a modern work ethic that was first critically expressed by Max Weber. Weber's insight into the theological circumstances of the Reformation, that pitted nature against God, is one I analyse and accept but then develop in a different direction. In the end, I leave behind Weber's social critique in order to follow Louis Dupré's hermeneutical analysis of why a dualism between God and nature during the Reformation was viable. This dualism in fact is more elaborately affirmed in the general Enlightenment disposition that attempts to secure the supremacy of the self, who is the arbiter of knowledge and bestows meaning to nature. One can see here that this attitude is not merely epistemological but, as I will argue, ontologically decisive since it affirms an interpretive relation to all things by which their primary mode of being is usefulness for the human subject. Finally, I examine the futile implications of this disposition in relation to Hannah Arendt's analysis of *animal laborans* which designates a mode of being that is essentially mechanistic. Here I choose to see Arendt's well-known classifications of *animal laborans* and *homo faber* as existential descriptions and not definite scientific categories. The two express modes of being that can operate simultaneously in one person since they refer to modes of intentionality towards the world and not attributes or qualities that are possessed by an individual.

### **Reconstruction**

In Chapter VI (Ontological Disproportion) I argue that the initial motivation of work is not necessity but ontological disproportion. I refer to Heidegger's analysis of ontological difference as the basis upon which tension in human being as such is knowable. The two lines of analysis I refer to are *existential anxiety*, whose disproportion is known in terms of finitude, and *reflective synthesis*, whose

disproportion is known in terms of dialectical affirmation. Ricoeur, who accepts Heidegger's account of difference, demonstrates how negation and negativity identify the latent nothingness and apparent futility of effort but must, in the end, choose in favour of something. This "something" is precisely an interpretation of the meaning of being which then opens up any negativity to an encounter with hope and the meaningful possibilities of being that can be realised.

After having shown that ontological disproportion is the initial motivation of work, I then turn to a reflection on how this then changes the manner in which we might understand work's response to literal needs. In Chapter VII (Form and Figure: The Literal and Metaphorical Aspects of Work) I argue that this change occurs in seeing work as having a superlative, metaphorical nature. Paul Ricoeur's studies on metaphor have revealed how language performs a function of reinterpreting ontological possibilities of being-in-the-world. Here, I explore Ricoeur's thought on metaphor and *poiesis* as it relates to a philosophy of work, arguing that it provides a foundation by which an ontological depth to work can be explicitly appreciated. This recovery consists in distinguishing between two levels of meaning in work: the literal form, that pertains to necessity and survival, and the metaphorical figure, that refers to greater possibilities of being. I encapsulate the twofold level of work in terms of the *gesture* of the hand which responds to necessity in its making, but also points towards new possibilities of being.

Chapter VIII (The Ancient Greek Understanding of Work) takes a recursive turn to Classical sources—i.e., Plato and Aristotle. This turn provides a necessary clarification of the relation between *theoria*, *praxis* and *poiesis* (or Aristotle's three modes of knowing truth) which, as I argue, not only permeates current conceptions of work but has been blurred since Marx's elevation of human production as social practice. This recursion allows us to gain a better sense of how a non-utilitarian understanding of work is possible and plausible. While I am not arguing for a nostalgic return to the past, I am intent to show that the foundation of our Western history is not as "philosophically excavated" as one might first suspect. Thus, by showing how the notion of use is entirely different in the ancient Greek thinking, I make the argument that a rehabilitation of the meaning of use today is not as radical

or “impractical” as one might object. Indeed, it is imperative to the extent that there is a domain to the meaning of use that is obscured today and resides in the ancient sources.

In Chapter IX (Ontologisation of the Greek Concepts), I offer an ontologisation of the foregoing analysis of the Greek thinking. Ontologisation, a term coined by Franco Volpi, generally refers to the reinterpretation of philosophical concepts according to Heidegger’s grounding of human understanding in the apprehension of ontological possibility of being (*vis-a-vis* finitude). In this case, the ontologisation occurs through Heidegger’s own interpretation of the hermeneutical unity of *theoria*, *praxis* and *poiesis*, whereby he reverses the Aristotelian emphasis on actuality for possibility and shows that work (*poiesis*) is linked to the other domains of reflection (the divine/eternal and the ethical). The studies of Franco Volpi, Hans-Georg Gadamer, Catriona Hanley and Mark Sinclair prove vital here as they offer a great deal of clarification on Heidegger’s relation to Aristotle and show convincingly that Heidegger’s challenge to philosophy during the period of *Being and Time* was to destruct the prevalence of theoretical understanding for a renewed appreciation of existential *praxis*, or being-in-the-world. This, in turn, allows one to appreciate more fully the role of the poetic (*poiesis*) as it is evinced in Heidegger’s later writings (1930s and onwards). To be sure, this renewal is not a Marxist elevation of *praxis* but a meditation on action in unity with an ontological interpretation of the pure possibility of being itself. It is therefore not antithetical to *theoria* but redescribes and reinvigorates its role and nature. In short, *theoria* is ontologised. This ontological interpretation provides a decisive moment in my study since it allows me to further broaden an understanding of work in relation to an overall scheme in which work participates *with* reflection in coming to interpret and reveal a world. In this sense, work and reflection dialectically participate in a larger, more total movement of human being.

### **Reinterpretation**

Chapter X (An Ontological Understanding of Use) applies Heidegger’s understanding of intentionality and possibility to use. Here, I challenge the idea that

use is merely utilitarian or practical and that to understand otherwise we must conceive of human being in relation to the hermeneutical unity of *theoria-praxis-poiesis*. The first step in arguing this is my reversal of the dominating philosophical anthropology that assumes human being to be the master of nature. By showing that the human role is one of *nurturing*, a term I borrow from Richard Rojewicz, I elaborate the unity of *theoria-praxis-poiesis* into a specific hermeneutical structure that identifies these activities with more existential and concrete actions. My elaboration enables one to see how human use is related to immediate concerns prevalent in work and the more non-necessary domain of theoretical contemplation. To this end, the unity of *theoria-praxis-poiesis* is correlated with *giving-receiving-returning*: the specific acts of openness to the pre-givenness of being (*theoria*), reception of this pre-givenness in terms of apprehending an interpretive horizon of meaning (*praxis*) and returning to this pre-givenness through the activity of work (*poiesis*), or what I show to be essentially an act of thanking.

Chapter XI (Conclusion: Human Vocation) concludes my study with a summary of my argument as well as a detailed account of how human vocation is to be reconceived according to my thesis. In short, I examine how vocation is a response to being that culminates in thanking and that this thanking is a manner of human being becoming appropriate to being itself. This appropriation, or what Heidegger speaks of as *Ereignis*, is a mutual disclosure of meaning in which the unity of being is differentiated through the human response to and realisation in vocation. Finally, I will underline what I believe the contribution of my study offers to the contemporary understanding of work.



### III

## A Hermeneutical Approach

We can assume nothing and assert nothing dogmatically; nor can we accept assertions and assumptions of others. And yet we must make a beginning; and a beginning, as primary and underived, makes an assumption, or rather is an assumption. It seems as if it were impossible to make a beginning at all.

—Hegel<sup>1</sup>

In this chapter I will explain my reasons for undertaking the method of a hermeneutical approach in an understanding of work and respond to the secondary literature concerning hermeneutics, Heidegger and Ricoeur. I will also indicate how this approach will be employed in the subsequent chapters. To do these tasks, I will identify and explain two key features of hermeneutics—pre-givenness and retrieval. The first point, addressed to the reasons for undertaking a hermeneutical approach, concerns how philosophical hermeneutics—that is, the theory of interpretation developed out of Heidegger's ontology by Hans-Georg Gadamer and Paul Ricoeur—is both appropriate and paramount to my thesis of work, which sets itself in opposition to a mechanistic understanding of nature. Pre-givenness, as I will argue, is something precluded by a mechanistic conception since it sees nature as mere matter for use and not something in its own right. If something is pre-given, it has an ontological status that elicits an appropriate response to that which has been bestowed or gifted. The second point, concerning my employment of hermeneutics, refers to my interpretation of philosophical sources, or what is retrieval. Generally, I describe how historical interpretation is bound up with a futural concern of possibility and how my thesis readily admits this supposition. Specifically, I outline some key aspects of my approach to Heidegger and Ricoeur and how I mediate between their differences, in this case, where Ricoeur critiques Heidegger. Having said this, I should state at the outset that this chapter is not meant to be a

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<sup>1</sup> Hegel, *Hegel's Logic*, p. 3.

summarisation of the history of hermeneutics.<sup>2</sup> Nonetheless, I will include commentary where significant points require contextualisation within the historical development of philosophy.

### The Pre-Givenness of Meaning in Being-in-the-World

The silent center around which the history of philosophy revolves is its interpretation of totality. I say *silent* because at stake in any metaphysical position is an interpretation of what totality means even though this is rarely expressed since a metaphysical understanding as such often conceals the larger interpretation of totality involved.<sup>3</sup> The Greeks, for example, used the term *kosmos*; in the Middle Ages theology coined the term *universe*;<sup>4</sup> and in modernity, though one no doubt thinks of the universe, one speaks of *world*, as in having a world-view. In these examples, there is a clear difference in how each era regards totality; but it is at the same time that this interpretation of totality is almost transparent. As a historical relation, for example, the history of philosophy is interpreted according to the present metaphysical view. Herein, the Greek cosmos is often explained according to the modern understanding of reality or nature, and this is essentially an

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<sup>2</sup> Gadamer's *Truth and Method* deals with this history in terms of motivating a methodological turn from within the human sciences. For more recent accounts of the history of modern hermeneutics after Gadamer, see Richard Palmer's *Hermeneutics: Interpretation Theory in Schleiermacher, Dilthey, Heidegger, and Gadamer* and Anthony C. Thiselton: *The Two Horizons: New Testament Hermeneutics and Philosophical Description and New Horizons in Hermeneutics*.

<sup>3</sup> Dupré's *Passage to Modernity* demonstrates this very well in relation to the transformations of the understanding of nature. See also Heidegger, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic* in which he speaks of world according to Medieval and modern understandings, p. 174.

<sup>4</sup> The Chambers Etymological Dictionary sources the word 'universal' to Chaucer's 14<sup>th</sup> century translation of Boethius' *The Consolation of Philosophy* (5<sup>th</sup> century AD). Whatever the case, the Latin *universum* takes on an unparalleled importance in Medieval theology as expressed in such works as John Scotus Eriugena (*Periphyseon*) where universe is defined according to a specific system of unity in diversity (*universitas rerum*), that is, his fourfold of Divine Nature: uncreated-creating; created-creating; created-uncreating; uncreated-uncreating; see Joseph Milne, *The Ground of Being*, pp. 46-7. In *Four Seminars* Heidegger comments that Diels was correct in asserting that the Greek cosmos, from Heraclitus on, did not mean world, p. 7; cf. Jean Beaufret, *Dialogues with Heidegger: Greek Philosophy*, p. 7. André LaCocque notes that the term universe in the Judaic tradition should not be equated with the term cosmos from the ancient Greek because the cosmos is grounded in reason while the Judaic universe is a 'harmony of the world' according to the 'decree, by Law, and an equation is established between harmony and obedience'; 'Cracks in the Wall', *Thinking Biblically: Exegetical and Hermeneutical Studies*, p. 6.

anachronistic move.<sup>5</sup> In this act of historical retrieval, a concealment occurs in which philosophical terms specific to one metaphysical system are appropriated by another system without saving their distinction. MacIntyre describes this as 'the adroit, although doubtless unconscious, use of a series of devices designed to mask difference, to bridge a discontinuity and to conceal unintelligibility'.<sup>6</sup> Heidegger similarly refers to the inversion of the meaning of the ancient Greek 'subject' [*hypokeimenon*] which originally meant 'that which is at the basis' and 'lies present as the ground for statements about something'.<sup>7</sup> Today, the meaning of subject has no currency outside the self; subject *means* the self as expressed, for instance, by Descartes. This inversion refers to how the innate presence of reason within nature, as with the Greek *phusis*,<sup>8</sup> is removed. All meaning outside the human being is doubted. The subject is now no longer nature but the human subject whose sole power consists in giving meaning to a mechanical nature. Louis Dupré writes,

The most decisive change in the way the self came to envision its role within the total order of being is symbolized in a strange reversal in the meaning of the term *subject*. Subject, the translation of *hypokeimenon* (what lies under something), had once named the most elementary level of being. In the course of the modern age it surprisingly came to stand for the ultimate source of meaning and value previously attributed to God or to divine nature.<sup>9</sup>

One can see here how the dichotomies of realism and idealism arise as a manner of affirming either side of the subject-object split. Idealism attaches itself to the human subject as the basis of all real meanings while realism posits an objective reality apart from any human involvement. Heidegger thus sees the two as expressing the same metaphysical misperception.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>5</sup> MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* pp. 12-29. For a detailed analysis of the ancient Greek understanding of the cosmos as craft, see Freidrich Solmsen, 'Nature as Craftsman in Greek Thought', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 24:4 (Oct-Dec 1963), pp. 473-96.

<sup>6</sup> 'The relationship of philosophy to its past', *Philosophy in History*, p. 33.

<sup>7</sup> Heidegger, *The Principle of Reason*, p. 9. Cf. Zimmerman, *Eclipse of the Self*, p. 209.

<sup>8</sup> As R.G. Collingwood points out for the Greeks 'the world of nature is saturated or permeated by mind'; *The Idea of Nature*, p. 3. Dupré adds, 'Contrary to later rationalism, however, that logical quality did not have its origin in the human mind: it constituted the very core of the real itself'; *Passage to Modernity*, p. 23; see also his *The Enlightenment*, p. 17.

<sup>9</sup> *Passage to Modernity*, p. 112.

<sup>10</sup> Schelling's *Treatise on the Essence of Human Freedom*, pp. 93-5.

According to Heidegger, this dichotomy, which is seen to be an epistemological one, misses the fundamental ontological constituency of understanding. Heidegger argues that understanding is not a mode of knowledge (epistemology) but relies upon the manner in which human being is comported towards being through temporality. Dasein *is* understanding, that is, always involved in a manner of interpreting.<sup>11</sup> Ricoeur summarises:

One must move deliberately outside the enchanted circle of the problematic of subject and object and question oneself about being in general. . . . Understanding is thus no longer a mode of knowledge but a mode of being, the mode of that being which exists through understanding.<sup>12</sup>

Because of this, one is deceived in thinking that anything like an objective reality can be ascertained. Commentators on Heidegger have criticised him on the grounds that his existential analytic of Dasein merely succeeds in reducing reality into the subjectivism of Dasein.<sup>13</sup> However, Dasein's mode of being as understanding is what makes this reading untenable. This is because Dasein's understanding is derivative of something ontologically prior to it. In this sense, Dasein recognises a world in which it has its manner of being: 'Understanding of existence as such is always an understanding of world'.<sup>14</sup> For Heidegger, the world is, in short, a unity of meaning that precedes the self and is by no means empty but constitutes the totality of actual and possible relations between beings. In this sense, Descartes' positing of the *ego* as the source of thinking is reversed by Heidegger: it is because one *is* in a world that one can think at all. This vital aspect of Heidegger's ontology will become clearer in subsequent chapters as I move from this more formal determination of *apriority* to the notion of giving thanks to the pre-givenness of being. But for now, it is necessary to see more clearly how Heidegger opposes the guiding concept of mechanism in the modern philosophy of work.

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<sup>11</sup> *Being and Time*, §31.

<sup>12</sup> 'Existence and Hermeneutics', *The Conflict of Interpretations*, p. 7.

<sup>13</sup> Hoy refers to such a mis-reading made by Nathan Rotenstreich in his argument that Heidegger subjectivises history ['The Ontological Status of History', *American Philosophical Quarterly*, 9 (January 1972), pp. 49-58]. See Hoy, 'History, Historicity, and Historiography in *Being and Time*', *Heidegger and Modern Philosophy*, p. 338.

<sup>14</sup> *Being and Time*, H146.

Mechanism refers to the fact that nature is a process with no inherent meaning, and moreover, that one can master the workings of the processes themselves.<sup>15</sup> A mechanistic understanding implies no final cause and allows a scientific investigation of nature to reduce its remit to the working relations within the mechanistic system, the so-called calculable logic of operations.<sup>16</sup> Mechanism concerns itself with the origin of the efficient cause and its subsequent effects that can be controlled through identifying the efficient cause. This is readily apparent in how technological and scientific thinking focus their research on smaller and smaller parts in order to increase results. This kind of reduction is, for example, prevalent in how an understanding of the functioning of human beings is reduced to these units. Thoughts are merely chemical reactions and behaviour is mechanistically determined. In short, this amounts to an understanding of being as a 'theory of the real'<sup>17</sup> in which we as humans have no direct relation to being but by a conceptual, explanatory representation. If mood is a problem, one does not, under this scheme, attempt to understand the nature of the mood in question, but is asked instead to ingest a chemical to eradicate the abnormality. Indeed, the notion of abnormality is itself something that is not in direct view of critical questioning but is merely accepted as a default component of this scheme.

The inclination to reduce meaning to an analysis of smaller and smaller parts relies on the justification that the universe is not really, as a whole, invested with meaning. The larger play of things is merely the effect of some smaller origin that is yet to be found. Consequently, the human involvement in mechanism tends to bracket out any questions larger than those at play in the immediate system of operations, that is, what I earlier referred to as technological rationality. In contrast and from Heidegger's point of view, because the unity of the world is prior to any existential determination, '[t]he essential possibility of Dasein concerns the way of taking care of the "world" . . . of concern for others, and always already present in all

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<sup>15</sup> Dupré, *The Enlightenment*, p. 25. Charles Taylor similarly refers to mechanism as an ontology of disengagement in contradistinction to Heidegger's. It is this disengagement that allows for the mastery of beings in nature since they are not seen to be inherently intelligent. See his 'Engaged agency and background in Heidegger', *The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger*, pp. 232-4.

<sup>16</sup> 'The Age of the World-Picture', *The Question Concerning Technology*, p. 135.

<sup>17</sup> Heidegger, 'Science and Reflection', *The Question Concerning Technology*, p. 171.

of this, the potentiality of being itself'.<sup>18</sup> For Heidegger, it is care for being that determines how Dasein subsequently dwells in and renders the world, and it is precisely a role for human caring that is occluded from the mechanistic world view which holds that the world is something to be mastered by humankind.

In view of Heidegger's notion of world, one can say that his reformulation of the modern concept constitutes a "Copernican revolution". In other words, it is a move so substantial that Hubert Dreyfus comments:

The description of the world as having a distinctive structure of its own that makes possible and calls forth Dasein's ontic comportment is the most important and original contribution of *Being and Time*. Indeed, since worldliness is another name for disclosedness or Dasein's understanding of being, worldliness is the guiding phenomenon behind Heidegger's thought in *Being and Time* and even in his later works.<sup>19</sup>

Instead of attempting to resolve the Enlightenment failure in trying to find the synthesis between subject and object, self and world,<sup>20</sup> Heidegger situates his philosophy within the unity of being. In other words, instead of trying to prove there is unity according to a rational scheme uniting subject and object, Heidegger shows how there *already* is the unity of being that precedes any scientific and pre-scientific understanding.<sup>21</sup> Unity is pre-given. In *Being and Time*, Heidegger states that he is defining the world in terms of the 'a priori of worldliness in general'.<sup>22</sup> Hubert Dreyfus explains,

Since Descartes, philosophers have been stuck with the *epistemological* problem of explaining how the ideas in our mind can be true of the external world. Heidegger shows that this subject/object epistemology presupposes a background of everyday practices into which we are socialized but that we

<sup>18</sup> *Being and Time*, H143.

<sup>19</sup> Dreyfus, *Being-in-the-World*, pp. 88-9.

<sup>20</sup> Dupré writes that 'Eighteenth-century attempts at closing the gap between the subject and object, opened during the previous century, often ended up reducing one to the other'; *The Enlightenment*, p. 267. Cf. MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, p. 52.

<sup>21</sup> John Caputo describes this aspect of hermeneutics as arising from 'the limitations of objective thinking, of setting ourselves apart from the world, from that imbeddedness in the world which can never be objectified'; 'The Thought of Being and the Conversation of Mankind: The Case of Heidegger and Rorty', *Hermeneutics and Praxis*, p. 262. Cf. Jeff Malpas on place and alreadiness in *Heidegger's Topology: Being, Place, World*, p. 51 and on unity, pp. 60-3.

<sup>22</sup> *Being and Time*, H65.



do not represent in our minds . . . he claims he is doing *ontology*, that is, asking about the nature of this understanding of being . . . that is not a representation in the mind corresponding to the world.<sup>23</sup>

According to Heidegger, the representational model of truth is based on the concern to find *correspondence* between the self and world. It thus elevates representational models of correspondence over an encounter with the very disclosure of being and the world.<sup>24</sup> So the unity of being and world does not appear to us as anything in its own right but as that which has its basis only through the reproduction of the human mind. In this respect, philosophical truth (i.e., logic) is a matter of correspondence between a representation and the real. The locus of philosophical propositions is the judgment that erects equivalence between two things. As Franco Volpi notes, this judgment cannot adequately account for being as it presences since it is 'merely a localization that, compared with the ontological depth of the happening of truth, constricts the phenomenon'.<sup>25</sup> Likewise, John Caputo remarks: 'Objectivist language is derivative, made possible only by breaking the primary bond of thinking to Being and artificially "constructing" a subject-object relationship'.<sup>26</sup>

For Heidegger, the over-determination of correspondence as the basis for a conception of truth—or what Steven Galt Crowell refers to as the 'hegemony of logic'<sup>27</sup>—actually fails to see truth as something adequate in its own right. Truth, in other words, is not primarily in correspondence. By virtue of being truth—that is, unconcealment (*aletheia*)—it is originarily disclosive (regardless of Dasein's role). This is why Heidegger argues that it is not we who presuppose truth in the world,

<sup>23</sup> Dreyfus, *Being-in-the-World*, p. 3.

<sup>24</sup> Werner Marx notes that in Heidegger's later thinking the term often translated into English as 'essence' (*Wesen*) does not convey the importance of active unfolding; *Is There a Measure on Earth?* pp. 159-60 n5. Cf. Iain Thomson on presencing versus presence (which refers to a static conception), *Heidegger and Ontotheology: Technology and the Politics of Education*, p. 34. As Peter Kemp points out, Ricoeur takes up this theme in Heidegger in terms of how the world should not be seen as the 'obstacle' that must conform to human reason (i.e., correspondence), but rather world is the correlate of one's existence. It mirrors its understanding and possibilities. 'Ricoeur between Heidegger and Levinas', *Paul Ricoeur: The Hermeneutics of Action*, pp. 44-5. See also, Joseph Milne, 'Appearance and Reality', *Temenos Academy Review* 9 (2006), pp. 51-64.

<sup>25</sup> 'Being and Time: A "Translation" of *Nicomachean Ethics*?' *Reading Heidegger from the Start*, p. 198. Cf. Mark Sinclair, *Heidegger, Aristotle and the Work of Art*, pp. 112-13.

<sup>26</sup> Caputo, 'The Thought of Being and the Conversation of Mankind: The Case of Heidegger and Rorty', *Hermeneutics and Praxis*, p. 259.

<sup>27</sup> 'Making Logic Philosophical Again', *Reading Heidegger from the Start*, p. 56.

but it is truth that presupposes us.<sup>28</sup> Truth, when seen in this way, is an ontological phenomenon of revealing/uncovering.<sup>29</sup> Meaning, on this view, is that which is always revealing itself through the very process of being, something that for Heidegger is named in the essence of the Greek notion of *phusis*.<sup>30</sup> Truth for Dasein then becomes a matter of becoming appropriate in such a way as to be able to receive it. I will develop this kernel in more detail in approaching the thanking nature of work that responds to the gift and pre-giveness of being in Chapter X (Ontological Use). It should be noted that falsity, in this sense, does not occur when a proposition fails to correspond to beings, but is a 'covering over or concealing of beings' through Dasein's inappropriateness.<sup>31</sup>

In this respect, while hermeneutics attests to the primacy of meaning in the very structure of being, it also states that this meaning is concealed, hidden and not absolute or univocal in its manifestation. The ontology of the primacy of meaning is offset by the existential need for human being to interpret it. Meaning must be nurtured through Dasein's mode of being in understanding, and this, as I will show in Chapter VI (Ontological Disproportion) bestows a unique role to human being. Ricoeur refers to this paradox of meaning and concealment in terms of the unity of the world which is something we recognise but cannot fully explicate or define: 'The unity of the world is too prior to be possessed, too lived to be known. It vanishes as soon as it is recognized'.<sup>32</sup> Ricoeur's phrase 'the unity of the world' refers to how human being, in order to have any understanding at all, must be preceded ontologically by world. It is the world that allows for the possibility of understanding in which relations, equivalences and inequivalences can be seen. To

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<sup>28</sup> *Being and Time*, H227-8.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Mark Sinclair, *Heidegger, Aristotle and the Work of Art*, p. 121. Sinclair argues that the theory of correspondence grounds truth in logic (*logos*), but Aristotle did not himself conclude this. Book 10 of *Metaphysics* refers to *truth as being* 'in the most proper sense' (p.24) which, as Sinclair notes, is a contradiction that many analytic scholars of Aristotle either dismiss as an anomaly, or they attempt to rationalise a different meaning to the text. Sinclair concludes, along with Heidegger, that Aristotle refers to two different modes of truth—the former (logic) as being dianoetic while the latter (being) as being noetic. Noetic truth comes through a non-discursive apprehension and so precedes the former by means of ontological primacy. Dianoia is reliant upon noiesis.

<sup>30</sup> See, for example, 'Aletheia (Heraclitus, Fragment B 16), *Early Greek Thinking*, pp. 102-23.

<sup>31</sup> Sinclair, *Heidegger, Aristotle and the Work of Art*, p. 120.

<sup>32</sup> Ricoeur, 'Notes on the Wish and Endeavor for Unity', *History and Truth*, p. 194. Cf. Heidegger, 'On the Essence of Ground', *Pathmarks*, p. 110.



maintain that one can get at an objective description of this unity is always a manner of thinking that arrives “too late” since it is by virtue of this unity that any description can be made—or as Ricoeur says, it is ‘too prior to be possessed, too lived to be known’. To reiterate, Heidegger refers to this as Dasein’s being-in-the-world in which one is in a world that is *already*. In the famous section of *Being and Time* where Heidegger critiques Kant’s understanding of the *a priori* of directionality (left and right), Heidegger comments that Kant’s subjective principle, or *a priori*, is itself ‘grounded in the “subjective” *a priori* of being-in-the-world, which has nothing to do with a determinate character restricted beforehand to a worldless subject’.<sup>33</sup> In other words, there is no meaning that can be derived from or for a worldless subject. The alreadiness of the world is the presencing of meaning in being. This is the basis upon which the question of being is already given to Dasein; that is, this *apriority* constitutes Dasein’s preunderstanding.<sup>34</sup>

Yet, if this unity of meaning can be attested to by recourse to Heidegger’s phenomenological description of disclosure, it is this phenomenology which needs to address the problem of error and double meaning. This is because unity of meaning is what one least recognises in having a perspectival view or in encountering unfamiliar texts and arguments. One is thrown into this world and this means that human being is non-coincidental with truth since it arrives in an ontological milieu in which things are already underway. Meaning is both present and hidden, and it is Dasein’s mode of being in understanding that must cope with this dilemma, a dilemma that is, to be sure, the very matter of human existence itself. The response to this problem lies in understanding the nature of prejudice in interpretation.

### Retrieval through Prejudice

Heidegger’s redevelopment of hermeneutics in *Being and Time* inherits Wilhelm Dilthey’s concern for historicity,<sup>35</sup> but instead of attempting to find meaning on the

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<sup>33</sup> *Being and Time*, H110.

<sup>34</sup> William McNeill, ‘The First Principle of Hermeneutics’, *Reading Heidegger from the Start*, pp. 395 & 398.

<sup>35</sup> Ricoeur, ‘The Task of Hermeneutics’, *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*, p. 48. On Dilthey’s insistence of the historical in understanding, Ricoeur writes, ‘Before the coherence of the text comes the coherence of history, considered as the great document of mankind, as the most fundamental *expression of life*’. Cf. Richard Kearney’s ‘Between Phenomenology and Hermeneutics’, *Paul Ricoeur: The Owl of*

basis of reconstructing the past subjectivity of the author, Heidegger's reconstruction refers to the project of disclosing the ground prior to a single life. In other words, Heidegger is interested in how human understanding can, despite historical distance, find a meaningful relation to being itself. The historical concern of Dilthey is refigured in terms of that which allows for the basis of anything like a historical view, and this "anything" is being. Interpretation is an act grounded in and therefore determined by the question of the meaning of being [*Seinsfrage*].<sup>36</sup> The crux of Heidegger's project is to show how history is both a productive and necessary involvement *in* being. History is therefore not simply the science of history (historiography) but what Gadamer was later to call 'historically effected consciousness', or in Heideggerian terms, historicity.<sup>37</sup> This move to simultaneously ground history in ontology and state that ontology only has its meaning in history constitutes the *hermeneutic turn* in Heidegger.<sup>38</sup> For Heidegger the fundamental relation between ontology and history cannot be overstated. Historicity is the milieu in which Dasein arrives at a self-understanding in view of the utmost possibility of its being. A historical interpretation is, then, not only a retrieval of sources but a retrieval of the future possibility of Dasein.<sup>39</sup> In this respect, history is not overcome in understanding but seen as constituent of the human project of understanding itself, that is, history is that through which meaningfulness itself arises.

Charles Guignon identifies three traits of historicity by which this occurs: 1) the sense of indebtedness in which one arrives in existing already in a traditional milieu of understanding; 2) the selection of events and figures in developing an overall sense of history; and 3) the self-reflective criticality of this sense in which the traditional understanding is re-invigorated through its re-interpretation.<sup>40</sup> According to the historical basis of hermeneutics, there is no objective meaning that is finally

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*Minerva*, p. 21. Ricoeur highlights Dilthey's distinction of explanation and understanding; the former is proper to natural science while the latter is unique to the human sciences. See Ricoeur, 'What is a Text?' *A Ricoeur Reader*, pp. 48-63.

<sup>36</sup> Jacques Taminiaux, *Heidegger and the Project of Fundamental Ontology*, p. 60.

<sup>37</sup> *Truth and Method*, pp. 165-8; *Being and Time*, H19-20.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p. 257.

<sup>39</sup> Hoy develops this same connection to historicity in 'Heidegger and the hermeneutic turn', *The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger*, p. 191 and 'History, Historicity, and Historiography in *Being and Time*', *Heidegger and Modern Philosophy*, pp. 329-53, especially pp. 336-48.

<sup>40</sup> 'History and Commitment in the Early Heidegger', *Heidegger: A Critical Reader*, pp. 136-8.

disclosed. Hermeneutics is constantly engaging in retrieval in order to better understand the past in relation to the future. Meaning, in this respect, is never exhausted but is continually emergent. Or as Ricoeur writes,

by retroaction from the successive “nows,” our past never stops changing its meaning; the present appropriation of the past modifies that which motivates us from the depths of the past.<sup>41</sup>

The dialogue with the past is therefore one of constant re-engagement according to the philosophical necessities by which the questioner/reader has been provoked to return to historical sources. Furthermore, it is on this need for a constant re-engagement, that is a repetition [*Wiederholung*] of interpretation and not experimentation, that Heidegger secures hermeneutics as the centre of the human sciences.

If objectivity is no longer possible, hermeneutics follows an alternative route that addresses the manner in which human understanding is not endlessly restricted by its own prejudice. It is in this sense that I follow the line from Heidegger to Gadamer and Ricoeur. Both Gadamer and Ricoeur, for instance, agree that prejudice is actually the sign of one’s openness to ontological possibility. Gadamer’s well-known account of prejudice is here key: ‘Prejudices are biases of our openness to the world. They are simply the conditions whereby we experience something—where by what we encounter says something to us’.<sup>42</sup> The possibility of interpretation is the possibility of coming into something entirely novel to the self, or what is a new self-understanding. In this is what one can call a more genuine inter-subjectivity since the historical sources have their own manner of being that encounters and reconfigures the reader’s understanding.<sup>43</sup> Ricoeur writes on hermeneutics in relation to this reconfiguration:

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<sup>41</sup> Ricoeur, *The Symbolism of Evil*, p. 22. Cf. Ricoeur, ‘The History of Philosophy and the Unity of Truth’, *History and Truth*, p. 51 and Lorenz Krüger, ‘Why do we study the history of philosophy?’ *Philosophy in History*, p. 89.

<sup>42</sup> ‘The Universality of the Hermeneutic Problem’, *The Hermeneutic Tradition*, p. 152. Cf. Ricoeur’s ‘Metaphor and the Main Problems of Hermeneutics’, *A Ricoeur Reader*, p. 315.

<sup>43</sup> ‘Metaphor and the Main Problems of Hermeneutics’, *A Ricoeur Reader*, p. 315.

By the expression '*self-understanding*', I should like to contrast the *self* which emerges from the understanding of the text to the *ego* which claims to precede this understanding. It is the text, with its universal power of unveiling, which gives a *self* to the *ego*.<sup>44</sup>

The hermeneutic circle between reader and text is therefore by no means solved. Rather, the circle is opened up in the sense that for textual interpretation reading constitutes the fulfilling of the destiny of the text in the attempt to re-say what the text has already said. The re-saying is not an attempt to re-create meaning but is, to the contrary, precisely a reinterpretation of reality in accordance with what the text has proposed.<sup>45</sup>

The project of hermeneutics is therefore one of retrieving a textual source from its tradition in order to reinterpret it according to new possibilities of being, that is, possibilities projected by the text itself. While this retrieval may include critique, because it always seeks to understand better, it is inevitably reconstructive of the tradition it reads.<sup>46</sup> This is expressed somewhat enigmatically by Heidegger when he writes,

Whatever and however we may try to think, we think within the sphere of tradition. Tradition prevails when it frees us from thinking back to a thinking forward, which is no longer a planning.<sup>47</sup>

This kind of retrieval lends a dialogical universality to philosophical sources while admitting that the unique circumstances of the present age, that have accrued through history, necessitate novel reinterpretations of the past. This twofold polarity constitutes a play wherein the past is reinterpreted through the concerns and exigencies of the present situation. This play instils the practice of interpretation with a self-reflexive awareness that recognises the interpretation of texts as an act of coming to understand the present and not an objective past. One of the more vivid examples of this is brought to mind by Alasdair MacIntyre when looking at how

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<sup>44</sup> Ricoeur, 'Appropriation', *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*, p. 193. *Italics in original.*

<sup>45</sup> Ricoeur, 'What Is a Text?' *A Ricoeur Reader*, p. 63.

<sup>46</sup> This applies even to the Heidegger's critique of metaphysics. See my 'Heidegger and the Appropriation of Metaphysics', *The Heythrop Journal* (forthcoming), wherein I argue how Heidegger does not dismiss metaphysics but calls for its renewal.

<sup>47</sup> Heidegger, 'The Principle of Identity', *Identity and Difference*, p. 41.

translators from various epochs render Homer's *Iliad* into English. Looking at the translations of George Chapman (1598), Alexander Pope (1715) and Robert Fitzgerald (1974), MacIntyre focuses on a key passage where Homer describes the moment at which Achilles is caught in a rage, 'poised for a moment between on the one hand drawing his sword in order to kill Agamemnon or on the other curbing his *thumos*'.<sup>48</sup> MacIntyre shows how each translator interprets the dilemma Achilles faces in terms of moral precepts prevalent during each translator's respective era. Chapman interprets the conflict in Achilles as one of 'rival thoughts'; Pope as reason versus passion; and Fitzgerald as psychological impulse.<sup>49</sup> In each case, the interpretation is not only a manner of gaining access to a traditional text but also one encountering a self-interpretation of one's philosophical precepts. This occurs because, according to MacIntyre, the means-ends reasoning in Homer must be made intelligible according to each translator's era in which means and ends are given cogency.<sup>50</sup> One might also say here that in the interpretation of historical sources, the prejudice of the reader encounters the prejudice of tradition, giving rise to what Gadamer famously called 'the fusion of horizons' that is projected as a future possibility of being.<sup>51</sup>

It is true, nonetheless, that when such a process is allowed to operate without any kind of self-reflexivity, then prejudice acts as a hindrance. But even so, the open-endedness of history allows for the possible retrieval of even the most prejudiced sources. It is in this sense, for example, that the acceptance of slavery by Aristotle brings to our attention the uniquely atemporal understanding he had of human nature.<sup>52</sup> Gadamer thus conceives of the hermeneutical exigency of the human sciences as one that is constantly re-awakened by the flux of historical consciousness:

Every age has to understand a transmitted text in its own way, for the text belongs to the whole tradition whose content interests the age and in which it seeks to understand itself. The real meaning of a text, as it speaks to the interpreter, does not depend on the contingencies of the author and his original audience. It is certainly not identical with them, for it is always co-

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<sup>48</sup> *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* p. 16-21.

<sup>49</sup> *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* p. 17.

<sup>50</sup> *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* p. 19.

<sup>51</sup> E.g., *Truth and Method*, pp. 374-5.

<sup>52</sup> MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, pp. 159-60. Cf. *Being and Time*, §81.

determined also by the historical situation of the interpreter and hence by the totality of the objective course of history.<sup>53</sup>

This treatment of prejudice as the threshold at which interpretation can either open the hermeneutic circle or close it down marks an appropriate point to speak more of my unique application of hermeneutics in interpreting Heidegger's thinking. Furthermore, we will see how this retrieval feature is remarkably pronounced in my attempt to re-read the philosophy of work in ancient Greek thinking.

### Retrieving Heidegger through Ricoeur

As mentioned earlier, while Heidegger and Ricoeur constitute the core of this hermeneutical study, the two also provide the means by which I attempt to draw out an ontological analysis of work into a more concrete scheme by which one can see how such an ontology relates to everyday practice and concerns. In this section, I will show in more detail how this mediation will operate.

Let us begin with some reservations about Heidegger's ontology to which Ricoeur gives cogent expression. While adopting Heidegger's ontology, Ricoeur by no means accepts it without making critical adjustments. In fact, Ricoeur formulates one of the more piercing critiques of Heidegger that takes issue not with any particular feature of his thinking but with his reluctance to step outside his fundamental ontology. For instance, there is Ricoeur's declaration that though he begins in agreement with Heidegger, he eventually refuses to follow him.<sup>54</sup> This refusal is precisely over the question of whether or not a fundamental ontology requires a further hermeneutical development involving questions of methodology

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<sup>53</sup> *Truth and Method*, p. 296. Cf. my article 'Commitment and Communication: The Aesthetics of Receptivity and Historicity,' *Contemporary Aesthetics*, 4 (2006), where in I discuss the centrality of this kind of historical/hermeneutical relation to aesthetic perception.

<sup>54</sup> See, for instance, Ricoeur's statement in *Fallible Man* where he speaks of Heidegger as someone 'whom we shall eventually refuse to follow,' p. 39. See also Ricoeur's comment directed at Heidegger's turning away from scientific methodology: 'Now a philosophy which breaks the dialogue with the sciences is no longer addressed to anything but itself'; 'The Task of Hermeneutics,' *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*, p. 59. Hoy makes a similar observation on Heidegger's development of historicity in relation to historiography: '. . . it is precisely at this point [where Heidegger exposes the meaningfulness of his fundamental ontology in relation to history] where ontology is to be reconnected with the ontic sciences that Heidegger is least convincing'; 'History, Historicity, and Historiography in *Being and Time*,' *Heidegger and Modern Philosophy*, p. 346.

and how such an ontology might translate over into affecting everyday concerns and participation with other beings, or what I will refer to as epistemology. This difference of attitude is best conveyed in their respective hermeneutical approaches. Ricoeur sees Heidegger's as a 'general hermeneutics' while Ricoeur refers to his project as one that moves from a general to a 'regional hermeneutics' allowing for subsequent development of 'philology, history, depth-psychology, etc.'<sup>55</sup> Heidegger, while having a general threefold method of reduction, destruction and construction,<sup>56</sup> offers no systematic epistemology but leaves each hermeneutical enterprise to itself, mediating between the ineluctable being-towards-death (as the fulfillment of the utmost potential to be) and a patient waiting [*gelassenheit*] in the provocation to think.<sup>57</sup> It is because of the very nature of being's difference, where being and beings are at play in their revealing and concealing, that Heidegger leaves open the general path of thinking. Hannah Arendt observes,

Heidegger never thinks "about" something; he thinks something. . . . he persistently remains there, underground, in order to lay down pathways and fix "trail marks".<sup>58</sup>

Each path stakes its course at the risk of concealing an aspect of that which has been revealed. It is at this point that Heidegger sees his ontology as commencing on the path of thinking (and thanking being) apart from philosophy since it attempts to

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<sup>55</sup> Ricoeur, 'Hermeneutics and Critique of Ideology', *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*, p. 89. There is also each thinker's reflection on time which Heidegger discusses in a more primordial way than Ricoeur's analysis of Augustine and Aristotle in *Time and Narrative*. Jean Griesch's essay 'The Eschatology of Being and the God of Time in Heidegger' provides an illuminating comparison of Heidegger and Ricoeur in this respect; *International Journal of Philosophical Studies*, 4:1 (March 1996), pp. 17-42.

<sup>56</sup> Franco Volpi, 'Dasein as praxis', *Critical Heidegger*, p. 33.

<sup>57</sup> Ted Sadler disagrees with Ricoeur's accusation stating that 'Given Heidegger's tremendous influences on the sciences, it is odd Ricoeur accuses him of 'breaking the dialogue' [with the sciences]'; *Heidegger and Aristotle*, p. 224 n54. Nonetheless, Sadler's statement becomes quite odd when considering the radical shift Heidegger that calls for in opposing historiography and the technological nature of the sciences. Breaking discourse with the sciences and having influence on further thinking on the sciences are different things. The reengagement with the sciences is separate from Heidegger's own thinking on them. Clearly, Ricoeur is greatly influenced by Heidegger and reengages his ontology with an epistemic elaboration. Heidegger, on the other hand, sees epistemology squarely located in ontology [cf. Volpi, 'Being and Time: A "Translation" of the *Nicomachean Ethics*?', *Reading Heidegger from the Start*, p. 204].

<sup>58</sup> 'Heidegger at Eighty', *Heidegger and Modern Philosophy*, p. 296.



think things originally—that is, at their ontological inception, or what is really the phenomenological proclamation, *to the things themselves!*<sup>59</sup>

Ricoeur's hermeneutics, on the other hand, is comprised of a grafting of hermeneutics onto Heidegger's phenomenology.<sup>60</sup> It is, in the last analysis, a manner of recovering method for the human sciences and as such is faithful to the initial project of the Enlightenment, i.e., Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*. Nevertheless, Ricoeur's hermeneutics, while allied to this general aim, is very different in its development. In Ricoeur's thinking the ontology disclosed by Heidegger is turned towards the question of texts and language. It is not only because texts are the central medium through which philosophy engages with itself over the many eras, but it is also because the text has its own manner of being—the text is autonomous—that Ricoeur focuses his methodology here. One need only compare Heidegger's statement 'language is the house of being' to Ricoeur's reflection on language as fixed, or written, discourse—that is, the sentence as 'the simplest unit of discourse'.<sup>61</sup> In comparison to Heidegger's project of self-understanding in ontology, Ricoeur proposes the model of the text with its world that re-configures one's self-understanding.<sup>62</sup> While Heidegger's statement leads directly to a reflection of being and language, Ricoeur's analysis is more extrovert in the way it seeks to construct an epistemology showing how indeed the text proposes a world by the re-configuring

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<sup>59</sup> In 'The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking', *Basic Writings*, Heidegger refers to thinking (apart from philosophy) as being neither 'metaphysics nor science,' p. 436. Furthermore, there is no 'founding' character of thinking as there is with philosophy: 'But above all, the thinking in question remains unassuming, because its task is only of a preparatory, not founding character. It is content with awakening a readiness in man for a possibility whose contour remains obscure, whose coming remains uncertain', p. 436. For the maxim of phenomenology, see *Being and Time*, H28. Merleau-Ponty summarises this aspect of phenomenology as, 'To return to things themselves is to return to that world which precedes knowledge, of which knowledge always *speaks*, and in relation to which every scientific schematization is an abstract and derivative sign-language, as is geography in relation to the countryside in which we have learnt beforehand what a forest, a prairie or a river is'; *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. ix as quoted in Malpas, *Heidegger's Topology: Being, Place, World*, p. 55.

<sup>60</sup> Ricoeur, 'Existence and Hermeneutics', *The Conflict of Interpretation*, p. 6.

<sup>61</sup> Respectively, Heidegger, 'Letter on Humanism', *Basic Writings*, p. 217 and Ricoeur, 'What Is a Text?' *A Ricoeur Reader*, p. 46. Consider also Ricoeur's comment on Heidegger and ethics: 'Unfortunately, Heidegger does not show how we can travel this road in the opposite direction, from ontology towards ethics'; 'Emmanuel Levinas: Thinker of Testimony', *Figuring the Sacred*, p. 112.

<sup>62</sup> Kevin J. Vanhoozer, 'Antecedents to *Time and Narrative*', *On Paul Ricoeur*, p. 42.



of being and that which is configured in the reader.<sup>63</sup> One difference is that Heidegger's analysis of language leaves no opening for textual exegesis in a public way. Indeed, whereas for Heidegger the notion of 'public' is related to everydayness and flattening down, for Ricoeur the public domain is the domain of proper discourse and communication.<sup>64</sup> Ricoeur constructs a definite epistemological structure from an ontological foundation. His hermeneutical studies therefore allow exegesis to breakout beyond the boundary of competing pluralistic interpretations and into communication.<sup>65</sup> Because of this epistemological structure, a great space is allowed in which dissimilarity and anomaly can be ontologically interpreted: '[t]he more radical and dissimilar the elements, the more will the ensuing gain in meaning be unpredictable'.<sup>66</sup> In this way, difference is no longer reduced to a casual explanation but is re-interpreted in terms of its ontological significance for today.

Having said this, this schism is one I try to suspend and mediate (and not reconcile or leave unanswered). Ricoeur's criticisms are to a large extent adopted by the general scholarship critical of Heidegger, while the Heideggerians themselves tend not to provide an answer against the need for methodology and epistemology.<sup>67</sup> Perhaps this in itself is telling, but Ricoeur's criticism can only remain polemical if it is left reified against Heidegger unilaterally. Heidegger is not heard in this respect. And what remains unheard, but nonetheless said, is Heidegger's argument that a methodology will conceal the nature of being itself. The method will become a mere

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<sup>63</sup> Ricoeur's analysis of pre-configuration (pre-understanding), configuration and re-configuration are in his studies *Time and Narrative*, Vol. I, pp. 52-77. He discusses the different phases of *mimesis* that correspond to the three terms.

<sup>64</sup> Cf. *Being and Time*, H127 to the importance and deep meaning given by Ricoeur to communication in 'The History of Philosophy and Historicity', *History and Truth*, p. 68.

<sup>65</sup> Mario J. Valdés writes of Ricoeur: 'Paul Ricoeur has addressed every major theoretical issue of the undisciplined discipline we call literary criticism'. 'Introduction', *A Ricoeur Reader*, p. 3. Also consider Ricoeur's comments in 'Structure, Word, Event', *The Conflict of Interpretations*, p. 96.

<sup>66</sup> Mario J. Valdés, 'Introduction', *A Ricoeur Reader*, p. 25.

<sup>67</sup> In many ways my point is anecdotal, but one need only survey the major secondary literature on Heidegger (e.g., *The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger*, *Heidegger: A Critical Reader*, *A Critical Heidegger*, and *Reading Heidegger*) to see that points raised by Ricoeur have not been addressed. At the same time, those interested in Ricoeur (e.g., *Paul Ricoeur: The Hermeneutics of Action* and *Ricoeur as Another: The Ethics of Subjectivity*) tend to regard Heidegger's weakness as a failure to address the being of the other, especially morally. See also Adriaan Peperzak's account of Levinas' critique of Heidegger; *Beyond: The Philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas*, p. 51.

technical means elevated to the level of meaning itself.<sup>68</sup> In this sense, a methodology merely reflects the metaphysics of its age, and has no way of engaging itself beyond its manner of enframing [*Gestell*]. The challenge to Ricoeur, then, is one in which the engendering of his methodology must continuously answer to the call of being and not simply sediment within its own structure. To be sure, this challenge is one Ricoeur saw clearly in relation to Heidegger's ontology of language:

I will not take this Heideggerian way towards language, but let me say in conclusion that I have not closed it, even if I have not explicitly opened it. I have not closed it, in that our own progress has consisted in passing from closure of the universe of signs to the openness of discourse. There would then be new scope for meditation on the "word". . . . But if this ontology of language [Heidegger's] cannot become our theme, by reason of the procedure of this study, at least it can be glimpsed as the horizon of this investigation.<sup>69</sup>

Despite this qualification, nonetheless, there is no guarantee that Heidegger's ontology is remembered. The methodology can never secure or keep secure the radicality of Heidegger's fundamental ontology since a method tends to seek employment rather than remain at the level of ontology. In view of this, I wish to keep the tension between Heidegger and Ricoeur alive as a means of provoking constant re-engagement. The critique that Ricoeur alights on in regard to Heidegger is one that is not unilateral but more cautionary. It is not as if we must denounce Heidegger altogether for his analytic of *Dasein* or his ontology of language!<sup>70</sup> On the contrary, Heidegger's ontology is that which must remain within the provenance of

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<sup>68</sup> See *Being and Time*, H27 wherein Heidegger compares the phenomenological method to other methods that are subservient to 'technical devices' and thus are removed in their analyses of 'things in themselves'. Also see 'The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking', *Basic Writings*, p. 434-5 wherein he sees philosophy as coming towards its lawful end in being governed by scientific technique, once again a method determining thinking in terms of things already determined in a technical way, denying 'any ontological meaning'.

<sup>69</sup> 'Structure, Word, Event', *The Conflict of Interpretations*, p. 96

<sup>70</sup> Ricoeur, 'The Task of Hermeneutics', *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*, p. 53: 'The presupposition of hermeneutics construed as an epistemology is precisely what Heidegger and Gadamer place in question. Their contribution . . . must be seen as an attempt to dig beneath the epistemological enterprise itself. Cf. Karsten Harries, 'Fundamental Ontology and the Search for Man's Place', *Heidegger and Modern Philosophy*, p. 71; John Caputo, 'The Thought of Being and the Conversation of Mankind: The Case of Heidegger and Rorty', *Hermeneutics and Praxis*, p. 250 & 251 n7. Gadamer also shares this division between the two which he expresses in terms of method versus truth. See Richard J. Bernstein, 'From Hermeneutics to Praxis', *Hermeneutics and Praxis*, p. 273.

thinking if it is not to be forgotten. It would seem that such a foundation allows for its continual renewal and development as evidenced in the many modern thinkers who take up the dialogue following after Heidegger.

In this respect, the main trajectory of my interpretation of Heidegger follows the impetus towards a developed structure by which an ontology of work can be more concretely understood. I attempt to draw an ontology of work, in other words, into the ontic domain and the question of how is one then to relate to things through this ontology. The key theme I take from Heidegger is his preoccupation with the Greek concepts of *poiesis*, *praxis* and *theoria*. In one sense, it can be argued that the entirety of philosophy is bound up in some way or another with the predominantly Platonic and Aristotelian understanding of these concepts. What is not of making (*poiesis*), doing (*praxis*) and thinking (*theoria*)? Certainly for Heidegger, these concepts are taken up in his earliest works dealing with Aristotle.<sup>71</sup> As I will address later, Franco Volpi has argued that *Being and Time* can be understood as a "translation" of the *Nicomachean Ethics*.<sup>72</sup> With regard to his later thinking, it has not gone unnoticed that Heidegger moves towards a poetic thinking as opposed to remaining with the traditional metaphysics.<sup>73</sup> The details of how these concepts are prevalent in Heidegger throughout will become apparent in Chapter IX where I look at how he *ontologises* them. But for now, let it suffice to remark that the unity between *poiesis*, *praxis* and *theoria* is not explicitly announced by Heidegger but does, indeed, remain to be interpreted by his commentators. I attempt to do this in view of finding a way in which Heidegger's unique understanding of being can be brought more fully into human dwelling, as I mentioned above, in articulating a more definite manner through which the human subject can self-reflexively apprehend its engagement in work and with the things rendered by work—or what is human vocation. In this sense, I am fully aware that such a task is itself subject to the passing away of entities that Heidegger sees as fundamental to the constitution of

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<sup>71</sup> E.g., *Phenomenological Interpretations of Aristotle: Initiation into Phenomenological Research* (1921-22) and 'Phenomenological Interpretations with Respect to Aristotle: Indication of the Hermeneutical Situation', *Man and World*, 25 (1992), pp. 355-93 (written in 1922 as well).

<sup>72</sup> 'Being and Time: A "Translation" of the *Nicomachean Ethics*?' *Reading Heidegger from the Start*, pp. 195-212.

<sup>73</sup> E.g., David Halliburton, *Poetic Thinking: An Approach to Heidegger*.

meaning 'wherein the intelligibility of something maintains itself'.<sup>74</sup> But this is to say nothing that is inconsistent with the historical nature of understanding that attempts to make sense of the present through a retrieval of the philosophical tradition. In this sense, the necessity of the hermeneutical approach is one that is ineluctable, and if assumed consciously, it can be productive rather than one of falling prey to the tragedy of historicity that turns on the fine point of remembering or forgetting the past.

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<sup>74</sup> *Being and Time*, H153.

**PART 2**

DECONSTRUCTION

## IV Marx and the Philosophy of Work

Jean-Paul Sartre commented that so many attempts to go beyond Marx necessarily end up occupying a position not ahead of but behind Marx's. This admonition has not yet lost its pertinence.<sup>1</sup>

My destructive retrieve of the philosophy of work begins with Karl Marx. While my decision to look at Marx first and the instrumental reason of the Enlightenment second seems to be in reverse order, my reason for this has primarily to do with the prevalence Marx gives to necessity. I argue that the role of necessity in Marx's philosophy of work is so dominant that it acts as an assumption that determines his entire thinking, and in this sense his system becomes the paradigmatic example for my critique and why human work cannot be thought merely at the level of necessity. To be sure, this point has been seen by many of Marx's commentators, some critically and others apologetically. To these arguments I will shortly turn, but at the moment I should state that my critique assumes a specific path and does not merely recapitulate the debate. My ontological analysis shows how Marx is not only susceptible to contradictions within his own system but also how his reduction of work to necessity (as a way of usurping the dominance of ideology) bars the theoretical realm at its own peril. The defining aim of work for Marx has its celebrating moment in freedom, that is, a particular kind of freedom that is the perpetuation of the self-realisation process involved in objectification and social practice. It would appear that Marx successfully avoids an ideological content to this freedom; but I argue that without a consciously positive conception of freedom, he depletes human understanding of any self-renewing, interpretative process. Freedom for Marx, I conclude, is merely an open self-creating practice that, in the end and ironically, becomes susceptible to ideological determination, albeit under the name of social practice itself. Marx's insistence on subjugating the theoretical to

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<sup>1</sup> Paul Thomas, 'Critical reception: Marx then and now', *The Cambridge Companion to Marx*, p. 52.

the praxical is demonstrative of a kind of philosophical attitude that Charles Taylor refers to generally as attempting to maintain a conceptual 'Maginot Line'.<sup>2</sup> It cannot hold.

Nevertheless, the dilemma with Marx is a point of interpreting what he means: freedom is either the repetition of labour whose action is its own end and therefore reduces human existence to labouring; or, it arises from and in labour as a mode of creative actualisation and self-realisation. The former constitutes the critiques of Arendt, Habermas and Ricoeur who cite Marx for a failure to distinguish between the reflective and the technical aspects of work.<sup>3</sup> The latter is taken up by proponents of Marx who seek to reinterpret or continue Marx's thinking in a new way that bestows a creative humanism to the labouring process. Terry Eagleton, Carol Gould, James Klagge and Sean Sayers are four commentators of this school of thought. I will be engaging mostly with Sayers' argument since he presents the express concern for understanding the opposition of necessity and freedom in Marx as complimentary rather than as antithetical.

My argument maintains that despite the creative, self-actualising role given to labour and the freedom it realises, the concept of freedom guiding this philosophy is still without content and risks being distorted and reduced to a kind of labouring militantism that is at heart suspicious of theoretical reflection and therefore any ontological possibility beyond production and consumption. In fact, as I indicated above, it reduces freedom to necessity. It is important to note, nonetheless, that this critique of the contradiction and/or conflation of freedom and necessity is precisely the point that proponents of Marx state is a misreading of him and so will be one of the main points of debate in this chapter.<sup>4</sup> Before turning to the body of this chapter, a few words needs to be said about my reading of primary texts.

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<sup>2</sup> 'What's Wrong with Negative Liberty?' *The Idea of Freedom*, p. 179. We will look at Taylor's critique of negative freedom shortly since it is one that I apply to Marx even though Taylor groups Marxism with positive freedom according to its political totalisation.

<sup>3</sup> See also Julius Loewenstein, *Marx against Marxism*, pp. 86-90. James O'Rourke identifies two types of necessities in Marx, external and 'the necessity of certain laws', i.e. social development. I am dealing with the former, that is, necessity of conditions; *The Problem of Freedom in Marxist Thought*, p. 39.

<sup>4</sup> See James C. Klagge, 'Marx's Realm of "Freedom" and "Necessity"', *The Canadian Journal of Philosophy*, pp. 769-78. Georg Lukács attempts to resolve this contradiction by extrapolating Marx's development of freedom according to historical and class consciousness in his *History and Class Consciousness*. For a comparative reading of Lukács and Habermas and how each attempts to place emancipation for society

My attempt to isolate and examine Marx's foundational *philosophical* assumptions concerning necessity contains a key presupposition.<sup>5</sup> It goes without saying that I am assuming a certain amount of contiguity between the early and later Marx, an assumption that is confronted universally in any study of him and will perhaps never be fully freed of ambiguity.<sup>6</sup> I will provide support for my unitive reading of Marx in the body of this chapter.<sup>7</sup> Nonetheless, there are many dimensions to Marx—the philosophical, the sociological, the economic, the political—and so it becomes somewhat of a slippery affair to find a point of dialogical entry when discussing him.<sup>8</sup> In view of this, I argue it is not requisite to attempt a full engagement of Marx insofar as one can demonstrate how an alternative philosophy of work can be distinguished from some of his basic tenets and systematic assumptions. I am attempting to arrive *before* Marx rather than 'behind' him, as the opening quotation regarding Sartre suggests. This statement will become clearer as I distinguish the prevalence Marx gives to necessity from a purely ontological consideration, vis-a-vis Heidegger, as the originating point for a reflection on work. This chapter does not therefore attempt to dismiss Marx once and for all but to present an alternative path of reflection on the nature of work that does not begin from his premises. As we will see, I return to Marx throughout this thesis, and in particular in the concluding chapter. Because of Marx's novel and

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in general, see Agnes Heller's 'Habermas and Marxism', *Habermas: Critical Debates*. Erich Fromm sees Marx's 'concept of man' as being set within a productive mediation of Fromm's well-known distinction of the 'freedom from' in order to have the 'freedom to', in this case, freedom for life to create life; *Marx's Concept of Man*, pp. 34 & 38.

<sup>5</sup> Trevor Ling [*Karl Marx and Religion*, p. 4] notes that while the philosophical Marx is largely associated with the earliest writings up to 1844, he also adds that it is not confined to this period. I mention this to highlight that I am aware that a philosophical critique of Marx assumes that this philosophy runs throughout his thinking. My analysis of necessity in Marx does indeed make the argument that necessity is the assumed foundation of his thinking.

<sup>6</sup> Agnes Heller notes that Habermas, for example, is not concerned with the question of unitive clarity in Marx, consciously oscillating between the 'raw material' of Marx's *oeuvre* and reinterpretations of the Marx 'already interpreted by Marxism'. Habermas, she notes, remains comfortable in even contradicting himself in his interpretations of Marx. 'Habermas and Marxism', *Habermas: Critical Debates*, p. 22. For an analysis of the different ways of interpreting the unity of Marx's thinking, see Ernest Mandel, *The Formulation of the Economic Thought of Karl Marx*, pp. 164-86.

<sup>7</sup> Klagge follows a similar unitive reading in seeing that the thinking of Marx in 1864 is an elaboration of his thinking since 1844 and is not a break with it. 'Marx's Realm of "Freedom" and "Necessity"', *The Canadian Journal of Philosophy*, p. 775.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Ernest Mandel, *The Formulation of Economic Thought in Karl Marx*, p. 157.



primary concern for human socialisation,<sup>9</sup> today his thinking becomes the essential background against which any alternative political-economic systems are articulated. Hence, any departure from Marx constitutes also an engagement with him.<sup>10</sup>

My argument in this chapter will proceed by three stages: 1) demonstrating how necessity is the origin of Marx's system; 2) critiquing this system according to how necessity fails to be an adequate starting point for an understanding of work and therefore misconstrues the phenomenon of freedom itself; and 3) outlining points by which this study can be seen to depart from Marx and which will subsequently be developed in the following chapters.

### Necessity and Naturalism

First, let us engage with Marx according to his phenomenology of work, that is to say, the manner in which he understands the basic constitution of human production, the bare facticity and truth of work. I use the term phenomenology to mean simply the 'clarification' and 'explanation'<sup>11</sup> of the phenomenon of work, and with regard to Marx this concerns his earlier thinking in *The German Ideology* and the *Manuscripts*. Marx's phenomenology of work, according to Ricoeur, is the reconstruction of

the concept of labor not as a descriptive phenomenon but as a process made meaningful through the species being of objectifying itself in an object, in a product, and then recognizing itself in the product.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Dupré, *Marx's Social Critique of Culture*, pp. 277ff.

<sup>10</sup> As Dupré observes, because Marx's system proposes a 'living critique' of culture, it requires that we, as contemporaries of this culture, 'investigate its supporting arguments' [*Marx's Social Critique of Culture*, p. 13]. In my view, this includes questioning Marx's philosophical assumptions about the nature of human being, i.e., ontology.

<sup>11</sup> Ricoeur refers to this basic definition of phenomenology in 'Phenomenology and Theory of Literature', *A Ricoeur Reader*, pp. 446-7. To be sure, there is a wide range of meanings to phenomenology, and here I mean to employ in its most basic sense where thinking attempts to expose the facticity of a phenomenon that, in the words of Gadamer, 'does not bring interpretive concepts to bear on itself, rather it is a kind of conceptual speaking that wants to hold onto its origin' ['Martin Heidegger's One Path', *Reading Heidegger from the Start*, p. 25]. The philosophical hermeneutical thinking I explicated in chapter two can be seen as beginning with this shared notion of facticity that one is already being-with; hence such a phenomenology is one that breaks with Husserl's; see Jacques Taminiaux, 'The Husserlian Heritage in Heidegger's Notion of the Self', *Reading Heidegger from the Start*, p. 283. The term facticity, as Jeff Malpas notes, is derived from neo-Kantian thinking and means the impenetrable nature of existence, or for Heidegger, being-there; *Heidegger's Topology: Being, Place, World*, p. 51.

<sup>12</sup> Marx: the *Critique of Hegel and the Manuscripts', Ideology and Utopia*, p. 34.

Prior to the objectification in labour is a philosophical disposition that a human being is at work in order to do something, in this case, to produce in order to fulfill and transcend necessity. The identification of survival with production (and reproduction) is an essential one for Marx<sup>13</sup> to the point that the human response to necessity develops along specifically human lines as history. However, the question of whether production is ever free of necessity—in the sense that it comes to signify a meaning beyond necessity—is an ambiguity that is at first glance exacerbated in an attempt to read a unity of meaning in Marx's thought. This is because the earlier Marx makes the case that a philosophy that does not attend to the necessity of existence, as is the case with religious symbolism,<sup>14</sup> is in fact distortive, while it is the later Marx of *Capital* and *Grundrisse* that hints at the possibility of a realm of freedom apart from labour (and necessity). This ambiguity of meaning will occupy the second section of this chapter. For the moment, let us take note of the significance of necessity that Marx presents as his foundation. Indeed, Terrence Ball observes that for Marx the central medium through which human production occurs—i.e., history—has 'no independent substance' except as a response to necessity.<sup>15</sup> All human action for Marx points towards the immediate and practical, the immanent and not the transcendent; for what is given to an otherworldly reality is taken away from the human.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Ernest Mandel, *The Formulation of the Economic Thought of Karl Marx*, p. 29. Susan Himmelweit argues how human reproduction is involved, though largely undeveloped, in Marx's understanding of production and the equality within the working class. See 'Reproduction and the materialist conception of history: A feminist critique', *The Cambridge Companion to Marx*, pp. 196-221.

<sup>14</sup> *The German Ideology*, pp. 63 & 142. Denys Turner observes that religion does not 'lead the religious believer into a world that does not exist at all, there to rest in an alternative world of mere make-believe. The primary effect of religion, the effect by virtue of which it deserves the label of *ideological*, is that the believer relates not to a false world by means of an alternative to the real world but to the real world in and through the prism of belief in a false world'. 'Religion: Illusions and emancipation', *The Cambridge Companion to Marx*, p. 324.

<sup>15</sup> Terrence Ball, 'History: Critique and irony', *The Cambridge Companion to Marx*, p. 126. Against my interpretation, James Farr interprets 'historical necessity' to be more important than 'absolute necessity' in Marx. Yet it is arguable that though history is the all-encompassing milieu of Marx's dialectic, it is still undergirded by the initial assumption he makes about nature—that indeed human history arises with the human response to nature. Hence, history and humanity are co-existential. See also Louis Dupré, *The Philosophical Foundations of Marxism*, p. 140 and Herbert Marcuse, *Reason and Revelation*, p. 146.

<sup>16</sup> Denys Turner, 'Religion: Illusions and liberation', *The Cambridge Companion to Marx*, p. 326.

Perhaps the most readily observable tension that drives Marx's thinking is this one between reality and thought. Thinking, as ideology, has misconstrued reality and allowed for an unjust economy of alienated labour. In *The German Ideology* it is the material life and the fact that humans distinguish their life apart from animals by virtue of *production* that precedes and supersedes even the human ability to think.<sup>17</sup> Thus, Marx identifies the human ability to produce with the immediate apprehension of necessity whereas thinking is that which can interfere with this apprehension when it takes the form of ideology. Marx's critique of Hegel is of this kind, arguing against Hegel's inadequate reduction of class contradiction to synthesis in the Idea.<sup>18</sup> It patently ignores the exploitation of the working class. Because the centrality given to necessity and production is what defines Marx's materialism,<sup>19</sup> we must examine the basis of this materialism more closely.

According to the *Manuscripts*, the primary function of human being resides in the objectification process by which human beings express themselves in human life. This clearly precedes and supersedes the power of thinking in being. Marx writes:

it is only when the objective world becomes everywhere for man in society the world of man's essential powers [*Wesenskräfte*]—human reality, and for that reason the reality of his *own* essential powers—that all *objects* become for him the *objectification of himself*, become objects which confirm and realize his individuality, become *his* objects: that is, *man himself* becomes the object.<sup>20</sup>

While Marx does indeed comment later in this same passage that 'man is affirmed in the objective world not only in the act of thinking, but with *all* his senses',<sup>21</sup> we should understand that thinking here is not meant as ideology, nor is he giving equal

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<sup>17</sup> *The German Ideology*, pp. 36-7.

<sup>18</sup> Lawrence Wilde, 'Logic: Dialectic and contradiction', *The Cambridge Companion to Marx*, pp. 278-9. See also Alasdair MacIntyre, *Marxism and Christianity*, pp. 15-16, 34-5 & 57.

<sup>19</sup> Jeff Hearn notes that this materialist position goes as far back to Marx's doctoral dissertation that critiques Epicurus for a limited understanding of the atom as self-consciousness. 'Gender: Biology, nature, and capitalism', *The Cambridge Companion to Marx*, p. 224. Louis Dupré, on the other hand, argues that while Marx never refers explicitly to materialism (as Sartre points out), it is still latent in his thinking and therefore he can be held accountable philosophically. See *The Philosophical Foundations of Marxism*, pp. 223-30.

<sup>20</sup> *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, pp. 107-08. *Italics* in original.

<sup>21</sup> *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, pp. 107-08. *Italics* in original.

significance of thought to the objectification process. Thinking serves *praxis* and by no means can transcend it.<sup>22</sup> 'Thus,' writes Marx,

the objectification of the human essence both in its theoretical and practical aspects is required to make man's *sense human*, as well as to create the *human sense* corresponding to the entire wealth of human and natural substance.<sup>23</sup>

Thinking in this *natural* sense, and not as ideology, contributes to the process of objectification; it is part of the realisation and actualisation of oneself but is subject to *praxis*. Or as Louis Dupré comments: for Marx 'praxis is more than a principle of consciousness: it is a prereflective unity of nature and consciousness, which can be explicated in thought, but not initiated'.<sup>24</sup> Thinking as ideology differs from the more natural form of thinking insofar as the ideas, aims and goals ideology introduces distract us from and distort our relationship to the objective world (reality).<sup>25</sup> Thinking, in the end, should be subservient to *praxis*.

In view of the above, the tension between thinking and reality is mirrored more primordially at the level of necessity and freedom, where human freedom is specifically characterised as the possibility of seeing reality for itself and therefore being free from the necessary limitations of reality. Though radically departing from Hegel, this philosophical foundation is inherited, as Alasdair MacIntyre shows, from Hegel's system where 'freedom is the knowledge of necessity'.<sup>26</sup> Clearly and distinctly, what is central to Marx is the ability to see the fundamental relation of human beings to necessity, that is, their responsiveness to necessity by means of

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Kostas Axelos, *Alienation, Praxis & Technē in the Thought of Karl Marx*, p. 273. This becomes more apparent in Chapter VII wherein I discuss Marx's reduction of *praxis* into *poiesis*.

<sup>23</sup> *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, p. 109. *Italics* in original.

<sup>24</sup> *The Philosophical Foundations of Marxism*, p. 216. Cf. Ricoeur, 'Marx: The 'First Manuscript'', *Ideology and Utopia*, pp. 38-9 and Terry Eagleton, *Marx and Freedom*, p. 8.

<sup>25</sup> *The German Ideology*, pp. 58-9. Cf. Dupré, *Marx's Social Critique of Culture*, pp. 244 & 277: 'Marx rejected the supremacy of the ego [i.e., 'Descartes' *cogito*, Kant's unity of apperception, and Fichte's ego], transcendental as well as empirical. Individual reflection, the starting point of modern philosophy, rests on a more basic socialization process'.

<sup>26</sup> *Marxism and Christianity*, p. 19; see also pp. 32-5, 63. Cf. Eagleton, *Marx and Freedom*, p. 17; James J. O'Rourke, *The Problem of Freedom in Marxist Thought*, p. 38; Dupré, *The Philosophical Foundations of Marxism*, p. 174; and Ricoeur, 'Marx: The 'First Manuscript'', *Ideology and Utopia*, p. 42 and his 'Marx: Critique of Hegel and Manuscripts', *Ideology and Utopia*, p. 33. Ricoeur observes of the *Manuscripts* that there is a trait inherited from German Idealism where human freedom is a universalisation that runs across all domains, something that is reinforced by Marx's notion of nature being for man, man being for nature.

production and objectification in order to actualise themselves in labour. 'Marx's central criticism of Hegel,' comments David McLellan, 'was that alienation would not cease with the supposed abolition of the external world'.<sup>27</sup> Indeed, for Marx, the external or natural world was what contained the real necessity to be confronted. It was 'part of man's nature and what was vital to establish the right relationship between man and his environment'.<sup>28</sup> Objectification in labour and the objective world produced by labour are the natural and mutual poles in an unalienated manner of human being. It is here, as Dupré notes, that Marx sees the path towards freedom in the alignment of *praxis* and its unhindered response to necessity: 'As the living unity of consciousness, human activity produces both a real freedom and a free reality'.<sup>29</sup>

We should also bear in mind that while necessity is central to Marx's system, it is often overlooked in favour of his analysis of alienation.<sup>30</sup> MacIntyre's study of Marxism, for example, jumps from noting the importance of the tension between necessity and freedom but accepts this description without further consideration.<sup>31</sup> The other studies I will refer to later note the problematic of freedom and necessity but do not attempt to think through the ontological implications of this contradiction. Given this preface, Marx's construal of reality is what appears to be least questioned, for his premises seem to be validated in how a capitalist economy commoditises things (e.g., labour, land, salvation, etc.).<sup>32</sup> This is possible in one respect because, as F.W. Dillstone observes, Marx takes the notion of alienation as the structure of existence.<sup>33</sup> That is to say, Marx avoids a metaphysical discussion that would include an explanation of freedom and necessity since it would detract from the real issue of

<sup>27</sup> *The Thought of Karl Marx*, p. 117.

<sup>28</sup> McLellan, *The Thought of Karl Marx*, p. 117. Cf. Dupré, *The Philosophical Foundations of Marxism*, p. 214.

<sup>29</sup> *The Philosophical Foundations of Marxism*, p. 216; cf. Bertell Ollman, *Alienation: Marx's Conception of Man in Capitalist Society*, pp. 99-100. He refers to a passage from *Capital I*, trans. Samuel Moore and Edward Aveling, I (Moscow, 1958), pp. 183-4.

<sup>30</sup> See Jeffrey Reiman's chapter 'Moral Philosophy: The critique of capitalism and the problem of ideology' which shows how Marx's more or less phenomenological descriptions of alienation and freedom become morally construed by some Marxists. I believe this supports my argument as to how more attention is given over to Marx's thinking on the significance of alienation than his philosophical assumptions about the primordial ground of reality itself; *The Cambridge Companion to Marx*, pp. 153-6.

<sup>31</sup> *Marxism and Christianity*, pp. 46-50.

<sup>32</sup> See, for example, Jeremy Carrette and Richard King, *Selling Spirituality: the silent take over of religion*.

<sup>33</sup> As quoted in John Macquarrie, *Existentialism*, p. 204. Cf. MacIntyre, *Marxism and Christianity*, pp. 76-7.

alienation.<sup>34</sup> Yet, at the same time, in this reversal any possibility of thinking on the human condition beyond necessity is more or less prohibited epistemologically; for what is not necessary risks ideology. We must not lose sight of the fact that given the later Marx's lengthy and probing critique of capitalism, his system stems from the simple assumption that necessity is the foundation of an understanding of work, and he can therefore develop this understanding in terms of materialism. Hannah Arendt notes that Marx is uniquely consistent in this manner:

Marx is outstanding not because of his materialism, but because he is the only political thinker who was consistent enough to base his theory of material interest on a demonstrably material human activity, on laboring—that is, on the metabolism of the human body with matter.<sup>35</sup>

Compare the above to one of Heidegger's few comments on Marx:

The essence of materialism does not consist in the assertion that everything is simply matter but rather in a metaphysical determination according to which every being appears as the material of labor.<sup>36</sup>

Heidegger intentionally reverses Marx's reversal of Hegelianism in anchoring his system to a 'metaphysical determination' that Heidegger sees holding sway over each human epoch in thinking. What Arendt and Heidegger suggest is that while the natural exigency to survive and flourish is in fact undeniable, it is not an exigency that accurately represents the whole of human being. Yet for Marx this seems to be the case, for as we noted above, thinking is but part of the process in the human response to live (produce). His reduction of human labour to the utilisation of nature (materialism) is of metaphysical proportions since it provides the basis by which all subsequent relations are defined and by which any other force or being can be determined as superfluous.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Scott Meikle is well-known to argue the opposite: that Marx retains Aristotle's metaphysical notion of substance. See his *Essentialism in the Thought of Karl Marx*.

<sup>35</sup> *The Human Condition*, p. 183 n8.

<sup>36</sup> 'Letter on Humanism', *Basic Writings*, p. 243.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. Louis Dupré, *Marx's Social Critique of Culture*, pp. 51-7. Marx's materialism, although not the same as the materialism of the Enlightenment, shares a common feature that Dupré observes as seeing material as 'an autodynamic, self-generating system of reality', *The Enlightenment*, p. 25. 'Self-generating' for Marx would be located in human beings as the essential part of nature.

Given the preceding analysis, I will refer to Marx's anthropology according to his own term as 'naturalism' in order to emphasise the crucial reduction of human being as having its defining moment in the response to necessity. W.L. McBride stresses that we should therefore not see Marx's use of the term naturalism to be any accident since it is used specifically and antithetically to Hegel's 'relegation of nature to a necessary but negative position within his idealist philosophy of 'Spirit'.<sup>38</sup> For Marx, nature and naturalism define the human possibilities of living in harmony; that is, nature is necessary *and* positive. By 'naturalism' I do not mean or refer to the notion that Marx's understanding of social progression (e.g., from capitalism to socialism) is a naive form of historicism.<sup>39</sup>

Marx at one point and at some length in the *Manuscripts* speaks a great deal about naturalism. Perhaps the most pronounced occurs when he states that communism is 'fully developed naturalism' which 'equals humanism, and as fully-developed humanism equals naturalism'.<sup>40</sup> This synthesis, in turn, provides for the 'resolution' of such things as 'freedom and necessity'. There is a primordial identity between the resolution of alienated labour and nature's own capacity to be free: if human being is free, then so is nature.<sup>41</sup> As Ricoeur notes, however, this sense of naturalism is only in the young Marx, ending as early as *The German Ideology*.<sup>42</sup> Yet, I maintain that naturalism prevails even in the later Marx. Although the terminology may disappear it nonetheless operates tacitly, that is, as an epistemological presupposition concerning a philosophical anthropology. Indeed, if Marx's

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<sup>38</sup> William Leon McBride, *The Philosophy of Marx*, p. 25. See also Dupré, *The Philosophical Foundations of Marxism*, p. 228. Cf. Scott Meikle who, instead of referring to Marx's critique of Hegel as one of turning him on his head, sees Marx as 'getting Hegel on his feet'. By this Meikle means that Marx did not repudiate Hegel's idealist conception of nature but in fact inherits and adapts it to social necessity; *Essentialism in the Thought of Karl Marx*, pp. 40-60.

<sup>39</sup> Sayers notes this as a problem; *Marxism and Human Nature*, p. 121-2. Louis Dupré sees Marx's reference to nature as being pejorative inasmuch as the purpose of social emancipation is to be free from nature; *Marx's Social Critique of Culture*, pp. 60-1. I think that Marx's reference to nature is highly dependant on the context, and in this case, Marx's equation of naturalism and humanism refers not to Romanticised conception of nature but human beings acting naturally in a state of free labour. In this respect, as mentioned earlier, Scott Meikle argues that Marx relied upon the essentialist and organicist conception of nature derived from Aristotle and inherited by Hegel, though Marx transforms this conception; *Essentialism in the Thought of Karl Marx*, pp. 41-2. But I disagree with Meikle that this inheritance is opposed to the mechanistic conception of nature (ibid.). I will address this later.

<sup>40</sup> *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*, pp. 102-03.

<sup>41</sup> Dupré, *Marx's Social Critique of Culture*, p. 87.

<sup>42</sup> Ricoeur, 'Fourier', *Ideology and Utopia*, p. 303.



philosophy of work is grounded in an anthropology throughout his writings, then this anthropology remains ineluctably tied to the original assumption he never questioned—i.e., necessity as the most natural realm of human existence. MacIntyre argues for a similar unitive reading of some key ideas in Marx, in his case, alienation.<sup>43</sup> I do not believe naturalism should be omitted from a unitive reading since, following the argument of MacIntyre, alienation assumes both an estrangement from oneself and from *nature*.

Jeffrey Reiman observes in view of this tendency to define things according to nature, the necessity in Marx's thinking is 'a necessity of preconditions rather than of inevitable outcomes'.<sup>44</sup> If this is accurate, then Marx's understanding of history is not one of inevitable destiny that is determined from ahead but one subject to the very conditions of existence that begin with and is contingent to materialism, i.e. human necessity.<sup>45</sup> Indeed, the social domain is but a more elaborate response to this call to fulfill necessity.<sup>46</sup> Marx writes:

Man *lives* from nature, i.e., nature is his *body*, and he must maintain a continuing dialogue with it if he is not to die. To say that man's physical and mental life is linked to nature simply means that nature is linked to itself, for man is a part of nature.<sup>47</sup>

Because of this emphasis on nature, that is seen to represent an irreducible fact of existence and therefore the ground for a philosophy of *praxis*, I do not, as Paul Thomas suggests, see Marx's radical challenge to philosophy as a shift from epistemology to ontology.<sup>48</sup> Rather, to speak of nature first is to in fact de-ontologise human being since, at least from a Heideggerian understanding, it is to identify a

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<sup>43</sup> *Marxism and Christianity*, p. 88. This, of course, involves a lengthy history of debate accounted for in part by Ernest Mandel, *The Formulation of the Economic Thought of Karl Marx*, pp. 154-86. For a nuanced analysis of how alienation evolves from a social projection to the very operation of the economy itself (e.g., in relation to surplus value), see Dupré, *Marx's Social Critique of Culture*, pp. 15-57, especially p. 43.

<sup>44</sup> 'Moral philosophy: The critique of capitalism and the problem of ideology', *The Cambridge Companion to Marx*, p. 149.

<sup>45</sup> Ball, 'History: Critique and irony', *The Cambridge Companion to Marx*, p. 138.

<sup>46</sup> Hearn, 'Gender: Biology, nature, and capitalism', *The Cambridge Companion to Marx*, pp. 224-5.

<sup>47</sup> *Early Writings*, trans. Rodney Livingstone and Gregor Benton (New York: Random House, 1975), p. 328-9 (*italics* in original), as quoted in Hearn, 'Gender: Biology, nature, and capitalism', *The Cambridge Companion to Marx*, p. 226.

<sup>48</sup> As cited in James Farr, 'Science: Realism, criticism, history', *The Cambridge Companion to Marx*, p. 111. He refers to Thomas' 'Marx and Science', *Political Studies*, 24, (1976), p. 23.



ground of being that is not being, such as the biological response to nature; it is to designate a source of being *before* being, i.e., as that which already *is*.<sup>49</sup> To be sure, if Marx were to speak of an ontology, it would be a social ontology.<sup>50</sup> But the term social ontology is deceptive if we accord it an innocuous meaning that simply refers to an ontology of society. For Marx, social ontology is really the only ontology since humans cannot be conceived of without society that is, in the first place, a *collective response to necessity*.<sup>51</sup> Nothing is possible without society. Society therefore forms the foundation of human being as the *polis* did in ancient Greek thinking.<sup>52</sup> Nevertheless, this elevation of society first, via the conditions of necessity that initiate human production, is one that is antithetical to a reflection on ontology that begins first with the primacy of the individual thrown into being, or what Heidegger notes as the 'ontological difference' of beings and being that constitutes Dasein's mode of understanding. While this may appear to be a preference for Heidegger's rethinking (destruction) of ontology on my part, it must be recognised that this distinction between what I am calling naturalism and ontology is a foundational one for Marx. This is because ontology is itself what Marx would call abstract, something that he was intentionally avoiding.<sup>53</sup> Hence Demetrius Teigas notes the initial skepticism of

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<sup>49</sup> This appears in many forms in Heidegger, but it is most notably what stands behind his critique of metaphysics. An interesting and indirect line can be drawn between Marx and Sartre in this respect. Contrary to Heidegger, Sartre accepts the general notion of human need as definitive of a basic, but by no means essential, human nature. Marx makes this same concept the foundation of his philosophical system. Compare, for instance, Wilfrid Desan's *The Marxism of Jean-Paul Sartre*, pp. 25-6 and Harrison Hall's 'Intentionality and world: Division I of *Being and Time*', *The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger*, p. 132 where he argues how Heidegger's reformulation of practical action is not marked by lack (necessity) but the primordially of an already present and presencing world.

<sup>50</sup> Carol Gould provides a discussion of this in chapter one of her *Marx's Social Ontology*.

<sup>51</sup> Paul Walton and Andrew Gramble, *From Alienation to Surplus Value*, p. 27.

<sup>52</sup> Scott Meikle, 'History of philosophy: The metaphysics of substance in Marx', *The Cambridge Companion to Marx*, p. 305. Although this identification is valid at first glance, it does not hold true upon further scrutiny since for the Greeks labour was attributed a lower status than political participation.

<sup>53</sup> Lawrence Wilde therefore remarks that Marx saw his concepts as abstractions taken from 'uncomprehended concrete reality'. See 'Logic: Dialectic and contradiction', *The Cambridge Companion to Marx*, p. 281. Cf. Arendt's comment that 'If Being and Appearance part company forever, and this—as Marx once remarked—is indeed the basic assumption of all modern science, then there is nothing left to take upon faith; everything must be doubted', *The Human Condition*, p. 275. Accordingly Marx would fall on the side of 'Appearance', or concrete reality as it appears in nature. See MacIntyre's discussion on the Marx's theory as scientific in *Marxism and Christianity*, pp. 84-7, where he addresses Popper's criticism that Marx confused the scientific meaning of law and trend. Simone Weil critiques the scientific basis of Marx's theory as one where the conclusions were determined before the method was established; *Oppression and Liberty*, pp. 147-51.

Marxism in relation to the existentialist philosophy that regards being and existence as the beginning of hermeneutic understanding:

It [Marxism] is predominantly the fear that such (existentialist) philosophers start from premises that cannot either reveal the "material" basis of life or come to terms with the course of history where the most important "real" features of the human conditions are to be met.<sup>54</sup>

Regardless of philosophical preferences, we must endeavor to see some specific consequences of what I argue to be Marx's reduction of work to the fulfillment of necessity. In moving to the next section, let me summarise what has been argued above: Marx determines necessity as the foundation of his system of materialism which, in turn, justifies his move to repudiate any form of thinking that is not addressed to the real or natural world.<sup>55</sup>

### **The Contradiction of Freedom and Necessity in Marx**

By referring to the *contradiction* of freedom and necessity, I am highlighting Marx's understanding of dialectical (versus logical) contradiction in which the process of 'the negation of the negation' is evolutionary and, contra Hegel, located in human production.<sup>56</sup> While I accept that Marx's dialectic should not be reduced to logical opposition, I believe it does not escape severe problems. In this section, I argue that the problem with Marx's dialectical opposition between freedom and nature lies in the inevitable teleological scheme his philosophy relies on but does not comprehend. This problem has been noted by Dupré in recognising how Hegel's dialectical end in

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<sup>54</sup> Demetrius Teigas, *Knowledge and Hermeneutic Understanding: A Study of the Habermas-Gadamer Debate*, p. 157. Cf. John Macquarie's observation that for many existentialists their criticism of Marx is that class is more real than being in *Existentialism*, pp. 238-9 and Dupré, *The Philosophical Foundations of Marxism*, p. 144. This contention is, of course, made less persuasive in view of Sartre's interest in Marx. But as I refer to later, the main obstacle Sartre faced with *Marxism* was in the mediation of freedom between individual and group agency. So in this respect, Sartre's confrontation with Marx embodies this very tension Teigas cites. Indeed, on another view which I endorse and refer to later, Marx's philosophy is extremely individualistic in its appreciation of freedom as activity 'for its own sake'.

<sup>55</sup> Cf. John Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, p. 181.

<sup>56</sup> Scott Meikle, 'The history of philosophy: The metaphysics of substance in Marx' and Lawrence Wilde, 'Logic: Dialectic and Contradiction', *The Cambridge Companion to Marx*, pp. 313-16 and pp. 287-91, respectively. See also, Dupré, *Marx's Social Critique of Culture*, pp. 132-45.

the Idea is replaced by Marx with an activity—i.e., human production.<sup>57</sup> While this substitution is faithful to Marx's critique of ideology, it means that where Hegel had a definitive *telos*, Marx has a self-perpetuating activity. Thus, means and ends are fused, and as I will argue, confused.

The contradiction of freedom and necessity in Marx can be described in a twofold manner. As Dupré has noted, the unavoidable teleological scheme Marx's dialectic presupposes means that one must either insist that the dialectical process is never-ending, and that therefore, no teleology is needed *or* that one must identify and commit to this *telos*.<sup>58</sup> The former is what Dupré characterises as the unfortunate position of declaring that society must exist in a constant state of the negation of negation, that is, social upheaval and revolution.<sup>59</sup> The latter problem consists in allowing an ideological content to re-enter into Marx's dialectic—that is to say, freedom culminates in a definite state or end that we can philosophically and economically locate and posit. This is to say that the means-ends of dialectic does indeed have *an* end. Dupré bars the former point on the basis that no society would affirm a perpetual state of upheaval. At any rate, it is the latter problem that evinces how Marx's understanding of freedom is over-determined by its relation to necessity.

Marx can only articulate freedom as a negative concept since to do otherwise would allow an ideological content to act as the new necessity. But this refusal can only be an intermediate stage: that is, the negation of negation must affirm something. In this sense, Marx's notion of freedom presupposes a teleological-ideological end, and this complicates matters because it means an end will be ascribed in some way. This is indeed what I believe to be the contradiction. Marx's insistence on a negative concept of freedom allows for an uncritical and unconscious end to fill its negative space. My critique in this section consists of two movements: a discussion of how Marx's initial interpretation is negative, wherein freedom is understood by the lack of constraint and the self-creative realisation of the human in

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<sup>57</sup> Dupré, *Marx's Social Critique of Culture*, pp. 68-72.

<sup>58</sup> *Marx's Social Critique of Culture*, pp. 145-64.

<sup>59</sup> *Marx's Social Critique of Culture*, p. 158.

production; and a demonstration of how this negative space allows for an ideological or positive content to be filled in.

Let us first rehearse the critique of contradiction in Marx with the well-known passage from *Capital* that runs:

the realm of freedom only begins when, in fact, where that labour which is determined by need and external purposes, ceases; it is therefore, by its very nature, outside the sphere of material production proper.<sup>60</sup>

The basic argument is that Marx posits a duality between necessity and freedom that is never reconciled, a criticism that attacks the edifice of his philosophy since Marx begins with the intention to re-appreciate labour. However, this contradiction is arguably resolved if one reads further on in *Capital*. David McLellan therefore notes that the passage above must be read in relation to the later comments of Marx:

man's struggle with nature 'always remains a realm of necessity. Beyond it begins that development of human potentiality *for its own sake*, the true realm of freedom, which however can only flourish upon that realm of necessity as its basis. The shortening of the working day is its fundamental prerequisite'.<sup>61</sup>

A reformulation of Marx would consist in saying that he sees necessity as foundational to human being and production; yet production itself tends towards a higher realisation that in turn releases labour. This realm is where freedom is pursued 'for its own sake'. According to Julius Loewenstein, Marx believed he had overcome any contradiction between freedom and necessity in this passage since necessity now serves as the basis for freedom.<sup>62</sup> But in designating necessity as the basis of human being does Marx resolve the contradiction?

Sean Sayers argues that it is a common mistake 'to infer that the realm of necessity is therefore a realm of unfreedom'.<sup>63</sup> James Klagge offers a similar reading

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<sup>60</sup> From *Capital* as quoted in McLellan, *The Thought of Karl Marx*, p. 165.

<sup>61</sup> *The Thought of Karl Marx*, p. 166. My italics.

<sup>62</sup> *Marx against Marxism*, p. 88.

<sup>63</sup> Sean Sayers, 'Freedom and the "Realm of Necessity"', p. 2; available from [www.kent.ac.uk/secl/philosophy/ss/506sayers.rtf](http://www.kent.ac.uk/secl/philosophy/ss/506sayers.rtf). Henceforward this reference is abbreviated according to its title alone.

in saying that, in reference to the *Grundrisse*, for Marx 'the object is to terminate this relation [between freedom and necessity], so that production can leave everyone surplus time for other activities'.<sup>64</sup> It would seem therefore that the terms freedom and necessity are obsolete for Marx though he in fact uses them. Free labour is simply freedom in this sense, and one no longer need refer to any distinction between freedom and necessity. In view of this, Sayers observes that the common mistake of interpreting Marx, as if freedom and necessity were opposed, results from the predominance of thinking from such philosophers as Plato, Aristotle and Kant who speak of the alleviation of labour in order to live the life of reason.<sup>65</sup> Herbert Marcuse takes the contrary view arguing that Marx did indeed inherit the traditional, philosophical dichotomy and that any attempt to address or resolve this issue is necessarily a thinking beyond Marx. Yet although Marcuse differs from Sayers in this respect, they are in agreement insofar as Marcuse, like Sayers, sees the definition of freedom according to productivity as more or less the correct path in defining a new socialism.<sup>66</sup>

In any case, Sayers argues that the path Marx is taking is in fact different from the traditional dichotomy of freedom and necessity. Marx's radical reformulation of the freedom and necessity polarity is that work is freed from religious ideology that condemns the physical realm; and therefore, freedom can be brought back into necessity by virtue of the flourishing of human creativity in labour for its own sake, and not for any distorting ideal.<sup>67</sup> Freedom in this respect is not opposed to necessity since freedom allows human production to be correspondingly liberated. The 'realm of freedom' develops specifically (and historically) because of the exigency the 'realm of necessity' creates: it demands that human beings adapt 'free human development' to their historical needs.<sup>68</sup> Labour becomes more creative; in fact it can 'overcome the

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<sup>64</sup> 'Marx's Realm of "Freedom" and "Necessity"', *The Canadian Journal of Philosophy*, p. 771.

<sup>65</sup> Dupré concurs with this reading of freedom in Marx; *The Philosophical Foundations of Marxism*, pp. 167-8.

<sup>66</sup> 'The Real of Freedom and the Realm of Necessity: A Reconsideration', *Praxis*, 5, no. 1 (1969), pp. 20-5.

<sup>67</sup> Sayers, 'Freedom and the "Realm of Necessity"', p. 2.

<sup>68</sup> Sayers, *Marxism and Human Nature*, p. 55. Cf. 'Marx's Realm of "Freedom" and "Necessity"', *The Canadian Journal of Philosophy*, p. 774.

antagonistic relation which has existed historically between work and freedom'.<sup>69</sup> Thus, Loewenstein observes that freedom for Marx occurs when production is no longer 'determined by necessity', that is to say, labour is free when it is no longer *only* fulfilling necessity.<sup>70</sup> To be sure, this freedom is the reverse of the compulsion under the capitalist system where the labourer is obliged to live "hand to mouth" because of the withholding of labour's object from the labourer. This, as Sayers argues, is the proper positive role of freedom, that is, freedom as the 'expansion' of necessity and not the antithesis of it. Or as Marx says, necessity as

the fullest possible extension and expansion of this sphere and hence of human nature, involving, in Marx's words, 'the universality of individual needs, capacities, pleasures, productive forces, etc. . . . The full development of human mastery over the forces of nature, those of so-called nature as well as humanity's own nature. The absolute working out of his creative potentialities'.<sup>71</sup>

On this view, freedom is constituted by individual free will to act and labour according to how one sees fit in order to reap what is rightfully one's own. Hence, even necessary action can be free since the end product is not alienated from its producer; that is, labour can be a 'liberating activity'.<sup>72</sup> The core feature of this definition of freedom is not so much individual free will but participation in what is rightfully created by oneself.

Indeed, Carol Gould and Sayers argue that Marx's concept of freedom is centered on self-realisation. Gould opposes Marx's concept of freedom to Kant's: 'whereas for Kant self-determination is an activity in accordance with one's nature (*qua* rational), for Marx freedom is an activity of creating one's nature'.<sup>73</sup> This interpretation refers to a passage from *Grundrisse* where Marx states:

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<sup>69</sup> Sayers, 'Freedom and the "Realm of Necessity"', p. 6. See also a passage from *Marxistisch-leninistisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie III*, p. 1002, as quoted in Loewenstein, *Marx against Marxism*, p. 89: 'Labour will no longer be merely a means of existence, it will be transformed into true creativity into a source of joy'.

<sup>70</sup> *Marx against Marxism*, p. 87. Cf. Sayers, 'Work, Leisure and Human Needs', *The Philosophy of Leisure*, p. 35.

<sup>71</sup> 'Work, Leisure and Human Needs', *The Philosophy of Leisure*, p. 41. Sayers quotes from Marx's *Grundrisse* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973), p. 488.

<sup>72</sup> Sayers, *Marxism and Human Nature*, p. 40.

<sup>73</sup> *Marx's Social Ontology*, p. 107.

labour obtains its measure from the outside, through the aim to be attained and the obstacles to be overcome in attaining it. But . . . this overcoming of obstacles is in itself a liberating activity – and . . . further, the external aims become stripped of the semblance of merely external urgencies, and become posited as aims which the individual himself posits – *hence as self-realization, objectification of the subject, hence real freedom, whose action is, precisely, labour.*<sup>74</sup>

Sayers adopts this same interpretive position when remarking, 'freedom involves not simply an absence of constraint, but the positive aspect of rational self-determination'.<sup>75</sup> This definition of freedom has an appeal to it since it affirms what would seem to be the essential nature of freedom as such—i.e., individual choice and determination of meaning through the vital self-making activity of production. However, there are several difficulties with this definition that require further discussion, and subsequent to this discussion, I believe it will become a viable critique against Marx that his understanding of freedom is problematic, if not unsustainable.

We will trace this path according to two reductions: 1) the identification of freedom as activity for its own sake, or an end in-itself, which corresponds to the isolation of the individual and the "bracketing out" of the *alterity* of the world; which in turn leads to 2) the identification of freedom with self-determination which is a non-hermeneutical, or instrumental, mode of being that is not self-reflexive.

*a) freedom as activity for its own sake*

In Marx the identification of freedom as its own end corresponds to labour as an activity for its own sake where free, or unalienated, labour is unfettered by necessary compulsion and ideological interference in the objectification process. It is the notion that something is for its own sake that realises a manner of social practice free of ideology. For activity to be for its own sake it must be, by definition, not for anything else, that is, not compelled by some other reason but be self-determined. I will deal with the problems of a self-determined notion of freedom in a moment. For now, I refer to the kind of relationships this focus on self-determination erects.

<sup>74</sup> *Grundrisse* as quoted in Sayers, *Marx and Human Nature*, p. 63. My italics.

<sup>75</sup> Sayers, 'Freedom and the "Realm of Necessity"', p. 4.



Because the tension within this self-determination is one where the labourer overcomes external necessity, Marx gives a specific ontological designation to the world. If the external necessity is tantamount to the forces of nature, Marx ontologically suspends the world itself as that which has little bearing on human understanding. The world is not an object of interpretation but merely the material for it. Indeed, the role of the external world, which is at the same time the realm of compelling necessity, is simply raw material for human production. The world therefore accords a secondary status to that of individual flourishing. If this is true, then freedom is the isolation, or suspension, of the self from world—the “nihilating withdrawal” where the locus of action is on self-production and self-determination. Indeed, if one is to draw a line forward to Sartre we find in Marx a striking resemblance to the Sartrean notion of freedom: ‘Freedom is the human being putting his past out of play by secreting his own nothingness’,<sup>76</sup> where the past is history that participates in ideological distortion. Despite the conflict between the existentialist individual and the Marxist collective that Sartre attempted to mediate,<sup>77</sup> the epistemological role of freedom as a self-positing and sustaining aim is similar.<sup>78</sup> By this I mean the shared problem between Sartre and Marx is not one of individual freedom vis-a-vis group or collective freedom, but that of individual freedom without regard for the world.<sup>79</sup> Freedom for Marx begins with removal from ideology and abstraction, what phenomenologically is the nihilating withdrawal in order to recover, through human agency, the freedom lost as a result of alienation.<sup>80</sup>

<sup>76</sup> Ricoeur refers to Sartre’s *L’Être et le néant* (Paris, 1948), p. 12 in ‘Primary and Negative Affirmation’, *History and Truth*, p. 320. Cf. Louis Dupré, *Marx’s Social Critique of Culture*, pp. 10 & 104-5.

<sup>77</sup> Wilfrid Desan, *The Marxism of Jean-Paul Sartre*, pp. 13-14, 152-3.

<sup>78</sup> I say this in view of the fact that the scholarship is not agreed on Sartre’s relation to Marx, nor even Sartre’s own assessment of his work on dialectical reason as being ‘non-Marxist’. Joseph Catalano summarises the debate in observing that Sartre’s own assessment of his relationship to Marx may not necessarily be correct. Sartre’s relationship to Marxism has been described by his commentators as ‘Neo-Marxist’, ‘existentialist Marxism’, and ‘Marxist existentialism’; *A Commentary on Jean-Paul Sartre’s Critique of Dialectical Reason*, Volume 1, pp. 4-5.

<sup>79</sup> Tillich observes of existentialist conflation of individual freedom that ‘individualism is the self-affirmation of the individual self as individual self without regard to its participation in its world’, *The Courage to Be*, p. 113.

<sup>80</sup> Marjorie Grene, *Sartre*, pp. 102-03. Cf. Mark Poster, *Sartre’s Marxism*, p. 84: ‘Marxists should be concerned, Sartre responds, not with *explaining* freedom but with comprehending it and making it intelligible’ (*italics* in original). The move from ‘explanation’ to comprehension is precisely one that focuses on agency as a means of making freedom real. Here, the nihilating withdrawal accrues to collective definition while remaining true to its own self-positing action. Poster comments: ‘Because the

It annihilates in order to engage with the real; and thereby it is a means of self-determination:

Marx's view is 'activist' in the most radical sense of the word; the truly liberated man is the one who transforms and refashions reality according to his own ends. The world is not seen as an unalterable order, specified by necessary laws which man can do no more than recognize, but rather as the highly malleable raw material for man's self-oriented activity.<sup>81</sup>

Dupré extrapolates this activism more systematically when he writes:

The subject of Marx's philosophy is *man* as a self-creating, dynamic, and historical being who shapes his destiny in a real (not purely ideal) relation to the world. Its starting point is the pre-reflective and wholly given reality of the *praxis* by which man, in communion with his fellow man, appropriates nature. Its end is a messianic salvation of man so total that all need for a transcendent redemption ceases to exist.<sup>82</sup>

Hence in Marx, activity pertains above all to human being, a self-production that ignores the alterity of the world in its designation of it as raw material for production. '*Nature as nature,*' writes Marx, '*is nothing—a nothing proving itself to be nothing—is devoid of sense, or has only the sense of being an externality which has to be annulled.*'<sup>83</sup> Nature is, as Marcuse writes on Marx, something to be mastered through production:

The world is an estranged and untrue world so long as man does not destroy its dead objectivity and recognize himself and his own life 'behind' the fixed form of things and laws. When he finally wins this *self-consciousness*, he is on his way not only to the truth himself, but also of his world. And with the recognition goes the doing. He will try to put this truth into action, and *make*

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project is one of freedom, the other presents no threat to the individual. Hence the fused group presents a reorganisation of the bonds between people such that the interiority of freedom has become the exterior basis of common action'; *ibid.*, p. 85.

<sup>81</sup> James O'Rourke, *The Problem of Freedom in Marxist Thought*, p. 39. Cf. Paul Smart, *Mill and Marx: Individual liberty and the roads to freedom*, pp. 68-9. John Milbank relates this to Marx's inheritance of Fichte's 'self-positing subject'; *Theology and Social Theory*, p. 195.

<sup>82</sup> *The Philosophical Foundations of Marxism*, p. 230.

<sup>83</sup> Marx, *Collected Works*, Vol. 3 (New York: International Publishers, 1974), p. 346 as quoted in Dupré, *Marx's Social Critique of Culture*, p. 239. *Italics* in original.

the world what it *essentially* is, namely, the fulfillment of man's self-consciousness.<sup>84</sup>

One should note that according to Marcuse, the essence of the world for Marx is in man's self-consciousness; it is a self-conscious that in the first instance is not concerned with the world (except as raw material for its own development).<sup>85</sup>

This constitutes what Charles Guignon refers to as one of the defining elements of modernism: 'ontological individualism' or 'self-encapsulated individuals' who are only contingently related to something else.<sup>86</sup> Indeed, it is on this positing of freedom as an aim to be attained through the 'doing' of action that Marx's philosophical system shares in the modern depiction of an individual isolated from a meaningful universe that is eventually to be shaped and mastered by human production.<sup>87</sup> Jeff Hearn's observation that in Marx '[n]ature is not given but is subject to development and change according to identifiable principles and directions'<sup>88</sup> defines a link between Marx and the Baconian view that nature is there to be mastered and controlled by human beings, a problem in Marxism that is the topic of much debate with regard to today's environmental crisis.<sup>89</sup> Similarly, there is a lacuna in Sayers' attempts to define a philosophical understanding of human nature according to the development of 'all our powers and capacities' which implies a relation to nature in which nature is silent.<sup>90</sup> With the world "bracketed out", ontologically speaking, self-disclosive action lacks a hermeneutical milieu by which it can become the subject of interpretive and dialogical reflection.

<sup>84</sup> *Reason and Revelation*, p. 113. *Italics* in original. Cf. Alfred Schmidt, *The Concept of Nature in Marx*, pp. 98-9.

<sup>85</sup> In contrast, a similar significance given to self-consciousness is in the work of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, e.g. *The Phenomenon of Man*. For Teilhard, the difference is that self-consciousness involves the organisation of matter towards greater complexity and unification. Nature is no raw material but 'the stuff of the universe' struggling to release its spiritual energy. Self-consciousness therefore refers to the evolution of the entire universe. As mentioned earlier, Scott Meikle argues that Marx does not have a mechanistic conception of nature because he ascribes a definite *telos* to its process and is just not a mere conglomeration of functions [*Essentialism in the Thought of Karl Marx*, pp. 5-11 & 41-2]. However, the inclusion of a *telos* is not in itself opposed to mechanism since the *telos* can reduce all things under its forward-driving call to material for its development, which I am in fact arguing Marx does.

<sup>86</sup> 'Authenticity, moral values, and psychotherapy', *The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger*, p. 220.

<sup>87</sup> Dupré, *Passage to Modernity*, pp. 120-44. Cf. William Cavanaugh's argument that the idea of individual free will lends itself to a state (secular) *mythos* allowing for and perpetuating ontological violence. See his 'The City: Beyond secular parodies', *Radical Orthodoxy*, pp. 182-200.

<sup>88</sup> Hearn, 'Gender: Biology, nature, and capitalism', *The Cambridge Companion to Marx*, p. 224.

<sup>89</sup> E.g., Sayers, *Marxism and Human Nature*, pp. 166-8.

<sup>90</sup> *Marxism and Human Nature*, p. 30. *Italics* in original.

Ironically, then, the generally held opinion that Marxism is a collectivism is not entirely true. Marx is concerned with individual well-being that, in turn, makes up the collective social nexus.<sup>91</sup> But this only exacerbates the problem of Marx's concept of freedom. In the next sub-section, I argue that the seemingly positive terms used to describe freedom by interpreters of Marx, such as self-realisation and flourishing, conceal what is really a problematic concept.<sup>92</sup>

*b) action and freedom as an end*

In order to see how Marx's concept of freedom leads to a kind of reification that prohibits, or at least hinders, self-interpretation (and therefore undermines the core of self-realisation as an act of understanding), we must see how freedom initially acts as a negative, or empty, concept in his system. This negativity actually gives the impression that the content of freedom is self-determination and choice, recognising any greater order of meaning as a hindrance to the self-determining role. However, as I will endeavour to show, the very nature of self-determination misconstrues the nature of freedom that requires a self-reflexive participation.<sup>93</sup>

Charles Taylor refers to the negative conception of freedom as 'an opportunity concept' where what is posited is 'nothing but the absence of constraint'.<sup>94</sup> Freedom as a negative concept relies on being free 'in the existence of

<sup>91</sup> Gould, *Marx's Social Ontology*, pp. 34-6.

<sup>92</sup> See Paul Smart's account of such interpreters in *Mill and Marx: Individual liberty and the roads to freedom*, p. 129, and James J. O'Rourke, *The Problem of Freedom in Marxist Thought*, p. 41. O'Rourke refers to 'self-realization'.

<sup>93</sup> Thomas Dunn notes a similar critique offered by Foucault of Isaiah Berlin's mediation between negative and positive freedom. Berlin's final concession to positive freedom as a means of establishing laws to secure negative freedom enacts a kind of transgression of this negative freedom that does not recognise itself to be such. Such violations then take the form of normative concepts and are antithetical to negative freedom; *Michel Foucault and the Politics of Freedom*, pp. 58-9. Dupré alights on a similar problem in Marx in relation to Sartre's point about dialectic: that 'Wherever creative freedom operates, conflicts arise' and so the dialectic of historical materialism can never find a final point at which freedom can be secured since any attempt to secure freedom results in a conflict with others; *Marx's Social Critique of Culture*, pp. 105-6.

<sup>94</sup> 'What's Wrong with Negative Liberty?' *The Idea of Freedom*, p. 177. Quentin Skinner challenges Taylor's critique of negative liberty on the basis that the original role of negative liberty was imbedded in an understanding of public service and virtue. See his 'The idea of negative liberty: philosophical and historical perspectives', *Philosophy in History*, pp. 193-221. Nonetheless, there seems to be some crossed lines of argument here. Taylor, on my reading, is referring specifically to modern determinations of negative liberty which he locates, in particular with Hobbes. Skinner similarly argues that it was Hobbes who failed to grasp the public milieu of negative liberty in his interpretation of the historical sources [pp. 213-14]. Where Taylor and Skinner appear to depart is the extent to which

certain capacities' that without them, one is 'not free, or less free'.<sup>95</sup> Taylor develops this tension inherent in negative liberty in terms of the obstacles and restraints that must be overcome. They are to a large degree not only external (e.g., unjust law) but internal (e.g., fears and prejudices) and must be recognised as such in order for one to attempt to be free.<sup>96</sup> In other words, negative freedom implies a pre-understanding of what it is that must be overcome, and where such obstacles are internal, the degree of self-reflection required is greater. Hence, the self-determining nature of negative freedom is not possible without first apprehending in advance 'oneself and the shape of one's life'.<sup>97</sup> And here we see a significant contrast of Marx to Heidegger: Marx insists that the apprehension of necessity, and subsequent response to it in production, are non-interpretive (that is, non-ideological) while for Heidegger Dasein's possibilities of being-in-the-world are always those which it anticipates from its pre-understanding. Dupré notes that this non-ideological foundation is a requirement of Marx's dialectic insofar as the contradiction upon which dialectic relies is one that is inherent in the structure of things and not reliant upon a *conception* of human nature.<sup>98</sup> This, I am saying, is Marx's attempt to keep his conception of freedom open, or negative—free of ideal content. For Marx, the dialectical structure is the *a priori* ground zero of reality.

A crucial sleight can be extrapolated from the negative concept of freedom: it assumes self-determination does not require a responsibility for discovering what the shape of one's life can be in relation to others or the world. It also omits a reflection upon the nature and implications of a teleological meaning beyond the self as autonomous centre. Thus, Dupré notes, Marx's dialectic is caught within an irresolvable contradiction, not resolved (or negated) by Marx himself: '[W]ithout a teleological assumption nothing warrants a positive outcome to Marx's dialectic'. However, as Dupré continues, 'Unceasing conflict accounts for movement; it does not determine the direction of the movement. In giving his dialectic a progressive

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the modern self (and its conception of itself and freedom) is aware of its ontological isolation from the world and others.

<sup>95</sup> 'What's Wrong with Negative Liberty?' *The Idea of Freedom*, p. 176.

<sup>96</sup> 'What's Wrong with Negative Liberty?' *The Idea of Freedom*, p. 177.

<sup>97</sup> 'What's Wrong with Negative Liberty?' *The Idea of Freedom*, p. 177.

<sup>98</sup> *Marx's Social Critique of Culture*, p. 137.

interpretation, Marx reveals his unwavering allegiance to an unavowed teleology'.<sup>99</sup> As 'unavowed', the teleology is at the very least nebulous and problematic for Marx's system. In looking at the range of interpretations of Marx, this certainly appears to be the case. Dupré, in this respect, sees this ambiguity as producing a lawful schism within Marx-ism. The question over ideology and dialectic is decisive for determining two kinds of Marxism. One school is more humanist and existential in that it is concerned with the development of human freedom, as in Sartre and Alexander Kojève. It sees Marx throughout his writings as aiming at an emancipated anthropology.<sup>100</sup> The other school is politically and economically focused, arguing that the real basis of Marx's system is not an anthropology, and therefore an ideology of human nature, but a historical-scientific structure of contradiction actualised in economics. One can say in this instance that dialectic is in the inherent reality of things and so moves towards communism regardless of a *telos*.<sup>101</sup> However, this intent to avoid teleology fails since a historical structure, even if scientifically determined, still infers an end. And while not overtly committing to a *telos* from the outset, it nonetheless arrives at one. The difference is that this latter position would argue to have validated any indication of a *telos* according to its examination of the law-like generalisations it has identified as the base structure. It might therefore speak of this end as being "objectively" determined, but this object still remains to be interpreted in human reflection and therefore attains a teleological meaning to be affirmed, questioned or even repudiated.

In view of these problems, one can say that Marx's concept of freedom seeks a teleology beyond self-realisation. In other words, the realisation of the self cannot be merely for itself but towards an end that incorporates the progress of human history. Where this requisite is consciously recognised, one finds that commentators on Marx do attempt to extrapolate a positive structure. Sayers, for example, does not give discussion to negative and positive freedom, though it is true to say that he accepts a positively defining role of freedom to create more needs from basic needs through

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<sup>99</sup> *Marx's Social Critique of Culture*, p. 141.

<sup>100</sup> *Marx's Social Critique of Culture*, pp. 135-6.

<sup>101</sup> *Marx's Social Critique of Culture*, pp. 138-41.

historical understanding.<sup>102</sup> Similarly, in arguing that for Marx 'freedom involves not simply an absence of constraint, but the positive aspect of rational self-determination' (as quoted earlier), Gould claims that the self-realisation 'is a process of social activity and not merely individual activity'. It 'generates not only actions but rules of action'.<sup>103</sup> In turn, the tension between individuals and collective social activity projects a mediating structure according to which individuals can debate about specific activities in relation to collective action. The impasse here is that once one admits of something like rules of action and a mediating structure by which rules can be accepted or rejected, one admits of a standard or system of values that guides this mediation. The self-realisation process, which in turn becomes self-legislating, cannot remain merely a form of neutral practice dedicated to human production. Indeed, here is precisely Habermas' critique of Marx: he fails to distinguish between instrumental and practical reason.<sup>104</sup> Practical reason, beyond instrumental reason, is self-reflexive. In short, it refers to ideological content that provides precepts by which it can reason towards its ends (hence why *praxis* is related to the uniquely ethical virtue of *phronesis* in Classical thinking). Thus, practical reason is addressed to understanding goods and symbolic meaning and the actions needed to attain them: 'The practical includes all areas of action that have a symbolic structure, a structure that both interprets and regulates action. The technical and the practical represent a twofold division in the field of human action'.<sup>105</sup>

What this suggests, to the detriment of the kind of suspension involved in negative freedom, is that its void is filled by ideological content.<sup>106</sup> The suspicion of

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<sup>102</sup> Sayers, Sean, *Marxism and Human Nature*, p. 55. Cf. Klagge, "Marx's Realm of 'Freedom' and 'Necessity'," *The Canadian Journal of Philosophy*, p. 774.

<sup>103</sup> *Marx's Social Ontology*, pp. 112-13; cf. Sayers' conception of communication and art, *Marx and Human Nature*, p. 77.

<sup>104</sup> Ricoeur, 'Habermas (1)', *Ideology and Utopia*, pp. 221-4. Habermas: 'The philosophical foundation of this materialism proves itself insufficient to establish an unconditional phenomenological self reflection of knowledge and thus prevent the positivistic atrophy of epistemology . . . I see the reason for this in the reduction of the self-generative act of the human species to labour' [*Knowledge and Human Interests* (Boston: 1971), p. 42 as quoted in Walton and Gamble, *From Alienation to Surplus Value*, p. 43].

<sup>105</sup> Ricoeur, 'Habermas (1)', *Ideology and Utopia*, p. 226.

<sup>106</sup> This occurs despite the distinction between formal and real freedom that Marxists wish to draw where the former is a mode of disguised authority and the latter is the express concern for freedom itself. This distinction does not hold up to scrutiny insofar as real freedom must define itself and place



ideology inevitably assumes ideological authority. Indeed, Habermas sees Marx's system as a critical philosophy that adapts the Kantian notion of transcendental synthesis to the labour producing scheme. It is where, as Ricoeur summarises, 'we have the constitution of the object through work and consumption'.<sup>107</sup> Thus, the intellectual/ideological principle of the 'transcendental ego as bearer of the synthesis of the object' is replaced by the 'productivity of a working subject as materialised in his or her work'.<sup>108</sup> Habermas writes:

That is why labor, or work, is not only a fundamental category of human existence but also an epistemological category. The system of objective activities creates the factual conditions of the possible reproduction of social life *and at the same time* the transcendental conditions of the possible objectivity of the objects of experience.<sup>109</sup>

Even with Marx, so it seems, *praxis* is not just action, but action with 'an ideological layer'.<sup>110</sup>

But there is a further, more significant consequence I would like to highlight, and this involves a certain deception where one thinks that self-determination is an end, requiring no commitment to a teleological reflection. In this case, the emphasis on negative freedom fails to appreciate the self-interpretive, hermeneutic nature of freedom itself, and instead, posits freedom in terms of the fulfilment of a *genus* of action rather than a reflection upon it. In other words, the immediate completion of the action is itself synonymous with freedom and requires no reflection beyond it. The identification of freedom with an action forms a concrete relationship impermeable to self-reflection. In this regard, the 'absence of constraint' that Taylor refers to takes on a positive form where this absence is "filled in" by the *genus* of action called labour. Marx's thoughts on self-realisation (quoted earlier) then gain a disconcerting levity: 'external aims become . . . posited as aims which the individual himself posits – hence as self-realisation, objectification of the subject, hence real

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its valuation in a mode authority over-against other definitions; Ricoeur, 'Weber (2)', *Ideology and Utopia*, p. 205.

<sup>107</sup> 'Habermas (1)', *Ideology and Utopia*, p. 227.

<sup>108</sup> Ricoeur summarising Habermas; 'Habermas (1)', *Ideology and Utopia*, p. 217.

<sup>109</sup> Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interests*, trans. Jeremy Shapiro (Boston: Beacon Press, 1972), p. 28 (*italics* in original) as quoted in 'Habermas (1)', *Ideology and Utopia*, p. 218; *italics* in original.

<sup>110</sup> 'Habermas (1)', *Ideology and Utopia*, p. 223.



freedom, whose action is, precisely, labour'. Despite the appeal to the individual's self-actualisation, the elevation of a non-reflective activity in the place of freedom produces a militant and collective conformity to work. The further ramification of this reduction is that because work is identified as the single activity of self-determination, it reduces the scope of human existence to activities tied to work—i.e., production and consumption.<sup>111</sup> Just as no society would like to see itself as existing in a constant state of upheaval, one can say conversely that no society would like to see itself as having its fulfilment in a complacent mode of production and consumption. In any event, what occurs is reduction of human activity into work itself, that is, into the ground of necessity that Marx designates as the basis of reality. To reiterate Habermas' critique (summarised by Ricoeur): 'Habermas' objection, to which he continually returns, is that Marx reduced the concept of activity to production. The scope of the concept was collapsed. While Marx solved the problem of synthesis by labour he reduced the compass of his discovery by identifying work with merely instrumental action'.<sup>112</sup>

### **Conclusion: Apart from Marx**

If what I have argued of Marx is true, then the specter of necessity haunts his philosophical system: his philosophy of work remains ineluctably bound to necessity while aspiring towards a realisation of freedom that he inadequately conceived. As Arendt notes, labour itself is never liberated by Marx, but instead the entire domain of human activity is conflated to it.<sup>113</sup> Margaret Canovan observes along these lines:

[A]lthough he [Marx] believed that his own theoretical and practical endeavors were directed towards a future in which human beings would be fully free masters of their own destiny what he was actually forwarding and articulating was the exact opposite: the emergence of a society entirely geared to the labour that is necessary to serve biological life, in which human

<sup>111</sup> Sayers, *Marxism and Human Nature*, p. 77; cf. Sayers, 'Freedom and the "Realm of Necessity"', p. 4.

<sup>112</sup> 'Habermas (1)', *Ideology and Utopia*, p. 221.

<sup>113</sup> *The Human Condition*, p. 306. See also Kimberly Hutching's analysis of Arendt in *Kant, Critique and Politics*, p. 86 and O'Rourke, *The Problem of Freedom in Marxist Thought*, p. 40.

individuality would be submerged in a collective life process, and human freedom sacrificed to that process's inexorable advance.<sup>114</sup>

The peculiar relation of labour to freedom, then, is one in which freedom represents the highest mode of self-realisation that is posited according to individual 'human power' within 'human society'.<sup>115</sup> But because the conception of freedom is initially empty it is filled in and identified with a genus of action. In the case of Marx, this genus is precisely labour. Thus, Ricoeur refers to this reduction as 'the rehabilitation of work' that triumphs 'in a void' and that tends 'towards the very indeterminate notion of a militant and non-contemplative form of human existence'.<sup>116</sup>

Necessity posits a definite limitation on what is and should be the subject of work, reflection, and finally, freedom. Loewenstein characterises this problematic in a different way: because Marx was so committed to the glorification of labour, '[h]e was obviously troubled by the thought that the true realm of freedom is detached from organised production'.<sup>117</sup> Ricoeur observes along similar lines, 'It is precisely this glorification of work which troubles me. A notion which signifies everything no longer signifies anything'.<sup>118</sup> In Chapter VIII (The Ancient Greek Understanding of Work), we will see how this can arise in the dominant role Marx ascribes to *praxis*, and in the concluding chapter, I will refer to Ricoeur's notion of integrative ideology in order to show how work is responsible for an ideological content from the start and so must accept this as its point of determination.

There are, no doubt, many questions left unanswered in my analysis of Marx, especially for those sympathetic to his critique of capitalism. Because my argument seeks to depart from Marx's initial interpretation of the foundation of work and a phenomenology of human being as responding to necessity, I cannot answer those questions demanding an alternative to Marx's analysis of capitalism, though I hint at

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<sup>114</sup> Hannah Arendt, *a Reinterpretation of Her Political Thought*, p. 74; cf. *The Political Thought of Hannah Arendt*, p. 12.

<sup>115</sup> Eagleton, *The Ideology of the Aesthetic*, p. 226.

<sup>116</sup> 'Work and the Word', *History and Truth*, p. 198. An example of this occurs when Etienne Born and François Henry confuse the realms of work and thinking: 'It must be remembered that man the worker is the whole of man; he is not merely the product of society, nor the animated instrument of production; he is man the thinker'; *A Philosophy of Work*, p. 7.

<sup>117</sup> *Marx against Marxism*, p. 88.

<sup>118</sup> Ricoeur, 'Work and the Word', *History and Truth*, p. 198.

something like this in the concluding chapter. The preceding analysis is meant more to raise fundamental questions regarding what I have argued to be Marx's inadequate considerations of his grounding of work in necessity. Yet because all deconstructive and critical projects posit in some sense an alternative for which the critique was conducted in the first place, I should say a few words about how my study proposes a different response to the question of the meaning of human work.

Despite my departure from Sayers' analysis of Marx, I am in fact motivated by a similar project: namely, to dissolve the prejudice that work is only necessary. Where I differ, of course, is in seeing human engagement in work as being motivated by and moving towards a definite, "ideological" content. In other words, I argue that work does indeed have a principle to which it is ultimately responsible, i.e., giving thanks to being. Nevertheless, because this kind of reconciliation requires a discourse that can incorporate necessity, I choose to isolate one aspect of necessity whose meaning appears to be indisputably coherent—that of use. If human usage can be broadened beyond simple utility, then what emerges is a reflective exigency to follow through the implications of this interpretation. Because conceptions of use inevitably are linked to notions of utility, my attempt to reinterpret the meaning of use requires a necessary encounter with Enlightenment philosophical suppositions, the theme of the next chapter.

## V

### Deconstructing the Modern Understanding of Work

More and more, *work* enlists all good conscience on its side; the desire for joy already calls itself a "need to recuperate" and is beginning to be ashamed of itself.

-Nietzsche<sup>1</sup>

The preceding critique of Marx and his reliance on necessity as the basis of work helps us to see more readily to what extent the modern conception of work is determined in a similar manner. In this chapter, I identify and will deconstruct the philosophical foundation of the modern conception of work that reduces reality to a conglomeration of occurrent entities to be controlled. I use the term *utilitarian* to describe this attitude, and I will explain later my broad usage of it that is not confined to the utilitarian philosophies of Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill, for example. One can see in this qualification that I rely on a shared, philosophical/theological assumption underlying the various forms of Reformation and Enlightenment thinking. Heidegger refers to this as the 'metaphysics that grounds an age',<sup>2</sup> and I will attempt to discover this grounding in a more hermeneutical way by drawing out the conceptual detail Max Weber and Louis Dupré bring to our attention.

I trace the modern understanding of work to the Reformation and Enlightenment thinking in order to see how the specific metaphysical orientation to the world, as being mechanistic and having no inherent meaning, arose. As one may recall, this trait of mechanism permeates Marx's notion of formative work where nature exists for human production and consumption. Thus, while Marx opposed the properly defined utilitarianism of Bentham and Mill because it abstracted the notion of necessity and attached to it false needs created by class ideology,<sup>3</sup> he still

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<sup>1</sup> *The Gay Science*, #329, p. 259. *Italics* in original.

<sup>2</sup> 'Age of the World Picture', *The Question Concerning Technology*, p. 115.

<sup>3</sup> See, for example, Sayers' *Marxism and Human Nature*, pp. 133-6.

maintained a common thread essential to utilitarianism by which the world was the object for human mastery.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, while Marx states that with industrialism 'nature becomes purely an object for humankind, purely a matter of utility',<sup>5</sup> his redefinition of nature fails to speak of it with qualitative difference. He sees it as 'a power for itself'<sup>6</sup> to be used by humans in their mode of labour vis-a-vis self-realisation. This Marxist notion of naturalism is one that is common to the Enlightenment in its endeavor to break free of traditional and theological impositions in order to actualise human autonomy.<sup>7</sup> While I have already discussed the problems of a mechanistic understanding of the world in contrast to Heidegger's notion of being in the chapter on hermeneutics, here we will see how mechanism attempts to reduce human being to the level of necessary response to nature, and in so doing, disregards any potential of human being beyond the attainment of practical ends. Because practical ends refer to nothing more than individual and collective satisfaction, this *telos* remains insufficient for the reflective, human capacity that sees itself situated in finitude and so seeks a greater end than simple fulfillment of desires.<sup>8</sup> Hence, the modern preoccupation with efficient means never replies to the question "for what end are these means efficient?" I will encapsulate this truncated conception of work by the term utilitarian.

My use of 'utilitarian' is not limited to the philosophy of the Enlightenment (e.g., Hume, Bentham and Mill) which is itself ambiguous and not consistent in declaring any particular thesis.<sup>9</sup> Rather, I mean utilitarian in a broader sense as it is often employed in the general philosophical discourse relating to human action.<sup>10</sup> In

<sup>4</sup> Dupré sees Marx succumbing to a utilitarian reduction despite his attempts to break free from it. *Marx's Social Critique of Culture*, pp. 213-14.

<sup>5</sup> *Grundrisse*, trans. Martin Nicolaus (New York: Vintage Books, 1973), p. 410, as quoted in Michael Zimmerman, *Heidegger's Confrontation with Modernity*, p. 210.

<sup>6</sup> *Grundrisse*, *Ibid.*, p. 410.

<sup>7</sup> Taylor's study of naturalism and utilitarianism in *Sources of the Self* shows how the two are interrelated (e.g., pp. 340-1).

<sup>8</sup> John Cottingham, *Philosophy and the Good Life*, p. 22.

<sup>9</sup> Sayers points out that Mill himself was never consistent with his definition of utilitarianism. See his *Marxism and Human Nature*, pp. 14-16. See also Taylor's *Sources of the Self*, pp. 339-40.

<sup>10</sup> See, for example, Charles Taylor's *Sources of the Self*, pp. 13 & 31; Bronislaw Szerszynski's *Nature, Technology and the Sacred*, pp. 51-64; Sayers's *Marxism and Human Nature*, pp. 133-6; and the works of Arendt and Dupré that I will be referring to throughout this chapter. Although there is no agreed meaning of utilitarianism the general notion that it serves to efficiently produce those things deemed useful is accepted. The area of dispute lies in exactly what constitutes usefulness.

a certain sense, the meaning of utilitarian is in need of no further clarification. By it one understands the definition of action and work according to use: something or some action is "useful". But as I hope to show in this chapter, this notion of "usefulness" is precisely what obfuscates a further exploration of the nature of work since there is no objective meaning of usefulness that is not already value-laden.<sup>11</sup> Hence, what stands behind a determination of use is an entire metaphysical interpretation of reality, one of whose aspects, as we will see both MacIntyre and Charles Taylor endeavor to show, is a reliance upon a moral edifice despite its appeal to a homogenous rationale of calculability.

Thus despite its many variations, utilitarian in its broadest sense involves two basic determinations: 1) an understanding of work which has no meaningfulness beyond its mechanistic fulfillment of necessity; and 2) an inability to stand outside its mechanistic system in order to question its involvement with reality. I should also add that this broad definition is a strategic move on my part in that it allows for the strange convergence of opposing philosophies within the Enlightenment, without having to take a detour into a detailed analysis of the varied arguments. For instance, Dupré and MacIntyre respectively allude to the opposition of theories in empiricism and ideological rationalism<sup>12</sup> and the justification of moral action according to either a moral intuition or a rational imperative that exclude one another.<sup>13</sup> The former underlies the general utilitarian philosophies of the Enlightenment while the latter is expressly a Kantian dilemma and what MacIntyre argues gives rise to emotivism, or the individualism justifying private moral preference. Despite the divergences, both Dupré and MacIntyre weave these differences into a general thesis as to why the Enlightenment conception of autonomy had to fail, an argument that relies not on independent causes but a general, shared metaphysical foundation. This shared foundation, to reiterate, is the supposition that the subject is the giver of meaning and that this meaning-

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<sup>11</sup> As Marcuse has shown, the neutrality claimed in scientific and technological rationality is not free of value but subservient to the technological intent to control nature; *One Dimensional Man*, pp. 159-63.

<sup>12</sup> *After Virtue*, pp. 80-1 and *The Enlightenment*, p. 7. What MacIntyre refers to as natural science is the same as Dupré's account of ideological rationalism—both refer to a transcendent efficient cause.

<sup>13</sup> *After Virtue*, pp. 62-3 and *The Enlightenment*, p. 117. Cf. Taylor's *Sources of the Self*, pp. 83-4 and Arendt's *The Human Condition*, pp. 155-6 where she notes how Kant shares in utilitarianism despite his well known opposition to it.

determining process occurs in a mechanistic nature. Enlightenment rationalism as a whole shares in the common separation of appearance and reality where thinking parallels reality 'without ever meeting it,' as Dupré remarks.<sup>14</sup> It is because of this breakdown that the ontological dissolution marking the modern age is characterised by the loss of the question of the meaning of being which recedes into the most private and therefore inarticulate discourse.<sup>15</sup> It is in this regard that modernity in general has inherited the metaphysical foundations of the Reformation and the Enlightenment without ever needing to have read its sources.

The argument of this chapter begins with an analysis of Max Weber's notion of the modern work ethic that arises during the Reformation. I will depart from Weber in order to reinterpret how other factors besides sociological mechanisms may be at play in allowing this kind of understanding to predominate. Here, I will turn to Dupré's account of the 'ontotheological breakdown'<sup>16</sup> that gives rise to mechanism and becomes most pronounced and overtly thought during the Enlightenment. After this examination, I will demonstrate how the utilitarian attitude is derived from this metaphysical edifice and how it points to an inevitable futility, referring to the arguments of Dupré, MacIntyre and Taylor. Finally, Arendt's analysis of *animal laborans* and *homo faber* will prove invaluable in providing a further existential analysis of the futility of the utilitarian attitude.

### The Inception of the Modern Work Ethic

The notion of a work ethic was popularised by Weber's *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* in which he argues how otherworldly transcendence and asceticism paved the way for the denigration of the world and subsequently focused human effort to conform to a rationalised interpretation, stripping the world of

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<sup>14</sup> *The Enlightenment*, p. 15.

<sup>15</sup> As we have seen in Heidegger's *Being and Time*. This also informs MacIntyre's argument in *After Virtue* where he sees moral philosophy succumbing to emotivism. In *Passage to Modernity*, Dupré follows the slow inception by which meaning is no longer taken to be present in being, or what he calls the 'ontotheological breakdown', pp. 3-5. Cottingham sees this same phenomenon in moral philosophy, 'confining itself instead either to second order classifications, or to puncturing the pretensions of earlier philosophizing. In the new academicized subject, there was no room for overarching visions of the good life', *Philosophy and the Good Life*, p. 15.

<sup>16</sup> *Passage to Modernity*, pp. 3-5.



meaning. This shift culminates in what Weber refers to as inner worldly asceticism which provides a rational code of conduct encouraging the accumulation of capital. It therefore forms the basis of Weber's argument of how capitalism was able to escalate and spread in a significant way during the Reformation. We will not, however, follow Weber this far since the socio-economic flourishing of capitalism is a separate subject.<sup>17</sup> This study will be concerned with his analysis of how a reified metaphysical system, that posits the absolute dualism between immanence (creation, nature, world) and transcendence (God), gives rise to the demeaning of the world, and inevitably human action as such. In this metaphysics, human work becomes the broad and general field for a depleted schema of good works that can never approach the kingdom of heaven. It marginalises the meaningfulness of good works, and in so doing, paradoxically elevates worldly work to a manner of profane, or secular, worship. In other words, slowly and by degrees work separates itself from its antecedent theological controversies and remains focused instead on its practical task at hand; and thus work, in this secular and profane sense, constitutes its own end. This is the seed of the modern work ethic that is unmistakably utilitarian.

The modern work ethic is simple enough to state: *useful effort is good*. And where useful effort is good, the more effort, the better. The notion that there can be 'a' single work ethic is energetically denied within the sociology of work which states that a 'monolithic' ethic of work is deluded in thinking that a single ethic can be applied across the board.<sup>18</sup> But what is meant in this study as the modern work ethic refers to the fundamental attitude, or *ethos*, by which various ethics can be articulated. Thus, I wish to point to the underlying metaphysical foundation of the understanding of modern work that manifests in varied ways but is, nevertheless, still consistent with this metaphysics. Weber's use of the word 'ethic' (as opposed to

<sup>17</sup> There is precedent for this in Weber's own work. The second edition of *The Protestant Work Ethic*, as its 'Introduction' states, adapts Weber's thesis in the book to support his larger argument in *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religions-soziologie* concerning the distortion of the self and its loss of meaning within the process of 'rationalization' and 'disenchantment' [see Friedrich Tenbruck, 'The problem of thematic unity in the works of Max Weber', *Reading Weber*, pp. 45, 49-50, 52, 58-9. For a discussion of the self in Weber see Harvey Goldman, 'Weber's Ascetic Practices of the Self', *Weber's Protestant Ethic*, p. 164].

<sup>18</sup> See, for example, *The Historical Meanings of Work*, ed. Joyce Patrick, p. 4. With regard to the application of a modern work ethic on non-Western societies, for example, it is the implication of this study (and also of Weber's) that the rationalisation inherent in the technological mode of enframing is one that will come to dominate work on a global basis which is already arguable from the standpoint of the proliferation of the exploitation of labour in third world countries.



ethics), refers to the pervasiveness of the understanding that informs the West. It is one that arose in the Reformation in a decisive manner and did not culminate in its fullest implications until the modern age.<sup>19</sup> Thus, the phrase 'the Protestant ethic' is rendered in this study more according to the specific metaphysical system that upheld the Reformation thinking and attempted to resolve the duality between nature and divinity.<sup>20</sup>

The well-known quotation of Count Zinzendorf sums up the modern work ethic where existence itself is conflated into mere toil: 'One does not only work in order to live, but one lives for the sake of one's work, and if there is no more work to do one suffers or goes to sleep'.<sup>21</sup> The idea that useful effort is good seems innocent and noble enough by itself. The proliferation of a metaphysics in favour of effort, however, inevitably enters into a system of justification where all action, even rest, exists only for the sake of work. But how was this attitude towards work made possible? Weber argues that the modern work ethic is the result of a definite metaphysical understanding in which nature and meaning are separated. Meaning is displaced in the other world of transcendence, a move that in Weber's mind is encouraged by the ascetic tendency of Christianity:

For the saints' everlasting rest is in the next world; on earth man must, to be certain of his grace, "do the works of him who sent him, as long as it is yet the day". Not leisure and enjoyment, but only activity serves to increase the glory of God, according to the definite manifestations of His will.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Dupré observes in support of my argument: 'When Max Weber described modernity as the loss of an unquestioned legitimacy of a divinely instituted order, his definition applies to the Enlightenment and the subsequent centuries, not to the previous period'; *The Enlightenment*, p. xi.

<sup>20</sup> Michael Rose, against this study's position, argues that the Protestant ethic is a specific interpretation of work that has been taken to be common, distorting the actual 'internalized values' that really are the cause; *Re-working the Work Ethic*, p. 41. It is my argument that these values are themselves symptomatic of the metaphysics inherited from the Reformation and still holding sway.

<sup>21</sup> As quoted by Max Weber in *The Protestant Work Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, p. 264, n24 and in Josef Pieper's *Leisure, the Basis of Culture*, p. 4.

<sup>22</sup> Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, p. 157. He quotes further from Baxter's *Christian Dictionary*, I, pp. 375-6: 'It is for action that God maintaineth us and our activities; work is the moral as well as the natural end of power . . . . It is action that God is most served and honoured by. . . . The public welfare or the good of the many is to be valued above our own'.

The difference between the spiritual asceticism of the monk and the asceticism of the worker concerns the mode in which the asceticism is practiced. As Karl Jaspers remarks in summarising Weber's argument,

Man should not, as monks do, retreat from the world in an asceticism practiced in uncharitable inactivity; God wants to be glorified by active asceticism *in* the world. Consequently, man should work for others; the way to realize God's will in the world is through useful works.<sup>23</sup>

To be sure, this attitude is not entirely unique to Weber, and it can indeed be traced back to the Enlightenment itself in which the ideological side of rationalism came under fire by counter-Enlightenment thinking in the attempt to refute the necessity of first principles.<sup>24</sup> Nevertheless, Weber alights on a crucial transition within the history of Western metaphysics, namely that actions in the earthly world are now subjected to ethical justification. Ethical justification is meant here in a modern sense where a course of action is validated according to a code of conduct.<sup>25</sup> Thus, the work ethic that is released out onto the world is not simply *an* ethic of work, but it is more largely an ethical understanding of living realised *by* work. This is the force behind Weber's notion of inner worldly asceticism.

Luther's thinking epitomises this struggle in which he strives to join submission to divine will and worldly undertakings. Weber states that in Luther's thinking

there remains, more and more strongly emphasized, the statement that the fulfillment of worldly duties is under all circumstances the only way to live acceptably to God. It and it alone is the will of God, and hence every legitimate calling has exactly the same worth in the sight of God.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Leonardo, *Descartes, Max Weber: Three Essays*, pp. 233-4.

<sup>24</sup> Dupré refers to d'Holbach's statement, 'But why should a future state, of which we know nothing, have to compensate for the happiness God has denied us in this life?'; *The Enlightenment*, p. 266.

<sup>25</sup> Ethics is meant generally here as the principle enabling the discourse concerning the realization of "the good life" or what it means to live responsibly as a human being. Thus, disputation that there can ever be such a thing as the good life is still an argument concerning ethics and a code of conduct. See, for example, MacIntyre's *After Virtue*, pp. 1-22. John Cottingham makes the distinction within moral philosophy where the concern for the good life is 'synoptic ethics'. See his *Philosophy and the Good Life*, pp. 20-1, 104.

<sup>26</sup> *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, p. 81; cf. Roland Bainton, *Here I Stand*, p. 233 & 245.

But this was a union that Luther could not maintain. Weber attributes this to the age's increasing reliance on and significance given to divine will which eliminated the possibility of recovering a divinely ordered cosmos in which an individual found oneself to be in a state of corruption and sin. All worldly concerns and situations, the realm of the existential as such, was fixed according to a divine will that in turn called for absolute submission to this will.<sup>27</sup> So the freedom to act in good works was negated by absolute submission, and this is integral to Luther's thesis of *sola fide*. The notion of submission itself, which is lacking until the Reformation's specific emphasis on individual salvation and exigency to conform, suggests a break with any divine immanence.<sup>28</sup> Dupré attributes this to the nominalist theology of the late Middle Ages that upheld the separation between the divine and worldly realms and subsequently created a 'two-edged sword' where salvation rested in the hands of the believer according to good deeds, on one side, and where due to God's absolute sovereignty no individual could do anything ultimately to receive grace, on the other side.<sup>29</sup> The Reformation crisis that is taken up by both Luther and Calvin, though in different ways, was an attempt to bridge the gap between nature and the divine. Yet because the Reformation began within this gap, the *a priori* condition of the Creation was understood to be corrupt. Any theological response was not equipped to resolve or even dissolve the dualism between a God who had receded after the Creation and the world left to its own devices. 'But a theology that fails to overcome the dialectical opposition between a totally corrupt nature and a divine justification,' writes Dupré, 'must fall short of solving the particular problem afflicting the religious consciousness of the modern age, namely, the separation of nature from grace'.<sup>30</sup>

With work denigrated in status, because it is ultimately bound up with a 'corrupt nature', there emerges an anxiety-ridden philosophy of work.<sup>31</sup> On the one

<sup>27</sup> *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, p. 85.

<sup>28</sup> See, for example, Harvey Goldman's 'Weber's Ascetic Practices of the Self', *Weber's Protestant Ethic*, p. 169.

<sup>29</sup> *The Passage to Modernity*, pp. 204-05. Cf. Ricoeu, *The Symbolism of Evil*, p. 106.

<sup>30</sup> *The Passage to Modernity*, p. 209.

<sup>31</sup> Erich Fromm therefore argues that Luther's understanding of human freedom is neurotic in the sense that it gives freedom to the individual but lacks the way of realising it productively and theologically. The dualism he creates between freedom from the Church and complete submission to God, argues

hand, there is the desire to erect the possibility of salvation in this world through deliberate and indefatigable effort while accepting, at the same time, that this guarantees nothing eschatologically. On the other hand, there is the beginning of the eventual retreat of the necessity to understand work in relation to a meaning greater than its simple efficient means. This second thesis anticipates the utilitarian attitude. But together, these two theses are two sides of the same metaphysical dualism: the former seeks the asceticism of work despite its ambiguous relation to the divine will; the latter seeks to break off any relation to this theological problem and concentrate solely on the practical. In either case, the divine is absent from the immanence of existence. It is worth noting that the second thesis is particularly modern insofar as it requires no theological understanding and constitutes work in what is referred to today as a secular society.<sup>32</sup> The first thesis maintains the thread for us to follow in seeing how the second thesis can become so predominant.

#### **Thesis One: The Denigration of Good Works**

Weber's concept of inner worldly asceticism is based on the argument that the good works encouraged by Christianity lost their validity according to their own theological sources. This was possible because the fallen state of the Creation could not be overcome by the action or will of mortals (*vis-a-vis* divine will). This created a gap in the Creation itself whereby worldly work attained a never before achieved role. According to Weber, the rational structure of Christianity encouraged an ethical code of conduct centered on worldly affairs despite the fact that this work had no real and direct relation to salvation.<sup>33</sup> The result is a mass mobilisation towards economic productivity whose prodigiousness is a sign (but not a guarantee) of pious dedication to God, and as in Calvinism, a possible sign of predestination.<sup>34</sup> Because

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Fromm, left human beings isolated within insignificance and powerlessness; *Escape from Freedom*, pp. 80-1.

<sup>32</sup> Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, p. 13.

<sup>33</sup> Hartmut Lehmann, 'The Rise of Capitalism: Weber versus Sombart', *Weber's Protestant Ethic*, p. 205.

<sup>34</sup> 'Thus, however useless good works might be as a means of attaining salvation, for even the elect remain beings of the flesh, and everything they do falls infinitely short of divine standards, nevertheless, they are indispensable as a sign of election. They are technical means, not of purchasing salvation, but of getting rid of the fear of damnation'; *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, p. 114. I must stress that both Weber and Dupré see the eventual outcome of the Reformation theology as

of this, Weber states that in this metaphysical system 'the most important thing was that . . . labour came to be considered in itself the end of life, ordained as such by God'.<sup>35</sup> Work is, therefore, something like the working-proof of one's devotion to God even though it ultimately has no bearing on the possibility of salvation. The tension is ironic, even irrational; but it is also one that is concealed. It is concealed because it is validated by the metaphysics of its age and so induces one to think from within this system rather than challenging it from without. Thus, the emphasis on faith alone had a paradoxical effect of magnifying the tension between work and its teleological justification. How could such a pathological attitude be maintained? It could not, and so it heralded the division of faith and reason that is monumental in the Enlightenment.<sup>36</sup>

There is another effect of this attitude that results in a re-invigoration of work according to a more private, individual relation. Because the transcendence of the divine can be received by faith alone, this isolates the individual, leaving him/her with no *corpus* and *ecclesia* within a corrupt nature. One is no longer a part of a community brought together by rites but is an individual set against a world that is fallen.<sup>37</sup> So instead of reclaiming salvation for more individuals, the faith alone thesis breaks up human being into two modes of action: one spiritual (faith), the other temporal (work). The wholly otherness of the divine leaves no response to the worldly actions of humans. One is left to oneself; and so this existential isolation exacerbates the feeling of distance and fallenness from God. Work therefore is the milieu in which one actually becomes disengaged from the world since in being preoccupied with work, one can avoid the earthly temptations.<sup>38</sup> Indeed, the

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resulting in un-intended effects. For this reason, Weber sees Calvinism, which takes up a similar understanding of faith as Luther, as being more significant in the development of the modern work ethic since the notion of "calling" was so strongly emphasised in the doctrine of predestination. The calling that set at odds the spiritual and earthly "calls" led eventually to the accumulation of capital for its own sake; *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, pp. 162-3 & 171. I will deal with the notion of calling later in this section.

<sup>35</sup> Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, p. 159.

<sup>36</sup> Dupré, *The Enlightenment*, pp. 269-311.

<sup>37</sup> Fromm, *Escape from Freedom*, p. 83; Zimmerman, *Eclipse of the Self*, p. 208.

<sup>38</sup> The isolationistic mode of work propagated in the Reformation is epitomised in how the faith alone thesis was largely possible because of the mass dissemination of the Bible and religious pamphlets through the printing press. Ronald Bainton points out that more pamphlets were issued in Germany from 1521-1524 than 'any other four years of German history until the present' (1978); *Here I Stand*, p. 305. The shift of removing the Christian teaching from the *ecclesia* to a ready-to-hand book is not only a

religious good works in rites, which the faith alone thesis makes obsolete, is replaced by the worldly work of humans but, of course, without its spiritual weight. That is to say, worldly work supplants the rite of good work but is totally devoid of its original spiritual content. So the outcome is that worldly work has no eschatological end save only to show that one is obedient to the will of God since it is His will that places one in the manner of work, or calling, in which one finds oneself. The obedience through good works is replaced by worldly work which then becomes a manner of affirming and carrying out the divine will, but it is a carrying out of the most non-eschatological aspect of this will. This is the metaphysical pivoting point that Weber observes socio-economically when he argues that worldly work is the highest means of asceticism in the world.<sup>39</sup> This is indeed a kind of technologisation of Christianity where the path to salvation is attested to by prodigious, profane work.<sup>40</sup> The prodigiousness is a negative affirmation in which worldly work attests to submission to divine will. It is in the end that work is made secular by virtue of its determination as efficient means to something else.<sup>41</sup> This development was inevitable in a theology that had no unifying response to nature. Thus, Dupré's observation regarding Calvinism cannot be underestimated when he says: 'After

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historical event marking the entire denouement, but as well, signals a manner of rationalising and technologising theology and salvation that is now at one's private disposal. Ricoeur observes that the interpretation of original sin as being biologically inherited was viable because the 'communal and personal' significance of it had been lost. Thus, the implication here is that sin becomes a personal burden where the ethical domain of it can be conflated to a merely private sphere. See his *The Symbolism of Evil*, p. 83.

<sup>39</sup> *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, p. 172.

<sup>40</sup> Zimmerman, *Eclipse of the Self*, pp. 206-7, where he refers to Heidegger's critique of good works as a *technic* (meant pejoratively) to salvation as opposed to a "genuine" faith. Cf. Szerszynski, *Nature, Technology and the Sacred*, p. 55, where he speaks of the emergence of the modern understanding of technology (from *techne*) during the Reformation.

<sup>41</sup> Friedrich Tenbruck refers to this as the rationalisation of religion (in reference to Weber) where theology attempts to address the questions of salvation and theodicy by means of diminishing the significance of this world and creating a 'rational logic' that displaces human concern from earthly matters to the transcendent, that is, away from 'the cognitive interpretation of reality'. See 'The problem of thematic unity in the works of Max Weber', *Reading Weber*, p. 65. As Carl Mitcham notes Christianity during the Enlightenment paradoxically tended towards the accumulation of wealth in its prodigious effort; *Thinking through Technology*, pp. 282-3. Stanislav Andreski rebuts that Weber took for granted that these processes were rational since, according to Hume, ultimate ends cannot be classified as 'rational' or 'irrational'; *Max Weber's Insights and Errors*, p. 79. But Andreski seems to miss the point that Weber is referring to an enclosed system that provides a rational justification for its dominance; it is not rational as such.

human nature has become estranged from its own internal teleology, it must find its direction through obedience to divine commands'.<sup>42</sup>

To see this fateful separation more starkly, one need only contrast the Reformation displacement of salvation with the Medieval thinking where Eckhart, for example, says: 'Although the work passes away with time and perishes, yet in that it corresponds to the spirit in its essence, it never perishes'.<sup>43</sup> Arendt therefore observes in this same spirit of understanding that

whoever sees himself performing a good work is no longer good, but at best a useful member of society or dutiful member of a church. Therefore: "Let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth."<sup>44</sup>

The orientation of intentionality in the religious act, as expressed by both Eckhart and Arendt, refers to a manner of good work in which the act itself is not undertaken in order to bring about a spiritual aim. In other words, it is not an efficient means to an eschatological end. The motivation to acquire spiritual ends indeed contradicts the meaning of good works enacted for the love of God. Good works fulfill the role of displacing the participant's own desire and will in that of God's. Indeed, in Eckhart's sermons the understanding of good works revolves around the human intention and whether or not it is free in God. The sermons that deal with the futility of works (e.g., 6, 9, 10, 13a, 15 in Walshe) tend to associate the human intention to an attachment to time and purpose and therefore are a manner of wrong dedication, seeing themselves outside of God. The sermons addressed to works as a redeeming activity (e.g., 6, 10, 12, 13a, 15, 16 in Walshe) refer to the intention as being without resistance and being free to act in God.<sup>45</sup> But the denigration of good works in the Reformation, which in turn is reinforced by the divide between nature and grace, is

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<sup>42</sup> Dupré, *Passage to Modernity*, pp. 213-14.

<sup>43</sup> *Sermons & Treatises*, Vol. I, Sermon 15, p. 134.

<sup>44</sup> Arendt, *The Human Condition*, p. 74.

<sup>45</sup> Also see Aquinas's understanding of good works in this regard in *Summa Theologiae* I-II.61.1 and John Bowlin's commentary on Aquinas and good works, *Contingency and Fortune in Aquinas's Ethics*, pp. 172-3. For a more detailed discussion of Eckhart's understanding of the domain of human action (without resistance) in relation to union with God, see Bernard McGinn's *The Mystical Thought of Meister Eckhart*, pp. 44-52, 69-70 and Joseph Milne's 'Meister Eckhart: The Ground of Self in God', *The Ground of Being*, pp. 57-8.



no surprise; for how can one act in the love of God when this God remains eternally distant, and as with Luther, a God requiring total submission?<sup>46</sup>

The difference between the Medieval and Reformation periods can also be seen in relation to Weber's understanding of calling [*Beruf*]. Wilhelm Hennis suggests that the difference between the Medieval and modern ages (beginning with the Reformation) is *the* point that we must remember in looking at Weber's analysis. For, the dislocation of the self within a tension of ethical understanding (arising from religion) and work (vocation) was 'an unbroken whole' during the Medieval age.<sup>47</sup> As in Aquinas's thinking, and despite the fact that many of the themes taken up in the Reformation were also present in his thinking,<sup>48</sup> the Medieval age is characterised by a significant meditation on the immanence of God:

God is in all things by his power, since all things are subject to his power; He is by His presence in all things, since all things are bare and open to his eyes; He is in all things by His essence, because He is present to all as the cause of their being.<sup>49</sup>

The immanence and indwelling of God presents no division between a worldly and spiritual vocation since the world itself, as the creation and emanation of God in being, embraced human work as that which was moved by God: 'God is in all things, not indeed as part of their essence, nor as an accident, but as an agent is present to that upon which it works'.<sup>50</sup> Indeed, as Genesis itself says, the creation is the work of God, sanctified by God (2:2-3). In contrast, Weber's allusion to the Protestant rendering of calling as both spiritual and temporal is already existing within, so to speak, a broken theology. Weber's reliance on Richard Baxter is well known. Baxter, whose thinking embodies this split, writes, 'Choose that employment or calling . . . in which you may be most honorable in the world; but that which you may do most

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<sup>46</sup> Erich Fromm observes that the requirement of total submission was itself not intended by either Luther or Calvin, 'But in their theological teaching they had laid the ground for this development by breaking man's spiritual backbone . . . by teaching him that activity had no further aims outside himself'; *Escape from Freedom*, p. 110.

<sup>47</sup> See *Max Weber, Essays in Reconstruction*, p. 93.

<sup>48</sup> *Passage to Modernity*, p. 205.

<sup>49</sup> Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I.8.3.

<sup>50</sup> Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I.8.1.

good and best escape sinning'.<sup>51</sup> Here, we see a common theme I mentioned above being repeated: nature is fallen and corrupt, filled with sin. To avoid sin, one must separate oneself from nature as much as possible; and this is done through work, by being involved in something else that removes one from nature's temptations. In effect, the worship of secular work is the effort to remove oneself from the Creation. Harvey Goldman therefore observes of Weber's analysis of calling:

the calling is a mode of asceticism for legitimating the self by sacrificing it in its natural form and building a new and higher self devoted to an ultimate value or cause. It sanctifies the person through service, creating a sense of meaning, purpose, and personal value in a world rationalization has emptied of meaning.<sup>52</sup>

The secular work ethic is then a participation in emptiness in order to arrive elsewhere. The spiritual is left unto itself in a metaphysical dualism in which, 'Above all, God and Mammon cannot be reconciled'.<sup>53</sup> But as importantly, one must observe in Weber's understanding of the rendering of calling in the Reformation that it is entirely consistent with Dupré's argument that the passage to modernity begins with the ontotheological breakdown, where meaning is derived from the human subject. The dualism between 'God' and 'Mammon', between heaven and earth, begins the slow process where the divine and an inherently meaningful universe are concealed. The call to be is not a call to align oneself with a meaningful universe but is a call to create oneself. That is to say, the emptiness upheld by the Reformation philosophy of work promotes an empty understanding of use in which all use serves some other end, that is, an end other than the very immanence of the world, nature, and finally and ironically, human being itself.

The age of the Reformation is therefore characterised by Erich Fromm, Rollo May and Dupré as an age of anxiety.<sup>54</sup> Dupré argues that this was possible because the Reformation was the age in which the nominalism of the late Middle Ages was

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<sup>51</sup> From Baxter's *A Christian Directory* (London, 1678), p. 110 as quoted in Malcolm MacKinnon, 'The Longevity of the Thesis: A Critique of the Critics', *Weber's Protestant Ethic*, pp. 222-3.

<sup>52</sup> 'Weber's Ascetic Practices of the Self', *Weber's Protestant Ethic*, p. 170. Bainton notes the expression 'vocational guidance' comes directly from Luther; *Here I Stand*, p. 233.

<sup>53</sup> Baxter in 'The Longevity of the Thesis: A Critique of the Critics', *Weber's Protestant Ethic*, pp. 223.

<sup>54</sup> Fromm, *Escape from Freedom*; May, *The Meaning of Anxiety*; Dupré, *The Passage to Modernity*, pp. 190-220.

aggravated by the inadequacy of a theological response to a philosophy centered around a meaning-giving subject. The uncertainty created by nominalist theology laid the foundation for crisis which in turn brought attention to the inadequacy of theology to make a reply. Theology, therefore, seemed to be constitutive of the problem and not the answer.<sup>55</sup> Within this historical interpretation of the Reformation, nevertheless, is a subtle contention. Indeed, for both Fromm and Jacob Burckhardt the problem arose due to theology's inadequate response to the social changes and the way in which humankind began to understand differently their relationship to all things within what was becoming an increasingly complex world.<sup>56</sup> The anxiety arising within this shift itself is seen as the inhering insufficiency of dogmatic, metaphysical principles that cannot adjust to a changing world.<sup>57</sup> Metaphysics itself would indeed seem to be the problem. But Dupré argues otherwise:

We ought to avoid the mistake made by Jacob Burckhardt in *The Civilisation of the Renaissance of Italy*, and often repeated in the twentieth century, of interpreting the Renaissance as the first stage of the Enlightenment. It is true, though, that the early period introduced one fundamental characteristic of modern culture, namely, the creative role of the person. *Yet that idea did not imply that the mind alone is the source of meaning and value, as Enlightenment thought began to assume.*<sup>58</sup>

While there is no disputing that the world at the time of the Reformation was marked by immense change (e.g., discoveries of new continents and the so-called religious wars),<sup>59</sup> the prominence of these changes have to be seen as a challenge to theology to reshape its cosmological view. But this cosmology is entirely impossible to articulate when the foundation itself is fragmented; that is to say, when the

<sup>55</sup> *Passage to Modernity*, p. 114. See also Fromm's more psychological account of this in *Escape from Freedom*, p. 83.

<sup>56</sup> See Fromm's *Escape from Freedom*, p. 43 where he refers to Burckhardt's analysis of human consciousness (*The Civilisation of the Renaissance in Italy*) as 'a member of a race, people, party, family or corporation'

<sup>57</sup> Fromm therefore seeks an alternative psychological understanding that does not need to rely on metaphysical justification, *The Fear of Freedom*, p. 229-230.

<sup>58</sup> Dupré, *The Enlightenment*, p. xi. *My italics.*

<sup>59</sup> I say so-called because William Cavanaugh has shown that the "Wars of Religion" during the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries were not due to religious division but the attempt of the state to homogenise the social and religious orders. See his "'A Fire Strong Enough to Consume the House': Wars of Religion and the Rise of the State", *Modern Theology* 11:4 (October 1995), pp. 397-420.

relation between human being and nature is itself broken. How can one speak of cosmology from an understanding that presupposes the meaninglessness of it? Thus, the grounding of reason in the meaning-giving subject (instead of nature itself) holds the key to the emergence of the modern work ethic as being utilitarian. But before turning to the development of our second thesis of the secularisation of work that will occupy several sections, we must first comment on our passage from Weber to Dupré.

It is worthwhile noting that in Dupré's study of modern culture, nature and grace occupy the same position as Weber's world and otherworldliness. And if Weber's study is eventually to be eclipsed by Dupré's in my analysis, it is ultimately because Dupré is not interested in historical or sociological causes and effects (ideal types).<sup>60</sup> Instead, in taking a hermeneutic approach, Dupré is seeking to understand the momentous implications of a changing metaphysics that, in turn, affect our understanding of the meaning of being. This last point is decisive. It argues that disclosing the causation of modern capitalism is not the key to understanding the modern work ethic, but rather, it is in seeing how the symbolic structure of a broken religious understanding of nature is transferred onto a system of action.<sup>61</sup> That is to say, the task is to see how a cosmological structure, ultimately based upon an irresolvable dualism, motivates a utilitarian understanding of the meaning of work. But it goes without saying that Weber paved the way for a self-critical look at the Reformation and the Enlightenment. In *The Protestant Ethic*, he articulates in a decisive way the conditions in which one can readily observe the broken metaphysics at play and soon to mark the birth of the Enlightenment. Weber's original contribution in this area deserves our attention. Certainly, it can be argued that Dupré's illuminating studies of the intellectual foundation of modern culture and MacIntyre's challenge to moral philosophy are indebted in some respect to Weber's critical examination of the modern metaphysical disposition.

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<sup>60</sup> *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, p. 183.

<sup>61</sup> Ricoeur, 'Weber (2)', *Ideology and Utopia*, p. 213.

Departing from Weber we must therefore seek to re-address the metaphysical divide between human being and nature.<sup>62</sup> We must recover the metaphysical significance of a meaning of human being in the cosmos that is greater than any specific aim of work, that is, any aim set up and targeted by the rational system that erects its efficient means. But does not this recovery, according to Weber's thesis of rationalisation and domination, simply become another mode of control? While George Marshall refers to Weber's thesis as 'unambiguous and breathtakingly simple',<sup>63</sup> my contention with it concerns Weber's aim to disclose an ideal, social typology which tends to caricature metaphysics. To be sure, his argument is not against metaphysics but the social phenomenon of domination in relation to how it attempts to justify its ends by rational means.<sup>64</sup> Thus, Weber's distrust of the rationalisation of ultimate ends that ensures domination is resolved in the sociologist whose objectivity allows him or her to stand outside this relationship. While one can question this claim, it serves my argument better to make a reply within and for metaphysics itself. That is to say, the critique of dominance when applied to metaphysics can only be absolute if the symbolic language of theology is reduced to a static meaning. 'Only a symbolic system may be altered in such a way,' writes Ricoeur in response to Weber, 'that it looks like a deterministic system. There is a kind of simulation of determinism by frozen symbolic relationships. . . . Weber always thought that he was dealing with transparent structures, whereas we know they are not transparent'.<sup>65</sup> Ricoeur states elsewhere that in looking at the relation between the symbolic and culture:

We must first return to an analysis of what constitutes the *imaginary nucleus* of any culture. It is my conviction that one cannot reduce any culture to its explicit functions – political, economic, legal, etc. No culture is wholly transparent in this way. There is invariably a hidden nucleus which determines and rules the *distribution* of these transparent functions and institutions.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Christopher Insole argues for a similar re-visiting of Weber according to theological roots of work ethic and liberty in Weber's study of North America. See *The Politics of Human Frailty*, p. 106, n49.

<sup>63</sup> Marshall, *In Search of the Spirit of Capitalism*, p. 70.

<sup>64</sup> Tenbruck, 'The problem of thematic unity in the works of Max Weber', *Reading Weber*, pp 52 & 66.

<sup>65</sup> Ricoeur, 'Weber (2)', *Ideology and Utopia*, pp. 213-14.

<sup>66</sup> Ricoeur, 'Myth as Bearer of Possible Worlds', *A Ricoeur Reader*, p. 482.

The potency of symbolism at this level is that it is always calling for its reinterpretation. If it were static and transparent, then its ultimate referents – God and the Creation – would be nothing more than reified meanings. And in the end, there should be no need for symbolism since this reification can be expressed more easily and accurately in a non-symbolic language. In this sense, it is indeed the symbol that speaks the religious and sacred reality. Human speaking resides in being able to listen to the symbolic and then think along with it according to the historical necessity of the age. For modernity, Ricoeur therefore sees that every interpretation of the symbolic must pass through the hermeneutics of suspicion (Nietzsche, Marx and Freud) in order to become engaged with the original symbolic depth.<sup>67</sup>

Thus in view of the above, we will pass from Weber's socio-political concern to Dupré's hermeneutical identification of the intellectual foundations of modern culture in order to see more extensively how the modern conception of work assumes the world to be meaningless.

### **Thesis Two: The Metaphysical Foundation of the Modern Work Ethic**

To recall the second thesis: the dualism of the Reformation allows for the development of a philosophy of work that can concentrate solely on the immanent practicality of action. In this section, we will see how this argument is made plausible and then how it fails, looking in particular at utilitarianism proper which expresses most clearly the argument that human action is reducible to some kind of instrumentality. This failure is implied in this section's title which refers paradoxically to the metaphysical foundation of a manner of thinking that seeks to bar metaphysics. In other words, my critique is that the utilitarian attitude, in attempting to narrow its focus on the instrumental, only succeeds in suspending the

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<sup>67</sup> See his 'Psychoanalysis and the Movement of Contemporary Culture', *Conflict of Interpretations*, p. 148. Richard Kearney writes, 'Ricoeur warns that the critical moment of demystification is not to be confused with desymbolization. Instead of reducing symbols to some putatively 'literal' content, hermeneutic reason exposes the perversion of symbols in order to recover their genuine value'; *On Paul Ricoeur*, p. 86.

greater metaphysical dimension of work's meaning in relation to reality. Let us see this by degrees.

If there is no higher referent to work beyond the human and natural domain, then in what sense can one speak of the metaphysical foundation of the modern work ethic since this attitude denies metaphysical reality?<sup>68</sup> Conventionally, what is metaphysical is associated with the conjectures of faith, unsupported by a methodology beginning in reason.<sup>69</sup> But in repudiating traditional metaphysics, one merely elevates another understanding in its place that now indeed has metaphysical implications and so does not escape metaphysics. The evidence for this is not in any self-conscious admittance involved in utilitarianism but in the manner in which any path of thinking will have to commit to an interpretation of the meaning of nature. In this case, nature is interpreted as mechanistic; the metaphysical aspect here is the removal of meaning as an attribute of the world. This goes hand-in-hand with mechanism's exclusion of final cause since a supererogatorial *telos* defies the basis of reason upon which a mechanistic understanding is grounded.<sup>70</sup> Mechanism can only assert that there is a process ongoing; and as the observer of this process, human being is not only in the position to interrogate its operations but also to take control of them. As Charles Taylor points out, this manner of taking hold of nature does not include a reflection on its manner of engagement since the notion of engagement is precisely what lies outside a mechanistic view.<sup>71</sup>

According to MacIntyre, one of the key moral maneuvers in the utilitarianism of Bentham is to remove a metaphysical principle (e.g., the Good) and replace it at another level by a personal yet universal concept (e.g., happiness). It achieves this by psychologising its utility concept:

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<sup>68</sup> This was in part based on the conflict between providing what is useful in accordance with nature versus the interpretation that religious faith conferred on nature, primarily out of fear. See Dupré's *The Enlightenment*, p. 263. Or as Taylor points out, such attitudes attempted to dissolve the opposition between a "higher" and "lower" division of life, *Sources of the Self*, p. 23.

<sup>69</sup> See, for example, Gadamer's 'The Historicity of Understanding', *Heidegger and Modern Philosophy*, pp. 166-171

<sup>70</sup> Dupré, *Passage to Modernity*, p. 72. See also John Cottingham's *Philosophy and the Good Life* and his comments on Cartesian physics that effectively removes teleology, pp. 9-11.

<sup>71</sup> 'Engaged agency and background in Heidegger', *The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger*, p. 323.





Traditional morality was on his view [Bentham's] pervaded by superstition; it was not until we understood that the only motives for human action are attraction to pleasure and aversion to pain that we can state the principles of an enlightened morality.<sup>72</sup>

MacIntyre refers to the reliance of Bentham's utilitarian principle on an individual psychological experience that therefore contributes to the emergence of emotivism in contemporary moral philosophy.<sup>73</sup> The difficulty with the psychologisation of a principle is interesting. A unifying psychological concept (e.g., happiness) may appeal to a collective recognition without relying on metaphysical suppositions, but by this maneuver its principle does not have exigency in the collective domain. In other words, a psychologisation of moral principles has the individual as its moral center and lacks an unambiguous bond to the whole of society. The psychologisation of its principle relies on a general experiential verification that indeed something like happiness can be declared as its aim. The experiential verifiability replaces a blind acceptance required by a metaphysical principle. But the problem that Dupré therefore points out is that 'if ethics [is] conceived on the basis of experience it [cannot] function as an absolute obligation'.<sup>74</sup> What is instrumental in the light of happiness is not for happiness itself or for the greatest number of people since instrumentality will be directed to the multitude of actions and objects that appeals first to one's own experiential sense of what it means to be happy. John Bowlin therefore observes that utilitarian arguments can hardly appeal to a 'common currency' of the good since there is a 'fundamental diversity of goods we recognize'.<sup>75</sup> In this way 'absolute obligation' eludes the moral philosophy of utilitarianism, affecting not just moral action but even practical action.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> *After Virtue*, p. 62.

<sup>73</sup> Summarising the struggle that utilitarian philosophers engaged in, from Bentham to Alan Gerwith (1978), MacIntyre argues that the inevitable psychologisation of happiness in the individual was a lawful consequence of the inability of moral philosophy to ground a justification for moral action in happiness; *After Virtue*, p. 64. Cf. H.M. Jones's discussion of happiness in relation to the psychology of William James in *The Pursuit of Happiness*, pp. 146-7, 160-1. Amartya Sen provides an economic critique of modern utilitarianism: 'The trouble with this approach [utilitarianism] is that maximizing the sum of individual utilities is supremely unconcerned with the inter-personal distribution of that sum'; *On Economic Inequality*, p. 16.

<sup>74</sup> *The Enlightenment*, p. 146, substituting 'was' with 'is' and 'could not' with 'cannot'.

<sup>75</sup> *Contingency and Fortune in Aquinas's Ethics*, p. 67.

<sup>76</sup> *The Enlightenment*, p. 147 and Taylor's *Sources of the Self*, p. 79.

Charles Taylor's critique of utilitarian philosophy refers to a weakness that is not necessarily psychological though it does have its psychological effects:

The aim of this philosophy [utilitarianism] was precisely to reject all qualitative distinctions and to construe all human goals as on the same footing, susceptible therefore of common quantification and calculation according to some common 'currency'.<sup>77</sup>

Taylor goes on to comment that this view is 'deeply mistaken'<sup>78</sup> since it conceals the moral impetus actually residing behind human action; and so what it does, as I have indicated above, is to reduce the calculable measure of reality to an individualism, where rational calculation appears to provide a reasonable interpretation of morality. But this only conceals the moral sources, and thus '[t]he utilitarian lives within a moral horizon which cannot be explicated by his own moral theory'.<sup>79</sup> Indeed, this is the level at which Kant challenged utilitarianism because its bond to morality was lacking.<sup>80</sup> It is in this sense that utilitarianism is, according to Taylor, an 'ethics of inarticulacy'.<sup>81</sup> My application of Taylor's critique is to say that its inarticulacy has to do with its attempt to reduce meaning to an inarticulate level—i.e., instrumentality. This level prohibits the natural human aspiration towards things beyond necessity and individual achievement. If this domain is barred and left unacknowledged, human work is left within a cycle of meaningless repetition. Thus, while utilitarianism enables one to avoid a metaphysical first principle, the question of metaphysical justification returns in another form. What is the meaning of being utilitarian?

Perhaps the most obvious problem of the utilitarian view is identified in Lessing's famous question: 'And what is the use of use?'<sup>82</sup> The question, meant rhetorically, is posed to show that a utilitarian attitude succeeds insofar as it reduces the remit of its relations to a simplified logic of operations that can be justified only in relation to the aim it sets out to achieve. When the question of its meaning is

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<sup>77</sup> *Sources of the Self*, pp. 22-3.

<sup>78</sup> *Sources of the Self*, p. 23.

<sup>79</sup> *Sources of the Self*, p. 31.

<sup>80</sup> *Sources of the Self*, pp. 83-4 & 363.

<sup>81</sup> *Sources of the Self*, p. 78.

<sup>82</sup> As quoted in Arendt, *The Human Condition*, p. 154.

broadened, for example, to an existential context, the utilitarian engagement in activities in relation to finitude appears futile. When uncritically assumed, either by choice or by habit, this utilitarian attitude induces a repetitive cycle that conflates all relations, reinforcing an empty notion of work. As the passage from Nietzsche quoted at the outset of this chapter suggests, the distinction between work and rest is blurred until perhaps we no longer speak of rest as that which is integral to existence but only as that which serves work. Rest is rejuvenation for work, and the cycle emerges: we work in order to eat and eat in order to work. The inevitable end of utilitarianism is a *cul de sac* of thinking that Dupré describes in terms of a philosophical challenge, not just to moral philosophy, but to the modern age:

As long as the moralist refuses to set up an idea of goodness that requires more than what we ordinarily do, he is unable to provide us with a moral *ideal* that we *ought* to pursue. . . . utilitarians are debarred by their ontology from formulating their own moral sources.<sup>83</sup>

Thus, utilitarianism's intention to provide a rational argument for the "ought" of human action according to some higher principle cannot approach a final "proof" because it is exactly the meaning of being which already begins with the understanding of an ontological possibility greater than any one individual or collective experience. This suggests that an understanding of work should in some way take into account the presence of being that resists reduction to mere necessity. Ricoeur provides one instance of this when he writes,

The sacred calls upon man and this call manifests itself as that which commands his existence because it posits this existence absolutely as effort and desire to be.<sup>84</sup>

Here, the 'desire to be' refers to a more total attempt to affirm a meaningfulness that would vanquish the very finiteness of one's existence. Where this relationship of work to finitude is not positively addressed, the locality of practical and instrumental action occurs within a vacuum. 'Deprived of all metaphysical and religious content,'

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<sup>83</sup> *The Enlightenment*, p. 133. He refers to Taylor's *Sources of the Self*, pp. 337-40.

<sup>84</sup> 'Existence and Hermeneutics', *The Conflict of Interpretations*, p. 22.

writes Dupré, 'practical reason tends to degenerate to a utilitarian calculus, "rationality in the service of self-preservation gone wild"'.<sup>85</sup>

This dislocation between human action and purpose inevitably allows for a rational and efficient functioning of human action, seemingly justified within the smaller and immediate details of cause and effect. But really it reveals itself to be empty when the ineluctable question emerges in the form of a metaphysical Sphinx: 'why work? Answer or be eaten!'<sup>86</sup> The truncated ontology involved in the utilitarian attitude is one that becomes more pronounced in the overt absurdity of the modern work ethic. The meaning of being remains unaddressed, concealed and forgotten, while humans ceaselessly work with immediate aims and uses in sight, but without any reflection given over towards its *telos*, save as private individuals. Thus, the expressly metaphysical and theological aspect of human work is inverted. It is not the most universal or uniting thing but the most disparate and solipsistic. The acceptance of this inversion only aggravates the natural human inclination to affirm by doing, for the only meaning to be affirmed in this case is the individual, setting humanity within the age of anxiety where a discourse with something greater than the life of one person is concealed: 'I will show you fear in a handful of dust'.<sup>87</sup>

### **The Existential Impact of the Modern Work Ethic**

Hannah Arendt approaches a critique of the utilitarian attitude according to a different path but not in contradiction to the arguments of Dupré and MacIntyre. Her analysis in *The Human Condition* follows an elaboration of the failings of work reduced to necessity in a more existential direction.<sup>88</sup> To take this kind of interpretation of Arendt's work is to remain distinctly on the philosophical side of her political philosophy.<sup>89</sup> I therefore attempt a more unconventional reading of her

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<sup>85</sup> *The Enlightenment*, p. 335, referring to Habermas' *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1987), p. 112.

<sup>86</sup> I take liberties in adapting Ricoeur's description of the challenge to civilisation as the question of the Sphinx: answer or be eaten. See his 'Christianity and History', *History and Truth*, p. 88.

<sup>87</sup> T.S. Eliot's *The Wasteland*, I.

<sup>88</sup> George Kateb refers to Arendt's analysis in *The Human Condition* as pointing to the 'existential' failure of hitherto understandings of human action; *Hannah Arendt: Politics, Conscience, Evil*, p. 3.

<sup>89</sup> Seyla Benhabib refers to the lack of study interested in the strictly 'philosophical significance' of Arendt's 'recovery of the public world'; *The Reluctant Modernism of Hannah Arendt*, p. 50.

*The Human Condition* that is characterised above all by seeing her analysis as constituting a dynamic existential description, wherein her definitions are not scientific, sociological or political categories but describe aspects of human being that overlap and become fused together. I take her definitions of labour and work to be *existential modes of being* always at play with one another in human being.<sup>90</sup>

The key distinction in her study, of course, is between *animal laborans* and *homo faber*, bodily labour and the work of the hands. It is *animal laborans* who knows only bodily toil in order to satisfy biological necessity (survival) while it is *homo faber* that eases labour and shapes it according to an end. The difficulty with Arendt's analysis in *The Human Condition* is that the distinction between labour and work is a loose one.<sup>91</sup> And this appears to be deliberate; if not to prevent her humanistic analysis from being reified into a rational system, which she would oppose,<sup>92</sup> then to allow us to see how a purely biological notion of labour is not specific to biological processes only (e.g., metabolism) but can be seen to infect the modern understanding of work through a curious transformation. *Animal laborans* and *homo faber* do not designate stages of human development, or even different classes within society, but existential modes referring to a manner of comportment towards the understanding of what human work is. Thus, I wish to avoid any sociological critique of Arendt's analysis. Instead, I choose to examine the subtleties by which she discloses how labour and work have become determined by utilitarian ends. We find, for example, that while she defines labour as bodily work within the processes of nature that exist only to perpetuate these processes (survival), she later demonstrates how this notion of labour has taken on a peculiarly modern inflection in the automation of work in the factory.<sup>93</sup> The de-humanisation of work in the factory is the reduction of any

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<sup>90</sup> Margaret Canovan argues that Arendt's main motivation in *The Human Condition* was the misunderstanding of human action as conceived by Marxism and totalitarianism. She also points out while this is so, she does indeed think *from* but is not limited to Heidegger's ontology. See *Hannah Arendt, a Reinterpretation of Her Political Thought*, pp. 101-06. For alternative kinds of categorisations, see Gregroy Pence, 'Towards a Theory of Work', *Philosophy and the Problems of Work*, pp. 93-105.

<sup>91</sup> As Bikhu Parekh states, 'Arendt's distinction between labor and work is not very clear and has been a subject of considerable controversy'; 'Hannah Arendt's Critique of Marx', *Recovery of the Public Realm*, p. 68. We will look later at John White's criticism of Arendt that adopts this same premise.

<sup>92</sup> Mildred Bakan, 'Hannah Arendt's Concepts of Labor and Work', *The Recovery of the Public Realm*, p. 61.

<sup>93</sup> Compare her beginning definition of 'labor' as the survival of the individual and the species where 'The human condition of labor is life itself' (pp. 7-8) and her section on how *animal laborans* wins out (pp. 305) in *The Human Condition*. In support of my position, Phillip Hansen observes that Arendt's concept

meaningfulness of effort to mere bodily toil (labour). Thus, the 'victory of *animal laborans*'<sup>94</sup> in her final analysis must be understood as the victory of a manner of understanding the meaning of work according to a reduction of this meaning to a biological necessity, which indeed is utilitarianism.

In this looseness of definition there is a subtlety that emerges in Arendt's analysis. The common critique of Arendt's distinction between labour and work is often set against the inadequacy of her description to achieve a comprehensive, categorical applicability. Her analysis, I would argue, is not meant to be a sociological criterion. John White, nevertheless, argues how Arendt's definitions of work and labour are insufficient. They are too slippery and cannot distinguish, he states, between work and labour for such occupations as a politician who appears to be involved in no manner of bodily toil or work of the hands.<sup>95</sup> However, the seemingly different roles of the cabinet-maker and the politician, for example, are not different in this existential analysis. The fact that the former's work involves the making of things while the latter's work involves political discourse does not negate Arendt's analysis. The work of either is dependent on how each uses their instrumentality to make things (*poesis*). The depth of their making lies in the depth of the product that comes into use in an ontological and not merely a functional way. Moreover, this depth is founded on the ancient Greek sense of necessity (*ananke*) in which labour merely keeps one bound within the circle of necessity—labour in order to eat, eat in order to labour—while work sets up the possibility for this necessity to be transcended (but not destroyed) towards greater human potential. Thus, labour 'never designates the finished product'<sup>96</sup> but the toil and pain involved in physical effort. It is true that labour does indeed result in an end product, but the products made by the sweat of labour promote nothing towards growing beyond an existence meeting biological necessity. The politician, especially in a Greek sense, is involved

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of labour which appears as 'the most unworldly and apolitical of human pursuits' in inevitably propelled towards the political insofar as it participates in a meaning beyond the self-interest of biological necessity; *Hannah Arendt: Politics, History and Civilization*, p. 43.

<sup>94</sup> *The Human Condition*, pp. 320-5.

<sup>95</sup> *Education and the End of Work*, p. 39. See also Mildred Bakan's criticism of Arendt's concept of labour as being too biologically grounded and not respectful of seeing it as uniquely human but simply animalistic; 'Hannah Arendt's Concepts of Labor and Work', *The Recovery of the Public Realm*, pp. 52-3.

<sup>96</sup> *The Human Condition*, p. 80.

in an occupation that is already above necessity. Political discourse is only possible when necessity has been fulfilled, or is currently being fulfilled by someone other than the politician. The politician is therefore free to engage in the *polis*. This political activity rightly constitutes the work of the politician where work is speech and action. Furthermore, according to the Greek definition politics cannot become labour since the fulfillment of labour is what makes the political possible. Whether or not this holds true for the modern age is itself a question worth posing: in what way, according to Arendt's definition of labour, can political discourse be merely involved in a manner of dominion that perpetuates the perception of existence as survival without looking to the ideals and possibilities of the human *polis*? But we will not pursue this question any further than by merely posing it rhetorically since it constitutes a more political concern.

It is worth noting that Arendt is not saying that we as humans exist in one way or another, as *animal laborans* or *homo faber*; rather, she is saying that both of these are modes of understanding human effort and must be distinguished in order to see how human work itself moves in a certain direction based upon the domination of one of these existential modes. Her analysis also points to a second problem of how an understanding of human work itself may be confused because the distinction between labour and work has not been taken into consideration.<sup>97</sup> In a similar way that Heidegger gives primacy to being, Arendt is stating that by virtue of being human one is involved in an understanding of human action (*vita activa*).<sup>98</sup> The ontological distinction between labour and work is more evident when Arendt writes,

No work is sordid if it means greater independence; the selfsame activity might well be a sign of slavishness if not personal independence but sheer

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<sup>97</sup> Consider the ontological intentionality implicit in Arendt's description of the role of instruments: 'The same instruments, which only lighten the burden and mechanize labor of the *animal laborans*, are designed and invented by *homo faber* for the erection of a world of things, and their fitness and precision dictated by such "objective" aims as he may wish to invent rather than by subjective needs and wants,' *The Human Condition*, p. 144.

<sup>98</sup> Arendt states that labour, work and action constitute the three fundamental activities of *vita activa* 'because each corresponds to one of the basic conditions under which life on earth has been given to man'; *The Human Condition*, p. 7.



survival is at stake, if it is not an expression of sovereignty but of subjection to necessity.<sup>99</sup>

There is the implication in this passage that work tends towards freedom while labour is merely the 'subjection to necessity'. For Arendt, labour considers only its first impetus to satisfy necessity while work reaches towards the specifically human sphere. Labour is situated in the beginning (*archein*) while work drives reflection towards a consideration of final cause and purpose.<sup>100</sup> Thus, human action is always the disclosure of "who" one is; and action figured in work is the disclosure of "who" one is that is freed into the world; it is transmitted, communicated, and left open to all who choose to be in the world. Arendt, like Marx, refers to the world artificed by human work as objective, that is, the worldliness appearing as objects, in which humans exist in 'a common world of things'. To be deprived of this is 'to be deprived of the possibility of achieving something more permanent than life itself'.<sup>101</sup>

Yet while this distinction remains, and insofar as labour and work describe two existential modes, both tend to succumb to utilitarian ends. In other words, they share the lack of being able to question their manner of 'engaged agency', to quote Taylor once again. Neither has the capacity to step outside their modes of effort in order to question them and indeed come finally to a realisation of human freedom. Instead, they become bound up in circle of futility. This suggests that work itself is not futile, but on the contrary, that when work is not understood in relation to a meaning greater than its simple productive power, only then does it descend into an absurd relationship. As we mentioned before, utilitarianism does not define a viable understanding of work but merely a truncated one. Or as Arendt states, 'utility established as meaning generates meaninglessness'.<sup>102</sup>

This meaninglessness is possible in one respect because work is characterised by a unilateral momentum that begins from a reflective impetus but paradoxically becomes non-contemplative as it becomes increasingly involved in working. In other words, work removes the possibility of reflection on the very meaning of work itself.

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<sup>99</sup> *The Human Condition*, p. 83 n7.

<sup>100</sup> *The Human Condition*, p. 189-90.

<sup>101</sup> *The Human Condition*, p. 59.

<sup>102</sup> *The Human Condition*, p. 154.

How is this so? The answer can be found in one's relationship with tools themselves. In his well-known thinking on equipment (or gear), Heidegger writes,

hammering with the hammer, neither *grasps* these beings thematically as occurring things nor does it even know of using or the structure of useful things as such. Hammering does not just have a knowledge about the useful character of the hammer; rather, it has appropriated this useful thing in the most adequate way possible.<sup>103</sup>

The type of involvement in human work tends towards a homogeneity wherein "what is useful" is interpreted always in terms of this use. Thus, the clock is understood as that thing which tells time, but the clock in no way reveals the significance of our orientation towards time as a sequence of "nows". That is to say, in using the clock we are in no way aware of how the clock has established a definite manner of relating to things through its interpretation of time as sequential. The things equipment that takes into account removes them from our circumspection. Equipment therefore has the tendency to "disappear" in its being used. 'Precisely when it is most genuinely appropriate,' comments Dreyfus, 'equipment becomes transparent. . . . All I am aware of is the task [e.g., to hammer, to tell time, to use a cane for walking], or perhaps what I need to do when I finish'.<sup>104</sup> The implication of the human relationship with tools and equipment, then, is one in which their usefulness, that already is disclosed in our being-in-the-world, conceals the possibility of thinking about them in any other way. It conceals but does not eliminate this possibility altogether. It is in this sense that Arendt states that for all its handiness and work of the hands, the meaningfulness of this world 'is beyond the reach of *homo faber*'.<sup>105</sup>

The transparency of tools contributes to the reduction of work to necessity in two ways. In the case of *animal laborans*, the transparency of tools is carried over to the transparency of machines. Human beings become part of the mechanical process; they are subsumed under the efficiency of means and consequently

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<sup>103</sup> *Being and Time*, H69.

<sup>104</sup> Dreyfus, *Being-in-the-world*, p. 65.

<sup>105</sup> *The Human Condition*, p. 155. I am assuming a continuity of thinking between certain aspects of Heidegger's ontological analysis and Arendt's. Margaret Canovan discusses the relationship between the two in *Hannah Arendt, A Reinterpretation of Her Political Thought*, p. 106-11.

“disappear” in the process. Arendt argues along these lines when referring to how the modern worker is now no longer seen to be included in the final production of a product:

most work in the modern world is performed in the mode of labor, so that the worker, even if he wanted to, could not “labor for his work rather than for himself,” and frequently is instrumental in the production of objects of whose ultimate shape he has not the slightest notion.<sup>106</sup>

Arendt is explicit in stating how the modern understanding of work is one that really sees work as labour. In the disappearance of the human worker in the modern factory, no meaningfulness for the reason of working is apparent. It simply fulfills the necessity to earn a living. Thus it is here that the *autonomy* of work, once expressed as the boon of technology, hinges upon the paradox that increasingly mechanised work has resulted in the *automation* of the worker rather than his/her being set free. But this is so not only for the factory worker but also for the office professional assigned to minute and repetitive tasks at the computer. The joy of labour of ‘earning one’s bread in the sweat of thy brow’,<sup>107</sup> has become the joy of the will to labour which has subsequently usurped the will to live. This reduction of work into labour prevents any further reflection on the meaning of work itself, for it cannot take into consideration the meaningfulness of life that labour initially seeks to affirm beyond the fulfilling of necessity. The modern reflection of this persists in the attitude that work is not that which is to be contemplated but escaped. In affirming nothing but unceasing necessity of survival, survival itself becomes tedious.

At the level of *homo faber*, work reduced to necessity takes on a more worldly quality insofar as the efficient means of work moves towards the production of things in order to secure one’s manner of being-in-the-world. Thus, *homo faber’s* making is contrasted with natural occurrence:

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<sup>106</sup> *The Human Condition*, p. 141. Arendt quotes from Yves Simon, *Trois leçons sur le travail* (Paris, n.d.) and refers to Georges Friedmann’s *Problèmes humains du machinisme industriel* [1946], p. 211 in regard to the lack of knowledge of the end of labour for the worker.

<sup>107</sup> *The Human Condition*, p. 140.

Work is the activity which corresponds to the unnaturalness of human existence, which is not imbedded in, and whose mortality is not compensated by, the species' ever-recurring life cycle. Work provides an "artificial" world of things, distinctly different from all natural surroundings. Within its borders each individual life is housed, while this world itself is meant to outlast and transcend them all. The human condition of work is worldliness.<sup>108</sup>

In making the world, human work takes the form in the 'reification' of nature by way of drawing materials from nature in order to build uniquely human things. While the making of *homo faber* can indeed be characterised as having an aim in this sense, it still does not consciously take up the meaning of its making. *Homo faber* becomes enthralled with the efficiency of making itself.<sup>109</sup> This is a degradation of work insofar as the things wrought in work are not allowed to disclose any use beyond being involved in efficient means, whose exemplary modern expressions are convenience and disposability. Thus, the transparency of equipment and tools is prevented from being seen because of the enthrallment of creating more and more efficient means:

the tragedy is that in the moment *homo faber* seems to have found fulfillment in terms of his own activity, he begins to degrade the world of things, the end and end of product of his own mind and hands; if man the user is the highest end, "the measure of all things," then not only nature, treated by *homo faber* as the almost "worthless material" upon which to work, but the "valuable" things themselves have become mere means, losing thereby their own intrinsic "value."<sup>110</sup>

What can therefore rescue human work from this denigration? Arendt appears to give us a hint in this passage in referring to 'intrinsic value'. But she does not elaborate on this phrase which carries a great weight.

If Arendt's argument is to propel us from the dualistic split between world and human being that is largely Cartesian, as she states,<sup>111</sup> and into seeing what possibility of meaning lies beyond this, then 'intrinsic value' refers to another level of discourse related to work but requiring a further analysis than is possible in Arendt's

<sup>108</sup> *The Human Condition*, p. 7.

<sup>109</sup> See Jacques Ellul, *The Technological Society*, p. 21.

<sup>110</sup> *The Human Condition*, p. 155.

<sup>111</sup> See, for example, *The Human Condition*, pp. 285-94.

analysis of human action.<sup>112</sup> In this sense, one can observe that Arendt's re-appreciation of the *vita activa* is not opposed to the *vita contemplativa*. Rather, her argument is that the *vita contemplativa* can be the life of the many instead of the few once we have re-appreciated the realm of action which permeates all levels of existence.<sup>113</sup> Arendt writes,

The danger is obvious. Man cannot be free if he does not know that he is subject to necessity, because his freedom is always won in his never wholly successful attempts to liberate himself from necessity. And while it may be true that his strongest impulse towards this liberation comes from his "repugnance to futility," it is also likely that the impulse may grow weaker as this "futility" appears easier, as it requires less effort.<sup>114</sup>

The *vita activa*, in other words, requires that human reflection be continuously given over to questioning the means and ends of work. If one cannot think work and what the 'intrinsic value' of things made in work is, then the futility of the modern work ethic wins out in our mundane repetition of the cycle of work. Indeed, this appears to be a legitimate point when one considers that the aim of modern work is largely expressed as *retirement*. That this should be considered a legitimate end demonstrates the conflation of human meaningfulness into a strictly futile circle. Retirement in itself means nothing more than a nodal termination point marked by the death of one worker whose toil is to be taken up by others. 'To strive from necessity and not for some good—driven and not drawn—in order to maintain our existence just as it is—that is always slavery,' writes Simone Weil.<sup>115</sup> How is it then that we can disclose in a meaningful way the 'intrinsic value' of human work?

This question, if it can be answered adequately, makes a response to the presumption of the modern work ethic that the world is merely an object to be rendered according to human will. In the next chapter, we will approach the meaning of 'intrinsic value' in a certain way. We will address the one question that

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<sup>112</sup> Margaret Canovan observes Arendt's intention in *The Human Condition* was 'to leave aside the realm of thought and contemplation without attempting to compare its dignity with that of action, and to describe and relate to one another the various forms of human activity', in *The Political Thought of Hannah Arendt*, p. 54.

<sup>113</sup> *The Human Condition*, p. 324.

<sup>114</sup> *The Human Condition*, p. 121.

<sup>115</sup> 'The Mysticism of Work', *Gravity and Grace*, p. 159.

has been remaining in suspense since initially looking at Marx: how is it possible to conceive of the world as inherently meaningful, that is, how is work more than simply a response to necessity?

**PART 3**

RECONSTRUCTION



## VI Ontological Disproportion

Necessity is God's veil.  
-Simone Weil<sup>1</sup>

How can one conceive the motivation of work beyond the response to necessity? And does this mean denigrating or destroying the significance of necessity altogether? These questions attempt to initiate a shift through which an understanding of work can be broadened beyond what I have set forth in the preceding chapters as its modern understanding. Is there, in other words, a way in which work's relation to necessity can be redefined so that necessity, which seems at first to be its base impetus, is understood to occupy one role within a larger ontological consideration of human existence?

This chapter argues that indeed there is an ontological ground that precedes necessity despite the fact that human action would appear to respond initially to it. Disclosing this ontological ground relies on seeing how the identification of necessity relies on a prior apprehension of ontological meaning. In other words, necessity is interpreted beforehand by the human ability to anticipate finitude and interiorise its significance. According to this capacity, necessity is apprehended within a greater context of possible meanings beyond its initial biological significance. Furthermore, this broadening of the milieu of work does not, as I will argue, denigrate necessity but transforms the human relationship to it. Necessity is no longer *only* compulsory but is essential to the realisation of supra-necessary meaningfulness. It should not therefore be defined by itself since it participates in a greater, more total movement within the human endeavour to exist through interpretation. It is in this respect that Simone Weil sees in necessity its ultimate nature as being 'beautiful'; or, as Ricoeur observes, in alighting upon the paradox that joy arrives only through the human encounter with toil and suffering, 'Man is the Joy of Yes in the sadness of finitude'.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Gravity and Grace*, p. 94.

<sup>2</sup> Weil, *Gravity and Grace*, p. 96; Ricoeur, *Fallible Man*, p. 140.

My argument in this chapter begins with an analysis of *ontological disproportion*<sup>3</sup> and how it, rather than necessity, constitutes the initial tension that motivates human response generally. In order to understand the fullest implications of this disproportion it is requisite to see how, despite the unity of being, what pervades human understanding is the perception of difference. Ultimately, it is the disproportion within being, in which humankind finds itself thrown, that motivates work to attain a greater meaning than survival. Here, Heidegger's phenomenological description of this disproportion as difference will provide a point of entry. His treatment of difference, consistent to what I have been describing thus far as his intent to remain at the level of primordial ontology, is meant to be a phenomenological description of being as such and therefore is applicable and pertinent to the varying manners in which we can think being—e.g., socially, politically and theologically.<sup>4</sup> Heidegger's contribution in this regard is quite remarkable, and the inheritance of ontological difference in recent philosophy is easily marked in many instances: Merleau-Ponty's synthesis of the perception of the visible and invisible in the 'flesh',<sup>5</sup> Gadamer's fusion of interpretive horizons in the dialogue of textual interpretation,<sup>6</sup> Derrida's *différance* that treats the difference between being and beings as the concealment of presence in favour of what is present,<sup>7</sup> and Ricoeur's mediation between text as autonomous artefact and its meaning-referent as ontological possibilities of being.<sup>8</sup> In the end, I maintain that ontological difference is the underlying condition of being as such that drives it towards a fuller mode of presencing which, as we will see with regard to the

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<sup>3</sup> I borrow this phrase from Ricoeur who, in *Fallible Man* (pp. 1-15), initially speaks of 'non-coincidence' and then 'disproportion'.

<sup>4</sup> The difference applies to theology which, even if taken as a positive science (as Heidegger states in 'Phenomenology and Theology', *Pathmarks*, pp. 39-62), comes after a phenomenology of difference—that is, it interprets difference in a particularly theological way according to Christian history that consequently removes the phenomenological phase of reflection; cf. Jeffrey Barash, *Martin Heidegger and the Problem of Historical Meaning*, pp. 175-86.

<sup>5</sup> *The Visible and Invisible*, pp. 138-42; cf. *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 333 and Hugh Silverman, 'Merleau-Ponty and the Interrogation of Language', *Merleau-Ponty: Perception, Structure, Language*, p. 135.

<sup>6</sup> *Truth and Method*, pp. 258-60 & 306-7.

<sup>7</sup> Charles Spinoza, 'Derrida and Heidegger', *Heidegger: A Critical Reader*, p. 276.

<sup>8</sup> 'Appropriation', *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*, pp. 182-93.

centrality Heidegger gives to Dasein, arrives through the reflective capacity of human being.

After an analysis of disproportion I turn to Ricoeur in order to show how Heidegger's understanding of difference is synthesised reflectively. In other words, where Heidegger refers to the utmost possibility of being that acts as the concern for Dasein,<sup>9</sup> Ricoeur shows that this possibility is comprised of a series of reflective steps that must be marked and elaborated in order to demonstrate how a reflective philosophy can sufficiently transcend the existential limitations in which it is situated—i.e., contingency, error, uncertainty and even nothingness. Ricoeur therefore draws out Heidegger's phenomenology in terms of epistemological points that take issue with such obstacles as nihilism, historicism and the notion of the naive interpretive ego that believes the self is the center of meaning (the reversal of *hypokeimenon* alluded to earlier). One can here see a correspondence that I will rely upon and draw out in the next chapter: the existential limitations mentioned above constitute the *a priori* conditions of reflection. No manner of thinking begins *tabula rasa* or from a purely objective starting point. Hence, where it can be shown how reflection overcomes these limitations, one can likewise find how work can follow this same path in transcending necessity. This suggestion is easy enough to conjecture, but the actual demonstration of it is much more difficult to do since work and reflection are not the same. In the next chapter, I will argue that work is *situated* within the reflective synthesis of ontological disproportion, always comported towards an affirmation of meaningfulness in existence by virtue of its capacity to make and render, facilitate and construct. It is important to note that work is *situated* in the reflective synthesis and is not identical to it. As we will see, the difference between work and reflection is one that must be maintained primarily because work is engaged in one form of knowing (i.e., *techne*) while reflection is engaged in another (i.e., *phronesis* and *sophia*).

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<sup>9</sup> As, for example, in *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, p. 277.

### Ontological Disproportion

At first glance it would appear fruitless to question the imperative nature of necessity. The force of necessity comes from the fact that the prime threat to being is physical extinction, and so why should this not form the beginning of any philosophy? This inception is perhaps most commonly associated with Hobbes' social philosophy in which his second principle in *Leviathan* affirms the right to defend oneself against the threat of death: 'the sum of the right of nature, which is: by all means we can to defend ourselves'.<sup>10</sup> In looking at Marx's philosophy of work we saw a similar reduction where human existence was defined in terms of production (and consumption). Society was but the more complex organisation of human effort to survive. In these two thinkers, the disproportion between human being and the threat of death is the necessary or motivating impetus of human work.

It is important to note that this kind of disproportion does not refer to anything beyond itself. In the case of Hobbes, the social contract between individuals is merely to assure a better chance of survival,<sup>11</sup> while in Marx survival allows for the freeing up of labor whose end is constituted by its self-realisation, or what I argued earlier to be an empty and inevitably self-contradicting teleology. Likewise, to the general conception of work one can pose the question "for what does one earn a living?" This question does not call for a specific reason as much as it serves to make one aware of the existential commitment involved in work. Shall we not say that at the phenomenological level the decision to work is a decision to live, if not at its inception of effort then gradually along the way as one reflects on one's life and future?<sup>12</sup> Let us note that this kind of fundamental decision, as Heidegger observes, is not one that requires proof that it is so; rather the recognition of work's importance is possible because it is situated in a pre-understanding of being that expresses specific possibilities.<sup>13</sup> Dasein's ability to project possibility is one that

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<sup>10</sup> Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, I:14, p. 189. Dupré comments that in Hobbes, 'the fear of death proves stronger than the strongest passion' [*Passage to Modernity*, p. 140]; according to William Cavanaugh Hobbes's state of nature is therefore constituted by competition between individuals ['The City: Beyond Secular Parodies', *Radical Orthodoxy*, p. 187].

<sup>11</sup> Dupré, *The Passage to Modernity*, p. 141. To be sure, as Dupré points out, 'the fear of death' motivates individuals to enter into society but this then gives rise to aims that transcend 'individual intentions'.

<sup>12</sup> Ricoeur refers to this as 'the pre-narrative quality of human experience'; 'Life: A Life in Search of a Narrator', *A Ricoeur Reader*, p. 434.

<sup>13</sup> *Being and Time*, H142-5.

entails a working out of this pre-understanding. Thus, project [*Entwurf*] is both what is “thrown before” and what becomes a carrying out of something in order to retrieve what has been thrown before oneself.<sup>14</sup> As William Blattner notes, this projection should not be seen as a plan but as a concern for being that is cast ahead teleologically.<sup>15</sup>

It is in this sense that while identifying a key non-coincidence between life and sustenance in existence, necessity inadequately accounts for the precisely *human* internalisation of it. Humans internalise necessity and do not merely respond to it as if it was an external stimulus. Necessity signals the possibility of something greater for human being, that is, a project of meaningfulness that, according to Heidegger, makes intentionality constitutive of every human action. It is because intentionality is involved in a project of meaningfulness—or what for Heidegger is more properly truth [*aletheia*]<sup>16</sup>—that human action has the capacity of ‘unveiling’ things in the world.<sup>16</sup> Intentionality in this phenomenological sense is not confined to voluntary actions but is involved in the fore-structure of understanding where one’s being-in-the-world presupposes an interpretation of how things are. The conception of a triangle, for instance, involves no voluntary intentionality that seeks to define being-in-the-world in any particular way; however, the triangle presupposes a Euclidean interpretation of space and therefore a Euclidean interpretation of being-in-the-world. It is this Euclidean conception that Heidegger critiques because its interpretation of space is one in which entities can be placed at the disposal of human need; their availability conceals the entities’ manner of being.<sup>17</sup>

The conflict between how things are or exist in this fore-structure and the possibility of another interpretation of them places human being in a mediating position wherein a problematic is internalised in order to be affronted. Thus this internalisation is often characterised by the anguish that feels the separation between

<sup>14</sup> Olafson, *Heidegger and the Philosophy of Mind*, p. 118.

<sup>15</sup> Blattner, *Heidegger’s Temporal Idealism*, p. 39. Cf. Mark Sinclair, *Heidegger, Aristotle and the Work of Art*, p.96. There are problems with Blattner’s interpretation of *Being and Time* as being idealistic which I will address later.

<sup>16</sup> *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, pp. 64, 157 & 217.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Harrison Hall, ‘Intentionality and world: Division I of *Being and Time*’, *The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger*, pp. 127-8; Maria Villela-Petit, ‘Heidegger’s conception of space’, *Critical Heidegger*, pp. 147-8. For a detailed study of Heidegger, space and place, see Jeff Malpas, *Heidegger’s Topology: Being, Place, World*.

*what is* and *what can be*. Paul Tillich has shown this moment is constituted by existential anxiety,<sup>18</sup> which is not simply an emotionalisation of the disproportion but is correlative to a reflective apprehension of what is at stake—or, where human consciousness of finite existence correspondingly brings before itself the question of its meaning. As Tillich writes,

Being is finite, existence is self-contradictory, and life is ambiguous. Actual reason participates in these characteristics of reality. Actual reason moves through finite categories, through self-destructive conflicts, through ambiguities, and through the quest for what is unambiguous, beyond conflict, and beyond bondage to the categories.<sup>19</sup>

This anxiety is one manner in which the concern in human being broadens the question of physical termination to include the possibility of contributing to something greater than necessity. According to the internalisation of existence, there is an ambiguity that qualifies the “brute necessity” of necessity. That is to say, necessity is held in suspicion according to an ontological interpretation of existence according to which it will be re-appropriated. I say “suspicion” because necessity itself is that which is interrogated in view of a hope to attain a more comprehensive understanding of what it may mean *to be* beyond the fulfillment of necessary ends. Ricoeur observes that reflective suspicion is an ‘act of awareness’ that moves towards a higher reflective synthesis.<sup>20</sup> Thus to live is to live despite that which threatens being and would appear to gain victory over it (non-being). This uniquely human response to finitude suggests that within the very fabric of being itself there is a more originary disproportion from which life and death emerge. Indeed, as Tillich notes, it is the juxtaposition of life and death that constitutes the humanisation of reality: ‘We are not always aware of our having to die, but in the light of the experience of our having to die our whole life is experienced differently’.<sup>21</sup> This is only to say at another level that the understanding that constitutes Dasein’s mode of being is inevitably an understanding of its utmost possibility of being that is brought to it

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<sup>18</sup> See, for example, *The Courage To Be*, p. 41. Cf. Ricoeur’s *The Symbolism of Evil*, p. 63. I will refer to Ricoeur’s analysis of anguish in relation to reflective synthesis in more detail later in this chapter.

<sup>19</sup> *Systematic Theology*, Vol. I, p. 81.

<sup>20</sup> *The Symbolism of Evil*, p. 85.

<sup>21</sup> *The Courage To Be*, p. 56.

from ahead by the anticipation of death.<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, this can only arise through Dasein's encounter with difference and not an *a priori* unity,<sup>23</sup> which is to say at another level that unity is mediated through difference.<sup>24</sup>

### Unity, Difference and Dasein

In the chapter on hermeneutics I referred to this *a priori* unity as the unity of the world that precedes any distinction, that it is on the basis of this unity that there can be anything like distinction. It is important to note that this does not preclude distinction from the real being of things, as if difference was an illusion or deception. It implies, to the contrary, that distinction is constitutive of unity and indeed that it is the simple notion of unity that is more deceptive since it overlooks the nature of distinction:

What Plato said of the One we can apply to the totality. Nothing gives rise to deception more than the idea of totality. All too quickly it has been said: It is here, it is there, it is Mind, it is Nature, it is History.<sup>25</sup>

But how can this be since it is the very disproportion of things, and not unity, that is most recognisable in one's everyday experience of the world? I suggest in response to this problematic that a clarifying qualification needs to be made: what is most distinct in one's recognition is distinction itself that is known through distinct things; knowledge comes through distinction. Distinction, in this way, is integral to being rather than contradictory to it. Hence, the disproportion is not simply by itself but, according to Heidegger's phenomenology, more radical than any instance of its

<sup>22</sup> *Being and Time*, H260-7.

<sup>23</sup> Tillich's analysis of anxiety moves beyond Heidegger's treatment of *Angst* in *Being and Time* [e.g., H190-91] and 'What Is Metaphysics?' *Pathmarks*, p. 93. Tillich elaborates this mood more existentially whereas Heidegger does not refer to the specific instances in which *Angst* arises. Furthermore, Heidegger does not mark a definite distinction between fear and anxiety as Tillich does. Heidegger relates fear to a fallen anxiety caught up in the world and is 'concealed from itself as such'. Tillich, in his well known comparison of fear and anxiety, writes 'Fear, as opposed to anxiety, has a definite object . . . which can be faced, analyzed, attacked, endured' [*The Courage To Be*, p. 36]. The object taken hold of in fear is essentially related to Heidegger's fallenness in which anxiety itself becomes concealed as one directs his/her concern towards something ontic. Thus, the ontic being, or object, then comes to represent anxiety concretely and specifically.

<sup>24</sup> Heidegger, 'The Principle of Identity', *Identity and Difference*, pp. 30-41. Cf. Malpas on unity and difference in Heidegger, *Heidegger's Topology: Being, Place, World*, pp. 60-3 & 116.

<sup>25</sup> Ricoeur, *Fallible Man*, p. 49.



showing distinction.<sup>26</sup> Here, radical refers to a reflective consideration of the primordial ground upon which any factual distinctions have their existence.<sup>27</sup> Disproportion as more originary is therefore more ontological; for what is more originary than any particular instance and what allows for the manifestation of any instance at all is being itself. Moreover, this suggests that human understanding is not placed at either pole—unity or difference—but is, as it were, in between.<sup>28</sup> This mediating role is, as we will see for Heidegger, what characterises Dasein's transcendence.

Ontological disproportion refers to the disproportion in the unity of being that manifests in the difference between entities, or beings, who have a distinct manner of being and yet, at the same time, in no way possess all of being. No being, as an entity, can ever be the total expression of being itself. Likewise, no sum total of beings defines being. And yet conversely, being can only *be* through beings. Heidegger defines ontological difference:

This difference has to do with the distinction between beings and being. The ontological difference says: A being is always characterized by a specific constitution of being. Such being is not itself a being.<sup>29</sup>

Because '[a] being is always characterized by a specific constitution of being', this means that Dasein grasps pre-thematically and in advance the whole of being. Catriona Hanley remarks on this: 'There must already be an understanding of being for any pre-predicative comportment or discovery of the manifest to be possible'.<sup>30</sup> While this seems a very basic observation to make, Heidegger's use of the ontological difference is to show how the entirety of Western thinking has arisen from this attempt to think the difference,<sup>31</sup> and how through its engagement with the manner

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<sup>26</sup> Cf. in relation to Dasein's transcendence which is its way of coping with ontological difference; *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, p. 162.

<sup>27</sup> As referred to in Chapter I; *Being and Time*, H220-1.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Plato, *Philebus*, 17e, 18a-b; Ricoeur, *Fallible Man*, p. 48.

<sup>29</sup> *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, p. 78.

<sup>30</sup> *Being and God in Aristotle and Heidegger*, p. 196.

<sup>31</sup> 'The Onto-Theo-Logical Constitution of Metaphysics', *Identity and Difference*, pp. 50-1; cf. Heidegger, 'Language', *Poetry, Thought, Language*, p. 202. For a concise discussion of how Heidegger's notion of difference arises as an attempt to understand the ancient Greek *hypokeimenon* apart from the traditional

in which the discourse has been inherited from epoch to epoch, the difference itself has been concealed or forgotten, most notably where metaphysics reduces difference to a single principle, or what Heidegger calls 'ontotheology'.<sup>32</sup> In this sense, Heidegger sees subjectivism, objectivism and nihilism as strains resulting from this initial forgetting of the difference.<sup>33</sup> However, we need not engage with this historical aspect of Heidegger's thinking since we are simply trying to see how the ontological disproportion is presupposed by necessity.<sup>34</sup>

The ontological difference states that being cannot be fully apprehended in looking specifically at beings; nor can being "be at all" unless through beings themselves. This paradox is resolved in a dialectical play wherein the ontological difference is apprehended according to one's relation, or being involved, with it.<sup>35</sup> Heidegger writes:

Thus we think of Being rigorously only when we think of it in its difference with beings, and of beings in their difference with Being. The difference thus comes specifically into view.<sup>36</sup>

The dialectical play exists according to a relation, or belonging together in reflection, where being and beings are thought together at the same time. This suggests that Dasein has a manner of transcendence innate to its manner of being. Otherwise the difference would not appear. Things would merely be occurrent, external stimuli. The ontological difference is that which provokes thinking on being itself; or where,

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Latin translations of substance and subject, see Mark Sinclair, *Heidegger, Aristotle and the Work of Art*, pp. 38-41.

<sup>32</sup> 'The Onto-Theo-Logical Constitution of Metaphysics', *Identity and Difference*, p. 71. William Richardson gives a summary of how the question of being, that is formally expressed in the Greek concern for being qua being [*on he on*], gives rise to the concealment. *Heidegger: Through Phenomenology to Thought*, pp. 10-15. It is also important to note here that my reference to Heidegger's early and later writings assumes that the ontological difference is one aspect of Heidegger's thinking that remains consistent throughout his career; Richardson, *Heidegger: Through Phenomenology to Thinking*, p. 14.

<sup>33</sup> Michael Zimmerman, *Eclipse of the Self*, pp. 205-6 & 221; Pöggeler, 'Being as Appropriation', *Heidegger and Modern Philosophy*, p. 99.

<sup>34</sup> Many (e.g., Foucault, Derrida and Andrew Feenberg) have taken issue with Heidegger's demarcation of human epochs and his definition of the modern age as the technological age; Iain Thomson, *Heidegger on Ontotheology*, pp. 58-61.

<sup>35</sup> James Hart and John Maraldo bring attention to the fact that while Heidegger says 'the difference as such does not show itself', it does announce itself. This suggests that difference always occurs as 'a relation' and never in terms of an observable phenomenon in and of itself; 'The Changing of the World and The Worlding of World', *The Piety of Thinking*, p. 200 n20. Cf. Ricoeur, *Fallible Man*, p. 67.

<sup>36</sup> 'The Onto-Theo-Logical Constitution of Metaphysics', *Identity and Difference*, p. 62.

as Hanley remarks, Dasein understands being 'in the movement of transcendence'.<sup>37</sup> Thus, to think the difference between being and beings is to be outside (ecstatic) of the difference, and for Heidegger this is to do ontology.<sup>38</sup> Or, as Heidegger says bluntly in *Being and Time*: 'Being is *transcendens* pure and simple'.<sup>39</sup> It is on this basis of transcendence that Dasein's manner of understanding is world-disclosing: because Dasein is beyond beings, or open to being in its manner of transcending, its reflective and practical actions disclose beings in a unique way that refigures the world. Indeed, as Blattner notes, because the ontological occurs as a concern of Dasein's thinking, this suggests that the being who can think ontologically is in some way outside of being in order to reflect on it.<sup>40</sup> Accordingly, necessity is by virtue of this ontological concern never simply a question of physical survival and metabolism. Necessity exists for something else: the difference between survival and extinction is thought according to their ontological significance and has another *raison d'être*.<sup>41</sup> In

<sup>37</sup> *Being and God in Aristotle and Heidegger*, p. 187.

<sup>38</sup> Blattner, *Heidegger's Temporal Idealism*, p. 293 n22.

<sup>39</sup> *Being and Time*, H38.

<sup>40</sup> Blattner, *Heidegger's Temporal Idealism*, p. 23; Mark Sinclair, *Heidegger, Aristotle and the Work of Art*, p. 97 and Lafont, *Heidegger, Language, and World-Disclosure*, p. 179. To be sure, Blattner sees this emphasis on Dasein as a failure, attested to by Heidegger himself when he refers to *Being and Time* as 'subjectivist' [p. 302-10]. However, Blattner points out that Heidegger's self-description is given no further elaboration. The difficulty here, to which I am willing to give interpretive latitude, is how Heidegger means 'subjectivist'. Is he referring to the normative epistemic discourse of the subject-object relation that *Being and Time* itself deconstructs [e.g., Dreyfus, *Being-in-the-world*, p. 3; Ricoeur, 'Heidegger and the Subject', *The Conflict of Interpretations*, p. 223] or a different meaning after this deconstruction? It would seem Heidegger takes the latter course [cf. Richard Rojcewicz, *The Gods and Technology*, pp. 196-201 and Béatrice Han-Pile, 'Early Heidegger's Appropriation of Kant', *A Companion to Heidegger*, pp. 80-101], which by no means makes an interpretation of what he means by 'subjectivist' easier. In fact, it actually throws back to the reader the very problematic proposed in *Being and Time* concerning our relation to subjects and objects and how human understanding should be conceived in relation to this. Heidegger's break with philosophy and metaphysics, in other words, is one that attempts to resituate us and is not a complete break. As Peter Kemp points out, Heidegger's sense of 'rupturing' is always historically grounded, seeking to refigure this history and not break from it completely [Kemp, 'Ricoeur between Heidegger and Levinas', *Paul Ricoeur: The Hermeneutics of Action*, pp. 48-9]. In view of this, I should say that the centrality given to Dasein is hermeneutic, and the term subjectivist emphasises that understanding first needs to be related to the being who lives existentially. Thus, as Heidegger points out in 'The Letter on Humanism' [*Basic Writings*, pp. 251-4], to understand anything like 'God' requires that one understand the ontological constitution of the being who asks the question of God. It is this understanding that determines the possibility by which one can understand how to question concerning God. Cf. Malpas, *Heidegger's Topology: Being, Place, World*, pp. 157ff.

<sup>41</sup> Richardson therefore remarks that 'the ontological difference has somehow a primacy over There-being [Dasein]'; *Heidegger: Through Phenomenology to Thought*, p. 175. Cf. William McNeill 'The First Principles of Hermeneutics', *Reading Heidegger from the Start*, p. 401; and Sheehan, 'Reading a life: Heidegger and hard times', *The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger*, p. 90. Also, while the expression '*raison d'être*' is a common one, I have used it in conjunction with Ricoeur's understanding of *praxis* that we will come across later in the final section of this chapter.

the language of Heidegger, one can say that the reduction of work to necessity means a truncated understanding of world, and that Dasein's transcendence of necessity constitutes a fuller world, a more engaged being-in-the-world that does not simply make Dasein its sole concern, but in fact, the world and the being of beings: 'We name *world* that toward which Dasein as such transcends, and shall now determine transcendence as *being-in-the-world*'.<sup>42</sup>

Let us relate this to a point made earlier regarding the *apriority* of unity. If difference owes its nature of disproportion to unity, then unity is made fuller through its articulation as difference. The ontological wholeness of being itself gains greater expression through the individuation of beings. Thus the greater the autonomy of beings, the greater that the unity of being (in being) is expressed. Heidegger speaks of this in terms of the 'strife' in being coming into unity through the 'rift':

Truth establishes itself as strife within a being that is to be brought forth only in such a way that the strife opens up in this being; that is, this being is itself brought into the rift. The rift is the drawing together, into a unity, of sketch and basic design, breach and outline.<sup>43</sup>

That the initial 'strife' should be brought into unity only through a 'rift' at first seems contradicting.<sup>44</sup> But here Heidegger is maintaining that the unity is possible only as long as distinction and difference are maintained. An analogy may serve to illuminate the manner in which Heidegger refers to unity and difference as co-existing. Heidegger refers to a bridge that crosses a stream: 'The banks emerge as banks only as the bridge crosses the stream'.<sup>45</sup> It can be said conversely that the bridge emerges as a bridge only because of the stream that parts the landscape. Thus, the unity of the bridge is possible only by virtue of the rift of the stream that separates and divides. It is the rift of the stream, or difference, that provokes the human response to build such that

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<sup>42</sup> Heidegger, 'On the Essence of Ground', *Pathmarks*, p. 109. My last point about Dasein's concern being extended to the world and being is contrary to Blattner's analysis of Heidegger's subjectivism.

<sup>43</sup> 'The Origin of the Work of Art', *Basic Writings*, p. 188.

<sup>44</sup> Malpas, *Heidegger's Topology: Being, Place, World*, p. 198.

<sup>45</sup> 'Building Dwelling Thinking', *Poetry, Language, Thought*, p. 152.

The bridge lets the stream run its course and at the same time grants their way to mortals so that they may come and go from shore to shore. . . . Always and ever differently the bridge escorts the lingering and hastening ways of men to and fro, so that they may get to the other banks and in the end, as mortals, to the other side. . . . whether mortals keep in mind this vaulting of the bridge's course or forget that they, always themselves on their way to the last bridge, are actually striving to surmount all that is common and unsound in them.<sup>46</sup>

The metaphorical weight placed on the bridge as a last passage from mortality to something more sanctimonious is not superfluous. In this metaphorical way, difference refers to the primary reflective distance between human being and unity; the sum total of problems between human action and its relation to beings is always in view of an understanding of being. The distance is therefore a hermeneutic one where any actual, physical gaps stand to be potentially brought together through human understanding.<sup>47</sup> Through this hermeneutic passage, human being, as the being who thinks the significance of being, is that being who enacts and provides the jointure for difference in unity.<sup>48</sup>

The centrality given to Dasein, as we noted earlier, is then the manner in which being gathers according to the one being who can think the difference. Heidegger characterises this as openness: 'For it is man, open toward Being, who alone lets Being arrive as presence'.<sup>49</sup> Through Dasein the difference is thought in unity as a projection of the utmost possibility of being that in turn renews itself through a retrieval of the past. Blattner designates this aspect in Heidegger's thought as a 'transcendental idealism about being' where being itself 'depends on

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<sup>46</sup> 'Building Dwelling Thinking', *Poetry, Language, Thought*, pp. 152-3.

<sup>47</sup> Ricoeur, *The Symbolism of Evil*, p. 77.

<sup>48</sup> This is essentially Heidegger's thesis on the principle of identity [A is A], whereby the copula 'is' refers to the 'belonging together' of unity of a thing within itself in being and through Dasein; 'The Principle of Identity', *Identity and Difference*, pp. 26-37.

<sup>49</sup> 'The Principle of Identity', *Identity and Difference*, p. 31. When this passage from Heidegger's later work is compared to his analysis of Dasein in *Being and Time*, one can conclude that the human subject plays a central role throughout his career. Ricoeur, likewise, sees that the analytic of Dasein is carried over into Heidegger's later thinking where the 'Da' of Dasein is in its ability to gather, *logos*: 'This emergence of the 'word' under the primacy of Being repeats exactly the emergence of the 'There', in *Being and Time*, as the one who inquires into Being' ['Heidegger and the Subject', *The Conflict of Interpretations*, p. 234]. Richard Rojewicz therefore alights upon 'humans are themselves a ground of disclosedness; as secondary, this ground is itself grounded in the self-disclosedness of Being', *The Gods and Technology: A Reading of Heidegger*, p. 225.

Dasein'.<sup>50</sup> Furthermore, this unity is not a static state or mode that is finally reached. To the contrary, what allows for this unity to be affirmed is time itself, that is to say, it is Dasein's being-in-the-world that lives according to time; it temporalises being through its openness that 'lets Being arrive as presence'.<sup>51</sup> Blattner therefore states repeatedly that Time is on the 'being side' of the ontological difference since Time is that which is not reducible to a being but always brings the difference to Dasein as that which is to be thought: 'time temporalizes'.<sup>52</sup> Hence, if the cliché "time heals all wounds" is true, this cannot include the wound of difference itself since it is out of the difference that healing can have its efficaciousness. Dreyfus therefore links Dasein's 'coping' in existence, or its being situated in 'strife', with the possibility of disclosing a world.<sup>53</sup> It is by virtue of 'coping' that Dasein is moved to disclose a world that can assuage its anxiety of and in being. Through 'coping' time gains a personal and historical relation.<sup>54</sup>

Indeed, because the difference is always a difference that occurs specifically between beings and being, the manner by which it becomes apprehended most

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<sup>50</sup> Heidegger's *Temporal Idealism*, p. 253. Blattner uses the term 'idealism' critically to the extent that he argues Heidegger's notion of originary temporality cannot adequately account for ordinary time (p. 30). Idealism therefore refers to a manner of thinking that fails to engage with reality despite its phenomenological project. For a similar kind of criticism concerning Heidegger's understanding of history, see Hoy, 'History, Historicity, and Historiography', *Heidegger and Modern Philosophy*, pp. 352-53. Blattner's term 'idealism' is problematic insofar as it claims Heidegger assumed a subjectivist position in *Being and Time* [cf. Malpas, *Heidegger's Topology: Being, Place, World*, pp. 157ff.]. I think this overstates the problem which Heidegger saw with its language—i.e., it tended too much to suggest that Dasein is the sole arbiter of understanding. But this tendency does not mean Heidegger's early philosophy is therefore reducible to it. In addition, I disagree with Blattner (and therefore Hoy) that Heidegger's analysis of time and history should be ultimately subjected according to the very epistemological criteria he is calling into question. This is why I choose to mediate between Heidegger and Ricoeur, that is, between a primordial ontology and its epistemological implications rather than discount Heidegger because he does not, in the end, conform to certain epistemological criteria that correspond to our everyday notion of how things in the world operate. We might hear Ricoeur's distinction: Heidegger does not challenge such things as vulgar time, historiography, and the *cogito* directly but rather 'the metaphysics that underlies it' ['Heidegger and the Subject', *The Conflict of Interpretations*, p. 224]. The difficulty here is that Heidegger *appears* to bring before the reader an 'all or nothing' decision regarding epistemology and its metaphysics. Again, I say 'appears' because I believe a mediation is possible where Heidegger's thinking can be disclosed in a more public manner rather than residing with and at the primordial ontology he brings to our attention.

<sup>51</sup> Zimmerman, *Eclipse of the Self*, p. 106.

<sup>52</sup> Heidegger's *Temporal Idealism*, pp. 29 n54, 226-7. Cf. Mark Sinalir, *Heidegger, Aristotle and the Work of Art*, p. 98: 'Heidegger seeks to show that *Dasein* is the movement of time itself as temporality'.

<sup>53</sup> *Being-in-the-world*, p. 107.

<sup>54</sup> After Heidegger, as it were, Gadamer refers to this as the 'fusion of horizons' within the 'historicity of understanding'; *Truth and Method*, pp. 306-7. Cf. Ricoeur, 'Life: A Story in Search of a Narrator', *A Ricoeur Reader*, p. 431.

powerfully is according to one's historical situatedness. History is that configuration of temporality as a story, both interpreted from the past and futurally yet to be lived. History is the difference between self and world expressed in narrative.<sup>55</sup> Ricoeur sees this difference according to a methodological paradox where historical science attempts use objectivity as its measure:

Anyone who wished to escape this contingency of historical encounters and stand apart from the game in the name of a non-situated "objectivity" would at the most know everything, but would understand nothing. In truth, he would seek nothing, not being motivated by concern about any question.<sup>56</sup>

Ricoeur refers to the fact that objectivity is a false hope insofar as it runs counter to the actual nature of human being that is motivated by being situated within the provocations that arise according to historical contingency. In this sense, historical understanding is not something to be fulfilled by an increasingly refined method but by a constant re-engagement and re-interpretation of sources. Historicity is the historical presence by which being announces the difference as a narrative to be understood. This refers not to just one quality of its announcement but to a central feature. The difference is made a human concern by virtue of what it brings into view historically: the difference in existence by which no thing can endure forever. Human reflection, in other words, recognises its utmost potential according to that which appears to be the greatest weakness or fault in human existence: the finitude by which beings fade away. Finitude refers to the horizon of the ontological disproportion that intensifies the disproportion from ahead. In every situation, in other words, is a 'not-yet'<sup>57</sup> of ontological possibility that is born only from the confrontation with finitude, that is, with the intent to make sense of the apparent historical contingency which no being can ever elude.

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<sup>55</sup> Joseph Dunne, 'Beyond Sovereignty and Deconstruction: the storied self', *Paul Ricoeur: The Hermeneutics of Action*, p. 146.

<sup>56</sup> *The Symbolism of Evil*, p. 24. Cf. historical understanding in William McNeill, 'The First Principle of Hermeneutics', *Reading Heidegger from the Start*, p. 394.

<sup>57</sup> The term 'not-yet' is taken from *Being and Time* [H145 & H259]. I leave out a discussion of being-towards-death in relation to the 'not yet' since I wish merely to show the founding ontological principle at play in disproportion and not how it specifically comes to its particular articulation as that which is non-relational in each person's death.



In this respect, human being is constantly and forever at play within the interpretation of beings towards “something more” in order to “de-scandalise” its finiteness. Thus the finiteness of being is that which intensifies the difference to be thought and affronted. William McNeill notes that the difference is the beginning of reflection since it provokes questioning:

What is, more precisely, this beginning? It is the beginning of the question of Being in *difference*, in the difference between Being and beings, a difference which is latently already there.<sup>58</sup>

Indeed, it is through anxiety that humankind is not irretrievably distant from things; rather, the otherness unique to humankind is one felt in the depths of human consciousness and therefore is a sign of its relatedness to “the other”. This gap, nonetheless, can only be bridged through a reflective synthesis and so remains one whose bond is in need of being constantly thought and remembered. Thus it is through human understanding that Heidegger conceives of the world as the unity of being and time; that is to say, the two are related, comprehended and continuously lived through Dasein’s encounter and transcending of the difference: ‘the intentional constitution of the Dasein’s comportments is precisely the *ontological condition of the possibility of every and any transcendence*’.<sup>59</sup> As we will see in the concluding chapter, this dialectical play between unity and difference is the basis of human vocation and the appropriation of being.

### **Reflective Synthesis of the Disproportion**

A reflective synthesis suggests the manner by which the transcendence of the disproportion is enacted. If Heidegger’s *ontological* analysis identifies the mode of Dasein’s being as transcendence, then we must see how transcendence is possible *reflectively*. In this section, I will, as I mentioned in the Introduction, draw out Heidegger’s primordial ontology in a more detailed manner that meets up with more

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<sup>58</sup> ‘The First Principle of Hermeneutics’, *Reading Heidegger from the Start*, p. 401. *Italics* in original.

<sup>59</sup> Heidegger, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, p. 65. *Italics* in original. Cf. Janicaud, ‘Overcoming Metaphysics?’ *Heidegger: From Metaphysics to Thought*, p. 9; Zimmerman, *Eclipse of the Self*, p. 112 and Malpas, *Heidegger’s Topology: Being, Place, World*, pp. 96-103.

concrete concerns. This involves what Ricoeur refers to as 'reflexive philosophy', that is, where ontology bears on immanent matters.<sup>60</sup> According to Ricoeur, in philosophy there is the aim of the transcendence of finitude: 'To experience in order to understand, to understand in order to go beyond—or, failing to go beyond, to confront'.<sup>61</sup> Yet at the same time, the reflective synthesis can never attain a transcendence that would finally overcome the disproportion, for then it would mean existence itself was somehow resolved of its distinction. To the contrary, the synthesis refers to a moment in which something greater than the disproportion can be reflectively productive. Thus Ricoeur notes:

a philosophy of finitude, even interpreted as transcending finitude, is not sufficient to the problem. A philosophy of synthesis—the synthesis of finitude and rationality—is required.<sup>62</sup>

Ricoeur distinguishes three levels of reflection in his essay 'True and False Anguish'<sup>63</sup> that demonstrate this synthesis, and it is throughout his analysis that the affirmatory nature of being is what allows human reflection to find a positive way forward: hope inevitably overwhelms anxiety. Hence, Ricoeur borrows a phrase from Jean Nabert to denote this nature: 'primary affirmation' [*l'affirmation originnaire*].<sup>64</sup>

The first phase is experienced as the will to live, the sheer vitality of human being that is expressed overtly by the will of "I can". Hence, one does not know much beyond the power of being in doing, not even death as reality but death as only possibility.<sup>65</sup> At this level, there is no unification of action towards a *telos* or overall aim and intended purposefulness of existence as such. This is because life itself, in its abundance, remains at an apparently sufficient level where the

<sup>60</sup> Cf. Jean Greisch, 'Testimony and Attestation', *Paul Ricoeur: The Hermeneutics of Action*, p. 88 and Eric Crump, 'Between Conviction and Critique', *Ricoeur as Another*, p. 178.

<sup>61</sup> 'True and False Anguish', *History and Truth*, p. 287.

<sup>62</sup> *Fallible Man*, p. 43.

<sup>63</sup> *History and Truth*, pp. 287-304.

<sup>64</sup> Ricoeur, 'True and False Anguish', *History and Truth*, p. 288. Cf. Kemp, 'Ricoeur between Heidegger and Levinas', *Paul Ricoeur: The Hermeneutics of Action*, p. 43 and S.H. Clark, *Paul Ricoeur*, p. 36; in Nabert, *Le Desir de Dieu* (Paris: Aubier, 1966), Book III, 'Metaphysique du temoignage et hermeneutique de l'absolu'.

<sup>65</sup> This phase is more fully elaborated in terms of *ipseity* in Ricoeur's later formulation of belief in attestation in *Oneself as Another*. See, for example, Greisch, 'Testimony and Attestation', *Paul Ricoeur: The Hermeneutics of Action*, pp. 85-6 and Charles Reagan, 'Personal Identity', *Ricoeur as Another*, p. 7.

completion of disparate acts seems tantamount to the fulfillment of an existential meaning. Ricoeur writes,

As a living being, I pursue goals which are disparate, heterogeneous, and, in the end, incoordinate: life, at least at the human stage, is a bundle of tendencies whose aims are neither clear nor concordant.<sup>66</sup>

Indeed, at this level, the unification of actions remains unnecessary insofar as the possibility of a cessation of life itself seems remotely distant and in need of no metaphysical answer. This phase is correlative to one's being-in-the-world in which its primary unity is experienced by virtue of each and every action being addressed meaningfully. But there is no reflection on the meaning of meaning.

In the second phase of reflection, the will to live is manifest in face of uncertainty and extinction. Ricoeur refers to this as 'anguish'. He states furthermore that it is fear that we know most immediately while ontologically it is contingent to anguish since, like Tillich's notion of anxiety,<sup>67</sup> anguish is experienced as a threat to one's total being. Fear is only a fear of one aspect of being that would extinguish it. Fear is only addressed to one aspect identified as a particular manifestation of the threat to being. It is only when fear becomes 'indeterminate' that anguish reveals the central nothingness and threat to being as such:

Thus, whenever fear becomes indeterminate, in respect to its object, and, on the other hand, moves toward myself so as to unfurl a total threat before me, at this point, fear turns to anguish.<sup>68</sup>

In this emergence of anguish, there is at one and the same time the emergence of the reflective awareness of non-being in being as well as the dominion of plurality that appears irreconcilable within a unified whole. What is affirmed risks concealing another; what is said *in favour of* risks unsaying another. Once more, and at a more

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<sup>66</sup> 'True and False Anguish', *History and Truth*, p. 291.

<sup>67</sup> 'True and False Anguish', *History and Truth*, p. 287: 'Anguish, on the other hand, has an indetermined object and one which is all the more indetermined as reflection attempts to coin its aim into fears with precise contours; but in return, this indetermined object of anguish signifies a threat for my totality'. Anguish, like anxiety, has no definite object. Cf. Tillich, *The Courage To Be*, p. 36.

<sup>68</sup> 'True and False Anguish', *History and Truth*, p. 288.

radical level, affirmation itself is seen as an empty gesture in a world that only appears whole within the bounds of one's perception that continually fends off its dissolution by further philosophical and metaphysical obfuscations and narcissistic deceptions.<sup>69</sup>

A frightening possibility is discovered by anguish: what if actual history did not have meaning? . . . The nothingness with which the threat is announced is a nothingness of meaning, at the very level of "spirit," a nothingness of meaning at the core of this presumed meaning which was to give purpose and design to the mental hygiene and to cure Narcissus.<sup>70</sup>

It is at this level where philosophy can tend to see 'negation as the proper activity of reflection'.<sup>71</sup> Furthermore, and in contrast to Heidegger's fundamental ontology, it is here that negation and nothingness can emerge from a primordial inherence in being (as non-being) into the historical understanding.<sup>72</sup> It is one thing to question the meaning of being at the level of a fundamental ontology, but the victoriousness of non-being historically deprives human technics of any ultimately meaningful aim, reducing history itself to an inescapable tragedy.<sup>73</sup> In other words, a philosophy reduced to negation (e.g., doubt and skepticism) has its zenith only in a mode of reflective suspension since any positive value appears barren or false. One must bear in mind that negation is defensible against any ordinary ontology of affirmation only because it elevates the immediate and concrete discordance and non-coincidence in existence as an ontological principle. The persistence of chaos, the infallible reliance on fallibility itself, is taken to supersede any phenomenological reduction of being. John Caputo observes against this position in terms of singling out the Cartesian project of doubt: 'Having set out to find everything that is to be doubted . . . having let the entire theoretical edifice waver, having rendered

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<sup>69</sup> Crump, 'Between Conviction and Critique', *Ricoeur as Another*, p. 167. Crump refers to Ricoeur's repudiation of skepticism.

<sup>70</sup> 'True and False Anguish', *History and Truth*, p. 294.

<sup>71</sup> Ricoeur, 'Negativity and Primary Affirmation', *History and Truth*, p. 305.

<sup>72</sup> Ricoeur's article 'True and False Anguish' [*History and Truth*], to which I have been alluding throughout this section, is a response to Sartre's radicalisation of nothingness and in part shows how Sartre's twisting of Heidegger's fundamental ontology is inadequate to the task of philosophy that posits transcendence as its aim.

<sup>73</sup> Joseph Bien, 'Ricoeur as Social Philosopher', *The Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur*, p. 298.

groundless every self-evident ground, he [Descartes] then added a little postscript . . . that the conduct of life is exempt from the universal project of doubt'.<sup>74</sup>

This second phase of negativity, then, is only redeemed in raising its reflective path of negation *back* to the originary, ontological ground of affirmation. This move constitutes the third phase, or the recovery of the originary ground of being in following negation through to its own negation. Negation negates itself in its positing a choice that arises after its critical analysis.<sup>75</sup> In this respect, the nothingness and presence of non-being in being must somehow be appropriated, and ironically, made being's own. Heidegger understands this in terms of non-essence (or 'the unfit', from the Greek *adikia*) being necessary to being, where it 'is included in the essence of presencing and belongs to the necessity of being'.<sup>76</sup> The necessity of nothingness then becomes a middle step in the whole movement of reflection. Ricoeur writes,

Let us reflect on the "nothing" which points up the insufficiency of every motive to bind me, that is to release me of all responsibility, providing me with an excuse, an alibi. This "nothing" has always been known.<sup>77</sup>

If the 'nothing has always been known', then its role is one of negating a former understanding in order to reform the bond with totality. The 'nothing' cannot be victorious over being but is appropriated by being as a form of reflective impetus internalised as anxiety and anguish:

The idea of totality is not merely a rule for theoretical thought. It dwells in the human will and in this way becomes the source of the most extreme "disproportion".<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> *Against Ethics*, p. 22-3.

<sup>75</sup> Heidegger provides an example of this when examining the principle of reason—nothing is without reason [*nihil est sine ratione*]. He refers to the ontological interpretation of reason as a 'leap back' to Ground/Being. Thus, the forward progression of the Principle [*Satz*] of Reason is a leap back to *Grund* [reason]. *Grund* is 'being and ground/reason: the same', and so the inadequacy of reason [*Satz*] is negated by the positivity that is opened in the leap back to *Grund*; *The Principle of Reason*, pp. 68 & 90.

<sup>76</sup> Heidegger, *Basic Concepts*, p. 102.

<sup>77</sup> 'Negativity and Primary Affirmation', *History and Truth*, p. 321.

<sup>78</sup> Ricoeur, *Fallible Man*, p. 67.

Or as Ricoeur writes elsewhere: 'If being is that which beings are not, anguish is the feeling *par excellence* of ontological difference'.<sup>79</sup> Negation is the means by which the existing boundaries of understanding are negated in order that that which lies beyond these boundaries can be thought positively.<sup>80</sup> Negation brings into view what was antecedently obstructed by the understanding that was in place. Thus what once appears as negative space, an emptied horizon, points towards a refigured understanding in which new things are indeed possible. Heidegger refers to this in terms of anxiety provoking a 'readiness' from human being that 'fulfills the highest claim . . . that is made on human essence alone'.<sup>81</sup> And yet, this is not a complete break with the old but is a continuation of it.<sup>82</sup> The possibility of being more fully then arises and is marked on the side of subjectivity as the attestation to a double mode of interpretation: one ontological, that is, for being itself; and the other concerned with self-interpretation.<sup>83</sup> And so the negation de-limits itself, that is to say, negation negates itself. Ricoeur observes,

Hence, by means of negations, and in a way that is more profound than all my refusals, I believe that by converting myself I have constituted a better continuation of myself, a more fully affirmative continuation.<sup>84</sup>

It is in this sense that the primacy given over to negation is affronted by the primacy of affirmation, or what Ricoeur refers to as 'the privileged road of the climb back to foundation'.<sup>85</sup>

The three phases of reflection describe the degrees by which the human encounter with necessity is succeeded by increasingly more committed engagements with being. The sheer will to live can never outrun the perpetual demands of necessity—to work, to eat, to sleep, to procreate. It therefore develops a suspicion by

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<sup>79</sup> *Fallible Man*, p. 106.

<sup>80</sup> Bernard Stevens, 'On Ricoeur's Analysis of Time and Narration', *The Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur*, pp. 506-7, referring to negation as positive generally; and S.H. Clark, *Paul Ricoeur*, pp. 14-15, 36. Cf. Heidegger's notion of *peras*; 'Building, Dwelling, Thinking', *Poetry, Language, Thought*, p. 154.

<sup>81</sup> 'Postscript to 'What Is Metaphysics?' *Pathmarks*, p. 234.

<sup>82</sup> Ricoeur therefore speaks of the two poles within tradition as 'sedimentation' and 'innovation'; *Time and Narrative*, Vol. I, p. 69 and 'Life in Quest of a Narrative', *On Paul Ricoeur*, pp. 24-5.

<sup>83</sup> John van den Hengel, 'Can There Be a Science of Action?' *Ricoeur as Another*, p. 87.

<sup>84</sup> 'Negativity and Primary Affirmation', *History and Truth*, p. 322.

<sup>85</sup> 'Negativity and Primary Affirmation', *History and Truth*, p. 327.

which its vital will is questioned and seen to participate in some kind of false consciousness. But finally, whatever is shown to be false is done so only by the light of another interpretation that can affirm a meaning greater than what preceded it. I should add a postscript: the third phase is by no means a final stage but describes the positive moment that will eventually come under question according to an ever-changing historical necessity. Without this continuing refinement and re-engagement there could be no dynamic growth in being itself but only stasis.<sup>86</sup>

In turning to the next chapter, I examine how work is situated in this reflective milieu, not merely as one thing among many to be reflected upon but as integral to the vitality of the reflective process. In this sense, it is not accurate to say alone that work responds to necessity; rather, it transforms it into a world within which it is related to a greater meaning.

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<sup>86</sup> Cf. Tillich's discussion of being and becoming as a dialectical unity; *Systematic Theology*, Vol. I, p. 181.



## VII

### Form and Figure: The Literal and Metaphorical Aspects of Work

We had the experience but missed the meaning,  
And approach to the meaning restores the experience  
In a different form . . .

-T.S. Eliot, *Four Quartets*

In the previous chapter I argued that work is responsive to ontological disproportion rather than necessity. In order to further support this claim, in this chapter I examine what specific ramifications emerge when one attempts to see work ontologically. This means that given the reflective synthesis involved in the interpretation of the ontological disproportion, one should be able to distinguish how work arises from this synthesis. I will do this by showing how work is situated within the milieu of human reflection by being motivated by it, and in turn, provoking it. I will focus my analysis in two phases, and subsequently, it should be noted that the relation I draw out between reflection and work will allow us in the next chapter to untangle what is often perceived to be the division between *theoria* and *praxis* in the ancient Greek thinking.

In the first phase of my argument I deal specifically with the necessary aspect of work, analysing it in such a way that what begins to emerge is a clearer picture of how necessity is in fact one aspect of work's larger ontological project. I identify the necessary level of work in terms of the *formative*, or formal, capacity through which it responds to needs.<sup>1</sup> The making involved in work therefore has literal functions of providing, securing and enduring that we associate most often with its necessary uses. But within these functions we will see that a supra-necessary meaningfulness informs the motivation of work, that is, a meaning that transcends the necessary but does not destroy it.

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<sup>1</sup> I am indebted to Sean Sayers for the term 'formative' which he uses to describe the objectification process of work. See, for instance, 'Creative Activity and Alienation in Hegel and Marx', *Historical Materialism*, 11:1 (2003): pp. 107-128. A book concerning his current research on 'Material and Immaterial Labour' is forthcoming.

The second phase, comprised of two strands of analysis, seeks to find the relation of reflection to work at another level and concerns how work provokes further reflection. First, I examine how work contains, in addition to a formative capacity, a *figurative* dimension. My argument is that work is an instance of metaphorical meaning, and so I seek to equate the figurative aspect of work with the metaphorical capacity of language. In order to do this, I draw upon Ricoeur's detailed study of metaphor and its power to transfigure reality and human self-understanding. While Ricoeur's account and discussion of metaphor—i.e., in *The Rule of Metaphor*—is encyclopedic, I do not attempt a recapitulation of his entire argument but begin with portions of it that are central to the development of my thesis.

Next, I correlate this linguistic analysis of metaphor to work, showing the direct lineage between metaphor and work. Work has a capacity of disclosing the possibility of transcending necessary limits of survival in view of something greater, that is, an interpretation of the meaning of being that gives greater purpose and direction than the aim of survival and metabolism. Work not only has an aim to perpetuate survival, but it also has an ontological project of affirming and disclosing a meaning of being. Thus, through the figurative capacity of work, necessity is in the service of something greater than toil and exertion; it has a reflective content. What is crucial here is that transcendence does not mean a negation or denigration of what it transcends. To the contrary, in the above scheme necessity appears as not the final meaning of work but the most resistant point of contact that must be "lived" in order for it to be transformed into higher possibilities of being. Consequently, necessity itself is elevated and transformed, and the more radical implication of my analysis is that to perceive necessity merely as something requisite is to denigrate its nature. As we will see, this analysis follows one of Ricoeur's rules of metaphorical language: i.e., in order to understand metaphorical meaning, one must pass through the literal or necessary, but it is this metaphorical meaning that constitutes the richest level of meaning because it is most ontological. My reversal of Marx's philosophy cannot be made clearer: what Marx refers to as "the ideological" is what I argue in fact sustains work, keeping it from being mere toil for survival. As mentioned earlier, this

reversal will become even more pronounced in the final chapter when looking at the integrative level of ideology that Ricoeur identifies. In this regard, I make this claim of restoring the ideological with the qualification that any theoretical interpretation of meaning must undergo the critical deconstructive phase of analysis (i.e., seeing ideology as distortion) before it can become integrative. This overall movement is embodied in Ricoeur's notion of the 'hermeneutical arc' that moves from naive meaning, to criticality of this meaning, to reconfiguration of this meaning.<sup>2</sup>

### The Formative Function of Work

The formative function of work refers to the ability to render or objectify material as things or products. This function presupposes the reflective synthesis of the ontological disproportion in which material can be transformed into something with a specific purpose that is reflectively anticipated. Hence in answering the question "what is a thing?" Ricoeur states: 'It is the unity that is already realized in a correlate of speech and point of view; it is the synthesis as effected outside'.<sup>3</sup> A thing of work, in other words, presupposes a reflective relationship to it: to name and refer to a thing is to have already grasped it reflectively. Ricoeur captures this aspect quite succinctly in relation to the specific knowledge used in work (*techné*) and the reflective interpretation that interprets work according to the question of the meaning of being. He writes, referring to reflection as 'the word':

The word has, moreover, a function of *foundation* with respect to all the pragmatic activities of man. It conveys the "theoretical" function in its entirety. There is no technique which is not an applied knowledge, and there is no applied knowledge which is not dependent upon a knowledge which at first repudiated all application. *Praxis* does not give us the whole of man. *Theoria* is its *raison d'être*.<sup>4</sup>

This reflective presupposition may be overt in terms of a conscious act of interpreting existence in order to render something according to this interpretation. The sacred space that fills cathedrals, for example, is of this nature since sanctity takes on a

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<sup>2</sup> See, for example, his *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and Surplus of Meaning*.

<sup>3</sup> *Fallible Man*, p. 37.

<sup>4</sup> 'Work and the Word', *History and Truth*, p. 218. Cf. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, H172.

specific kind of structuration.<sup>5</sup> Or, this presupposition can be unconscious, as the kind involved in a pre-understanding. Here, an attitude towards existence has been inherited or adopted uncritically and carries over in the manner one goes about working. Most relationships drawn up in the work-world are of this kind. The wages earned even by the most innocuous of jobs participates in an enframing of ontological relationships. The wages deposited into a bank are, in turn, invested by the bank into certain areas that have direct impact upon the shaping of the culture. A bank's investment in land speculation, for example, reinforces the "buy-to-let" frenzy which in turn drives land values up; and therefore, the gap between those who must rent and those who own land is widened. In this instance, to agree or disagree with land speculation always arrives after the fact that it has been affirmed in one's involvement in work itself—by earning a wage and by paying rent.<sup>6</sup> It is by virtue of this relational turn from ontology to social relations, that an interpretation of being is enacted in terms of power.<sup>7</sup>

The reflective presupposition involved in the formative function of work indicates that work takes into account a specific interpretive attitude. In other words, if things have uses, prior to this useful determination is an interpretation of being that makes possible the conception of its utility. For example: that a streetlight takes into account darkness allows for something like nightlife and its counter-culture that shadows the conventions of the normal day; that a levee can be

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<sup>5</sup> Brian Keeble explores the role of the conscious act of meditating on the nature and principles of work in terms of the 'arts and crafts movement' (i.e., Eric Gill and W.R. Lethaby); *On the Nature and Significance of the Crafts*, pp. 17-31.

<sup>6</sup> Goodchild argues how money has a dual role as 'measure of values and value of measures' in which such things as 'personal preferences' are displaced by the drive to increase capital, or what I alluded to above as one's 'arriving after' the practice of land speculation. Later on, Goodchild concludes that 'one's subjectivity and evaluations are produced as roles within the economic system'—in regard to my analysis, this refers to land speculator and renter; *Capitalism and Religion*, pp. 128-9. Karl Polanyi shows the interrelation between the emergence of wage labour in the market economy and land enclosure; *Origin of Our Times: The Great Transformation*, especially pp. 73-132.

<sup>7</sup> There is a symmetry and distinction that needs to be maintained between ontological affirmation and power. As Tillich notes the affirmation involved in ontological interpretation comes into expression by means of social relations; it gains its fuller manifestation by this in terms of power: 'power is real only in . . . the encounter with other bearers of power' [*Love, Power and Justice*, p. 104]. In this sense, this distinction is represented by the figures of Heidegger (ontology) and Foucault (power), and it is evident that neither side of the symmetry is complete by itself since one presupposes the other. This is not to say that Heidegger complements Foucault, or vice versa, but that each thinker bears witness to two sides of the human commitment to interpret and live from an interpretation. Cf. Dreyfus, 'Being and Power: Heidegger and Foucault', *International Journal of Philosophical Studies*, 4:1 (March 1996), pp. 1-16.

constructed takes into account the maintenance of land below sea level so that a city like New Orleans can exist as an almost subterranean culture. We will return to this aspect of work in relation to its figurative function, but for now let us note that the formative process of work presupposes that a certain manner of reflection on being and existence has occurred and can therefore give shape to the material of the earth in order to sustain a human manner of dwelling. Indeed, formation is so central to work that it is what characterises the 'durability' of its objects in view of finitude.<sup>8</sup> The formative power of work, in other words, is what gives constancy and enduring in the ever-changing, external world that is permeated by transience. Work's formative nature has its enduring presence in terms of objectification:

the things of the world have the function of stabilizing human life, and their objectivity lies in the fact that . . . their ever-changing nature notwithstanding, can retrieve their sameness, that is, their identity, by being related to the same chair and the same table.<sup>9</sup>

On the basis of enduring, the objects of work form the structures by which human interaction can occur; and according to the demands of necessity, the increasing complexity of this structure suggests a more efficient manner of addressing such needs.<sup>10</sup>

But it is at this stage of our analysis that human work seems to separate itself from the natural world. Is it not questionable to what degree the formative nature of work is natural, for the objectification process is itself predicated on a model of how things are to be rendered and subsequently used?<sup>11</sup> Behind every tool or instrument is a possibility of the creation or destruction of something else. In this sense, atomic energy is different to the sustainability of fire not only by degree, but also according to its unnatural manner of challenging nature that can unleash unimaginable

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<sup>8</sup> Arendt, *The Human Condition*, p. 137. In ancient Greek thinking, the formative function is its teleological realisation. We will look at this in more detail in the next chapter and see how beyond this formal *telos* is, as it were, a greater teleological calling.

<sup>9</sup> Arendt, *The Human Condition*, p. 137.

<sup>10</sup> This is also, on Marx's view, the same basis by which the labour of the labourer is taken away from him/her. Labour itself is made into an object to be traded and controlled, and thus the formative nature of work is distorted and turned against itself. See Dupré, *The Philosophical Foundations of Marxism*, pp. 125-6.

<sup>11</sup> Arendt, *The Human Condition*, p. 140.

productive and destructive powers in a single moment. Work, at this level, seems wholly natural to humankind but unnatural to nature. One may here recall Bertrand Russell's sardonic definition: 'Work is of two kinds: first, altering the position of matter at or near the earth's surface relatively to other such matter; second, telling other people to do so'.<sup>12</sup> This notion of work endorses a negative meaning of the relationship between human being and nature, and subsequently, between human beings themselves whose relationship is enframed according to a division of labour. Ricoeur summarises this attitude well:

Work calls into play the power of relations of man over man within the context of the relations of force between man and nature. Indeed, through work, human existence takes on the character of a rationally organized battle against nature that makes nature appear as a reservoir of forces to be conquered. . . . Now, the force of man's work also figures among the forces to be mastered. The rational organization of the battle against nature also implies an organization of human efforts in projects, plans, and programs.<sup>13</sup>

According to this general description the more abstract and technological processes are also work since such efforts are formative of human being's relation to nature and itself. In this way, formation does not necessarily mean production of a physical object but includes so-called abstract processes of work (e.g., intellectual property) whose abstractness takes objective form in terms of it being an expression that is valued and gives value to other things and processes. Indeed, if this is not true then the litigation regarding intellectual property rights would be unnecessary.<sup>14</sup> Thus work's formative function includes also intellectual formations, or what is idea (*eidos*).

Let us return to the description of work as "effort in order to dominate" which must be critically assessed. This is because the notion of the domination of nature does not identify a phenomenology of work but reads a specific value of human action into it. Domination cannot be identified with work unless one

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<sup>12</sup> *In Praise of Idleness*, p. 13.

<sup>13</sup> *Fallible Man*, p. 116.

<sup>14</sup> For an interesting analysis of the commodification of property in relation to its intellectual and ontological meaningfulness, see George Taylor and Michael Madison, 'Metaphor, Objects and Commodities', *Cleveland State Law Review*, 54 (2006), pp. 141-174.

perceives domination as the mode of human being *per se*.<sup>15</sup> If what I have argued in the preceding chapter is true, then the utilitarian attitude that holds sway in the modern understanding means that critiques of our current abuse of nature are not critiques of human work as such but of our interpretation of nature. Thus the sum total of malevolent effects unleashed by human action in fact instantiates a utilitarian attitude and its mechanistic view of nature. In this sense, the abuse of nature expresses more accurately that a certain mis-relationship to nature prevails according to an unmediated understanding. Domination results from a definite ontological comportment towards nature and is not inherent in human being as such: interpretation and not domination is Dasein's *existentiale*.

Retracing our path back to the analysis of ontological disproportion, one can see that work responds to the disproportion by clearing space in the world in order to form a structure that can cope with the disproportion.<sup>16</sup> This manner of clearing is not a removal of the disproportion but an interpretation of it in view of its possible resolution. It is work that indeed structures the world according to how it perceives its possibility, or as the Heideggerian turn of phrase goes, work 'worlds'<sup>17</sup> the world. Heidegger says elsewhere, 'The work as work sets up a world. The work holds open the Open of the world'.<sup>18</sup> In other words, work's formative function opens the world to the extent that it makes a home within the ontological disproportion.<sup>19</sup> Jeff Malpas observes in Heidegger that human building 'arises out of dwelling spaces and preserves, and in so doing allows things to come forth as things, and so also allows

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<sup>15</sup> Arendt suggests the contrary when she states that there is an 'element of violation and violence' in 'all fabrication'; *The Human Condition*, p. 139.

<sup>16</sup> 'Building, Dwelling, Thinking', *Poetry, Language, Thought*, p. 154.

<sup>17</sup> For use of the word *world* in this sense of disclosing worldliness, see for example Heidegger's 'The Turning', *The Question Concerning Technology*, p. 49; 'The Origin of the Work of Art', *Poetry, Language, Thought*, p. 44; and James Hart and John Maraldo, 'The Changing of the World and the Worlding of the World', *The Piety of Thinking*, p. 125.

<sup>18</sup> 'The Origin of the Work of Art', *Poetry, Language, Thought*, p. 45. Cf. Arendt, *The Human Condition*, p. 7. Elsewhere, Heidegger writes: 'The establishing of truth in work is the bringing forth of a being such as never was before and will never come to be again. The bringing forth places this being in the Open in such a way that what is to be brought forth first clears the openness of the Open into which it comes forth. Where this bringing forth expressly brings the openness of beings, or truth, that which is brought forth is a work'; *Ibid.*, p. 51.

<sup>19</sup> Young, *Heidegger's Philosophy of Art*, p. 34. In this instance, the disproportion is what normally 'veils and withdraws itself in existence'.



the world to come forth as world'.<sup>20</sup> This occurs because work sets forth beings in a particular way where the natural being of the earth in *phusis* is transformed by human *techne*. *Phusis*, as the 'emerging and rising in itself',<sup>21</sup> is encountered by Dasein whose manner of encountering is to transform, work upon, and make space. In referring to the example of a sculptor, Jean Beaufret notes, 'it is the *techne* residing in him which "moves the hands" without any violence. When violence gains the upper hand the tragedy of Prometheus occurs'.<sup>22</sup> *Techne*, then, is the manner of revealing unique to Dasein that 'reveals whatever does not bring itself forth and does not yet lie before us'.<sup>23</sup> The difference between *phusis* and *techne* is exemplified in the blooming of the flower that does not require Dasein in anyway and the working upon the oak tree that is to be hewn and made into wood for building.<sup>24</sup> In *phusis* the blooming allows the flower to fulfill its own manner of being while in *techne* the tree is revealed as wood, or material for building.<sup>25</sup> Heidegger draws the following conclusion in seeing how earth (as primordial *phusis*) is rendered into world: 'The work moves the earth itself into the Open of a world and keeps it there. *The work lets the earth be an earth*'.<sup>26</sup>

There is another way in which work can be seen as responding to the ontological disproportion. To speak of work's capacity as one that merely objectifies is to under-appreciate its formative capacity. To give form to something in work is to refer to a primordial kind of act that gives form to matter. This relation, according to Heidegger, is present in Aristotle's understanding of *hyle* which designates not only the matter of the cosmos but refers literally to the natural material to be worked and fashioned by human being:

*Hyle* in the ordinary sense means "forest," "thicket," the "woods" in which the hunter hunts. But it likewise means the woods that yield wood as

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<sup>20</sup> Heidegger's *Topology: Being, Place, World*, pp. 271-2. Cf. Young, *Heidegger's Philosophy of Art*, p. 34. In this instance, the disproportion is what normally 'veils and withdraws itself in existence'.

<sup>21</sup> 'The Origin of the Work of Art', *Poetry, Language, Thought*, p. 42.

<sup>22</sup> *Dialogues with Heidegger*, p. 98.

<sup>23</sup> 'The Question Concerning Technology', *The Question Concerning Technology*, p. 13.

<sup>24</sup> Heidegger notes that the nihilism of metaphysics consists in part in the confusion of *phusis* as a *techne*, that is, nature as mechanistic, as a technique to be learned; 'On the Essence and Concept of φύσις', *Pathmarks*, p. 220.

<sup>25</sup> See Heidegger's 'On the Essence and Concept of φύσις', *Pathmarks*, p. 221.

<sup>26</sup> 'The Origin of the Work of Art', *Poetry, Language, Thought*, p. 46. *Italics* in original.

construction material. From this, *hyle* comes to mean material for any and every kind of building and "production."<sup>27</sup>

Hence to work is to further develop and enhance the order of the cosmos: it is to give greater order to the natural ordering of things.<sup>28</sup> One can say that to objectify in work is not only to produce something in terms of an object but to interpret reality in a new way such that relations are now drawn and mediated by the objects of work. Ricoeur therefore emphasises in the notion of work as objectification, there is the existential transfer of the internalisation of meaning into the object:

Only when I do something is there a work, a deed, something public and common to others, such that I realize or actualize myself. Only then do I really come to exist. Objectification is this process of actualization. . . . it is the meaning of work as such that we deposit our meaning in something exterior.<sup>29</sup>

He refers here to Marx's philosophy of work, but it should be noted that what is left untreated in Marx is the internalisation of meaning, which of course, is essentially ideological. In Marx, internalisation is seen to have its significance only in the response to necessity. What Marx neglects is the range according to which necessity can be interpreted in view of human possibilities.<sup>30</sup> Necessity has a "for", for which it is necessary. In this sense, it can be said animals also externalise themselves in their use of natural objects to survive, but humans alone see a possibility in the involvement with tools and instruments beyond necessity. This possibility can only come about by internal reflection on *what can be*.<sup>31</sup> Thus elsewhere Ricoeur refers to

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<sup>27</sup> Heidegger, 'On the Essence and Concept of φύσις', *Pathmarks*, pp. 209-10. I have transliterated the ancient Greek. Cf. 'The Origin of the Work of Art', *Poetry, Language, Thought*, pp. 26-7 and Roochnik, *Of Art and Wisdom*, pp. 18-20.

<sup>28</sup> Dupré alights on this in terms of the Greek understanding of form and cosmos; *The Passage to Modernity*, p. 21. Cf. Heidegger, 'On the Essence and Concept of φύσις', *Pathmarks*, p. 210.

<sup>29</sup> Ricoeur, *Ideology and Utopia*, p. 39.

<sup>30</sup> Dupré concludes that this prevalence of the objective over the subjective, or what I am calling the internalised domain of reflection, is determinative in Marx because of his larger project of the reintegration of culture with nature through *praxis*. Thus what is important in objectification is how the non-objective aspect of the worker is made objective and how this object needs to be placed in a free relation with society; *Marx's Social Critique of Culture*, pp. 36 & 277-8.

<sup>31</sup> In his analysis of Ricoeur, Simms refers to this difference as 'seeing' (which is common also to animals) and the human ability of 'seeing as'; *Paul Ricoeur*, p. 67. Cf. Aristotle's distinction of animals and humans based upon perception; *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1139a18-21.

this relation negatively, in terms of the loss of the significance involved in the internalisation of work:

One can easily see in the evolution of crafts—including that of intellectual—that there is a limit toward which this movement of objectification is tending; this limit constitutes my destruction in the gesture devoid of meaning, in activity which is literally meaningless because it is without horizon.<sup>32</sup>

Here, 'horizon' refers to an existential gaze that looks upon the possibility of being. When this is removed, the making and objectification performed in work is emptied of the specifically human content. But when united with the existential nature of concern, work is a form of testimony in which 'the greatest interiority of the act' corresponds to 'the greatest exteriority of the sign'.<sup>33</sup>

In this respect, a striking observation in French sociology is Georges Friedman's analysis of the modern factory process and how its monotony and over-specialisation disassociates an end product from the actual labour required to make it.<sup>34</sup> This disassociation is not only a disruption of the 'interiority' of the work act, but it is also a disregard for the relation of work to an interpretation of finitude. In this case, the 'exteriority of the sign' is emptied of any real, existential content. Products of work are geared towards serving necessary ends rather than interpreting a relation to finitude. To this end, as Eliot's well-known verse from the *Four Quartets* declares, 'We had the experience but missed the meaning'. That is to say, we had the experience of work but the absence of a reflective involvement caused us to miss its meaning. Contrary to this, the capacity of work to open a world, as Heidegger puts it, lies precisely in its response to found a contemplative abode within being from which all other relations can be redrawn.<sup>35</sup> Work opens what was formerly closed to

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<sup>32</sup> Ricoeur, 'Work and the Word', *History and Truth*, p. 212.

<sup>33</sup> Crump, 'Between Conviction and Critique', *Ricoeur as Another*, p. 180.

<sup>34</sup> *Anatomy of Work*, p. 32; *Industrial Society: The Emergence of the Human Problems of Automation*, pp. 129-56. Friedmann's analysis has carried over into other domains of French sociology. For example, Ellul critiques technology more broadly in terms of it being a self-enclosed automated system; *The Technological System*, pp. 125-55. Baudrillard's notion of simulacra and simulation includes the automation of productive forces that simulate real presence; *Simulacra and Simulation*, pp. 1-42.

<sup>35</sup> Young points out that this relation to all things is possible because for Heidegger the founding of work is prefigured by the alreadiness of language that precedes action; *Heidegger's Philosophy of Art*, p. 57.

human being at the level of necessity, and the formative function of work can be said to open beyond necessity to something greater. Or, from a phenomenological perspective can we not say that the object rendered in work *bursts beyond itself*?

### The Figurative Function of Work

Reflection is involved in work at another level. Whereas the formative function of work indicated that reflection presupposes the ability to render matter into things, the figurative function of work suggests that reflection is provoked at the other end of the human relation to work: that is, in using what is made. In alluding to the etymological relation between the German *bildung* and the English *culture*,<sup>36</sup> one can say that work *cultivates* thought by virtue of its *building* a public structure. Thus, if the formative function arises from an interpretation of the ontological disproportion, then the reflective content is carried over in work and articulated in a figurative way. In other words, the figures of work retain a reflective content that it projects to us, proposing new possibilities of being-in-the-world.

#### a) the relation between form and figure

While the objects of work become transparent in their use—as we observed earlier in how a hammer “disappears” in the act of hammering—the meaning of a particular kind of use enacts a particular interpretation of existence. One can distinguish between the *focus* of the act of hammering in a particular task (e.g., nailing a plank) to the *enframing* that has allowed and determined such an activity (e.g., nailing a plank to a fence that divides property).<sup>37</sup> Any particular task that is apparently transparent in its enacting (focus) is open to a larger milieu that bears relations of ontological significance (enframing). In the cited example, the

<sup>36</sup> Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p. 10.

<sup>37</sup> I have adopted in part Max Black's terms 'focus' and 'frame' that he uses to describe how metaphor is open to a larger range of meaning (frame) that is manifested in the particular metaphor (focus). See, for example, Karl Simms, *Paul Ricoeur*, p. 70. Albert Borgmann also uses the term 'focal' to refer to practices and things that bring a focus on the nature of a practice or thing itself in its relation to nature and being; *Technology and the Character of Contemporary Life*, p. 196ff. This use of the term 'focus' is therefore quite different from mine since by the term I mean the immediate application and intention of the use of a thing. Heidegger refers to the focus of equipmentality as location [*Platz*] and the enframing as region [*Gegend*]; Malpas, *Heidegger's Topology: Being, Place, World*, p. 241.

construction and maintenance of a fence bears a definite interpretation of the '*socius* of the neighbor' that 'innovates a hyper-sociological mutuality between one person and another'.<sup>38</sup> The fence divides, encloses, and attests to the private space away from and elevated above the public sphere. It gives status to the suburban developments and the gated communities of contemporary America over against a social discourse of participation.<sup>39</sup> In Baudrillard's words, the epitome of this new kind of city is the hypermarket and the shopping center around which everything else is 'satellized';<sup>40</sup> suburban homeowners must trek to this new city centre in order to be a part of the city designed solely for consumption. But in the activity of mending the fence, none of this is readily associated with the simple, practical activity that requires nothing but direct focus on how and what to nail.

What this suggests is that the things produced by work are not objects in any dead, reified sense of the term. It is not as if the meaning deposited by the labourer in work is only an "autobiographical" meaning that pertained to the labourer alone. To the contrary: because the formative process of work is involved in a communal participation that is within history, whatever singular meaning or intention its artificer had is but one possibility of its use. The objects of work are not simply pertinent to one applicability but contain within it an infinite range of possible uses; thus what is deposited in the formative function of work is specifically an ontological potentiality that is activated when human beings are involved in using objects.

Heidegger therefore sees the gesturing power of the hand as essential to the openness of work and craft. The hand is more than an evolutionary appendage that facilitates survival, rather the phenomenology of the hand suggests that for there to be something like a hand means that the ability to think must co-exist with its handiness. In other words, the openness made possible by the gesture of the hand is coeval with the ability to think: 'Only a being who can speak, that is, think, can have

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<sup>38</sup> Ricoeur, 'The *Socius* of the Neighbor', *History and Truth*, p. 101.

<sup>39</sup> This is, of course, the inverse of the ancient Greek privilege to participate in the *polis*. Cf. Paul Halmos, 'The Ideology of Privacy and Reserve', *Mass Leisure*, p. 132.

<sup>40</sup> *Simulacra and Simulation*, p. 77.

hands and can be handy in achieving works of handicraft'.<sup>41</sup> This suggests that the domain of work is fundamentally related to the signifying power of gesturing. The gesture embodies, according to Ernst Cassirer, 'a constructive process' of interpretation that bears meaning within a 'structural whole'.<sup>42</sup> The gesture discloses meaning and thus opens relations between human beings. Indeed, if one may consider the human body itself a gesture then Ricoeur's observation regarding bodily presence runs parallel to Heidegger's ontological analysis of Dasein's openness via transcendence:

The first meaning I read in my body, insofar as the body is a mediation of appearance, is not that it is finite, but precisely that it is open onto. . . . The body opens me onto the world even when it isolates me in suffering. . . . It opens me to others insofar as it expresses, that is to say, displays the interior upon the exterior and becomes a sign for others, decipherable and offered to the reciprocity of consciousness.<sup>43</sup>

According to the power of gesturing, then, one may say that work *figures* what is gestured. In addition, because the nature of gesture is to point to something beyond itself, it is along this trajectory that the figurative function of work holds within it the capacity to *refigure* the understanding of the interpreter. This, according to Ricoeur, is what underlies narrative schemes,<sup>44</sup> and I want to argue that this in fact underlies the process of work not only because the human story of work can be read as a narrative—in Pascal's words 'as one man who continues to exist and constantly learns'<sup>45</sup>—but because work itself has an inhering quality common to narrative.

*b) metaphor and work*

How can we say work is metaphorical which appears to be an attempt to reduce the praxical nature of work to the semantic? Here, we catch sight of a fundamental confusion to which I will address in more detail in the next chapter.

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<sup>41</sup> *What Is Called Thinking?* p. 16. Cf. Teilhard de Chardin, *The Phenomenon of Man*, p. 170. For a treatment of the significance of the hand in Heidegger, see Mark Sinclair, *Heidegger, Aristotle and the Work of Art*, p. 63.

<sup>42</sup> *An Essay on Man*, p. 142.

<sup>43</sup> *Fallible Man*, p. 19.

<sup>44</sup> 'Mimesis and Representation', *A Ricoeur Reader*, pp. 148-53.

<sup>45</sup> From *Traité du vide*, in Ricoeur, 'Philosophy and Historicity', *History and Truth*, p. 74.

But for now, let it suffice to say work is not praxical (*praxis*) but poetic (*poiesis*). In my attempt to correlate work and metaphor, we can begin with a basic similarity: namely, that both are *poiesis* in the broadest sense. Both work and metaphor are not only a manner of producing but of *bringing forth* into reality. Even more, this kind of bringing forth is one that reshapes reality, not only in the literal sense of making new things but also in proposing or projecting new possibilities of being.<sup>46</sup> Let us follow this correlation by looking first at metaphor and then at work.

While there is an enormous range of debate concerning the metaphor in different disciplinary fields, the hermeneutical philosophy of Ricoeur allows us to enter into a consideration of metaphor at the ontological level, that is, where the linguistic function of it can be seen to correspond to an ontological refiguration of meaning. My reliance upon Ricoeur is strategic insofar as he accounts for the lengthy debate between opposing understandings of metaphor, as 'stylistic elements' (e.g., as trope or substitution) and as emergent meaning. He argues how those who tend towards the latter (e.g., I.A. Richards, Max Black, Colin Turbayne, Monroe Beardsley and Douglas Beggren) have subsequently prepared the way for an ontological/hermeneutical understanding of how metaphor reshapes reality, that is, provides for a 'metamorphosis of both language and reality'.<sup>47</sup>

In textual analysis, the process of self-interpretation implies a specific relationship to the pre-existing context of the text before which one finds oneself. This "before" refers to a projection of the world of the text, the encounter with which allows the reader to understand something new.<sup>48</sup> For Ricoeur, metaphor constitutes this projective power of the text *par excellence* since its specific function of juxtaposing different meanings in order to propose novel meaning encapsulates the larger project

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<sup>46</sup> See Ricoeur on Heidegger; 'Writing as a Problem for Literary Criticism and Philosophical Hermeneutics', *A Ricoeur Reader*, p. 332.

<sup>47</sup> 'Word, Polysemy, Metaphor', *A Ricoeur Reader*, pp. 65-85. The general transition Ricoeur traces extends from the Classical consideration of metaphor as word (trope) to its involvement in discourse (semantics) and how therefore metaphorical referent involves a third level of an ontological projection of a lifeworld (hermeneutics); *The Rule of Metaphor*, studies 2-3, 7. Karl Simms provides an accurate summary of Ricoeur's argument and relation to the various understandings of metaphor; *Paul Ricoeur*, pp. 66-73.

<sup>48</sup> Ricoeur, 'Appropriation', *A Ricoeur Reader*, p. 97; cf. 'Metaphor and the Main Problems of Hermeneutics', *A Ricoeur Reader*, p. 315.



of the text itself.<sup>49</sup> In this sense, if metaphor provokes self-interpretation, it is not possible on the basis of a newly created language but must use the existing linguistic means in order to refer to a novel meaning. Because the so-called 'twist'<sup>50</sup> of metaphorical meaning relies on the pre-existing range of literal meanings and connotations in order to form a non-literal meaning, metaphor is by no means a radically free act.<sup>51</sup> Rather, it is indebted to the very givenness of language itself that, for many thinkers like Plato and Aristotle, constitutes the intelligibility of the cosmos.<sup>52</sup> It is because metaphor's novel meaning is indebted to the language that precedes it that its referent therefore bears on reality itself. In this respect, there must be a literal level at which one can relate to the metaphor in order for change to occur, and we can therefore speak of two levels of metaphor: a literal level that can be identified readily and a non-literal, or properly metaphorical, level that refers to the emergent meaning.

While this double aspect of metaphor can be reduced to its logical absurdity or internal contradiction, Ricoeur follows upon the work of Richards, Black and Beardsley asserting that the opposition of meaning in metaphor does not occur on the same plane of meaning but contradicts the primary, literal level in order to attain a secondary signification that could not be attained otherwise.<sup>53</sup> Ricoeur refers to this in terms of how the literal, or first level of sense, activates the secondary or metaphorical sense:

If it is true that literal sense and metaphorical sense are distinguished and articulated within an interpretation, so too it is within an interpretation that a second-level reference, which is properly metaphorical reference, is set free by means of the suspension of the first-level reference.<sup>54</sup>

Elsewhere:

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<sup>49</sup> 'Metaphor and the Main Problems of Hermeneutics', *A Ricoeur Reader*, p. 305ff.

<sup>50</sup> Ricoeur, 'Word, Polysemy, Metaphor', *A Ricoeur Reader*, pp. 77-81. This is a term Ricoeur borrows from Monroe Beardsley.

<sup>51</sup> *The Rule of Metaphor*, p. 60.

<sup>52</sup> See, for example, Dupré, *Passage to Modernity*, p. 17.

<sup>53</sup> *The Rule of Metaphor*, pp. 109-10; 'Metaphor and the Main Problem of Hermeneutics', *A Ricoeur Reader*, p. 306.

<sup>54</sup> *The Rule of Metaphor*, p. 261.

a word receives a metaphorical meaning in specific contexts within which they are opposed to other words taken *literally*; this shift in meaning results mainly from a clash between literal meanings, which excludes a literal use of the word in question and gives clues for the finding of a *new meaning*.<sup>55</sup>

For Ricoeur, this suspension is decisive since the metaphorical suspends in order to preserve and refigure the literal. Moreover, this suspension has greater implications for the overall aim of interpretation. It discloses the nature of interpretation as a suspension of the ego in order to realise a new self-understanding. Interpretation is not a self-projection of meaning but an encounter with something entirely new, or 'the disclosure of *new modes of being*'.<sup>56</sup> This kind of encounter, says Ricoeur, 'gives to the subject a new capacity of knowing himself'.<sup>57</sup> In this way, the emergence of meaning through the act of interpretation is correlative to the emergence of self-interpretation that 'gives a *self*' to the ego.<sup>58</sup>

Hermeneutically, the distinction of the two levels of metaphor allow for a dialectical relation between literal and metaphoric meaning where one is necessary to the other. One would not, for instance, equate Blake's 'Tyger!' with the literal animal since the poem discloses this metaphor as that which burns bright in the forest of the night. Nor, would one be able to apprehend the magnitude of what the poem projects as the 'Tyger!' without initially understanding it in opposition to the most conventional sense of the animal. Hence Ricoeur writes on symbolic meaning, which is akin to metaphor in this sense: 'It is by living in the first meaning that I am led by it beyond itself; the symbolic meaning is constituted in and by the literal meaning'.<sup>59</sup> For our purposes the distinction between symbol and metaphor is not important, but let it suffice to say that according to Ricoeur the difference between the two, generally speaking, is that symbol is pre-reflective, as in myth, while the metaphor is not and is formed according to a 'semantic lacuna' that the author fills in.<sup>60</sup>

<sup>55</sup> 'Metaphor and the Main Problems of Hermeneutics', *A Ricoeur Reader*, p. 307. My italics.

<sup>56</sup> Ricoeur, 'Metaphor and the Main Problems of Hermeneutics', *A Ricoeur Reader*, p. 316.

<sup>57</sup> 'Metaphor and the Main Problems of Hermeneutics', *A Ricoeur Reader*, p. 316.

<sup>58</sup> 'Appropriation', *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*, p. 193. Italics in original.

<sup>59</sup> Ricoeur, *The Symbolism of Evil*, pp.15- 16.

<sup>60</sup> *The Symbolism of Evil*, pp. 10-18 and Karl Simms, *Paul Ricoeur*, p. 65, respectively. Cf. Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor*, p. 280 and 'The Function of Fiction in Shaping Reality', *A Ricoeur Reader*, pp. 115-128.

In turning to work, we can establish its fundamental relation to metaphor in two ways: according to 1) creative context; and 2) the similar roles that literal and metaphorical meaning serve in the two.

Following upon metaphor's reliance of pre-existing linguistic means in order to create novel meaning, we can observe that similarly the conception of work as figurative stands opposed to the idea that human work is a rendering "out of nothing". Rather, work is a figuring of what precedes it (i.e., matter) and makes possible anything like the human response in work. This was suggested earlier, as Heidegger noted, in the relation between *hyle* and *morphe*. Human production is not a making out of nothing but 'imprinting and molding, i.e., by the act of "forming"'.<sup>61</sup> Human work is therefore not creative in the Promethean sense since human beings can do nothing more than reshape what is already given. Indeed, Plato's stance on imitation (*mimesis*) hints at this distinction where the artist cannot perform an act of original creation but works according to the idea (*eidos*).<sup>62</sup>

This point is crucial since it suggests that the creative freedom of the worker is still and always bound to that which has allowed it to be. That is to say, human working owes itself to *phusis*, or in this case, nature. This is why, according to Dupré, the idea of "new" is foreign to the Greek notion of *poiesis*; the task of human making is to render in accordance with the natural order of the cosmos.<sup>63</sup> Rephrasing this principle ontologically, one can say that in its being free to make, human work is responsible to the pre-givenness of being that allows work to take place, or what Heidegger encapsulates in his well-known rendering of the German '*es gibt*', or 'it gives'.<sup>64</sup> An act of being for Dasein is a response to the being "that gives" because it is presupposed by this givenness. Jean Greisch therefore remarks that 'Between "there is" and *es gibt* no passage is possible'.<sup>65</sup> In other words, one is already in givenness. Heidegger expresses this relation as the debt or responsibility human

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<sup>61</sup> 'On the Essence and Concept of φύσις', *Pathmarks*, p. 210.

<sup>62</sup> *Republic*, X.601.

<sup>63</sup> *Passage to Modernity*, Chapter 1.

<sup>64</sup> See, for instance, *On Time and Being*, p. 5.

<sup>65</sup> As quoted in Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor*, p. 334, from Greisch, 'Les mots et les roses. La métaphore chez Martin Heidegger', *Reveu des sciences philosophiques et théologiques* 57:3 (Paris, Vrin, July 1973), p. 473.

work has to being,<sup>66</sup> and we will take up this point in more detail in Chapter X (An Ontological Understanding of Use). My intent here is merely to dispel the notion of human work as a kind of radical creation (*sui generis*) which tends towards an undetermined freedom of self-expression and self-realisation. Beaufret notes that this misconception is revealed in the translation of the Greek *poiesis* into 'making' which aligns the productive act to an efficient cause. He states instead that the Greek *poiesis* is closer to letting something appear.<sup>67</sup> The consequence of this misconception is that this freedom elevates the self above the ontological givenness of being, and in doing so, it risks perceiving nature as material for its own self-rendering (as we saw in Marx's system). Radical self-creation refers to an interminable series of aims since each self can posit its own end according to its desire—a tragedy where desire outruns desire. 'The originality of the desires of having, of power, and of worth,' writes Ricoeur, 'lies in their undetermined terminus: the desire of desire has no end'.<sup>68</sup> One should say contrary to the Promethean conception of work that work's free play lies precisely in its ability to give form. In giving form, it gives greater cohesion and expression to the world, thereby freeing up future relations for greater possibilities of meaningfulness. This seems to be evinced above all by the collective participation in the figurative dimension of work that seeks a community in and through the human structures of the world.

Nevertheless, while relying on this Greek understanding of nature and creation, I am not reducing the modern situation to it. In other words, a historical retrieval of the Greek understanding requires its adaptation to the modern situation which sees itself as moving from old to new in order to gain a better understanding.<sup>69</sup> So while work does not create something new in a radical way, it does propose new interpretations and meanings. The novelty lies in the human understanding and is not a quality of the thing itself. I will address this retrieval of the Greek in more detail when turning to Heidegger's ontologisation of *theoria*, *praxis* and *poiesis*

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<sup>66</sup> Here the relation is of the Greek *aitia* (i.e., formal and material causes) that allows for work and which Heidegger translates as debt; 'The Question Concerning Technology', *The Question Concerning Technology*, p. 7.

<sup>67</sup> *Dialogue with Heidegger*, p. 100.

<sup>68</sup> *Fallible Man*, p. 127.

<sup>69</sup> This recalls David Kolb's point about the term modern from Chapter I.

(Chapter IX). For the moment, it is important to see that the task of redefining work then becomes one of understanding the nature of how work does not radically create but transforms matter according to an interpretation of being. The hermeneutical nature of this process of transformation, or refiguring, can be seen more clearly in focusing on how interpretation encounters the literal, or necessary, and moves to the figurative, or supra-necessary.

First, at the level of the literal there is the proposition that one works in order to live. The realm of necessity constitutes the most literal level of work. There is nothing non-literal at this level of existence defined by sheer effort. To remove necessity would be tantamount to removing life. Second, at the level of the figurative: if use attends to a specific end, this end is always encompassed by the greater impetus of the ontological disproportion where working makes in order to “make sense”. Making sense implies a translative function of work that sees beyond its immediate structures and uses—i.e., the literal—towards something greater. Eventually through an entire nexus built by human effort does work provide an open vista that discloses something that was never before conceivable at the base level of metabolism. In this sense, the figurative gesture of work is refigurative of reality; it provides a *metamorphosis* by which new possibilities gain actuality. Thus work, according to the nature of metaphor, allows reality to become something more, that is, perceived according to new possibilities of being. One can see this readily, for example, in the relation between the architect’s pencil and the realisation of the blueprint (*eidos*) through the hands of the builders. Matter is rendered creatively through human hands into something more. In addition, what is made (the object) does not stand as an occurrent entity but *as* something. The bank is not just a bank (i.e., a building) but an institution with certain services and functions that require one to conform and honour specific customs in order to be a part of it. Even in something more abstract like insurance, there is the relation between the metaphoric gesturing of the underwriter whose signature signifies approval of a risk. Thus whatever business or person is insured is also affirmed within a social nexus of risk and negligence, security and financial solubility. An insured entity is not only affirmed but so is its entire comportment to reality itself; and in turn, the discourse

and thinking of the insurance industry is adopted into everyday life, a life that is above all characterised by the uncertainty that insurance would seek to remove. Cannot one say that life is translated into the discourse of insurance (e.g., indemnity, premium, negligence) by the gesturing of the underwriter's pen?<sup>70</sup> Nothing appears to escape the gesture of the human hand through which thoughts and actions become embodied . . . for better or worse.

The gesture of work, that originates in the gesturing of the hand, carries its meaning beyond the initial situation of the event of making. This means that the basic needs for survival and metabolism are fulfilled before an interpretation of greater ontological significance can be engaged. This seems a point of common sense to a large degree, but it maintains at the same time a crucial link backwards where the figurative meaning cannot forsake or leave behind the literal. Indeed, one can say that the figurative does not destroy or make obsolete the literal form. Rather, it gives figure, or body and contour, to the literal. I suggest that because the uniquely human engagement with things is never only necessary that the human relation to the necessary is itself that which can be refigured. That is to say, the necessary is not left behind but placed within a larger ontological milieu in which it is connected to the philosophical and theological hope for the potential of humankind. In this sense, we can read back onto work, at the necessary level, a kind of potency that instils and elevates work itself. If work is often seen as the use of hands to make and alter (*homo faber*), then it is this use of the hands which is essentially a gesture that carries over to its complete product. Work's meaning is, in this sense, emergent; it is projected as a possibility that is witnessed when a thing of work comes into use by a human being.

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<sup>70</sup> Cf. Todd Mei, 'Insurance in Between: A Critique of Liability Insurance and Its Principles', *Literature and Theology*, 21:1 (March 2007), pp. 82-98. One area that should be noted, but lies outside the scope of this study, is current research in archaeology exploring the 'non-functional' uses of artefacts that appeared at first to have only practical functions (e.g., medical instruments during the Roman Empire). Here, practicality is defined according to our modern, Western interpretation that in a hermeneutical sense constitutes the prejudice that can subsequently open such research to other aspects of tools. For examples of this kind of approach in archaeology see: J.D. Hill, *Ritual and Rubbish in the Iron Age of Wessex* and Patricia Baker, 'Roman Medical Instruments: Archaeological Interpretations of their Possible 'Non-functional' Uses', *Social History of Medicine* Vol. 17 No. 1, pp. 3-21.

Ricoeur therefore states that the relevance of 'meaningful action' goes beyond its situation, 'breaking discourse' with 'all ostensive references'.<sup>71</sup>

The figurative dimension of work prohibits one from reducing work to the circularity of production and consumption because it constantly breaks with this mundane discourse. Its nature is to open the world to inter-communication and discourse of possibility: by the interaction of different communities linked by the trade of commodities and ideas, by the transmission of technics from one generation to the next, and by the inheritance of knowledge in monuments and artefacts embodying ritual and sanctity. This ability to transmit itself refers to a feature of work that is already metaphorical: it exists as one thing and yet bears the meanings and intentions of another. For example: in the building of a temple, as Heidegger observes, space is made on the earth for the *temenos*, or sacred space surrounding the temple.<sup>72</sup> And conversely, the sacred space endures by virtue of the temple that gathers it. But its space is not only that of sanctity that invokes, celebrates and allows for propitiation. It is also, by virtue of its being demarcated against the space that is not the *temenos*, a place to be questioned, either within the immediate community that erected it or by scholars arriving centuries later and attempting to understand the sacred in relation to the profane. In short, if human effort moves within an economy of work, this economy is also one of discourse and dialogue.

In this richer ontological, or supra-necessary, sense, work produces and uses objects that never stand as simple, obvious determinations. To recall Heidegger's famous notion of the 'as-structure',<sup>73</sup> the objects of work exist *as* something: the hammer as a hammer, the table as a table, and so on. No set of attributes, no matter how complete, can define an entity because it is precisely the entity's involvement in being that refers to a dynamic actualisation of what remains in potential. According to Heidegger, this is what Aristotle formulated as *energeia*, or the *being* appropriate in work as an object.<sup>74</sup> An object of work is not static but attains its renewal according

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<sup>71</sup> Ricoeur, 'The model of the text: meaningful action considered as text', *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*, pp. 207-09.

<sup>72</sup> 'The Origin of the Work of Art', *Poetry, Language, Thought*, pp. 41-2.

<sup>73</sup> *Being and Time*, I.v. §32.

<sup>74</sup> 'On the Essence and Concept of φύσις', *Pathmarks*, pp. 218-19. Cf. Hanley, *Being and God in Aristotle and Heidegger*, p. 76 and Sinclair, *Heidegger, Aristotle and the Work of Art*, pp. 157ff.



to its potentiality of meaning that is activated by Dasein's use of it. In relation to the metaphorical nature of work, one can say that things cannot be defined "once and for all" according to the as-structure because they are always in participation with a manner of human being engaged in work towards an end. Thus, the "as" of a tool or object is appropriated for that moment according to an end, or possibility to be actualised. For Heidegger, the as-structure captures both the *actual* there-ness of a thing's being and its *potential* use in which it will be activated. So, the thing that we see as a hammer is not a representation of any original idea but is the idea's manner of presencing: the thing we see or make as a hammer is presencing the essential nature of the hammer.<sup>75</sup> Heidegger's famous example of a jug therefore does not refer to a representation [*Darstellung*] of an idea (or use or function) but as the presencing of an interpretation of being according to which the jug is both actually and potentially appropriate.<sup>76</sup> It is actual in the sense that the jug is indeed an entity with 'there-being', declaring its own manner of being to Dasein; and it is potential insofar as the jug awaits to be used for its end or purpose. In the following passage, Heidegger therefore identifies a jug's ability to 'outpour' as both its actuality and potentiality:

The gift of the outpouring is what makes the jug a jug [actuality]. . . . If the pouring is for consecration, then it does not still a thirst. It stills and elevates the celebration of feast. The gift of the pouring is now neither given in an inn nor is the poured gift a drink for mortals. The outpouring is the libation poured out for the immortal gods. The gift of outpouring as libation is the authentic gift. In giving the consecrated libation, the pouring jug occurs as the giving gift [potentiality].<sup>77</sup>

Without the purpose or end (*telos*) of 'outpouring', the jug would not exist, and this is what gives the jug its actual being. At the same time, nonetheless, the jug in its being

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<sup>75</sup> This is the difference between presence and presencing for Heidegger where the former refers to occurrent entities (e.g., the metaphysics of presence) and is therefore pejorative. The latter refers to a dynamic mode of being (or becoming) that is its essence. Cf. Iain D. Thomson, *Heidegger on Ontotheology*, p. 34. There is a crucial relation between the German *Anwesen* and the Greek *ousia* that bears out this relation of what we today would call essence in relation to existence. The Greek and German save the distinction together; Sinclair, *Heidegger, Aristotle and the Work of Art*, Chapter 1.

<sup>76</sup> For a detailed analysis of the difference between Heidegger's notion of presencing and the post-Kantian *Darstellung*, see Sinclair, *Heidegger, Aristotle and the Work of Art*, pp. 168-85.

<sup>77</sup> 'The Thing', *Poetry, Language, Thought*, p. 172-73. My words in brackets.

proposes a new possibility for Dasein who, in using the jug as a manner of outpouring, can either still a thirst or give libation. While Heidegger would not choose one [actuality or potentiality] over the other, he does emphasise potentiality as the characteristically transformative aspect of a thing because potentiality is what highlights the specifically temporal constitution of being and understanding.<sup>78</sup>

As something involved in a meaningful relation, an entity participates in a dynamic mode that discloses its own nature, and in doing so, potentially transforms Dasein's self-understanding. According to this double nature of actuality and potentiality that is encapsulated in the as-structure of work, one can say that the things of work are finite beings (actuality) with an infinite range of meanings (potentiality) and therefore propose a corresponding range of ontological interpretations.<sup>79</sup> And if this is so, then the original division between form and figure that I proposed is one for conceptual clarity and not ontological categorisation. One can say that the actual *form* of work constitutes the freedom of work because the structure that it erects allows for greater possibility of being. In other words, it is this structuration that opens; it is the objectness of work that releases *figurative* meaning. Work, in this way, provides an ontological structuration for renewal, a kind of concretised *mythos* that is 'the bearer of possible worlds'.<sup>80</sup> Or, viewed from the standpoint of necessity, we may conclude that *necessary use gives rise to supra-necessary meaning*.

It is the emergent meaning of the figurative aspect of work that, nonetheless, gives rise to the next situation that is to be reinterpreted. The obvious image conceived here is one of progression, where the dialectic of work and reflection moves towards greater degrees of articulation and understanding. This image is deceptive if one thinks the cumulative effect is simply linear, where the furthest point is always the most advanced. Contrary to this, in keeping with a dialectic of

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<sup>78</sup> We will look at this later in Chapter VIII (Ontologisation of the Greek Concepts).

<sup>79</sup> This refers to Ricoeur's distinction between metaphorical sense and referent (meaning) where sense refers to the diverse range of definitions (e.g., as in a dictionary) and meaning refers to what emerges anew by virtue of being used in a sentence. Thus, words have senses and sentences have meaning; 'Word, Polysemy, Metaphor', *A Ricoeur Reader*, p. 69. The correlation to work is that objects have a diverse range of potential uses (senses) but this use becomes meaningful only when in participation with human being. The object is then actively something.

<sup>80</sup> I borrow this phrase from Ricoeur; 'Myth as the Bearer of Possible Worlds', *A Ricoeur Reader*, p. 482.

work and reflection that is hermeneutical (as opposed to Hegelian),<sup>81</sup> one should say this sense of progression is only justifiable insofar as the furthest point takes into account more deeply the totality of past and present. Hence, the furthest point does not leave behind the earlier ones but finds a greater sense of responsibility in attempting to understand history. Progression, hermeneutically speaking, is a greater degree of participation in the past and is therefore always a manner of retrieval as opposed to advancement.<sup>82</sup>

Given this ontological broadening of work, the subsequent tasks remaining for this study are to develop in a more succinct manner how this ontology can be understood and seen in relation to everyday being-in-the-world. This elaboration, which again follows the route from Heidegger's ontology to Ricoeur's hermeneutics, is one that must occur by degrees. In the next chapter, the turn to the ancient Greek sources will serve a number of purposes, in particular, it will provide a clearer picture in which we can conceive of the relation between work and reflection in terms of different modes of understanding. Here, we will see how work is actually a mode of understanding, albeit one whose expertise (*techne*) is limited by virtue of it being specialised and so requires a participation with other modes of reflection—i.e., *phronesis* (*praxis*) and *sophia* (*theoria*). Its limitation, nonetheless, is not detrimental but allows work to render the world in a concrete fashion that is not available to the other modes of reflection. One can here glimpse the larger schema by which the Greeks understood how work participates in the total movement of human action and contemplation and is not simply an isolated aspect of them.

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<sup>81</sup> Cf. Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, Vol. III, pp. 193-206. In other words, Hegel's dialectic is not historical enough because it is more futural. Cf. Ricoeur's opposition of hermeneutics to Husserlian idealism in this respect; 'Phenomenology and hermeneutics', *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*, pp. 105-14.

<sup>82</sup> A condensed version of this chapter appears as 'Paul Ricoeur and the Rehabilitation of Human Work', *The Journal of French Philosophy*, forthcoming (2007).

## VIII The Ancient Greek Understanding of Work

Order was not made by god or man. It always was  
and is and shall be an ever-living fire . . .

-Heraclitus<sup>1</sup>

In this chapter I propose a recursive analysis of the ancient Greek understanding in order to see how a non-utilitarian centred interpretation of work is not only possible but, as I hope to show, philosophically viable given a specific ontological orientation to reality. This analysis is necessary because the direct fruit of its project will be an epistemological structure by which I will be able to substantiate my appeal to a non-utilitarian, non-necessity based understanding of use and therefore work. This epistemology is derived from the ancient Greek concepts of *theoria*, *praxis* and *poiesis*; and so one can see here the need for me to clarify my understanding of these concepts according to their sources and how they pertain to the contemporary situation, a pertinence that will be more fully accounted for in the next chapter when I look at an *ontologisation* of their meaning.

Generally, the ancient Greek orientation to reality acknowledges that the cosmos innately has a pre-given order,<sup>2</sup> thereby apprehending it as something in its own right and not simply subject to human will. Thus as we have seen so far, the assumption of a philosophy of work, conceived on the basis of necessity alone, interprets the relation between human being and the matter it works upon in production as objects for its own manipulation in the gambit for mastery over nature and metabolism. Its conception of reality is that of ontological inertness, there to be controlled for the utility of human being without regard for any ontological status reality itself may have. Socrates' dispute with Protagoras ('Man is the measure of all things') is a direct confrontation with the notion that reality can be described and participated in according to an uncritical trust in its appearances, without engaging

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<sup>1</sup> *The First Philosophers: The Presocratics and the Sophists*, F36, pp. 41-2.

<sup>2</sup> Friedrich Solmsen, 'Nature as Craftsman in Greek Thought', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 24:4 (Oct-Dec 1963), p. 480.

in a deeper reflection on its nature.<sup>3</sup> The Platonic and Aristotelian understanding of the cosmos is defined by a dual aspect in which the innate order of the cosmos necessarily means that it is knowable and intelligent. For Plato 'All things are *episteme*' while for Aristotle this principle of intelligence is expressed in the opening lines of the *Nicomachean Ethics* where he states 'the good is "that which all things seek"'.<sup>4</sup> This philosophical understanding is present in pre-Socratic thinking, as well, as one can see from the passage of Heraclitus quoted above.<sup>5</sup>

In this chapter, my appeal to a non-utilitarian reduction of work is formed around three main arguments. First, a destructive retrieve of the Greek concepts of *theoria*, *praxis* and *poiesis* is necessary since it is after Marx, as I argue, that the modern pre-understanding equates work with *praxis* and antithetically opposes it to *theoria*. I provide some illumination on how the modern notions of action (*praxis*) and thought (*theoria*) differ from the Classical distinction. In the last analysis, my revision of the modern understanding via the Greek will allow us to see that work is more properly understood as *poiesis* rather than *praxis*.

Second, I examine the Greek concepts of *praxis* and *theoria* in detail, focusing on the relation between divine principle and the temporal realisation (*energeia* and *kinesis*) of such principles. My aim here is to broaden the concepts of *praxis* and *theoria* so that their interrelation can be seen more hermeneutically as opposed to categorically. This reinvigoration of the Greek will allow for a more generous analysis of *poiesis* in the next section.

Third, in equating *poiesis* (and not *praxis*) with human production, I will show how *poiesis* is hermeneutically linked to the project of living virtuously. Hence, *poiesis* is not an activity isolated from the higher activities of *praxis* and *theoria* because it is limited to necessary toil; rather, *poiesis* is itself the productive

<sup>3</sup> *Protagoras*, 336a; cf. Nussbaum, *The Fragility of Goodness*, p. 242 n†. My argument goes against the attempt to interpret Plato in a utilitarian fashion. See Nussbaum's refutation of a utilitarian reduction; *The Fragility of Goodness*, p. 97.

<sup>4</sup> *Protagoras*, 361c; *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1109a3 [hereafter abbreviated in text and notes as *NE*]. All English translations are taken from Christopher Rowe's translation of the text. Cf. A.O. Rorty, "The Place of Contemplation in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*," *Essays on Aristotle's Ethics*, p. 386.

<sup>5</sup> Beaufret refers to this conception of the cosmos as 'the unity of the same and the other'; *Dialogues with Heidegger*, p. 8. See also MacIntyre's exposition of the origin of the Athenian *dikē* (justice) and how it 'presupposed that the universe had a single fundamental order, and order structuring both nature and society'; *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* p. 14 and Dupré, *Passage to Modernity*, p. 18.

articulation of the good life without whose goods and products human existence would not be possible. This recovery of *poiesis* involves a twofold project: on the one hand, appreciating the divine aspect of *techne* that sustains human production, or what I will refer to as *eidōs*; and, on the other hand, identifying the manner through which products of work (*erga*) provoke a self-reflexive response from human beings in understanding how things are to be used, or what is *chresis*.

Once again Ricoeur's hermeneutical development of ontology will provide a greater framework in which my argument takes shape. In the instance of the Greek concepts, his reflection on *praxis* and *poiesis*, within the context of the self-interpretive project of a human life, shows how the separate domains of theoretical, practical and poetical activity all participate in the greater movement of life itself. This is because life is essentially self-reflexive, seeking to link particular forms of understandings (i.e., the practical and the poetic) to a theoretical interpretation of the possibility of being itself. The ingenuity of Ricoeur's approach will be more apparent after my recapitulation of key assumptions made about Aristotle's distinction between *theoria* and *praxis* by some of his modern commentators.

Finally, I venture a novel interpretation of the myth of Hephaestus in order to bolster my destructive retrieve of the ancient Greek concepts. This interpretation attempts to show how my analysis is to a large degree consistent with the *muthos* that underlies the ancient cosmology. In this respect I interpret Hephaestus' disability to represent the ugliness of work, or what is constituted by necessity and utility. However, this disability does not describe the essence of work but its one "face" if it is understood incompletely, that is, as being separate from the human apprehension of what is possible in being as such. Hence, the disability of Hephaestus is but the other side of his divine splendor, realised in and by his craft.

I centre my discussion mostly around Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* because it is Aristotle who attempts to give a greater, systematic meditation on the nature of work (*poiesis*) in relation to other human activities (*theoria* and *praxis*). I draw on Plato and Hesiod to some extent where they support my argument, but I am in no way claiming that there is "one" ancient Greek understanding of work. This may undermine my general appeal to what I refer to as "ancient Greek"; nevertheless, I

believe I can justify my use of the phrase on two counts. First, I am not attempting to construct a systematic description of work in the Classical world. Rather, following a trajectory that will eventually fall in line with Heidegger's ontologisation of Aristotle (Chapter IX), I am trying to locate the ontological orientation to productive activity in the ancient Greek that constitutes its nucleus. At the present stage of this chapter, this nucleus can only be defined negatively as the absence of a purely utilitarian understanding. Because things are used according to a relation to a divine cosmos in the ancient Greek thinking,<sup>6</sup> this precludes the possibility of a simple homogeneity with the modern where the orientation to human production is merely necessary.

Second, while my reference to Protagoras proves the exception to my classification of an ancient Greek understanding of work, I admit the position that the history of Western philosophy has more or less been a dialogue with the two most prominent Athenian voices—Plato and Aristotle. Thus my use of the word “Greek” refers to the especially Athenian, philosophical understanding of these two. Whether or not this is an accurate manner of speaking of the ancient Greek more generally (e.g., as synecdoche) is a question that inevitably relies on the extent to which one accepts Plato and Aristotle as the most prominent voices.<sup>7</sup>

My recursion is, in this way, not just a contrasting example but a way of initiating the transition to a reinterpretation of work apart from utility and necessity. This transition is something that will be completed in the subsequent chapters. This strategy is necessary in order to address certain concerns over how it is I can argue for an appropriation of ancient sources in view of the greatly differing social and economic milieus, such as the dubious role of slavery in the *polis*.<sup>8</sup> Here I must

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<sup>6</sup> Domenico Jervolino, ‘Gadamer and Ricoeur on the hermeneutics of praxis’, *Paul Ricoeur: The Hermeneutics of Action*, p. 65. Cf. María del Carmen Paredes, ‘Amicus Plato Magis Amica Veritas: Reading Heidegger in Plato's Cave’, *Heidegger and Plato*, p. 113.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, p. 135. In *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* MacIntyre shows how even though the Athenian voices of Plato and Aristotle would appear to form the foundation of Western philosophy, the voice of sophism, or the ‘goods of effectiveness’ against the Platonic-Aristotelian ‘goods of excellence’, predominate in today's political and ethical climate [see Chapter III]. See also, Kurt Raaflaub, *The Discovery of Freedom in Ancient Greece*, p. 14. David Roochnik provides a similar kind of account of the Greek *techne*; *Of Art and Wisdom: Plato's Understanding of Techne*. Jean Beaufret notes that Athens was particularly resistant to philosophy (exemplified in the expulsion of Anaxagoras and the death of Socrates) due to the recent wars that solidified an ‘old soldier mentality’; *Dialogue with Heidegger*, p. 18.

<sup>8</sup> Herein, I do not address slavery because it would open up another kind of debate tangential to my recursive analysis. Suffice it to say, the role of slavery in the Classical world is not simply one which



reiterate a point made in the Introduction: my analysis is one of contrasting the philosophical dispositions of separate historical ages in order to see what is possible for the contemporary situation.

### Situating *Praxis* and *Theoria* in the Modern Context

In this section, I will argue that the Classical dichotomy of *praxis* and *theoria* is, in fact, not antithetical, where the two define two distinct and contrary modes. Rather, while the two are distinct (and should not be conflated), their relationship is one in which *theoria* defines a specific mode of *praxis* that is most proper to human being. As Jean Beaufret summarises, 'In reality the distinction between *wisdom* and *science* is foreign to the Greeks, a distinction that a peculiarly modern mania sometimes poses as an opposition of *theory* to *practice*. Theory, in the Greek sense, is in no way opposed to practice'.<sup>9</sup> This argument therefore raises the question, how then does

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can be simply deplored in the name of modern rationality. The debate is wide-ranging. See, for example, Bernard Williams, *Shame and Necessity*, pp. 103-29, in which he shows how slavery was constituent of the larger understanding of necessity. Arendt is hesitant to assign slavery in the Classical world an immoral tag and relates the notion of being a slave to the quality of being incapable of committing oneself to the *polis* in terms of virtuous living, or more generally what is *bios*; *The Human Condition*, pp. 31-6; MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, pp. 31-3 & 127-8. For a more recent study in this vein, see Russell Bentley, 'Loving Freedom: Aristotle on Slavery and the Good Life', *Political Studies* (1999), XLVII, pp. 100-113. With regard to my study, I would like to bring the reader's attention to my opening remarks in the introduction: namely, the modern situation calls for the possibility in which work and leisure can be open to all. This does not preclude the Greek sources whose historical situation was conducive to chattel slavery. In other words, while the contemplative life depended on the freedom of a certain class to live leisurely, because today the possibility of "mass leisure" exists, the contemplative life is therefore possible for all. This does not make Greek thinking irrelevant, but to the contrary, more pertinent. Furthermore, from the question of moral certitude, who is not to say that a different kind of slavery exists today in subtler forms, as many Marxists would argue? If such is the case, then MacIntyre's point becomes very salient: that what Aristotle misperceives is the role social and political dominance has in perpetuating the way in which one perceives how a person is; *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* pp. 104-05. Such a misperception seems possible only through the passage of time in which philosophical critique can gain the distance to see what had been hitherto concealing the nature of relationships.

<sup>9</sup> *Dialogue with Heidegger: Greek Philosophy*, p. 2; *Italics* in original. Catriona Hanley argues that *theoria* and *praxis* cannot be related because their corresponding virtues are not identical in any way; *Being and God in Aristotle and Heidegger*, p. 164. My interpretation, however, points to *theoria* being a kind of *praxis* and that is all. It is not necessary to equate *theoria* with *phronesis* since this involves a kind of category jump. Since *theoria* is 'sufficient unto itself', as Hanley remarks (p. 163), it is an activity whose end is in itself, or *praxis*. Volpi marks the difference between the three activities according to their 'ontological character', which means their modes of being in reference to the agent. This suggests *theoria* can indeed be *praxis* according to how the activity shares in the same kind of comportment (activity as an end in itself) though not the end of this comportment (wisdom and prudence, respectively); 'Being and Time: A "Translation" of *Nicomachean Ethics*?' *Reading Heidegger from the Start*, p. 202. Gadamer concludes, 'Theoria itself is a practice (πράξις τις)', *Reason in the Age of Science*, p. 90.

work relate to either since the common way of perceiving this division is in terms of work being identical to *praxis*, or the human practice of production and making. As we will see, *praxis* is not the term that should be ascribed to human work; rather *poiesis* is the term used by both Plato and Aristotle to denote human production. Indeed, in Aristotle the pairings of the intellectual virtues and their corresponding activities is generally agreed to be the following:<sup>10</sup>

<u>Virtue</u>		<u>Activity</u>
sophia (wisdom)	→	theoria (contemplation)
phronesis (practical reason/prudence)	→	praxis (action/practice)
techne (expert/technical knowledge)	→	poiesis (production/making)

*Sophia* is the wisdom concerned with the divine and eternal nature of things; *phronesis* is the practical wisdom that operates from a comprehension of the divine in relation to particular instances; *techne* is the specific knowledge local to a system of operations and procedures that is responsible for the excellence of that which is to be produced or performed. The modern subjugation of theory to practice in fact conflates *praxis* and *poiesis* uncritically when assuming that action (*praxis*) unproblematically includes work.<sup>11</sup> Practice in this respect denotes work as the application of a value-free, or utilitarian, action addressed to immediate necessities. Subsequently, the unique character of *praxis*, as Aristotle defines it, is lost, and the notion of action as practice and production is elevated in its place.<sup>12</sup> This, in turn, exacerbates any dialectical relation to *theoria*, whose position is commonly seen to be antithetical to the realm of action. But before seeing how this is indeed the case, we must first address the modern situation of our pre-understanding.

Marx's well-known thesis eleven on Feuerbach marked a transition in the history of philosophy which cast a sense of immovable suspicion upon the traditional philosophy that preceded him. While Marx's main opponent is the

<sup>10</sup> See, for instance, Hanley, *Being and God in Aristotle and Heidegger*, p. 28.

<sup>11</sup> This modern scientific understanding is what Gadamer highlights as that which is to be corrected by a hermeneutics is both theoretical and practical; *Reason in the Age of Science*, pp. 69-87.

<sup>12</sup> MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, pp. 81-4.

German Idealist tradition, this attack extends back to the Classical sources by way of the centrality such sources assumed in German Idealism. Ted Sandler comments on this relation to the Classical: 'After being reduced by Kant to the status of "master of abstractions", Aristotle comes to life again in Hegel, as the Greek world's supreme expression of that "absolute spirit" which is achieving fulfilment in our own age'.<sup>13</sup> Hence, bearing in mind the radicality of Marx's overall project to change the status-quo, thesis eleven should be read in reference to the immediate philosophical tradition and the more established Classical thinking. Thesis eleven states:

The philosophers have only *interpreted* the world in various ways; the point is to *change* it.<sup>14</sup>

Thesis eleven gains greater force when juxtaposed with thesis eight:

All social life is essentially *practical*. All mysteries which lead theory to mysticism find their rational solution in human practice and in the comprehension of this practice.<sup>15</sup>

'Change' in thesis eleven and 'practice' in thesis eight are integral to one another since the change that Marx is referring to is both a change through practice, or *praxis*, and a change that places *praxis* at the centre of a new socially conscious philosophy.<sup>16</sup> Hence, Marx equates a well-reasoned solution dispensing with 'mysticism' to the identification of *praxis* with the aim of philosophical understanding. *Praxis* is first because society is defined by it: 'all social life is essentially *practical*,' that is, a practice by which social relations are made by human production, forming the basis of 'the materialist concept of history'.<sup>17</sup> *Theoria*, on the other hand, is subsequent to this production and must reflect upon that which comes before it. Thus, *theoria* serves the role of appreciating *praxis*. Dupré stresses the novelty of this inversion of the

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<sup>13</sup> *Heidegger and Aristotle*, p. 23.

<sup>14</sup> 'Theses on Feuerbach', *The German Ideology*, p. 571. *Italics* in original.

<sup>15</sup> 'Theses on Feuerbach', *The German Ideology*, p. 571. *Italics* in original.

<sup>16</sup> Kostas Axelos refers to this as 'total praxis' which is a reversal of Hegel's absolutisation of the Spirit. Thinking is therefore reduced into practice which is for real action. Axelos remarks that in this reversal, philosophy is present in praxis by virtue of its absence (or negation of negation through real action); *Alienation, Praxis & Technē in the Thought of Karl Marx*, p. 273.

<sup>17</sup> *The German Ideology*, p. 61. Cf. Dupré, *Marx's Social Critique of Culture*, pp. 68-9.

Classical understanding in terms of how historical materialism is different from any other science:

Since the praxis is at the origin of all theory, historical materialism refuses to be merely a science—it is a theory of action, founded in action, and returning to action. A purely theoretical science, even if it is based upon positive facts, is bound to turn into an ideology. Unless it can be converted into action, theory becomes estranged from praxis, and since praxis alone contains the truth of man, theory alone becomes *eo ipso* false.<sup>18</sup>

But does Marx's inversion provide a remedy, or does it merely aggravate a problem in the understanding of *praxis* and *theoria* that still has yet to be addressed? I suggest that the latter is the case when one considers the following: in the Classical arrangement *praxis* can be marginalised to the point where the realm of action itself is denigrated. Nowhere else but in Aristotle is this most pronounced when he announces that the life of contemplation is the highest mode of human being [*ariste kai teliotate*].<sup>19</sup> But is the resolution to this problem, as Marx proposes, simply a reversal of the premises?

Let us recall from my earlier treatment of Marx that in his inversion *theoria* becomes the denigrated activity since it perpetuates a distorted relationship to reality. It seems that both characterisations—the Classical and the Marxist—construe an inadequate relation between thought and action where one is celebrated to the detriment of the other. On the one hand, how can the Classical arrangement justify a life of contemplation when the necessary metabolism of a society must be sustained? On the other hand, how can a Marxist critique argue that *praxis* is first when in fact such a recognition is itself theoretical, that is, an interpretation of being? Granted that *praxis* may be first, what if Marx's interpretation of *praxis* is not adequate or is even incorrect? Ricoeur summarises this dilemma as a question: 'Is not the process of interpretation so primitive that in fact it is *constitutive* of the dimension of *praxis*?'<sup>20</sup> Where to turn? A new theory of *praxis* and *theoria*?

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<sup>18</sup> *The Philosophical Foundations of Marxism*, p. 178. Dupré traces this inversion in Marx to the Hegelian August von Cieszkowski; *Marx's Social Critique of Culture*, pp. 67-70 & 83.

<sup>19</sup> *NE*, 1177a12-18; a22-25.

<sup>20</sup> *Ideology and Utopia*, p. 10. Elsewhere concerning Habermas' adoption of this opposition: 'it is a weak argument [i.e., Habermas' critique of Husserl] to oppose *praxis* to theory and to say that everything is theory which is not post-Marxist thought. . . . I question even more whether this opposition between

The problematics of mediating between *praxis* and *theoria* are significant and deep enough that many different avenues of resolution can be taken up. But for my purposes, I wish to explore a reconsideration of the Classical sources.<sup>21</sup> My argument is in fact that the problem is not with *praxis* or *theoria per se*, but in the interpretation of the Classical sources. Hence, the resolution is not, as Marx assumes, with replacing one mode of human engagement with another; rather, the resolution is a hermeneutic one that requires one to see how the two can be placed in a complimentary unity (where neither is denigrated). When *praxis* is understood as simply referring to action, or practice, the depth of the Classical understanding is lost. The consequence of the equation of *praxis* with practice is a nullification of any intermediary structures between human thought and action. Ricoeur therefore comments,

Marxism, if not Marx himself, has too commonly reasoned as though practices followed directly from *praxis*. Without questioning the undoubted primacy of infrastructures, I believe that there is always a mediator between *praxis* and practices, namely the conceptual scheme by the operation of which matter and form, neither with any independent existence, are realized as structures, that is as entities which are both empirical and intelligible.<sup>22</sup>

Ricoeur's point is subtle insofar as he draws a distinction immediately between practice and *praxis*. How are they not the same? As we will see shortly, *praxis* is aligned with practical reasoning (*phronesis*) and therefore is not simply action that does something in order to achieve an end. Rather, *praxis* refers to an action that is itself a realisation of *phronesis*. Work, as a practice, does not fit into this distinction because work is not directed by *phronesis* but *techne*, or technical expertise. Thus, what Ricoeur refers to as 'the conceptual scheme' is that which mediates a threefold relation: 1) the practical reason (*phronesis*) that sees what should be done; 2) in alignment with the good contemplated by *theoria*; and 3) the technical action that produces according to the orientation to reality predicated by *phronesis* and *theoria*.

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praxis and theory does not weaken Habermas' own position, because how can there be a critical position that does not participate in the theoretical trend of philosophy? The critical moment within praxis is surely a theoretical moment; the capacity for distanciation is always a part of theory', 'Habermas (2)', *Ideology and Utopia*, p. 233.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. *Hermeneutics and Praxis*, pp. 278-9.

<sup>22</sup> 'Structure and Hermeneutics', *The Conflict of Interpretations*, p. 53 n17.

The ethical understanding that informs house building, for example, is separate from the technical expertise that knows how to build. Whereas the technical concerns the efficiency and excellence of the product, the practical reasoning (or the ethical) concerns the relation of the house as a dwelling (and the activity that produces it) to being or reality. Questions of cost and material then stand in view of environmental sustainability, landscape aesthetics, well-being and so on. *Praxis*, in relation to this 'conceptual scheme', refers to a 'realized' structure that is practical according to reason (*logos*). It is not just "practical" for utility's sake but for a certain interpretation of being seen to be harmonious, or ethical. This suggests that the mediating 'conceptual scheme' locates practice within an interpretation of being. *Praxis* is indeed subordinate to a reflection on being that directs it from an ontological concern but, at the same time, such a reflection is not possible without the *praxically* imbedded existence of human being, or what is Heidegger's *Dasein* (being-there) that always interprets its existence in terms of a possibility of being.<sup>23</sup> As we will see 'the conceptual scheme' is essentially the Greek *eidos* which we will discuss in the third section. For now, let us note that it is 'the conceptual scheme' that reads a particular meaning into how one is to make things, that is in the Greek thinking, how matter (*hyle*) is to be rendered into form (*morphe*) in the course of human production.

When *praxis* is set against thinking—a sentiment that is often read back into Aristotle—the practical sphere and the contemplative sphere are split so that human being becomes ontologically dualistic, simultaneously dwelling in a world of action and a world of thought. Philosophically, the worlds parallel one another but never merge, and consequently *praxis*, which was originally related to reason, loses its fullness and risks being reduced to action in and by itself. This separation is radicalised when the reason that informs *praxis* is separated from the highest activity, *theoria*. Andrea Nightingale concludes on Aristotle:

Aristotle responds with a bold new claim: *theoria* does not lead to *praxis*.  
Narrowing the scope of theoretical philosophy, Aristotle identifies *theoria* as

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<sup>23</sup> We will consider in the next chapter how Heidegger's emphasis on *praxis* over *theoria* is strategic and not necessarily antithetical.

an exclusively contemplative activity. In fact, he even separates the processes of learning and demonstration from the activity of *theoria*. To be sure, the theorist will attempt to argue and account for his findings, but this is not considered part of the *theoria*. Rather, *theoria* is a distinct activity that is an end in itself, completely cut off from the social and political realm.<sup>24</sup>

Rather than announcing this reading of Aristotle as our arrival point, I refer to it as the grounding problematic for our hermeneutical departure. The distinction between *theoria* and its practical applications is by no means an easy one to resolve and requires an attempt to re-read Aristotle apart from a Marxist (or even post-Marxist) suspicion. While the above passage from Nightingale is keen to reify the distinction between the pre-Platonic, poetic orientation to things and the Platonic-Aristotelian intellectualisation of concepts, I do not see this as so radical a divide where the progression to the Platonic-Aristotelian is some kind of break with earlier Greek thinking. Indeed as Bernard Williams, Martha Nussbaum and Alasdair MacIntyre refer to this distinction as well, they observe that this change to philosophy from the poetic is both a change and an attempt to express an adequate understanding of the poetic and the very issues that require expression if the *polis* is to be self-sufficient.<sup>25</sup> Surely, the turn towards the philosophical is for Plato and Aristotle a necessity that is co-emergent with the question of the flourishing of the *polis*.<sup>26</sup> Indeed, if Plato attempts to suppress the poetic through philosophy, he does

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<sup>24</sup> Andrea W. Nightingale, *Spectacles of Truth in Classical Greek Philosophy: Theoria in its Cultural Context*, pp. 5-6. To be sure, Nightingale notes that other Greek philosophers held *praxis* and *theoria* in unison; however, she accepts that Aristotle is qualitatively different.

<sup>25</sup> Williams, *Shame and Necessity*, pp. 27-8; Nussbaum, *The Fragility of Goodness*, pp.89-121; MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality*, pp.74-102. Cf. Heidegger, *Parmenides*, p. 128. I note, nonetheless, that in Nussbaum's updated edition of *The Fragility of Goodness* (pp. xxviff.), she seeks to separate herself from the 'antitheoretical thinkers' (i.e., Williams and MacIntyre among others). Nussbaum, in addition, states that she is perplexed that such movements assimilate her work into their arguments (p. xxvii), omitting Williams from this criticism. My response to this is that in accepting the label of 'antitheoretical', for MacIntyre in particular, is to misrepresent and misinterpret the place of *theoria*. To the contrary, MacIntyre accords the highest role to reason and theory in being able to discern the narrative continuity and teleology of human life (e.g., *After Virtue*, pp. 211-12). MacIntyre seeks a broadened understanding of *theoria*, one not confined to the rationalist reductionism of modern moral philosophy which he seeks to overcome, as made clear in the first chapter of *After Virtue*. So, from the point of view of the broken, moral discourse of modern philosophy, MacIntyre's ethics must seem 'antitheoretical', just as Heidegger's thinking must seem to be fantasy to logical positivism.

<sup>26</sup> Beaufret refers to this as a turn from what appears to be looking at 'a mode of what appears', that is, the shift from being (noun) to the being (participle and noun); *Dialogues with Heidegger*, p. 10.



so at the cost of his own argument as the dialogues depend heavily on myth and can never finally wrest itself free of *poiesis*.<sup>27</sup>

### ***Praxis and Theoria in the Ancient Greek Understanding***

#### *a) praxis*

If *praxis* is not simply what we often call action, then what is it? The response I offer to this question requires that one see *phronesis*, or practical wisdom, as a concern for both human goods and an ultimate good, that is, an ultimate concern for the good. In this way, I am attempting to broaden the notion of practicality from a concern for aims attached to specific acts to a concern for the good as well, an argument implied in how *praxis* is associated with reason itself. Reason, here, denotes not only logical relations and correspondences (by which anything practical can be declared), but as Tillich would say, reason refers to its own depth that is transparent to it, that 'precedes and is manifest through it'.<sup>28</sup> Reason reflects a higher principle by which reality is in fact "reasonable" and ordered according to a divine nature. This elevation of reason to a principle of the cosmos is, as I have mentioned earlier, implied in the Greek pre-understanding of the cosmos as ordered and good, and this can be seen in terms of how Aristotle designates human action as that which corresponds to reason itself.

In Book VI of *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle distinguishes animals from human beings insofar as the nature of animals does not correspond to any endeavour to be truthful or virtuous in how they exist. This point is so crucial that Aristotle notes that animals have perception (*aisthetike zoe*) 'but do not share in action'.<sup>29</sup> Aristotle is referring to a specific meaning of action that is not simply an event of doing<sup>30</sup> since mere existence is involved in action on the whole. To the contrary, where Aristotle comments 'perception is not an originator [*arche*] of any sort of action',<sup>31</sup> there is the

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<sup>27</sup> Elsewhere, I give a detailed analysis of how Plato's banning of the poets is not as clear-cut and dismissive as it first seems. See my 'Justice and the Banning of the Poets: The Way of Hermeneutics in Plato's *Republic*', *Review of Metaphysics*, (July 2007 (forthcoming)).

<sup>28</sup> *Systematic Theology*, Vol. 1, pp. 79-80. Cf. Gadamer, 'Amicus Plato Magis Amica Veritas', *Dialogue and Dialectic*, p. 218.

<sup>29</sup> 1139a18-21.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Christopher Rowe's commentary on *praxis* in *NE*, p. 261.

<sup>31</sup> *NE* 1139a17-18.

suggestion that sensory perception cannot begin from a principle (*arche*) that is reasonable and intelligent. The use of senses as the basis of decision precludes it from intelligence (*nous*), and therefore perception cannot be related to *praxis*.<sup>32</sup> Aristotle provides another argument several lines after when contrasting *poiesis* (production) with *praxis* (action):

For the end of production [*poiesis*] is something distinct from the productive process, whereas that of action [*praxis*] will not be; here, doing well itself serves as end.<sup>33</sup>

In this passage, Aristotle defines action according to its end, noting that the act of making (*poiesis*) is different from *praxis*. In this case, *poiesis* is enacted to make a thing that is separate from its process because in fact it arrives at an end product that is not the process itself. It 'aims at an end distinct from itself', whose end is outside the agent.<sup>34</sup> In contrast, *praxis* denotes a process that is itself its end. That is to say, action is constituted by a manner of being in which the process of being involved in an action and its completion are not separate; *praxis* is an activity that 'includes the end itself'.<sup>35</sup> The process and end may be distinguishable, but they are not separate. Aristotle refers to the building of a house which is an act of production that arrives at a separate end while being involved in a reflection on what is good (*phronesis*) is an act whose end is fulfilled in its activity. In short, being involved in practical wisdom is an activity whose end of being wise is realised in the process of doing it; practical wisdom is a manner of being involved and enacting wisdom. Aristotle refers to this in terms of the Greek word for moderation [*sophrosune*], meaning 'the preservation of wisdom' [*sozei ten phronesin*]. Moderation, or what constitutes Aristotle's middle way, is a manner of enacting and therefore preserving wisdom.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>32</sup> Cf. *Republic*, 523a-c. Cf. Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, pp. 124-5.

<sup>33</sup> 1140b6-8.

<sup>34</sup> Hanley, *Being and God in Aristotle and Heidegger*, p. 119; cf. Taminioux, 'The Origin of "The Origin of the Work of Art"', *Reading Heidegger*, p. 393.

<sup>35</sup> Hanley, *Being and God in Aristotle and Heidegger*, p. 119.

<sup>36</sup> This appears to have its root in the Homeric conception of *arete* and *dike* which dictates the manner of thinking in order to act "justly"; MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* p. 15. Cf. Gadamer, *The Idea of the Good in Platonic-Aristotelian Philosophy*, p. 163: 'The point of his doctrine is not that one should hold to the golden mean, but that one ought to be aware of what one is actually doing when one does what is right'.

Ricoeur takes interpretive liberty in extending this notion of *praxis* to poetic activity. His studies on time and narrative argue that narration (*poiesis*) is ultimately this kind of *praxis* since in narrating one is in fact mimetically telling the story that at once evokes a reconfiguration of reality by virtue of the audience's willingness to interpret it. Ricoeur's studies are radical when viewed from the dichotomy between *praxis* and *poiesis*, for he is arguing that *poiesis* is really linked to *praxical* understanding.<sup>37</sup> Hence, *poiesis* does not end with narration and the audience's act of listening. Rather, *poiesis* is extended through time: the act of interpretation carries poetic activity into the "existential practice" of interpreting being; the narrative is appropriated into one's life that gives rise to a new self-interpretation. To summarise Ricoeur, narrative *praxis* is constantly ongoing and to this extent is contiguous with human existence.<sup>38</sup> To interpret is to live this interpretation; it is *praxis*. While Ricoeur's novel interpretation anticipates a move I wish to reduplicate in the next section at another level, i.e., that of human work (which is also *poiesis*), let it suffice for now to bear in mind that *praxis* may be an action whose end is in itself, but it is not therefore separated from the more temporal and mundane affairs of work. It is the place of *praxis* to actualise a manner of being-in-the-world according to wisdom.<sup>39</sup>

This last remark refers to a crucial temporal difference between *praxis* and *poiesis*: *praxis* is complete in itself, or actual, while *poiesis* is on its way, or potential, until completed at a specific moment in time. J.L. Ackrill observes that in Aristotle, *praxis* is identified with a temporality that is not marked by a limit (*peras*) that would define its activity. For instance, 'living well' has no limit but is an on-going activity whereas 'house-building' ends with the completion of the house.<sup>40</sup> Here, Ackrill notes that *praxis*, an action whose end is in itself, is *energeia*, where the end is present and therefore not measured according to time. In *praxis* the mode of action is one in which, according to *Metaphysics* [9.81050a21], 'the actuality is the action'.<sup>41</sup> *Poiesis*, by contrast, is a manner of acting whose end 'is not yet in existence during the course of

<sup>37</sup> See, for example, 'Life: A Story in Search of a Narrator', *A Ricoeur Reader*, p. 428; 'Narrated Time', *A Ricoeur Reader*, p. 339.

<sup>38</sup> *Time and Narrative*, Vol. 1, pp. 52-87.

<sup>39</sup> Hanley, *Being and God in Aristotle and Heidegger*, p. 27.

<sup>40</sup> 'Aristotle's Distinction between *Energeia* and *Kinesis*', *New Essays on Plato and Aristotle*, p. 122.

<sup>41</sup> *Metaphysics* as quoted in Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, p. 306 n8.

action' and is therefore identified with *kinesis*, or change through time.<sup>42</sup> Furthermore, its ontological mode is of potentiality (*dunamis*) that is to be enacted. The division between the two—*praxis-energeia*, on the one hand, and *poiesis-kinesis*, on the other—does not suggest a dualism within reality itself but refers to the constituent modes of being in reality. Nussbaum has, in this regard, shown how the notion of goodness in ancient Greek tragedy and philosophy is always set against, or in dialogue with, the temporal contingencies (or what characterises *kinesis*) that challenge the enacting of the virtuous life, a life which is *praxis*.<sup>43</sup> As she notes later, for Aristotle the role of contingency in the actualisation of the good life is essential.<sup>44</sup>

Aristotle's appreciation of contingency appears to be a modification of Plato's reflections on the relation between *phronesis*, as the knowledge of the statesman, and the ability to apply this knowledge in action. Plato thus speaks not of *praxis* but the relation between *phronesis* and *techne*,<sup>45</sup> where *techne* suggests a technique that can master contingency. *Phronesis* is a technique to be learned, administered, and taught. So what is important are not the transient ongoings of the world, but the science of moral knowledge that can provide a self-sufficiency despite them, something epitomised when reading Plato as a philosopher who unilaterally despised the body and its physical transience. While this appears yet another way in which Aristotle disagrees with Plato, one finds throughout Plato's dialogues there is an unsolved relation between virtue and teaching. The dilemma: is practical wisdom teachable or a gift of the gods?<sup>46</sup> John Milbank sees Plato as more or less arguing for a theoretical model by which one can imitate it, therefore ascribing to wisdom a mimetic role that can be carried out through *techne*, and this in fact is more or less the agreed position to take.<sup>47</sup> However, going against the grain of interpretation, it seems to me that what is overlooked in Plato's dialogues is that matters concerning virtue are never

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<sup>42</sup> 'Aristotle's Distinction between *Energeia* and *Kinesis*', *New Essays on Plato and Aristotle*, p. 122. Cf. Nussbaum, *The Fragility of Goodness*, p. 326.

<sup>43</sup> *The Fragility of Goodness*, especially pp. 318-342.

<sup>44</sup> *The Fragility of Goodness*, p. 353.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. Robert Hall, 'Techne and Morality in the *Gorgias*', *Essays in Ancient Greek Philosophy*, pp. 203-5.

<sup>46</sup> *Protagoras* and *Meno*.

<sup>47</sup> 'A Christological Poetics', *The Word Made Strange*, p. 124. Cf. Nussbaum, *The Fragility of Goodness*, p. 309 and Stanley Rosen, *The Sophist: The Drama of Original and Image*, p. 27.

clear. Is virtue comprised of a technique that is teachable? Is the good to be reduced to a technique or science?

In the dialogues there appears to be no clear position. In the *Meno*, Socrates concludes 'that virtue is neither natural nor acquired, but an instinct given by God to the virtuous' [99d-100a; cf. *NE* 1177a13-17]. In the *Protagoras* Socrates and Protagoras swap positions with Socrates concluding that virtue can be taught.<sup>48</sup> Heidegger at one point in his earlier lectures remarks, 'Plato would never determine philosophy as *techne* (technique)!'<sup>49</sup> Similarly, Gadamer notes that the prominence of *techne* in Plato has specifically to do with dialectic as a technique; however, it is a technique internal to *theoria* and is therefore not a technique that leads to the good but is a technique presupposed by an apprehension of the good or a concern for it.<sup>50</sup> This inconsistency suggests that the question of virtue is a mixture of both, that is, as a divine gift it requires human nurturing through contemplation and action.<sup>51</sup> In other words, the learning of virtue is possible only because it has been given to human beings, on the one hand, while its divine bestowal is no guarantee of its flourishing, and so it must be thought out in relation to 'the whole and the parts, on the other hand'.<sup>52</sup> The latter is a position that Aristotle himself seems to take when considering one of his main objections in *Nicomachean Ethics* II is that the Platonic Good is not practicable.<sup>53</sup> In this sense, the perception (*aisthesis*) referred to earlier that is so pivotal for Aristotle, in defining the human being over-against the animal, is directed in a specific way by human concern for the good: perception is 'a faculty of discrimination that is concerned with the apprehending of concrete particulars, rather than universals'.<sup>54</sup>

<sup>48</sup> See Roochnik's account of this ending in *Protagoras* where Socrates' reference to measurement and hedonism cannot be taken to be serious; *Of Art and Wisdom*, pp. 227-31.

<sup>49</sup> *Phenomenological Interpretations of Aristotle*, p. 38.

<sup>50</sup> *Reason in the Age of Science*, pp. 120-1. See also his *The Idea of the Good in Platonic-Aristotelian Philosophy*, p. 140 in which he shows how Plato, like Aristotle, distrusted *techne* as a mode of enacting the Good. For a detailed and systematic analysis of the role of *techne* in Plato, see David Roochnik's *Of Art and Wisdom: Plato's Understanding of Techne*. He argues against the standard depiction of Plato as one attempting to establish a scientific moral knowledge as well as the idea that Plato's dialogues have a shifting concern for the role of *techne* in their historical development. In the end, Roochnik sees the role of *techne* in Plato as a negative example by which moral knowledge should be contrasted.

<sup>51</sup> Gadamer, *The Idea of the Good in Platonic-Aristotelian Philosophy*, pp. 50-1.

<sup>52</sup> Cf. John Sallis, *Being and Logos*, pp. 101-2.

<sup>53</sup> Nussbaum, *The Fragility of Goodness*, pp. 255-8.

<sup>54</sup> Nussbaum, *The Fragility of Goodness*, p. 300.

This suggests two important points of interpretation: 1) Aristotle may not be as antithetical to Plato as many of the commentators assume; and 2) Plato's dramatic medium of the dialogues obscures the idea that he was attempting to construct doctrines. MacIntyre alights on both these points, arguing: 1) Aristotle was in fact the 'heir' of Plato in relation to ethics; and 2) Plato's philosophy was deliberately incomplete in terms of formulating an *episteme* and *techné* because at the heart of the matter for Plato was a discernment of the *arche* of philosophy which, at least in the *Republic*, could not adequately be disclosed. Thus, Aristotle inherits this project of disclosing the *arche* in terms of particular instances of justice, and this is precisely Aristotle's development of *phronesis* that seeks to articulate a practicable relation to the good.<sup>55</sup>

Regardless of the debate over the teachableness of the virtues, for both Plato and Aristotle, the weight given to virtuous living is one in which a greater participation in reflection is demanded in order for it to actualise itself. It differs from the modern understanding of action as a mere act of doing insofar as virtuous living is grounded in a beginning (*arche*) that is commensurate in some way to the inherent ordering of the cosmos. Therefore, I maintain that Plato and Aristotle, despite their many differences, are still agreed on one point: namely, the principle of the good which all things seek requires of a human agent that he or she "rules" over the beginning (*arche*) according to reason (*logos*).<sup>56</sup> Thus, as Arendt notes, the ability of human speech (*logos*) and the inherent permeation of order and reason in the cosmos (*logos*) suggest that human being is integral to the disclosure of reality since with human beings 'the principle of beginning [*arche*] came into the world itself'.<sup>57</sup> This so-called apriority of language (*logos*) is what Lévi-Strauss recognised in the pre-eminence of structural linguistics. The human being-in-the-world is presupposed by 'the constitutive dialectic of individual praxis facing the practico-inert'.<sup>58</sup> But for the Greeks, as Arendt is arguing, it is more than a structural necessity. The structural

<sup>55</sup> *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* chapters V-VI.

<sup>56</sup> Nussbaum notes that Aristotle's challenge to Plato is not an unqualified dismissal of the Forms but merely their relation to practice; *The Fragility of Goodness*, p. 256; MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* pp. 125-42.

<sup>57</sup> *The Human Condition*, pp. 177-78; cf. MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* p. 44, 89-91.

<sup>58</sup> *The Savage Mind* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1966), p. 252 as quoted in Ricoeur, 'Structure and Hermeneutics', *The Conflict of Interpretations*, p. 52.

order refers to and is consequent of something else. Through human action, a metaphysical principle (*arche*) is enacted in the cosmos.

To conclude this sub-section, within the Greek understanding one cannot separate *praxis* from its relation to the divine, assuming that action simply involves the human agent and whatever ends it designates as worthwhile. The worthiness of action for the Greeks is bound up with the theoretical apprehension of the divine nature which, as I have said, is most overtly instantiated in terms of the ordering of the cosmos and how human beings are therefore to exist in harmony with this order.

*b) theoria*

As I indicated above, the matter concerning *theoria* and where it stands in relation to *praxis* is by no means a clear one. I stated that the two are complimentary in observing that *praxis* is an enacting from a contemplation of a principle (*arche*). In Aristotle, however, this argument is part of a still lively debate and is generally described according to two positions as the 'dominant end' and the 'inclusive end' arguments.<sup>59</sup> I will rehearse those points of the debate that are pertinent to my own exposition.

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<sup>59</sup> Timothy Roche provides a concise account of this debate as well as a convincing argument in favour of the latter in 'Ergon and Eudaimonia in Nicomachean Ethics I: Reconsidering the Intellectualist Interpretation', *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 26:2 (1988), pp. 175-94. With regard to those thinkers not mentioned in his article and referenced in this study: Martha Nussbaum allows for 'inclusivist' interpretation but by no means disregards the complications of attempting to reconcile conflicting passages in *NE* and throughout Aristotle's works which give rise to another question concerning the influence of Platonism [*The Fragility of Goodness*, pp. 297, 373-7]; Andrea Nightingale falls within the 'intellectualist' argument since she is adamant on making the distinction that Aristotle develops a new understanding of *theoria* that is for its own sake and by itself [*The Spectacles of Truth in Classical Greek Philosophy*]; MacIntyre appears to endorse the inclusivist position when arguing that ethics is about the theoretical reasoning identifying a *telos* to human action and practical reasoning identifying how to act in each particular case; *After Virtue*, p. 162. He also sees Aristotle as inheriting Plato's unity of practical and theoretical understanding vis-a-vis sophism; *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* pp. 85-7 & 92. Gadamer is clearly within the inclusivist interpretation ["The Idea of Practical Philosophy", *The Idea of the Good in Platonic-Aristotelian Philosophy*, pp. 159-78], though he also brings our attention to the fact that what constitutes Greek *sophia* has to do with the unchanging principles that are mathematics, and so therefore is learnable by anyone (Nussbaum confines this to the middle dialogues; *The Fragility of Goodness*, p. 238). Gadamer suggests that Aristotle's opposition of *sophia* to all other things is on the basis that its exclusivity is non-relational to the changing flux of existence. For Gadamer this constitutes a modern exigency for a "hermeneutics of the human sciences" in which applicability and fore-understanding of principals is mediated; *Truth and Method*, pp. 314-16; *Reason in the Age of Science*, p. 112. While I do not discuss Gadamer specifically in this chapter, his approach is one I attempt to pursue in ontologising the Greek concepts in the next chapter. Heidegger, as we will see in the next chapter, falls squarely within the inclusivist school. In this sub-section, I deal specifically with an interpretation of Book I of *NE*. There is further dispute over the importance of Book X which has been argued by the



The 'dominant end' argument, or what is often referred to as the 'intellectualist interpretation' of Aristotle, sees *theoria* as the highest mode of being according to Aristotle's own treatment of it in *Nicomachean Ethics*.<sup>60</sup> Both *theoria* and *praxis* are the modes of being involved in their appropriate forms of understanding: *sophia* and *phronesis*, respectively.<sup>61</sup> Because Aristotle describes *theoria* as the highest mode according to the highest virtue (*sophia*), the intellectualist argument is that *theoria* is a manner of being according to this one "dominant end" to which *phronesis* does not correspond or relate. Here, we can recall as an example of this in the passage from Nightingale quoted earlier. The implications of this argument become radical. Accounting for the various proponents of this argument Timothy Roche observes:

All action, choice, and practical cognition is [sic] supposed to be pressed into the service of promoting the monolithic end of theoretical activity. The alleged injunction to engage in this single-minded and self-centered pursuit has led at least one interpreter to claim that Aristotle's doctrine of the human good is ultimately selfish.<sup>62</sup>

This characterisation of *theoria* no doubt bolsters Marx's challenge to traditional thinking. But what must also be taken into consideration is that a specific understanding of *theoria* has been assumed in the 'dominant end' argument. Indeed, how is it that *theoria* can be selfish? For Plato, of course, this attribution would be impossible since it would be choosing the unjust over what is just. It appears that the isolation of *theoria* as a dominant end is more or less a utilitarian definition insofar as

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"intellectualists" to support their claim that the contemplative life is the sole end to which Aristotle subscribes. Roche, on this point [pp. 192-4], is inconclusive and merely deconstructive of the grounds upon which the intellectualists claim their authority. Andrea Nightingale argues persuasively that what is not noted by many commentators is that the Greek word Aristotle uses to denote the difference between activity and contemplation is *peripoieisthai*, thus related to *poiesis*. She concludes that activity in this case 'does not apply to *praxis*' but to a certain kind of activity associated with *poiesis*. Her conclusion, regardless of her rejection of the inclusivist argument, corresponds to an ontological interpretation of Aristotle that locates the difference in modes of activities according to intentionality rather than objectively described states. Thus, she notes '[Aristotle] believes that *praxis* can be chosen either for its own sake or for the sake of external ends', therefore denoting a certain ontological compartment that is choice [*prohairesis*]; *The Spectacles of Truth in Classical Greek Philosophy*, pp. 212-13.

<sup>60</sup> Roche, 'Ergon and Eudaimonia in *Nicomachean Ethics* I', p. 176.

<sup>61</sup> Hanley, *Being and God in Aristotle and Heidegger*, p. 28.

<sup>62</sup> Roche refers to W.F.R. Hardie, Anthony Kenny, John Cooper, A.W.H. Adkins, R.J. Sullivan, and Trond Berg Eriksen as proponents of this position and G.C. Field as the 'one interpreter' claiming Aristotle's theory to be selfish; 'Ergon and Eudaimonia in *Nicomachean Ethics* I: Reconsidering the Intellectualist Interpretation', *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 26:2 (1988), p. 176 n2-3.

*theoria's* aims are somehow posited as being separate from ethical considerations.<sup>63</sup> In this way, *theoria* is reduced to a kind of technical rationality, producing the conflation of the Greek *theoria* to *techné*. To be sure, this separation of what is good from what is the subject of contemplation is precisely where the inclusivists and the intellectualists depart.

The inclusivist position, most famously articulated by J.L. Ackrill,<sup>64</sup> interprets the *ergon* (function) of human being, or the manner and extent to which human being is involved in *theoria*, as extending throughout the practical domain of existence. It is important to mark the distinction: *theoria* extends to but cannot be conflated to the practical domain of existence. Aristotle asks in Book I of *Nicomachean Ethics* whether or not the function (*ergon*) of human being is just like any other function of a thing where its excellence resides in its enacting or performing of the function itself.<sup>65</sup> This question is not one that is asked as a hypothesis but is rather a question that is already given over to the task of seeing how the *ergon* of human being is one that extends through every phase and sphere of human existence, and therefore, in some sense completes it. In the case of human beings, their excellence lies in the enacting of reason but reason not simply for finding correspondences but in conformity to the good that all action seeks. Nussbaum refers to this in terms of the ancient Greek concern for an intelligent self-sufficiency in the face of luck, or fortune (*tyche*).<sup>66</sup> The question is "what characterises this sovereignty that is based on reason?" Is it genuinely self-interested in placing human being before all other things? Or, is it a manner of reasoning seeking conformity with the higher principle of order in the cosmos?<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Hall attempts such a reading of Plato's *nous* in *Gorgias*, 'Techne and Morality in the *Gorgias*', *Essays in Ancient Greek Philosophy*, p. 206. For an analysis of the opposition between rationality (i.e., utilitarianism) and ethical judgment, see MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, pp. 6-22. MacIntyre argues elsewhere that it is precisely this utilitarian understanding that Plato opposed in relation to the prevalence given over to effectiveness over against justice itself; *Whose Justice? Which Rationality*, p. 63 & 70.

<sup>64</sup> 'Aristotle on *Eudaimonia*', *Essays on Aristotle's Ethics*.

<sup>65</sup> 1097b25-28.

<sup>66</sup> *The Fragility of Goodness*, p. 19; see also her specific comments on the human function argument, p. 293.

<sup>67</sup> Cf. Nussbaum's account of the debate in terms of 'practical self-sufficiency' and 'extra-philosophical' aims; *The Fragility of Goodness*, p. 19. Nussbaum argues for a third, 'rational self-sufficiency' according to which reason is expanded beyond practicality and non-dismissive of the Platonic, 'supra-human' concern to be removed from passion.

The difference between the two schools of interpretation on this point resides here. While the “intellectualists” claim that *theoria* characterises the final and single end (*telos*) by which all other things become marginalised, the “inclusivists” argue that Aristotle is referring to an end that in fact actualises itself through the practical sphere of human being. Thus Roche observes: ‘Aristotle [NE I.8] argues that the good for man is not to be placed in the category of a possession (*ktesis*) but in a use (*chresis*) and activity (*energeia*)’.<sup>68</sup> This, in turn, allows Roche to conclude:

Aristotle’s claim that he intends the sense which implies activity means that the *ergon* of man is to be defined in terms of the actual exercise of reason, not merely the potential for it.<sup>69</sup>

This suggests, in support of my thesis, that *praxis* and *theoria* are two distinct modes of engagement in existence but complimentary to one another. Indeed, Roche’s argument supports the notion that *theoria* expresses a reflection on metaphysical principles while *praxis* is a manner of acting commensurate to this reflection to some degree. A.O. Rorty similarly argues:

There is nothing about the practical life which prevents it from being contemplative, and even enhanced by being contemplated. . . . Properly conceived, *theoria* completes and perfects the practical life, in the technical senses of those terms. And while of course practical wisdom cannot ensure *theoria*, it can assure the political conditions that allow contemplators to discover and exercise their potentialities.<sup>70</sup>

Ricoeur takes up Aristotle in this same way when remarking that ‘*ergon* [function] is to life, taken in its entirety, as the standard of excellence is to a particular practice’.<sup>71</sup> This correlation of “*ergon* to life; excellence to practice” is the means by which Ricoeur proposes a synthesis of the specific aims of each *praxis* and an ultimate end, or what he calls the tie between ‘*phronesis* and *phronimos*’.<sup>72</sup> By this Ricoeur means

<sup>68</sup> Roche, ‘*Ergon* and *Eudaimonia* in *Nicomachean Ethics* I’, p. 180.

<sup>69</sup> Roche, ‘*Ergon* and *Eudaimonia* in *Nicomachean Ethics* I’, p. 180. Cf. Mark Sinclair, *Heidegger, Aristotle and the Work of Art*, p. 42.

<sup>70</sup> ‘The Place of Contemplation in Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics*’, *Essays on Aristotle’s Ethics*, p. 377. For a more technical, systematic exposition of *eudaimonia*, see Dominic Scott, ‘Aristotle on Well-Being and Intellectual Contemplation: Primary and Secondary *Eudaimonia*’, *Aristotelian Society Supplementary Volume*, 73:1 (1999), pp. 225-242.

<sup>71</sup> *Oneself as Another*, p. 178.

<sup>72</sup> *Oneself as Another*, p. 179.

that the involvement in human being as an “actor” (*phronimos*) is one that is constantly hermeneutical insofar as there exists a mutually defining tension between what one perceives to be the good that draws one forth and directs one’s entire existence (*phronesis*) and the specific practices by which one enacts this and so performs work in the eyes of another (*praxis*):

it is in unending work of interpretation applied to action and to oneself that we pursue the search for adequation between what seems to us to be best with regard to our life as a whole [*theoria*] and the preferential choices that govern our practices [*praxis*].<sup>73</sup>

Indeed, exactly how this occurs is precisely the question of ethics. Thus the reason why *praxis* is so central: it relates the performance of good deeds to an understanding of the good; or, it unites the universal good to the particular instance in which it must be enacted.

MacIntyre interprets Aristotle in the same way when relating the relation between *praxis* and *theoria* in the *Nicomachean Ethics* to the *Politics* and the *Metaphysics*.<sup>74</sup> This “inclusivist” interpretation goes against the view that what characterises the ancient Greek philosophical relation to the *polis* is one of absence.<sup>75</sup> As well, I share the inclusivist rejection of the intellectualists’ argument, but for an additional reason. The intellectualist interpretation seems too heavily based upon a literal (or physical as compared to symbolic) reading of the Orphic dualism between body and soul that lies at the heart of the Classical Greek culture.<sup>76</sup> Such a dualism presents an intellectual life un-committed and removed from the toil within necessity and therefore implies that contemplation has nothing to give to the practical world. How, then, can this dualism be resolved? How can *theoria* be seen in sympathetic relation to work? My response: in broadening the understanding of *poiesis*.

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<sup>73</sup> *Oneself as Another*, p. 179. Words in brackets are my insertions. Cf. MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* p. 92.

<sup>74</sup> *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* p. 125.

<sup>75</sup> Nightingale, *The Spectacle of Truth in Classical Greek Philosophy*, p. 6-7; Bernie Yack, ‘A Reinterpretation of Aristotle’s Political Teleology’, *History of Political Thought* 12, p. 21.

<sup>76</sup> Ricoeur, *The Symbolism of Evil*, p. 154.

**The Question of *Poiesis*:****The Interrelation of *Praxis* and *Theoria* through Form (*Eidos*) and Use (*Chresis*)**

In undertaking a re-appreciation of *poiesis*, one must maintain Aristotle's insistence that *theoria* is non-productive, that is, *theoria* is not *poiesis*.<sup>77</sup> While this distinction does not completely sever the relation between *poiesis* and *theoria*, it does complicate any mediation between them. We can begin such a mediation in seeing that *theoria* does not share in the same kind of efficaciousness as *poiesis*. After all, the effects of the activities (*theoria*, *praxis*, *poiesis*) are what largely occupy Aristotle's treatment of them in *Nicomachean Ethics*. For example, because *theoria* is divine it surrenders itself to the unity of things and their divine nature; and therefore, it cannot be held according to the same measures used to evaluate production. This is because the comprehension of the divine does not bear directly upon the human affairs in how to do and make, achieve and reap. Divine rest and completion seem to have nothing to do with the busyness of human affairs. In this sense, *theoria* and *praxis* are the focus of Aristotle's discussion while *poiesis* is used as a demonstrative contrast. Indeed, while Aristotle speaks of *poiesis* in *Nicomachean Ethics* it is generally to provide a contrast by which *praxis* can be more clearly defined. John Milbank therefore notes that in Aristotle the role of *poiesis* is largely defined by that which it is not, i.e., *praxis*.<sup>78</sup> But this obstacle in no way precludes the possibility of seeking their union.

At first glance, the main difference between *poiesis* and *theoria* resides in their relation to use (*chresis*). It is a common disposition in Greek thinking, as it is today, that *theoria* is useless (*achreston*).<sup>79</sup> One may recall Socrates' parable of the noble captain in which he attempts to explain why he agrees with Adeimantus' challenge that philosophers are 'useless to the world'.<sup>80</sup> Indeed, Aristotle deliberately contrasts the philosophers as ones who do not appear wise to the public because they are not able to use their knowledge for their own benefit: they are 'useless, because what they inquire into are not the goods that are *human*'.<sup>81</sup> To be sure, Aristotle continues by making the point that it is his task to establish the relation between *theoria* and

<sup>77</sup> Nightingale, *The Spectacle of Truth in Classical Greek Philosophy*, pp. 15-16.

<sup>78</sup> 'A Christological Poetics', *The Word Made Strange*, p. 124.

<sup>79</sup> Nightingale, *The Spectacles of Truth in Classical Greek Philosophy*, p. 6.

<sup>80</sup> *Republic*, 487c.

<sup>81</sup> *NE*, 1141b4-9.

*praxis*. Nevertheless, this relation is not a subjugation of *theoria* to the measure of human (or ethical) goods, for it is that which remains most divine. Aristotle is calling for a development, or 'architectonic',<sup>82</sup> of how this relation can be established and thought. Lacking from this architectonic, however, is *poiesis* which is in fact more basic than human goods since it deals with necessary goods. But this distinction is no absolute separation; rather, it creates an exigency where the necessary is lacking precisely because it is in need of being related to the highest *theoria*.

In Plato this need is obvious insofar as the point of the parable of the ship captain, and indeed the *Republic*, is to show how common pre-understanding of what is good and just is inverted, or what is the mistaking of shadows and images for reality.<sup>83</sup> In Aristotle the need to bridge the gap between *theoria* and *poiesis* is evident when he states,

Thought by itself sets nothing in motion; thought that sets in motion is for the sake of something and practical. For this also controls productive thought, since everyone who produces something produces it for the sake of something, and what is an end without qualification is not the end of production (being relative to something else, and the end of a given expertise), but the end of action.<sup>84</sup>

While using the word *dianoia* to refer to thought, Aristotle speaks of two different kinds of thought in the above passage: *theoria* and *poiesis*. The thought that sets nothing in motion is *theoria*, which as Ackrill pointed out corresponds to *energeia*, where the end is present in the act itself and therefore not measured according to time. *Theoria*, as the most divine activity, is in harmony with the divine, and so like the divine, is completely at rest. It is at the origin from which all movement begins. Beaufret provides the analogy that what *theoria* taps into is like a reservoir of water that remains at rest behind a dam.<sup>85</sup> On the contrary, the thought (*poiesis*) that 'sets in motion' for a practical end is in movement because it is for the sake of something. In

<sup>82</sup> NE, 1141b23; cf. Roochnik on this architectonic in Plato; *Of Art and Wisdom*, p. 169. This architectonic is not technical like scientific knowledge but is stochastic in its development.

<sup>83</sup> Nussbaum, *The Fragility of Goodness*, p. 141 & 146. Andrea Nightingale therefore notes that the role of *theoros* is of a stranger who 'brings a radical alterity to the city'; *The Spectacles of Truth in Classical Greek Philosophy*, p. 5.

<sup>84</sup> NE, 1139a36-1139b4.

<sup>85</sup> Beaufret, *Dialogue with Heidegger*, p. 97.

this sense, production (*poiesis*) does not share in the same end as *theoria*. What becomes apparent, then, is that in trying to see the relation of *poiesis* to *theoria*, we must see how the kinetic activity of production relates to the *energeia* of thought (*theoria* and *praxis*).

Let us begin this path in seeing the connection between the product of work (*ergon*) and *energeia*. Etymologically, *ergon* and *energeia* are related. Martin Schonfield accounts for the various levels of relation between actuality and potentiality as follows:

For Aristotle, *dynamis* is a potential that, when put in (*en*) action (*ergon*), is *en-ergon* or *energeia*; energy. . . . Aristotelian energy is *dynamis* put into operation, or, in the Latinized Aristotle, a *potentia* put into *agere*, a potential acting. This potential has a *telos* guiding the *energeia*. Thus it has (*echein*) a goal (*telos*) within (*en*).<sup>86</sup>

The inclusion of the *telos* in the act itself constitutes the *energeia* of *ergon* (the activity of an action) where the activity fulfils the *telos*. But there seems to be more to this. The etymological relation between *energeia* and the objects of work (also derived from *ergon*) provokes an interesting question. Is a product of work (*ergon*), created by the kinetic movement of production, in some way an actuality whose movement is also *energeia*? My answer to this lies in making a distinction between the productive activity and the using activity. Both production and using, in other words, are that which unite *poiesis* to *theoria* and *praxis*.

#### *a) eidos and production*

Recalling what I mentioned earlier in terms of the relation *techne* has to *phusis*, one can say that human *techne* has a responsibility to render according to the laws that govern *phusis*. This responsibility is something requisite and inherent to the cosmos as order. In this sense, the *techne* that gives rise to products of work (*erga*) is a knowledge that brings forth the virtue or excellence of a thing *as* a thing. Jean-Pierre Vernant points out, 'the *ergon* of each thing or being is the product of its own

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<sup>86</sup> 'Kant's Thing In Itself, or the Tao of Königsberg', *Florida Philosophical Review*, III:1 (2003), p. 19. Cf. Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, p. 306 n8.



particular excellence, of its *arete*'.<sup>87</sup> The *ergon* Vernant refers to is that which is the product of *poiesis*. *Poiesis*, in this respect, is reliant upon *techne* in order to achieve excellence. It is through *techne* that *poiesis* achieves its nobleness and usefulness, a use expressly for the benefit of the public and not for the home (*oikos*).<sup>88</sup> Thus, excellence (*arete*) is highly significant in the craftwork of *techne*; for *techne*, in understanding how to achieve excellence in *poiesis*, upholds the public realm (*polis*) in and through this excellence.<sup>89</sup> Here, I am saying, is a continuous correlation between the good, as expressed in the entity of the *polis*, and the nature of work, as expressed in the making of things for collective human use.

Because of this public feature, Nussbaum notes that from various Greek sources one can extrapolate four requirements of *techne*: universality, teachability, precision and explicability.<sup>90</sup> Universality concerns the overall applicability of whatever the *techne* performs in relation to the universal laws of *phusis*. Teachability is obvious insofar as expert knowledge must be transmittable in such ways as apprenticeship. Precision refers to more accurate measurement and, for the physician in particular, the precision of understanding the humoral balance of the body and how to rectify an imbalance. Explicability concerns the ability to see the craft or product in relation to the future, what can be predicted based upon the nature of the thing made or action taken. Again, for the physician this is obvious in the ability to see what types of medicine work for a specific imbalance, but even in crafts such as carpentry there is the same kind of explicability in the knowledge of woods in relation to climate, use, durability, odor, etc. In general, *techne* can be seen as an understanding of how to do and make by which the products and actions that result give greater structure, coherence and articulation to the cosmic order.<sup>91</sup> *Techne* arises from a *logos* within the cosmos,<sup>92</sup> and gives greater articulation of this *logos* in

<sup>87</sup> *Myth and Thought among the Greeks*, p. 248.

<sup>88</sup> *Myth and Thought among the Greeks*, p. 249.

<sup>89</sup> Arendt, Hannah, *The Human Condition*, p. 49; in terms of truth (*aletheia*), see Heidegger, *Parmenides*, pp. 89-90 & 92.

<sup>90</sup> *The Fragility of Goodness*, pp. 95-6. Roochnik provides a much more systematic account for the understanding of *techne* from pre-Platonic times to Plato; *Of Art and Wisdom*, pp. 17-88.

<sup>91</sup> Freidrich Solmsen, 'Nature as Craftsman in Greek Thought', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 24:4 (Oct-Dec 1963), pp. 473-96.

<sup>92</sup> Rosen, *Plato's Sophist*, p. 27. Thus, in Rosen's analysis, rhetoric is not a *techne* because it cannot give a *logos* for its nature, this is therefore why it has no allegiance to truth for the philosopher.

its enactment. Indeed, Roche keenly points out that *ergon* is not an arbitrary agency for human being. Rather, according to Aristotle, 'the *ergon* of man is to be defined in terms of the actual exercise of reason, not merely the potential for it'.<sup>93</sup>

The excellence of *techne* is therefore reliant upon the manner in which its knowledge can adequately grasp the nature of the things it makes. In the Greek this nature is identified as the *eidos*—the image, form, idea or plan by which the craftsman envisions the product. Dupré begins his study on the Classical understanding of form (*eidos*) with a direct rebuttal to what he will later expose as the modern inclination to reduce ontological structures to mental representations. If the modern predicament can be generally described as the inclination to base knowledge on the correspondence of mental representations to reality (e.g., truth as correspondence), then the Greek manner of thinking constitutes the contrary of this philosophical pre-understanding. Dupré writes,

In Greek myths as well as in early philosophy, *physis* appears simultaneously as a primordial, formative event and as the all-inclusive, informed reality that results from this event. *To be* consists in partaking in an aboriginal act of expression. Nothing precedes that expression. As ontological ultimate it provides the definitive answer to the question how things came about.<sup>94</sup>

The often cited example of this principle is the acorn that emerges, or is "expressed" in Dupré's words, as an oak tree. Here, the form of the oak tree is both anticipated and contained within the acorn. One can say, therefore, that the form that arises in nature is the "look" of the inherent order and intelligibility of the cosmos that Plato and Aristotle refer to as *nous*.<sup>95</sup> *Nous*, as intelligence, is shared by both nature and human being and is evinced in the moment of insight that constitutes the heart of *theoria* as a witnessing of the divine nature of reality (e.g., the ascension of the knower in Plato's Cave). *Nous* is real because of the inherent order of the cosmos.<sup>96</sup> Nightingale comments that because this relationship between divinity and human

<sup>93</sup> Roche, 'Ergon and Eudaimonia in Nicomachean Ethics I', p. 180.

<sup>94</sup> *Passage to Modernity*, p. 15. Cf. Arendt, *The Human Condition*, p. 150.

<sup>95</sup> MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*, pp. 91-3.

<sup>96</sup> Thomas Nagel, 'Aristotle on Eudaimonia', *Essays on Aristotle's Ethics*, p. 387; Dupré, *Passage to Modernity*, p. 18. Thus, MacIntyre notes that *nous* is prior to *theoria*; *Whose Justice? Which Rationality*, p. 93. Also see Stanley Rosen [*The Quarrel Between Philosophy and Poetry*, p. 19] where according to Plato *dianoia* (that participates in the sensibles) must be unified by *nous*.

being is participatory it maintains to some degree the original pre-Platonic understanding of *theoria* as a participation in a religious festival.<sup>97</sup> Indeed, one need only recall in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, the passage from Book X.7 that speaks of *theoria* as the most divine aspect of human being. Within Neo-Platonism, the pre-reflective unity that allows for the intelligibility that is form is the One. Transcending any particular form because it allows for form as such, the One shows its formal unity not as empty but by virtue of the complexity of its qualities (forms).<sup>98</sup>

In Aristotle the presence of the form is considered within the play of things themselves and not at the level of transcendence. Thus of the four causes (*aitia*), the formal cause is given the greatest significance and is often identified with the final cause according to the notion that the form is the final purpose of things in being. For example, in *Physics* he writes:

But in many cases these 'because's coincide; for the essential nature of a thing and the purpose for which it is produced are often identical (so that the final cause coincides with the formal).<sup>99</sup>

And further,

Also, since the term 'nature' is applied both to material and to form, and since it is the latter that constitutes the goal, and all else is for the sake of that goal, it follows that the form is the final cause.<sup>100</sup>

There is a great debate over the exact relation between the formal and final causes that is tangential to my argument.<sup>101</sup> The centrality of the formal cause cannot be underestimated and for our purposes should be seen as more than an empty shell. Form embodies the very beingness (*ousia*) of the thing itself. What we today refer to as essence and substance do not lie elsewhere apart from the form; rather, the form is

<sup>97</sup> *The Spectacles of Truth in Classical Greek Philosophy*, pp. 11-13.

<sup>98</sup> Dupré referring to Plotinus, *The Passage to Modernity*, p. 22.

<sup>99</sup> *Physics* II.7.198a.

<sup>100</sup> *Physics* II.8.199a; cf. *Metaphysics*, A3.983a.

<sup>101</sup> For example, John Cooper ['Aristotle on natural teleology', *Language and Logos*, p. 200] and R.J. Hankinson ['Aristotle's conception of final causality', *RM* 30, 1976/7, pp. 226-54] support the reduction of the final cause to the formal cause while Rich Cameron's article ['The Ontology of Aristotle's Final Cause', *Apeiron* 35 (2), pp. 153-79] summarises much of the debate and argues for an understanding of final cause as *sui generis*.

the presencing of this essence.<sup>102</sup> Giovanni Reale refers to the dominance of the formal cause in Aristotle as the 'supremacy' of the formal cause, and he argues that Aristotle's ontology is described more accurately as 'ousiology'—that is, the study concerning essences since the essence of an entity is its form (*eidos*).<sup>103</sup>

Nevertheless, the role of form in human work (*ergon*) need not be overly sensitive to the wide ranging debate, on the one hand, between Plato and Aristotle, and on the other hand, between commentators on Aristotle. What is central to Plato and Aristotle is how the form constitutes the physical beingness of things. Thus, in human work the *eidos* is the form, or idea, by which a thing comes into being. It is precisely the *eidos* that allows matter (*hyle*) to be rendered into a specific form (*morphe*). This description of human work is described by Plato in, for example, Book X of the *Republic* when speaking of the *techne* of such crafts as bed-making, where the bed-maker imitates the "original" form of the bed conceived by God.<sup>104</sup> This passage can be grouped under what is conventionally referred to as Plato's hypostatisation of the Forms (or more generally, the Theory of Forms) where human action is necessarily an inferior form of the original.<sup>105</sup> Nonetheless, such an interpretation, as Elizabeth Asmis has shown, need not be considered a denigration of *techne* since Plato's discussion of the imitative nature of something like bed-making is qualified. Plato focuses his criticism on such craft that takes 'semblances' (*eidolon*) to be the true reality.<sup>106</sup> Indeed the dilemma that Plato sets before the reader is always within a

<sup>102</sup> Cf. Sinclair, *Heidegger, Aristotle and the Work of Art*, pp. 28-41.

<sup>103</sup> Giovanni Reale, *The Concept of First Philosophy and the Unity of the Metaphysics of Aristotle*, pp. 23 & 31. See also H.H. Joachim's *Aristotle: The Nicomachean Ethics*, p. 178. Contrary to this, Vasilis Politis argues that ontology (the 'theory of being in general and of all things') and ousiology (the 'theory of primary being') remain distinct aspects of Aristotle's metaphysics though in fact ontology depends on ousiology; *Aristotle and the Metaphysics*, p. 119. The meaning of the Greek *ousia* is difficult as it bears many meanings in Aristotle. For a concise account of this see Catriona Hanley, *Being and God in Aristotle and Heidegger*, pp. 57-67 and Sinclair, *Heidegger, Aristotle and the Work of Art*, pp. 20-6. Rocjewicz identifies formal cause with essence from a Heideggerian understanding of the four cause and ontology; *The Gods and Technology*, p. 123.

<sup>104</sup> 597a-e. Roochnik alights upon the possible original meaning of *techne* as referring to woodworking and housebuilding; *Of Art and Wisdom*, pp. 17-22. And this correlates with the notion that *hyle* is denoted as forest. *Techne* renders the forest into things used for human dwelling. See also, Freidrich Solmsen, 'Nature as Craftsman in Greek Thought', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 24:4 (Oct-Dec 1963), p. 492.

<sup>105</sup> Hankinson, *Cause and Explanation in Ancient Greek Thought*, pp. 158-9.

<sup>106</sup> *Republic*, 599a-600e; 'Plato on poetic creativity', *The Cambridge Companion to Plato*, p. 352. See also Elizabeth Belfiore, 'A Theory of Imitation in Plato's *Republic*', *Transactions of the American Philological Association*, 114 (1984), pp. 121-46, wherein she marks the difference between a lowly imitation ('versatile imitation') that has no knowledge of the thing it makes and 'imitation with knowledge' which

certain context, and here the description of the form of something like a bed seems cautionary insofar as Plato is focusing on the problem of identifying the mere appearance of things for reality itself. The seeming transcendence of the original *eidōs* is not meant to dictate a kind of Manichean subordination to a higher reality, but to make one aware of the greater milieu of participation involved in craft-making.<sup>107</sup> The production of something from *eidōs* brings a certain kind of existential exigency where human production actualises the excellence bestowed by the “transcendent” *eidōs*. Actualisation is therefore always predicated on the craftmaker’s involvement. Appearances by themselves, or seen through sensory perception, are untrustworthy because they require a second-hand kind of knowledge that has not apprehended the original idea itself, or *eidōs*.<sup>108</sup> In general, when referring to work of poor quality we notice this difference. We often refer to cheap imitation, whereas craft of good quality has an originality to it that is made from sound technical expertise as well as a non-definable quality we might call the inspiration or genius of the craftsman.

The *eidōs* of a product is constituted by two aspects; that is to say, two features define its “look”. First, from a metaphysical point of view the phenomenon of a product or work is dependent upon the givenness of the formal unity that precedes all things. This aspect of the *eidōs*, which gives rise to its very being, is at once its essence, or that which underlies its very reality (*hypokeimenon*). For Plato, of course, this essence was describable by one quality alone, the Good. But we need not go so far in order to see my point. The essentiality of the *eidōs* is formally the pre-given unity that has definite form in distinct entities. Thus, *eidōs*, as transcendent, is

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does, and which is the art of the craftsman. MacIntyre also refers to Plato’s *techne* as being different from the sophist who merely uses a technique to arrive at an end rather than contemplate the *arche*; *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* p. 70.

<sup>107</sup> Cf. Roochnik, *Of Art and Wisdom*, p. 206.

<sup>108</sup> Nussbaum’s chapter ‘Saving Aristotle’s Appearances’ [pp. 240-63] in *The Fragility of Goodness* looks at Aristotle in contradistinction to Plato’s distrust of the appearance of things. She summarises this interpretation well: ‘Plato, too, [along with Parmenides] repudiates perception and belief altogether, as “mired” in the “barbaric mud” of the human point of view. Aristotle, answering them, promises to work within and to defend a method that is thoroughly committed to the data of human experience and accepts these as its limits’ (p. 245). In the next part of this section, I attempt some mediation between the transcendence of the form and its immanent manifestation as a something. In this way, I am giving a more ontological reading of Plato that anticipates the next chapter which is not unprecedented. See Adriaan Pepperzak, ‘Heidegger and Plato’s Idea of the Good’, *Reading Heidegger*, pp. 258-85 and Gail Fine, ‘Knowledge and Belief in *Republic* 5-7’, *Plato 1: Metaphysics and Epistemology*, pp. 215-46.

pure possibility of what can take expression in being, or from the human point of view, what is being expressed in being. Hence, the essential make of the *eidōs* is one we can never traverse without lived experience, and in this way is, as Ricoeur says, 'too lived to be known'.<sup>109</sup>

Yet, at the same time, there is a problem: if this is so then this unity remains non-relational, for it remains forever transcendent in its essential realm, or 'beyond the sensibles'.<sup>110</sup> To contravene this criticism one should bear in mind that the second aspect of the *eidōs* is its existential correlation by which its essence is engendered according to a specific *morphe*. A thing's essence is not separate from the existential but completed by it. Hence, Aristotle remarks that 'A thing's essence is "what it *was for it to be*" (*to ti en einai*)'.<sup>111</sup> Here, the 'was for it to be' designates the potentiality of what it was that is now only actual because "it is" in being, i.e., existence.

With human work, the essential *eidōs* is given a specific "look" according to the craftsman's understanding of how one is to use a particular thing, or one can say that the craftsman's apprehension of a thing's *eidōs* is co-emergent with the thing's use. In craftsmanship, use gives form (*morphe*) to form (*eidōs*). This is because it is use that governs the *techne* of the craftsman; it determines the definition of a thing, its features, qualities, and subsequently the measure by which a thing can be deemed excellent or not. Vernant observes,

When considering a product, the ancient Greeks were less concerned with the process of manufacture, the *poiesis*, than with the *use* to which the article was to be put, the *chresis*. And, for each piece of work, it is this *chresis* that defines the *eidōs* that the worker embodies in matter.<sup>112</sup>

This means that the *eidōs* of something like a house has its essential nature prior to reflective recognition, or in what Dupré referred to earlier as 'the primordial, formative event'. Its existential reality, on the other hand, occurs by virtue of this pre-reflective form which is interpreted and related by human *techne* to a real use. The relation of the essential *eidōs* to its actual existence in being is defined by a

<sup>109</sup> As quoted earlier in chapter II.

<sup>110</sup> Giovanni Reale, *The Concept of First Philosophy and the Unity of the Metaphysics of Aristotle*, p. 26.

<sup>111</sup> Dupré summarising Aristotle, *The Passage to Modernity*, p. 26.

<sup>112</sup> *Myth and Thought among the Greeks*, p. 261. My italics. Cf. Van Johnson, 'Aristotle's Theory of Value', *The American Journal of Philology*, 60:4 (1939), pp. 447-8.

reciprocal bond where the *eidōs* is that which the human being must produce in an appropriate way.<sup>113</sup> Furthermore, this bond is characterised by a divine justice where the human being must respond in measure to the order of things; this, of course, is the heart of virtuous living that extends to every aspect of human existence. (We will look at this later in relation to Heidegger's understanding of use in Anaximander's fragment.) In attempting to see the correspondence between human production and the divine order in which the *eidōs* emerges, one must remember the radicality of the Greek understanding of the divine nature of the cosmos as immanent. 'The Greeks are not, therefore, zealots of the fantastic,' writes Jean Beaufret, 'but those to which everything, including the gods, has the nature of being manifest. In this way they are men of manifestation or appearing, which they think in its plenitude'.<sup>114</sup> Thus, the movement in being—i.e., human use—expresses the movement of this order (the cosmos is eternity in motion).<sup>115</sup>

Given this account of *eidōs* in the activity of *poiesis*, one can see that the knowledge (*technē*) involved in work is bound up with an apprehension of the divine cosmos and how things fashioned by human work might exist in harmony with this order. In relation to temporal movement, it appears that the apprehension of *eidōs* by *technē* is one of *energeia* since *technē* con-forms to the *eidōs* of what is to be made. Ricoeur sees this relation in terms of a correspondence *technē* bears to *phronesis*, where the nature of technical processes is related in some way to a larger project of understanding defined as the ethical. Ricoeur notes *technē* is method that borders on speculation and routine.<sup>116</sup> Far from a break with the divine, I am suggesting that *poiesis* is rooted in the divine harmony of the cosmos by virtue of this concern. Where *poiesis* faces its resistance is in the obstacle of actualising the product, or what is most properly kinetic. However, this resistance is not a nodal point separate from the ethical concern, and so by way of situating the kinetic process of production within the larger project of ethical understanding that asks "how to live?", *poiesis* itself becomes part of the good life that realises its end in doing it. To fashion an

<sup>113</sup> Cf. Vernant, *Myth and Thought among the Greeks*, p. 254.

<sup>114</sup> *Dialogue with Heidegger*, p. 101.

<sup>115</sup> Plato, *Timaeus*, 37d; Aristotle, *Physics* VIII.6.

<sup>116</sup> *The Rule of Metaphor*, p. 31.



artefact harmonious with the cosmos is not a contingent affair but an act directly affirmative of the divine itself. Thus, the gap between eidetic apprehension and actualisation is not a deficiency but alights upon the hermeneutic exigency that calls human beings to more fully participate in the cosmic harmony through their own unique capacity to let things appear through *poiesis*. In turning to use (*chresis*), we will see a complimentary exigency in terms of how human beings interpret how to use things in order to actualise the good life.

*b) chresis and human participation*

Human use is intimately tied to the affirmation of the order of the *polis*, which is evident in the way in which what is “marked out” (*dike*) by the *polis* is there specifically for the mediation of human relations and activities that are subsequently subject to the measure of virtuous living and justice (*dikaiosune*).<sup>117</sup> The modern notion of utility for utility’s sake is foreign to the Greek conception of virtue. As Aristotle remarks, retail trade is not intrinsic to the making of things in general; nor is *techne* tied to the accumulation of wealth.<sup>118</sup> A shoe is not made to be an object of barter, nor is the accumulation of wealth meant to exceed simple means.<sup>119</sup> Today, the shoe is made for success of its mass production, and only then, for walking.<sup>120</sup> Both Arendt and Vernant refer to how the modern understanding of the division of labour in order to increase efficiency is entirely absent from the ancient Greek understanding.<sup>121</sup> Division of labour to the Greeks concerned how the performance of tasks could be done more excellently (*arete*) and not efficiently.

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<sup>117</sup> MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* p. 97; cf. Elizabeth Belfiore on Plato’s conception of *arete* depending on use; ‘A Theory of Imitation in Plato’s *Republic*’, *Transactions of the American Philological Association*, 114 (1984), p. 144.

<sup>118</sup> Weber argues that this is also generally the case for human nature in his analysis of the effectiveness of piece-rates in agriculture; *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, pp. 59-60.

<sup>119</sup> *Politics*, 1257a.

<sup>120</sup> One need only consider how mass production emphasises not durability, which would be one quality related to the usefulness of a thing, but disposability. It therefore often costs more to repair an item than replace it. The *eidos* of the shoe for walking (over a lifetime) is qualitatively different from the *eidos* of a shoe meant for profit according to mass production (although this need not necessarily be the case but only as it stands for the most part today). One can in fact say, as I suggest above, that in the latter case the notion of efficiency stands in front of and conceals the *eidos*.

<sup>121</sup> See, for example, Plato’s *Republic* (374) in which he discusses how a shoemaker should be allowed to perform no other duty so that he may best fulfill his craft of shoemaking. Rather than seeing this as a form of “social determinism” one must see the manner in which Plato understands the division of labor according to making things most excellently rather than efficiently for profit. Compare also to the

Nussbaum highlights the Greek understanding of use over-against the practice of mere utility within a *technē*:

There are, first, the clearly productive *technai* such as shoemaking and housebuilding, where the product can indeed be specified (and desired) apart from what makes shoemaking *artful* and *good*, rather than merely adequate, may not be specifiable in advance: for once the art exists, its own activities – fine stitching, elegant ornamentation – tend to become ends in themselves. The Greeks recognized this from the time of Homer. Achilles did not value his shield simply because it served well the requirements he could have set down antecedently. It is an example of high *technē* just because the craftsman has done so much more than Achilles' untutored imagination could have conceived or requested.<sup>122</sup>

This heightened understanding of use is supported by Xenophon, Plato and Aristotle who employ the word *ergon* (function) in a specialised sense according to the realisation of supra-practical meaning—i.e., excellence (virtue). Xenophon in *Memorabilia*,<sup>123</sup> for example, refers to use in comparing a craftsman to a just citizen, a deliberate relation of making to just living. Plato identifies similar meanings of a work's usefulness in *Cratylus* (390d) where the work of a carpenter is compared to the work of a lawgiver [*nomothetou de ge, hos eoiken*] who gives names to things according to their nature.<sup>124</sup> Aristotle speaks of the excellence of a thing as the right performance of a specific function in *Nicomachean Ethics* I.7.14. But perhaps most provocative is a passage from the *Eudemian Ethics* where Aristotle distinguishes between different types of *erga*:

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*Republic*, lines 370: '... we must infer that all things are produced more plentifully and easily and of a better quality when one man does one thing which is natural to him and does it at the right time, and leaves other things.' The Classical division of labor is seen to be not only to be more excellent but also more plentiful and easy. This must be contrasted with the modern notion of productivity, for what Plato refers to is in relation to the life in which one lives temperately. See also *Laws* (viii, 856d-e). See also Xenophon's *Cyropaedia* (8.2.5) and comments supporting my argument in Jules Toutain's *The Economic Life of the Ancient World*, pp. 52-53, 57, and M.I. Finely's *The Ancient Economy*, p. 135. For a detailed look at the relation of virtue (*arete*) to Classical social structure, see MacIntyre's *After Virtue*, pp. 121-30. For the prominence of excellence over efficiency, see Vernant, *Myth and Thought among the Greeks*, p. 258 and Arendt, *The Human Condition*, pp. 47-48, 38n.

<sup>122</sup> *The Fragility of Goodness*, p. 98.

<sup>123</sup> 4.2.12.

<sup>124</sup> See also *Statesman* (288e), *Republic* (335d, 352e, 537d), and *Laws* (916d-e). To be sure, the crafts and the art of governance are not the same with regard to function. Plato refers to how the crafts produce while governance preserves that which has been produced; *Statesman* 288e. Aristotle refers to the intellectual virtues *sophia* and *phronesis* as producing in a special way different from *technē*: they exercise the happiness that is in themselves; *NE* 1144a1-7.

But the term “work” has two meanings; for some things have a work that is something different from the employment of them, for instance the work of architecture is a house, not the act of building, that of medicine health, not the process of healing or curing, whereas with other things their work is the process of using them, for instance the work of sight is the act of seeing, that of mathematical science the contemplation of mathematical truths. So it follows that with the things whose work is the employment of them, the act of employing them must be of more value than the state of possessing them.<sup>125</sup>

Aristotle refers to one mode of work as that which enacts the very aim (*telos*) for which something exists, such as the capacity to see. This activity is *energeia*, as discussed previously, where the act of its doing is, in fact, its actuality. It has worth in its ‘employment’ or usage as opposed to its possession. The other mode of work concerns *poiesis*—e.g., the act of building a house—that is derived from *techne*, or the expert knowledge of how to do something. Here, the virtue of the thing made is not only as it stands in its finished form (*telos*)—e.g., the house as a house—but also in its being possessed. While this distinction would appear to be a demarcation between the two kinds of work, the ability to possess the later kind of work implies a subsequent using, or employment. So while such things do not have a direct meaning in relation to use, they potentially do.<sup>126</sup> Here and to recall my argument for broadening the notion of *poiesis*, I am saying that even the other forms of *erga* that Aristotle distinguishes as not being *energeia* are hermeneutically incorporated into the *energeia* of *praxis* through use.

In this respect, let us note that virtue (or the good of a thing) is crucial for Aristotle:

And the work of each thing is its End (*telos*); from this, therefore, it is plain that the work is a greater good than the state, for the End is the best as being

<sup>125</sup> 1219a13-19. Translations taken from the H. Rackman version.

<sup>126</sup> Anticipating the next chapter on Heidegger’s ontologisation of the Greek concepts, my interpretation of Aristotle’s inclusion of use goes against the conventional understanding that Heidegger critiques the Platonic and Aristotelian thinking as being too reliant on “productionist metaphysics”, that is, metaphysics that does not understand the completed thing (*ergon*) in any relation outside its present standing (or what would later be *res*); see, for example, Charles Spinosa, ‘Derrida and Heidegger: Iterability and Ereignis’, *Heidegger: A Critical Reader*, p. 276 and Michael Zimmerman, *Heidegger’s Confrontation with Modernity*, pp. 222-37. I believe my account of Aristotle here and my interpretation of Heidegger in the next chapter will show a more amenable relationship between the Platonic-Aristotelian tradition and Heidegger; that, in fact, Heidegger was not critiquing but appropriating the tradition.

an End, since the greatest good is assumed as an End and as the ultimate object for the sake of which all the other things exist.<sup>127</sup>

And later: 'so if there is such a thing as shoemaking goodness and a good shoemaker, their work is a good shoe'.<sup>128</sup> This relation shows that the virtue of a produced thing is not simply present in its final form, nor in its being possessed, but in its being used.<sup>129</sup> Because use always lies in potential according to a person's intention (that arises in response to a specific situation in existence), use is reliant upon the manner of dedication that determines how an action is to be performed. Or, as Aristotle comments later,

For we think that to do well and live well are the same as to be happy; but each of these, both life and action, is employment (*chresis*) and activity, inasmuch as active life involves employing things--the coppersmith makes a bridle, but the horseman uses it.<sup>130</sup>

This emphasis on use is precisely what potentially relates human work to virtuous living—that is to say, the potential use also potentially relates *poiesis* to the larger field of *praxis*. Thus, the use of things participates in the total enactment of the good life (*eudaimonia*). In this sense, the use of things is not reducible to a *techne*, such as house-building; rather it is ultimately related to *phronesis* which deals with the particular concerns of how to act on a daily basis.<sup>131</sup> With *phronesis* an understanding of use is never finally achieved (like a *techne*, or science, of utility), but is reinterpreted according to unique situations that arise in day-to-day existence. If this is so, then this forms the crux of the reversal of utilitarian principles since utilitarianism, by definition, conforms human use and engagement to a *techne* of what is "utile", or what we noted earlier as technical rationality that posits aims according to its system of internal operations.<sup>132</sup> According to the Greek notion of use, a complete life is one whose nobility extends or permeates each aspect of

<sup>127</sup> *Eudemian Ethics*, 1219a6-12.

<sup>128</sup> *Eudemian Ethics*, 1219a21-23.

<sup>129</sup> Cf. Plato, *Republic*, X.601d and Roochnik, *Of Art and Wisdom*, p. 31, 97 & 164.

<sup>130</sup> *Eudemian Ethics*, 1219b1ff.

<sup>131</sup> NE 1096a28; cf. Nussbaum, *The Fragility of Goodness*, pp. 290-3, Gadamer, *The Idea of the Good in Platonic-Aristotelian Philosophy*, p. 140 & 161 and Roochnik, *Of Art and Wisdom*, pp. 90 & 97 n7.

<sup>132</sup> Cf. Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, pp. 320-1 and Sinclair, *Heidegger, Aristotle and the Work of Art*, pp. 162-3.

existence encountered or touched upon by human dwelling.<sup>133</sup> Use is therefore no mere handling of things but constitutes the mediative heart by which work and the things produced by work are linked to the highest of human aspirations in the good life. In short, use is hermeneutical.

To conclude, it is through human use that *poiesis* is enlarged beyond mere tasks and production to include the question of living virtuously (*eudaimonia*).<sup>134</sup> The relation of *poiesis* to *praxis* and *theoria* is a hermeneutical road whose path is one that must be travelled in order to be actual. *Poiesis* is therefore not by default related to *praxis* but requires its activation in use which ultimately provokes the reflection on reality, or what I referred to in the previous chapter as the figurative function of work. This recalls Roche's argument that 'the good' of human being is in 'use (*chresis*) and activity (*energeia*)'.<sup>135</sup> *Poiesis*, *praxis* and *theoria* are thus unified but only by means of the total comportment towards the good that bridges, on the one hand, the concern for metaphysical principles and, on the other hand, contingent or existential events that must be lived through in order for one to live well. Work itself, as the activity that produces, is not a necessary and servile task but a manner of making manifest or bringing forth a greater participation in the order and divinity of the cosmos. This is an inversion of the utilitarian thesis I have thus far been challenging, for it places the onus of use within a reflection on higher principles commensurate with the inherent ordering of the cosmos. In the next chapter, I will undertake an ontologisation of this Greek correlation in which the higher principles of metaphysics are translated into Heidegger's notions of horizontal and utmost ontological potentialities, or pure possibility. Thus, the "for the sake of something" of production is related ontologically to the 'for-sake-of-which' of being.

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<sup>133</sup> Nussbaum, *The Fragility of Goodness*, pp. 293-4, referring to the difference between Aristotle and Plato on the intrinsic goodness of things in relation to the good life. While she maintains that Plato seeks the goodness of things apart from any context or relativity, this difference does not affect my argument insofar as use is applicable in both a context-specific sense or in looking for universal applicability. In either case, use still relates to the existential involvement in reality itself. Also compare MacIntyre's distinction between 'fact' in Aristotle (which conforms to a hierarchy of human goods) and in utilitarianism (which sets out to make facts 'value-free'); *After Virtue*, p. 84.

<sup>134</sup> Milbank notes that *poiesis*, as poetical representation, figures ethical behaviour, e.g., the imitation of heroic virtues in the Homeric epics; 'A Christological Poetics', *The Word Made Strange*, p. 129.

<sup>135</sup> Roche, 'Ergon and Eudaimonia in Nicomachean Ethics I', p. 180. Cf. Beaufret when commenting, 'To become by means of science "masters and possessors of nature" was a program quite foreign to Greek philosophy'; *Dialogues with Heidegger*, p. 12.

### An Interpretation of the Myth of Hephaestus

In this last section I would like to consider a reinterpretation of the myth of Hephaestus according to the reading of the ancient Greek understanding of work that I have offered above.<sup>136</sup> As I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, this section attempts to show that my interpretation is not merely a philosophical re-rendering of sources but one that appears wholly consistent with the *muthos* that underlies the ancient cosmology.

I would like to focus on one specific aspect of the god, namely, his disability which has been often thought to be a limp or club foot. While this aspect has generally been interpreted as an indication of the ancient Greek attitude towards disability in general (i.e., disdain),<sup>137</sup> I would like to reinterpret the significance of his crippled leg as disclosing a dual aspect of the nature of work itself that is consistent to the thesis I have put forth: namely, that Hephaestus' disability refers to the possibility of work as being "crippled", or lame, when it is left to itself or by itself, but also and to the contrary, as a divine mode of "bringing forth" whose form is in accord with the divine itself.<sup>138</sup>

Let us take the first part of my thesis. When work is understood to respond unilaterally to necessity, or the requirements of survival and metabolism,<sup>139</sup> it is reduced to necessity. This limitation of work is present in Plato's notion that the one who cannot master the requirements of necessity (*penia*) is forced to labour

<sup>136</sup> For a consideration of the varying interpretations of the myth and its numerous narratives, see Robert Garland, *The Eye of the Beholder: Deformity and Disability in the Graeco-Roman World*, pp. 61-3.

<sup>137</sup> See, for example, Nicholas Vlahogiannis, 'Disabling Bodies', *Changing Bodies, Changing Meanings: Studies on the Human Body in Antiquity*, p. 23; Garland notes M. Delcourt's interpretation of the god's lameness as one of being compensated for by his divine *techne* [*Héphaistos ou la légende du magicien, Bibliothèque de Philosophie et Lettres de l'Université de Liège*, fasc. 156, Paris, pp. 121-8] and M. Detienne and J.P. Vernant's interpretation of the god's club foot as a symbol of his *metis*, i.e., his wisdom and intelligence [*Cunning Intelligence in Greek Culture and Society*, trans. J. Lloyd (Chicago: 1991), p. 272] in *The Eye of the Beholder*, p. 61; and Martha Rose challenges perceptions of lameness in antiquity but does not offer a reinterpretation of Hephaestus in her reference to the god; *The Staff of Oedipus: Transforming Disability in Ancient Greece*.

<sup>138</sup> A.K. Coomaraswamy takes a similar approach in seeing a dual nature of Hephaestus in his essay 'Athena and Hephaistos' [as referred to in Brian Keeble, *On the Nature & Significance of the Crafts*, p. 49]. His concern is juxtaposing the intellect and craft, thus the relation between Athena and Hephaestus. I speak of this as well, but choose to concentrate more on the significance of the god's disability.

<sup>139</sup> E.g., *Statesman*, 274c.

continuously (*ponos*).<sup>140</sup> And as we can see from my reference to Aristotle above, this manner of work would be tantamount to the lack of intelligent perception that sees the possibility of another mode of participation that would be in accord with human virtue. One can also note that such a manner of being is equivalent to the slave (*doulos*) who does not rule from the *arche*, or principal, of what it is to act in a reasonable way.<sup>141</sup>

Hephaestus's disability, nonetheless, is not a detrimental and non-negotiable lack but rather is the means by which things of a great and extraordinary nature can arise. It is when Hephaestus cleaves open the head of Zeus that Athena is born and hence the other crafts: war, weaving, and olive cultivation.<sup>142</sup> In addition, Hephaestus renders divine weapons, tools and artefacts that no other god can equal—e.g., the throne he designed to ensnare Hera, the web that caught Ares and Aphrodite, and so on. Furthermore, Hephaestus is often identified with fire which occupies a similar dual role insofar as fire can be 'destructive' and 'profane' or 'beneficial' and 'sacred'.<sup>143</sup> But perhaps most illuminating is the god's marriage to one of the Graces, Aglaea, whose name means "splendor".<sup>144</sup> This union with grace suggests that when craft is wed to the charity, or givenness, of the cosmos, it comes into a proper relationship whereby *techne* achieves a kind of making (*poiesis*) that articulates, or re-forms, reality in a more elaborate and harmonic manner. That is to say, the function of work is not simply to respond to necessity but render the superabundant givenness of *phusis* according to reason and harmony, or what is encapsulated in the single Greek concept of *form*.

Work thereby gives greater expression of the unity of the cosmos according to its differentiation in the works it produces. This harmony is suggested in how Hephaestus is not only the brother of Athena but is coupled with her. That is to say,

<sup>140</sup> Arendt, *The Human Condition*, p. 110 n56.

<sup>141</sup> Arendt, *The Human Condition*, pp. 222-3. Cf. Russell Bentley, 'Loving Freedom: Aristotle on Slavery and the Good Life', *Political Studies* (1999), XLVII, pp. 100-113, wherein shows that slavery for Aristotle was centered on the lack of "noble desire" to live according to the good life.

<sup>142</sup> Roochnik, *Of Art and Wisdom*, pp. 22-3.

<sup>143</sup> G.S. Kirk, *The Nature of Greek Myths*, p. 86. Cf. Pindar, *Pythians* 3. Roochnik points out that *techne* is often associated with *deinon*, or the quality of being both wonderful and terrible; *Of Art and Wisdom*, p. 58.

<sup>144</sup> Hesiod, *Theogony*, II.945-6. Cf. Hephaestus's connection to *charis* (grace or beauty) in Homer's *Odyssey*, VI.234-7.



craft requires its coupling with wisdom.<sup>145</sup> This relation is refined, as I have argued, by Aristotle who does not absolutely separate *theoria* and *praxis* from *poiesis*. Finally, one should not forget that the etymology of the god's name [from *phaeos istora*],<sup>146</sup> which relates to a shining forth, can be primordially tied to the shining forth of forms in the phenomenon of *phusis*. One can juxtapose the "shining forth" of the natural *phusis* to the "bringing forth" of the human *techné*, not as enemies or strangers to one another, but as reciprocal interlocutors. Work in this sense constitutes "the stuff" of the narrative of the human journey to achieve the good.

This double meaning of the god does not suggest that the latter, divine significance wholly transcends the former, mundane one. Because work is an activity placed within the toil of existence as such, the double meaning refers to a tension by which the latter meaning can only be realised in living through the first. Thus, while Aphrodite rejects Hephaestus when taking Ares as her lover,<sup>147</sup> we find still that the nature of work is only possible according to Love itself. That is to say, work can never attain a complete union with Love but is always moving towards it, is drawn forth in its making by its gaze. One finds in Plato's *Symposium* that Aristophanes refers to Hephaestus as the one who can join lovers in harmony, not as such, but only in and through work: 'Do you desire to be wholly one? for if this is what you desire, I am ready to melt you into one and let you grow together'.<sup>148</sup> Furthermore, it is in this same vein that necessity [*ananke*] is appropriated to a higher principle since human work is lifted to a form of love or adoration. Agathon states just after speaking of Hephaestus' craft as being guided by Love: 'dreadful deeds were done among the gods, for they were ruled by Necessity; but now since the birth of Love, and from the Love of the beautiful, has sprung every good in heaven and earth'.<sup>149</sup> This bears a great relation to the myth of Necessity in *Timaeus* where Reason persuades Necessity to 'bring the greater part of created things to perfection'.<sup>150</sup> Necessity is more than brute conditions or basic ground rules for the

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<sup>145</sup> *Laws II*, 920e.

<sup>146</sup> See Socrates's explanation of the god's name in *Cratylus*, 407.

<sup>147</sup> *The Odyssey* 8.308-12.

<sup>148</sup> 192c.

<sup>149</sup> 197b.

<sup>150</sup> 48a; cf. Gadamer, *Dialogue and Dialectic*, pp. 171-2.

Greek thinking; it refers to an order and exigency by which greater things occur, both physically and contemplatively. This exigency, for the Greeks, revolves around the realisation of the good life (*eudaimonia*). Thus, as Nussbaum points out, even what appear at first glance to be 'value-neutral' processes are ultimately comprehended by us in terms of what fits into the understanding of what is good.<sup>151</sup>

The next chapter includes what is in fact a more radical determination of the unity of work and reflection insofar as we will see how Heidegger appropriates the Greek concepts discussed above according to his fundamental ontology. As I have mentioned before, this appropriation allows me to unify the relationship between *theoria*, *praxis* and *poiesis* according to the question of being. This, in turn, allows for a contemporary reinterpretation of the domain of work, beyond necessity and towards the concerns of human use and thanking that will be the theme of Chapter X.

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<sup>151</sup> *The Fragility of Goodness*, p. 321.

## IX Ontologisation of the Greek Concepts

Death is the mother of beauty; hence from her,  
Alone, shall come fulfillment to our dreams  
And our desires.

-Wallace Stevens, *Sunday Morning*

Ontologisation refers to the centrality given by Heidegger to Dasein and its mode of being described as *understanding*.<sup>1</sup> This understanding is constituted by a reflection of Dasein's ownmost potentialities in view of finitude. To recall my analysis in Chapter VI on ontological disproportion, it is because of this mode of understanding that anticipates finitude that Dasein is the being who 'opens' being in terms of its ability to think difference.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, this allows Dasein a reflective transcendence according to which it can interpret finitude beyond its biological limitation. Ontologisation is therefore the grounding of concepts in this ontology of finitude to the point where such concepts have their 'authentic' meaning only when related to it.<sup>3</sup> Hence, Heidegger's descriptions of 'authentic' and 'inauthentic' describe the manner in which Dasein can think being in relation to finitude or not, that is, whether it is resolute or distracted in thinking being.<sup>4</sup>

With reference to the ancient Greek concepts discussed in the previous chapter, ontologisation refers to the significance of theoretical, practical and poetical activities as they figure in an understanding of being and finitude. They have their authenticity when interpreted according to the project of self-understanding that attempts to reflectively transcend its finite limits. My argument will be set forth in four sections. First, I will look at the role of finitude in Aristotle and how Heidegger

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<sup>1</sup> See especially Heidegger, *Being and Time*, H12 and his commentary in the footnote; cf. Richard J. Bernstein, 'From Hermeneutics to Praxis', *Hermeneutics and Praxis*, p. 274. The term 'ontologization' is used by Franco Volpi in *Being and Time: A "Translation" of Nicomachean Ethics? Reading Heidegger from the Start*, pp. 195-211.

<sup>2</sup> 'The Principle of Identity', *Identity and Difference*, p. 31.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Volpi, *Being and Time: A "Translation" of Nicomachean Ethics? Reading Heidegger from the Start*, p. 201.

<sup>4</sup> Taminaux, 'The Origin of "The Origin of the Work of Art"', *Reading Heidegger*, p. 394. Cf. Werner Marx, *Is There a Measure on Earth?*, p. 5.

expands and appropriates Aristotle's thinking according to his own. Second, I will look in detail at how *praxis* is the central activity of Dasein since it is what Heidegger understands as comportment towards the possibility of being. Third, the debate concerning Heidegger's relation to Aristotle will be necessary to address in order to show how I critically assimilate key concepts in my argument. Finally, the crux of this chapter sets out to show how *theoria-praxis-poiesis* form a hermeneutical unity, by which I mean a unity that is not static but demands an interpretive participation of the human subject in order for its unity to be sustained. In this regard, this last section aims to develop the Greek concepts so that in the next chapter we can see how *use* has at its core a supra-necessary meaning—i.e., meaning not confined to technical means and ends—and therefore involves an ontological responsibility that I will describe as *thinking*.

To be sure, the last chapter anticipated this ontologisation to the extent that I relied upon a synthesis of *theoria-praxis-poiesis* in the whole movement of a human life, that is, a hermeneutical interpretation of what one's life means. To recall Ricoeur: 'it is in unending work of interpretation applied to action and to oneself that we pursue the search for adequation between what seems to us to be best with regard to our life as a whole and the preferential choices that govern our practices'.<sup>5</sup> The previous chapter thus indicates how I will interpret Heidegger's understanding of Aristotle, namely, that Heidegger attempts a unification of *theoria-praxis-poiesis* through hermeneutics. Because *theoria-praxis-poiesis* refer to three modes of disclosing truth (*aletheuein*),<sup>6</sup> this places Dasein at the centre of the unification where its mode of being is a bringing together of the three; in Dasein's act of interpretation is the synthesis of the three modes of truth. As we will see, this gives to *praxis* a mediating role since it is through *praxis* that Dasein encounters the immediacy of its thrownness in the world and therefore its ownmost possibilities against the horizon of

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<sup>5</sup> *Oneself as Another*, p. 179.

<sup>6</sup> In *Plato's Sophist*, Heidegger actually refers to five modes, adding *episteme* and *nous* (pp.15-16). But the five modes are by no means a concrete categorisation. In his subsequent discussion of them he shows how *nous* is present in all four modes while *episteme* is a formal way of knowing truth that corresponds to *theoria* (pp. 15-27). Thus, the *theoria-praxis-poiesis* relation is more internally cohesive than the other two modes.

finitude. Or indeed as Franco Volpi concludes: *Dasein is praxis*.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, the importance given to *praxis* by Heidegger is not a dismissal of *theoria*, that for the Greeks was the highest mode of being; rather, Heidegger's rethinking of the role of *theoria* as being grounded in *praxis* follows his project of retrieving the question of the meaning of being [*Seinsfrage*] according to the specific historical-philosophical necessities dictated by the contemporary age. The meaning of *Dasein* that Heidegger says has been concealed is co-emergent with the distortion of *theoria*, and this can be corrected, as I argue Heidegger poses, by a reconsideration of *Dasein*'s fundamental reliance on *praxis* as its most basic mode of comportment. Hence, the centrality of *praxis* in Heidegger results in the restoration and not the usurpation of *theoria*.

This is not to say, however, that scholarship on Heidegger is agreed that what I have presented above is an accurate understanding of his relation to Aristotle. Although much of the Heideggerian scholarship in this field parallels my own thesis, there are problems and ambiguities that arise in trying to understand the unity of *theoria-praxis-poesis*. I will not go into any detail here but leave the particulars of the debate to the body of the chapter. I should say, nonetheless, that my interpretation of Heidegger's understanding of Aristotle is an amalgam of others. The nuances of my approach will hopefully be shown in this chapter as I mediate between the various commentators—i.e., Gadamer, Jacques Taminiaux, Volpi, Ted Sadler, Catriona Hanley and Mark Sinclair to name the most prominent.<sup>8</sup> But it is helpful to give a brief summary of my relation to these scholars.

My argument in this chapter contends that Heidegger relies on the finite constitution of being as the central motif by which the Greek concepts are ontologised. Volpi presents this argument within the general pretext that *Being and Time* is a destructive retrieve of *Nicomachean Ethics*. *Praxis*, which is activity whose end is in-itself, is equated with Heidegger's notion of comportment towards finitude. The connection Heidegger draws is based upon the 'for-the-sake-of' involved in

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<sup>7</sup> *Being and Time: A "Translation" of the Nicomachean Ethics?* *Reading Heidegger from the Start*, pp. 202-3.

<sup>8</sup> Key texts, respectively: *The Idea of the Good in Platonic-Aristotelian Philosophy, Heidegger and the Project of Fundamental Ontology*, *Being and Time: A "Translation" of the Nicomachean Ethics?* *Reading Heidegger from the Start: Essays in His Earliest Thought*, *Heidegger and Aristotle: The Question of Being and Being and God in Aristotle and Heidegger*.

ontological comportment which figures in Aristotle as the *arche* and *telos* of *praxis*.<sup>9</sup> I will analyse Volpi's argument against claims of those opposed to a "friendly" relation between Heidegger and Aristotle, i.e., Ted Sadler who gives the most comprehensive rejection of Volpi's position to my knowledge. My critique of Sadler will be supported by Mark Sinclair's study of Aristotle and Heidegger to some degree. Following from this, Volpi's argument will be extended beyond his original argument, vis-a-vis Catriona Hanley's work, in order to disclose the unity of *theoria* and *poiesis* that emerges through *praxis*, that is, the unity of theoretical reflection and poetical activity that emerges through the human concern for being in face of finitude. It is in this sense that I will speak of 'the hermeneutical unity of *theoria-praxis-poiesis*'.<sup>10</sup>

### Aristotle and Finitude

Heidegger's relation to Aristotle, and indeed like his relation to most thinkers to whom he devotes a great deal of thought, is a complex affair. It is misleading to assume Heidegger was "for" or "against" a thinker. Such an assumption not only contradicts Heidegger's peculiar hermeneutical approach that attempts to rethink the past in relation to the present, but it also disregards the kind of 'piety of thinking'<sup>11</sup> Heidegger sees as guiding the process of interpretation. In this piety there is a confrontation with an *aporia*, or philosophical impasse, that requires a new orientation to the questions inherited through the history of philosophy.<sup>12</sup> To begin to respond to past thinkers presupposes that one has arrived at an adequate understanding of the questions posed by such antecedent thinkers, and so one finds

<sup>9</sup> In Aristotle *hou heneka*; in Heidegger *das Umwillen*; Peperzak, *Heidegger and Plato's Idea of the Good*, *Reading Heidegger*, p. 260.

<sup>10</sup> Gadamer speaks similarly of 'hermeneutics as a theoretical and practical task' but does so more generally with regard to science; *Reason in the Age of Science*, pp. 113-38. Hanley also refers to hermeneutics as the means by which Heidegger shifts away from *theoria* alone and towards a more participatory understanding in *praxis*; *Being and God in Aristotle and Heidegger*, p. 120. Dupré speaks more generally of the unity; *Passage to Modernity*, p. 75.

<sup>11</sup> *Die Frömmigkeit des Denkens*; Heidegger, *The Piety of Thinking*, p. 167; commentary by the translators James G. Hart and John C. Maraldo.

<sup>12</sup> E.g., *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, p. 233. See also, Heidegger, 'Phenomenological Interpretations with Respect to Aristotle: Indication of the Hermeneutical Situation', *Man and World*, 25 (1992), p. 360: 'To understand means not simply to accept established knowledge, but rather to repeat primordially that which is understood in terms of its own situation and for that situation' (*Italics* in original).

in Heidegger's lectures lengthy preparations before even tackling a thinker directly.<sup>13</sup> In this respect, Heidegger sees the task of interpreting a thinker as an act that is undertaken in view of a philosophical necessity that arises within a development (or destining) of historical circumstances:

Plato's thinking is no more perfect than Parmenides'. Hegel's philosophy is no more perfect than Kant's. Each epoch of philosophy has its own necessity'<sup>14</sup>

More technically, this refers to Heidegger's notion of *appropriation*, of which he says:

To appropriate a past means to come to know oneself as indebted to that past. The authentic possibility *to be* history itself resides in this, that philosophy discovers it is guilty of an omission, a neglect, if it believes it can begin anew.<sup>15</sup>

And elsewhere:

The situation of the interpretation, of the understanding appropriation of the past, is always the situation of the living present. . . .The past opens itself only according to the resoluteness and force of the ability-to-lay-open which a present has available to it.<sup>16</sup>

The illusion of beginning anew marks the failure of adequately understanding the questions posed by past thinkers. The indebtedness of philosophical study resides for Heidegger in moving back through what is most familiar in one's own age to that which is least understood in the thinking of another. This manner of approaching philosophy occurs as early as 1922 when he contrasts Aristotle to the immediate context of its Neo-Kantian interpretation (i.e., by Nicolai Hartmann):

The polemically negative attitude of Neo-Kantianism in relation to Aristotle had fallen victim to the erroneous presupposition that Aristotle has anything

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<sup>13</sup> E.g., Heidegger's *Phenomenological Interpretations of Aristotle: Initiations into Phenomenological Research* is a preparatory series of lectures leading up to the investigation of Aristotle. It deals with an understanding of phenomenology and the contemporary distortions of Aristotle and rarely refers to Aristotle works as such.

<sup>14</sup> Heidegger, 'The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking', *Basic Writings*, p. 433.

<sup>15</sup> *Plato's Sophist*, p. 7. Cf. Richard J. Bernstein, 'From Hermeneutics to Praxis', *Hermeneutics and Praxis*, pp. 273 & 276.

<sup>16</sup> 'Phenomenological Interpretations with Respect to Aristotle: Indication of the Hermeneutical Situation', *Man and World*, 25 (1992), p. 358. This passage is prior to the 1922 *Sophist* lectures and should also not be confused with *Phenomenological Interpretations of Aristotle: Initiations into Phenomenological Research* (1921-22, cited below) which precedes this essay.



to do at all with the Middle Ages or with Kant. In fact, just the opposite is the case. It will have to be said, however, that these effective nexuses, decisive for the history of the spirit and more pressing for the present spiritual situation than is commonly thought, have not yet been grasped in their basic lineaments. And what is lacking for that task is the decisive posing of the problem.<sup>17</sup>

If Heidegger's position were as simple as a critique of Aristotle, such a lengthy preparatory phase of thinking would not be necessary. Heidegger's comments must therefore be seen not as a dismissal but as a "thinking with Aristotle" in order to address key problems Heidegger identifies in the historical destining of the oblivion of being (i.e., the forgetting of the *Seinsfrage*).<sup>18</sup>

Central to my thesis on ontologisation is one of Heidegger's most well-known problematics which he identifies in Aristotle's *Physics*: namely, the presentation of time as 'a sequence of nows'.<sup>19</sup> This conception of time is set against Heidegger's notion of finitude, but it remains to be seen as to how Heidegger moves from Aristotle to his own formulation, a path necessary in retracing if we are to understand the key turn Heidegger initiates in his ontologisation of the Greek concepts. Indeed, it is easy to represent Heidegger's position on Aristotle's understanding of time in terms of a critique, and this, as Sinclair has shown,<sup>20</sup> misrepresents the arduous path he takes in order to see the complexity involved in the conception of time and how it is dependent on the ancient Greek understanding of being. In *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, for example, Heidegger spends a great deal of effort reflecting on how Aristotle arrives at defining time in terms of number. He writes at one point:

*The now is not limit, but number, not peras but arithmos. Aristotle explicitly contrasts time as arithmos with peras. The limits of something, he says, are what they are only in one with being the limit. The limit of something belongs to the mode of being of the limited. This does not hold true for*

<sup>17</sup> *Phenomenological Interpretations of Aristotle: Initiations into Phenomenological Research*, p. 6; cf. 'On the Essence and Concept of Φύσις', *Pathmarks*, pp. 185-6.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. *Plato's Sophist*, p. 42 where Heidegger explains that 'it is not possible to understand *phronesis* and *sophia* under the guiding line of the Kantian distinction between practical and theoretical reason'.

<sup>19</sup> *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, p. 256; cf. Frank Schalow, 'The Kantian Schema of Heidegger's late Marburg Period', *Reading Heidegger*, p. 312. Mark Sinclair, via Derrida, argues that Heidegger's negative critique of Aristotle appears somewhat hasty since an ontological understanding of time can be found in *Physics*; Heidegger, *Aristotle and the Work of Art*, pp. 105-10.

<sup>20</sup> Heidegger, *Aristotle and the Work of Art*, pp. 98-110.

number. Number is not bound to what it numbers. Number can determine something without itself being dependent, for its part, on the intrinsic content and mode of what is counted. I can say "ten horses." Here the ten indeed determines the horses, but ten has nothing of the character of horses and their mode of being.<sup>21</sup>

The numerical identification of time with number refers to its ability to designate a now that is the same at any one instance but can also be different. The instance of one person entering the room and another person leaving the room is both the same instance yet different with respect to each person who is either entering or exiting. In this sense, time does not belong to any one entity. And therefore, it is not like limit (*peras*) where a being has its mode of presencing according to something that is set against it and is therefore bound by it: for example, the limit of the city is defined by the boundaries of the countryside; the city gathers within its limits.

The crucial moment for Heidegger is not so much this analysis and presentation of time as what results from an unreflective reception of it: 'Time is number and not limit, but as number it is at the same time able to measure that with reference to which it is number. Not only is time counted, but as counted it can itself be something that counts in the sense of a measure'.<sup>22</sup> The neutral ordering that results from time understood numerically—that is, as a sequence of nows—prohibits a grasping of how one is involved in this interpretation of time. As number, time has no inherent limit by which it can be understood; it merely designates a before and after according to its position of being the now. In other words, when time is understood in terms of its locus being the now, it defines the before and after that precedes and follows in terms of the isolated moment. It divorces one's being from a conscious recognition of being involved in an ontological world. The now pertains to the moment in which one separates oneself from a larger context of self-interpretation. The modern reliance on clock-time, which Heidegger notes is not absent from Aristotle but is presupposed by him,<sup>23</sup> epitomises this relation to the now as a series of connected moments that carries on in measured increments according to how one's daily schedule is ordered.

<sup>21</sup> *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, p. 249. Heidegger refers to Aristotle, *Physics*, IV, 11.219b10ff. *Italics* in original.

<sup>22</sup> *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, p. 250; cf. *Being and Time*, H420-1.

<sup>23</sup> *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, p. 257.

When I look at my watch I ask, for instance, how much time still remains for me until the scheduled end of the lecture. I am not searching for time as such in order to occupy myself with it . . . I am concerned to bring it to a close. In noting the time, I am trying to determine what time it is, how much time there is till nine o'clock, so as to finish this or that subject.<sup>24</sup>

While this series of moments gives the impression of duration and extension in existence, by virtue of its connectivity between moments that designate events in a schedule, it continually repels non-measurable, temporal phenomena—such as finitude. Because finitude has an ontological fullness that cannot be explained by measurement but emerges as the mode of being in which Dasein confronts its sense of an end, Heidegger equates finitude with *kairological* time, that is, the moment [*Augenblick*] in which 'Dasein, as being-in-the-world, holds and keeps its world in view'.<sup>25</sup> In contrast, when interpreting time as clock-time, one does not take note of temporality except as a series or schedule by which one enacts the day. The nature of clock-time, as it might stand in relation to other interpretations of time, does not emerge. There is a fundamental concealment operating here where the sequence of nows seems to refer us constantly to the past and future by virtue of the schedule we use to measure and give perspective to duration. However, it actually removes the ontological depth of past and future. 'Time as a continuous series of levelled now-points,' as Otto Pöggeler writes, 'knows no distinctive point of demarcation separating the future from the past'.<sup>26</sup> In this sense, clock-time lingers in unlimited duration, neutralising the very finiteness of time itself. Hence, Dasein 'forgets its own essential finitude'.<sup>27</sup>

This levelled-down conception of time, while neutralising finiteness, does not however remove the significance of finitude itself. With the question of finitude excised from the everyday encounter with time, it contrarily becomes magnified since it remains unaddressed. 'However,' writes Heidegger, 'just as one who flees death is pursued by it even as one evades it, and just as in turning away from it one

<sup>24</sup> *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, p. 258.

<sup>25</sup> Heidegger, *Kant's Thesis on Being*, p. 287, as quoted in Taminioux, *Heidegger and the Project of Fundamental Ontology*, p. 93. Cf. Ted Sadler, *Aristotle and Heidegger*, pp. 155-6, bearing in mind I will challenge his thesis that Heidegger's philosophy of *Existenz* rejects Aristotle's practical philosophy.

<sup>26</sup> 'Destruction and Moment', *Reading Heidegger*, p. 144.

<sup>27</sup> *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, p. 273.

has to see it nonetheless, the harmless endless successions of now that just runs on imposes itself "on" Dasein in a remarkable enigmatic way'.<sup>28</sup> The everyday talk of "time passing away" refers to this phenomenon though it is not initially related to the ontological depth of finitude; it merely refers to a moment that is passing and no longer within one's service. Heidegger comments on this:

In the kind of talk that emphasizes time's passing away, the *finite futurity* of the temporality of Dasein is publicly reflected. And since even in talk about time's passing away death can remain covered over, time shows itself as a passing away "in itself".<sup>29</sup>

Here is the decisive moment for Heidegger in his interpretation of Aristotle: the Aristotelian conception of time neglects to carry out the determination of time in relation to finitude. But as importantly, one must note that for Heidegger this neglect is consistent with the Greek understanding of being as 'stable presencing' (*ousia*). For the Greeks, being endures in an eternal, everlasting cosmos: 'pure being present to that which always is'.<sup>30</sup> This, in other words, is the conformation of the understanding of *bios* to *aei*—life to eternity—in which

resides the peculiar tendency of the accommodation of the temporality of human Dasein to the eternity of the world. The abiding with what is eternal, *theorien*, is not supposed to be arbitrary and occasional but is to be maintained uninterrupted throughout the duration of life. Therein resides for man a certain possibility of *athanatizein*, a mode of Being of man in which he has the highest possibility of not coming to an end. This is the extreme position to which the Greeks carried human Dasein.<sup>31</sup>

I will turn to Heidegger's understanding of *theoria* which he appears here to oppose in the last section of this chapter. For now, let us take note that it is precisely the difference between eternity and temporal Dasein that Heidegger wishes to mark. The contemporary situation is one, of course, that no longer sees the cosmos in this regard. A different understanding of time that can bring Dasein to reflect on the

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<sup>28</sup> *Being and Time*, H425.

<sup>29</sup> *Being and Time*, H425.

<sup>30</sup> *Plato's Sophist*, p. 118; see also pp. 117 & 122 and 'On the Essence and Concept of Φύσις', *Pathmarks*, pp. 204-5. Cf. F.C. Copplestone's observation that Aristotle 'concentrated on what a thing is' while Aquinas brought the question of temporality to existent things in his thinking 'on the ways in which something is or can be, and not on the act of existing itself'; *Aquinas*, p. 83. To be sure, Heidegger would see even Aquinas' treatment of time as deriving from Aristotle's; *Being and Time*, H427.

<sup>31</sup> Heidegger, *Plato's Sophist*, p. 122.

question of being is required. Hence, Heidegger focuses on finitude as the defining concept that brings to Dasein the question of its utmost possibilities. In view of the horizon of finitude an understanding of time must address the meaning of being. And this furthermore suggests that Heidegger is not rejecting anything at all—neither Aristotle nor his practical philosophy—but is emphasising a piety of thinking that attempts to understand being and time *through* Aristotle but *re-appropriated* according to the present age.

Thus, while Heidegger's introduction of finitude can be read as a criticism of Aristotle—i.e., a fundamental deficiency in his thinking—one needs to bear in mind also that Heidegger is pointing to a difference that could not be thought by Aristotle at that time. Why? Because the historical necessity in which being and cosmos are apprehended as stable presencing did not call for it.<sup>32</sup> The eternity of the cosmos does not necessitate a conception of finitude but, as in the case of Plato and Aristotle so Heidegger argues, determines time as a numerical motion of eternity.<sup>33</sup> Hence, privation (*steresis*), as Heidegger argues, is for the Greeks a privation of presencing and not a privation interpreted through time.<sup>34</sup> In this respect, nonetheless, Heidegger characterises Aristotle's treatment of time not as an attempt at a definition but a description of how one gains access to it from within the very phenomenological suppositions of being during that age.<sup>35</sup> And while the second half of *Being and Time* was never completed—a section that was to address the questions of how one can formulate time according to the meaning of being—<sup>36</sup> it is clear that regardless of this, Heidegger's notion of temporalisation is staked on

<sup>32</sup> Otto Pöggeler, 'Being as Appropriation', *Heidegger and Modern Philosophy*, p. 104.

<sup>33</sup> *Being and Time*, H423; cf. Taminiaux, *Heidegger and the Project of Fundamental Ontology*, p. 127.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, p. 273 and 'On the Essence and Concept of Φύσις', *Pathmarks*, pp. 226-30. In the latter, Heidegger analyses privation and presencing in terms of being itself. The process of concealment and unconcealment in Aristotle does not take into account time. See also Brogan, 'The Place of Aristotle in the Development of Heidegger's Phenomenology', *Reading Heidegger from the Start*, pp. 216-17. After referring to how important Heidegger regarded Aristotle's notion of *steresis*, Brogan comments, 'It is not just accidental that Heidegger inserts a discussion of death and the finality of life into the text at this juncture (referring to his *Phenomenological Interpretations with Respect to Aristotle: Indication of the Hermeneutical Situation, Man and World* 25 (1992), p. 355-393. Indeed, in the same essay (p. 382) Heidegger refers to *steresis* as privation and then seems to add his own ontologisation of it when interpreting it as 'not-yet', a specifically temporal determination that is the complement to the "alreadiness" of being itself. The 'not-yet' is, of course, central in *Being and Time*, e.g., H242ff.

<sup>35</sup> *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, pp. 256-7.

<sup>36</sup> *Being and Time*, H437.

Dasein's capacity to apprehend its finitude in advance.<sup>37</sup> This becomes our point of departure in attempting to understand the ontologisation of *praxis*.

### **The Ontologisation of Praxis: Finitude and the For-sake-of**

To recall Aristotle, the intellectual virtue corresponding to *praxis* is *phronesis*, the practical wisdom that perceives the uniqueness of a situation in order to act in terms of the *telos* of the good. This occurs to the extent that the good is not an external aim to be attained but is constitutive of one's manner of being. Indeed, Heidegger's summation of *phronesis* confirms this: '*Phronesis* is the inspection of the this here and now, the inspection of the concrete momentariness of the transient situation' so that its understanding constitutes its 'mode of Being . . . *Phronesis* is Dasein's positionality toward the beings which are themselves Dasein'.<sup>38</sup> Here, Heidegger renders Aristotle's notion of *praxis* as an activity with its end in itself as 'Dasein's positionality' which interprets other beings in terms of Dasein's potentiality to be. Hence, other beings are related to Dasein in such a way that they are involved in the actualisation of the good. Nevertheless, in this passage from *Plato's Sophist*, one can detect his subsequent turn towards the conception of intentionality in *Being and Time*. Phrases such as 'here and now', 'momentariness', and 'transient situation' refer to an understanding of time where the very moment of finiteness emerges as a conceptual concern for how one interprets human being. Indeed, this turning becomes more apparent when looking specifically at Aristotle's *hou heneka*, the for-sake-of, according to which human being acts in each particular circumstance in order to actualise *eudaimonia*. In this section I will focus on how Heidegger ontologises 'the for-sake-of' by placing it under the horizon of finitude rather than as a being directed towards the concept of the good.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>37</sup> *Being and Time*, H329-30; cf. Guignon, *Heidegger and the Problem of Knowledge*, p. 135.

<sup>38</sup> *Plato's Sophist*, p. 112-13.

<sup>39</sup> Joanna Hodge, *Heidegger and Ethics*, p. 10. Parallel to this, Adriaan Peperzak notes that the early Heidegger initially tried to ontologise Plato's notion of the Good as the 'pre-ontic' designation of the 'transcendence to world' but later abandoned this attempt because 1) the world is ontological while the Good has an ontic basis, and 2) the Good has a visual, contemplative aspect and not an existential/praxical one; 'Heidegger and Plato's Idea of the Good', *Reading Heidegger*, pp. 259-60. More interestingly, Aristotle's departure from Plato in looking for a practicable relation to the Good can be seen as step towards this ontologisation. Certainly, this appears to be the case when seeing how Heidegger appropriates Aristotle.

For Aristotle the center of human decision (*prohairesis*) resides in *phronesis*, and the virtuous constancy of deciding and acting well occurs as *bouleuesthai*. The principle (*arche*) of deciding and acting well in each particular situation is the for-sake-of (*hou heneka*) in view of which one acts—i.e., the good. And yet as noted above, for *praxis* to be an activity in itself, its *telos* must be its *arche* otherwise it would seek something outside itself. Thus for *phronesis* the object of its reason is the action itself, the actualisation of the good.<sup>40</sup> Heidegger is keen to point out that this framing of *phronesis* and *praxis* must be set against the theoretical *aei* which is in itself eternal and complete. He refers to Aristotle's analogy:

<i>health</i>	:	<i>sophia</i>
<i>healthy</i>	:	<i>phronesis</i> <sup>41</sup>

Here, healthy is opposed to health. Healthy is a manner of *being* healthy and is therefore a state in which it must constantly be realised. Health, on the other hand, is the thing itself, always health. By analogy, the practical action that *phronesis* attempts to actualise in any particular instance is a manner of acting which is never completely identical with its principle. It must be constantly acting in order to attain a state of being. Hence, the virtue of *phronesis* is a disposition (*hexis*) according to which one acts in the world: '*Phronesis* leads and guides all human acting, but it is still dependent on something else, namely the action itself'.<sup>42</sup> It must constantly persist, even in the face of misfortune. *Sophia*, on the other hand, is the thing itself, always and forever: '*sophia* . . . does not . . . have a further goal; instead it is carried out purely as such by the man who lives it'.<sup>43</sup> Yet, in this description there is, for Heidegger, something lacking and subsequently creating the moment for an ontologisation of *phronesis* and *praxis*.

The lacuna in which Heidegger initiates his ontologisation is the process by which *phronetic* understanding comes to grasp its principle, which by implication includes how *sophia* as the highest mode of being can come to a recognition of the eternal. The ontologisation occurs as a confrontation with finitude by which

<sup>40</sup> *Plato's Sophist*, pp. 85 & 101.

<sup>41</sup> *Plato's Sophist*, p. 117; NE 1144a3ff.

<sup>42</sup> *Plato's Sophist*, p. 117.

<sup>43</sup> *Plato's Sophist*, p. 117.



*phronesis* declares itself. Gadamer, in this respect, refers to *phronesis* as understanding itself, that is, human understanding that must first come through 'one's own becoming'.<sup>44</sup> The lacuna is the finite horizon before which Dasein comes to interpret itself. Hence, the notion of deciding and acting well is based upon a more primordial confrontation located in *phronesis* rather than in *sophia*.<sup>45</sup> That is to say, *theoria* (the activity which corresponds to the virtue *sophia*) cannot be understood as the highest activity by default; it requires first an understanding of how finitude shapes Dasein's manner of being and interpreting. 'Dasein finds itself disposed, and comports itself to itself, in this way or that. Dasein is the *arche* of the deliberation of *phronesis*'.<sup>46</sup> If this is true, then even if *sophia* is 'unthematic speculation'<sup>47</sup> it still must arrive through Dasein who, in turn, can only gain access to understanding through the finite context in which it apprehends a concern to be and use things. Indeed, for Heidegger it is ontological concern that is primary, that is, necessarily determining any possibility of Dasein: 'Every comportment of Dasein is thus determined as *praxis kai aletheia*',<sup>48</sup> that is, truth unconcealed primarily through *praxis*. Elsewhere, he writes, 'Pure beholding [*theoria*], even if it penetrated into the innermost core of the being of something objectively present, would never be able to discover anything like what is threatening [i.e., finitude]'.<sup>49</sup> Heidegger's ontologisation is in this way a subordination of *sophia* to *phronesis* at the phenomenological-ontological level. Nevertheless, we will see how, as Taminioux maintains, that *sophia* still retains its place as the highest mode of thinking even after Heidegger's appropriation of Aristotle.

In §15 of *Being and Time*, Heidegger refers to *praxis* as the activity that takes care of things. He relates it to *pragmata* which he clarifies is not simply use, that is, a specific utility that serves a practical end.

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<sup>44</sup> *Plato's Sophist*, p. 117; 'Science and Reflection', *The Question Concerning Technology*, p. 164.

<sup>45</sup> 'The Problem of Historical Consciousness', *Interpretative Social Science: A Reader*, ed. P. Rabinow and W.M. Sullivan (Berkeley: University of California, 1979), p. 107 as quoted in Bernstein, *Hermeneutics and Praxis*, p. 276.

<sup>46</sup> *Plato's Sophist*, p. 35.

<sup>47</sup> *Plato's Sophist*, p. 35.

<sup>48</sup> *Plato's Sophist*, p. 27.

<sup>49</sup> *Being and Time*, H138. Cf. Gadamer's comments on Heidegger and death in Ricoeur, 'The Conflict of Interpretations: Debate with Hans-Georg Gadamer', *A Ricoeur Reader*, pp. 219-20.

Strictly speaking, there "is" no such thing as *a* useful thing. There always belongs to the being of a useful thing a totality of useful things in which this useful thing can be what it is. A useful thing is essentially "something in order to . . .".<sup>50</sup>

Use, utility and practicality all have a larger ontological context in which they operate. Dasein does not at first notice this by virtue of its immediate concern to see a task through to its completion: 'A totality of useful things is always already discovered *before* the individual useful thing'.<sup>51</sup> One year later, in terms of the equipmental (useful) nature of things he writes:

We have seen that, in order to understand in the contexture of their functionality the beings that are closest to us and all things we encounter and their equiprimordial contexture, we need an antecedent understanding of functionality-whole, significance-contexture. . .<sup>52</sup>

This, of course, refers to the fore-structure of Dasein's thrownness in which meaning is designated and given beforehand.<sup>53</sup> The alreadiness mentioned here is the ontological prefiguration of the world I discussed in Chapter III—'the unity of the world is too prior to be possessed, too lived to be known'. In this prefiguration, any specific use is already set within a relatedness of entities within the world. Dasein does not create use just as it cannot 'begin anew' historically (to recall my reference to appropriation in the earlier section). Rather, Dasein finds itself already being within actual and possible relationships and so finds use co-emergent as it encounters things in the world.<sup>54</sup> Werner Marx observes of this,

Dasein would not comport itself at all to beings which it is not and to the being which it itself is if it could not project beings in their sense of Being, if it had no understanding of Being. It is in this sense that the "privilege of existing" contains the "need of the understanding of Being" within itself. Understanding of Being is "the most finite of finite."<sup>55</sup>

The co-emergence with beings therefore means the simultaneous interpretation of them in terms of possibilities that Dasein projects. Hence, Dasein is *already* involved

<sup>50</sup> *Being and Time*, H68. *Italics* in original.

<sup>51</sup> *Being and Time*, H69. *Italics* in original.

<sup>52</sup> *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, p. 171.

<sup>53</sup> *Being and Time*, H151; cf. Bernstein, 'From Hermeneutics to Praxis', *Hermeneutics and Praxis*, pp. 275-6.

<sup>54</sup> Heidegger, 'On the Essence of Ground', *Pathmarks*, pp. 121-2.

<sup>55</sup> *Heidegger and the Tradition*, p. 93.

in a concern for how things are to be interpreted: 'Dasein is always in each case already referred in terms of a for-the-sake-of-which to the with-what of relevance'.<sup>56</sup>

This pretexture of use is the condition in which the 'something in order to' apprehends the possibility of greater meaningfulness. This, to recall Chapter III, refers to the ontological prejudice involved in hermeneutics that opens one to the world. Applying this to *praxis*, one can say that choosing for Dasein is related to both particular instances and the larger, ontological possibility for its mode of being. *Praxis* confronts the particular, which involves prejudice, in order to relate it to its greater possibility of being.<sup>57</sup> Volpi comments:

Dasein primarily relates itself to its being . . . in order to decide what is to be made out of it, to choose and actualize its own possibility from among a variety of possibilities.<sup>58</sup>

This kind of ontological decision is precisely a deliberation at the level of rational choice (*prohairesis*). As Gadamer points out in making a link between Aristotelian practice and hermeneutics as a practical philosophy, *prohairesis* is '[k]nowingly preferring one thing to another and consciously choosing among possible alternatives' as 'the actuation of life'.<sup>59</sup> *Prohairesis*, in this regard, assumes the role of the resoluteness of Dasein to carry out a project.<sup>60</sup>

Nonetheless, there is a key difference between Aristotle and Heidegger. Because Aristotle places this manner of choosing in terms of a virtuous life dedicated to the good, i.e., *eudaimonia*, his conception of reason is a self-motivating process of actualisation, that is, it is as long as it can be virtuous it is sufficient in itself in order to attain its end.<sup>61</sup> Neither a divine grace nor the "hand" of a prime mover is necessary for human understanding to achieve its end. For Heidegger, on the other hand, human understanding exists within a strife against which it is reflectively motivated and re-emergent. This strife is the challenge that finitude brings to Dasein in terms of things passing away. This, of course, is epitomised in Dasein's

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<sup>56</sup> *Being and Time*, H86.

<sup>57</sup> Bernstein, 'From Hermeneutics to Praxis', *Hermeneutics and Praxis*, p. 276.

<sup>58</sup> 'Being and Time: A "Translation" of the *Nicomachean Ethics*?' *Reading Heidegger from the Start*, p. 203.

<sup>59</sup> *Reason in the Age of Science*, p. 90-1.

<sup>60</sup> 'Being and Time: A "Translation" of the *Nicomachean Ethics*?' *Reading Heidegger from the Start*, p. 209.

<sup>61</sup> MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* pp. 156-7.

anticipation of its own end: 'In the having of *certain* death (a having which *takes hold* [of life]), life becomes visible itself. Death which exists in this way gives to life a [kind of] sight, and continually brings life before its ownmost present and past, a past which comes from within life itself, burgeoning behind life'.<sup>62</sup> It is this strife which therefore presupposes ontological concern. Hanley comments,

Finite temporality is thus the primordial ontological basis of Dasein's existentiality as a whole. The kinetic praxis of transcendence by means of which Dasein understands being, is itself consequently finite: it leads Dasein beyond itself, beyond the isolation of the ego over against a naked set of facts, but towards the world.<sup>63</sup>

Finitude is the motivating limit that gives rise to the concern for the meaning of being. In contradistinction, this meaning is precluded to a great extent when Aristotle refers to the conception of the good which retards in some way the necessity of *phronetic* participation at the existential level. In this respect, Heidegger is not dismissing the good. Instead he emphasises that finitude marks the first phenomenological horizon for Dasein under which it gains its understanding. As Volpi points out, Heidegger's ontologisation occurs in his placement of understanding within finitude. Volpi quotes from Heidegger's 1926 (summer semester) course *Grundbegriffe der antiken Philosophie*:

The opposition of drives and authentically resolute, reasonable action is a possibility only for living beings who have the possibility of understanding time.<sup>64</sup>

For Heidegger this understanding is the praxical domain in which particular entities are conjoined together for a futural concern, or the for-sake-of:

Insofar as that which is alive is abandoned to drives, it is related to *to ede hedu*, that which immediately is there and stimulates; drives strive uninhibitedly towards this, toward the present, the available. However, since *aithesis chronou*, the sensation of time, is found in human being, the

<sup>62</sup> See also, Heidegger, 'Phenomenological Interpretations with Respect to Aristotle: Indication of the Hermeneutical Situation', *Man and World*, 25 (1992), p. 365. *Italics* and bracketed words in original translation.

<sup>63</sup> *Being and God in Aristotle and Heidegger*, p. 144.

<sup>64</sup> 'Being and Time: A "Translation" of the *Nicomachean Ethics*?' *Reading Heidegger from the Start*, p. 211.

latter has the possibility of *to mellon*, the future, as something possible for the sake of which it acts.<sup>65</sup>

Finitude therefore provokes the manner of being that apprehends possibility in terms of the future. The nature of truth-disclosure (*aletheia*) does not reside apart from this but in it since each manner of revealing is derived through Dasein who apprehends meaning futurally in terms of what it can be. The conclusion is that '[s]ince Dasein is fundamentally concerned with itself, its finitude, etc. it must prioritise *praxis*, as the activity that aims at an end non-distinct from itself'.<sup>66</sup> One only need recall Heidegger's own words, 'Dasein is always its possibility'.<sup>67</sup>

The significance of Heidegger's treatment of finitude as the context for human understanding therefore acquires a preeminent status when juxtaposed with the initial situation described in *Being and Time*: 'This question [the meaning of being] has today been forgotten'.<sup>68</sup> Heidegger suggests that his ontological analysis vis-a-vis finitude proposes a fruitful path for its continual retrieval, that is, remembrance: 'The word [memory] designates the whole disposition in the sense of a steadfast intimate concentration upon the things that essentially speak to us in every thoughtful meditation'.<sup>69</sup> It should be understood, then, that Heidegger's ontological project is one attempting to reinvigorate the tradition by means of ontologising it, that is, reinterpreting it in view of finitude.

### Contextualising the Arguments

Before turning to my analysis of how Heidegger unifies the relation between *theoria*, *praxis* and *poiesis*, it is necessary to examine my argument in relation to Heidegger's commentators. As I mentioned at the outset of this chapter I offer an amalgamation of the arguments in order to exemplify the tri-fold unity, with the exception of Ted Sandler who opposes interpretations of Heidegger and Aristotle that set them in friendly dialogue with one another. The following analysis will help to mark the

<sup>65</sup> *Grundbegriffe der antiken Philosophie*, 'Being and Time: A "Translation" of the Nicomachean Ethics?' *Reading Heidegger from the Start*, p. 211.

<sup>66</sup> Hanley, *Being and God in Aristotle and Heidegger*, p. 165.

<sup>67</sup> *Being and Time*, H40; cf. H144: '*Understanding is the existential being of the ownmost potentiality of being of Dasein in such a way that this being discloses in itself what its very being is about*'; *Italics* in original.

<sup>68</sup> *Being and Time*, H2.

<sup>69</sup> Heidegger, *What Is Called Thinking?* p. 140.

lineage of my argumentation as well as show in what way I intend to unify *theoria-praxis-poiesis*.

The accuracy of secondary scholarship on Heidegger's relation to Aristotle is a complex one since secondary scholarship on the subject has more or less emerged from a dependency on personal recollections of Heidegger's lectures by his former students (e.g., Gadamer and Hans Jonas)<sup>70</sup> and whatever actual manuscripts of his lectures have been made available. One of Sadler's main points against Gadamer, Volpi and Taminiaux is that their argument is based on the omission of a key text that has been only recently made available, namely, the *Sophist* lectures of 1924 (to which I have been referring throughout this chapter).<sup>71</sup> Sadler tends to dismiss Gadamer's recollection and interpretation of the relation between Aristotle and Heidegger based upon Gadamer's own admission that as a student it was difficult to tell when Heidegger was presenting Aristotle's thinking and/or when he was presenting his own thinking that arose in dialogue with him, 'a new Aristotelianism'.<sup>72</sup>

As mentioned above, Heidegger's notion of appropriation is one of interpretive retrieval that attempts to think along with a past philosopher according to the necessity of the contemporary age. Sadler, to the contrary, assumes that appropriation is more or less an unproblematic acceptance.<sup>73</sup> Unfortunately, Sadler does not explain in any detail how he understands appropriation. But then again, neither does Volpi—most likely because he assumes his readers are familiar with Heidegger's understanding of historical interpretation—e.g., through Gadamer.<sup>74</sup> Nonetheless, in Volpi's argument what is clear is that whatever appropriation may mean, it is clearly not an unproblematic acceptance. Prior to his essay '*Being and Time: A "Translation" of the Nicomachean Ethics?*', Volpi wrote what would appear to be its longer "draft", '*Dasein as praxis: the Heideggerian assimilation of and*

<sup>70</sup> Heidegger and Aristotle, pp. 13-14.

<sup>71</sup> Heidegger and Aristotle, pp. 141-2.

<sup>72</sup> Heidegger and Aristotle, pp. 13-14.

<sup>73</sup> Heidegger and Aristotle, pp. 13-14 & 141. See especially his assumption that ontologisation is not a refiguration of Aristotle but antithetical to it (p. 146). How can ontologisation 'destroy' the Aristotelian concept of *phronesis* when it is a reworking of it in a new way?

<sup>74</sup> This is not to say that Gadamer uncritically accepts Heidegger. As Richard Bernstein points out, like Ricoeur, Gadamer finds Heidegger in need of an elaboration of the *Seinsfrage* in relation to immediate, practicable circumstances; 'From Hermeneutics to Praxis', *Hermeneutics and Praxis*, p. 283.

radicalization of the practical philosophy of Aristotle'.<sup>75</sup> The title itself indicates that appropriation involves not an acceptance but a 'radicalization'. In the essay he writes:

It is important to adopt a perspective suitable to grasping and understanding how Heidegger takes up, assimilates, transforms and realizes certain of Aristotle's problems and determinations by rethinking them in relation with the fundamental questions which he confronts within his speculative horizon.<sup>76</sup>

In his later version, he maintains this same attitude, speaking of reappropriation, reformulation, and reactivation of 'the substantial sense of just as many basic concepts of Aristotle's practical philosophy'.<sup>77</sup> Taminiaux, as well, speaks of 'a critical thematization', 'a transformation and a reappropriation'.<sup>78</sup> But why should Sadler miss this qualification?

Sadler points out that the debate over appropriation is really not his main argument rather it is one of showing how Heidegger's philosophy as a whole rejects the very premises of Aristotle's practical philosophy.<sup>79</sup> This, as he notes, follows from the difference between Aristotle's practical philosophy based upon an understanding of being as *ousia* (or to recall what Heidegger translates as 'stable presencing') and Heidegger's reliance on the temporal characterisation of truth as revealing itself in being, that is, in process.<sup>80</sup> There are two axes in Sadler's argument that must be clarified.

First, he assumes that Heidegger's philosophy seeks to overcome the Aristotelian ontology based on *ousia*. This relates to Heidegger's rejection of ontotheology which designates that the truth of being is reliant on something prior to

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<sup>75</sup> *Critical Heidegger*, pp. 27-66.

<sup>76</sup> 'Dasein as praxis', *Critical Heidegger*, p. 29.

<sup>77</sup> 'Being and Time: A "Translation" of the *Nicomachean Ethics*?' *Reading Heidegger from the Start*, p. 201; cf. pp. 198, 201, 205 & 208.

<sup>78</sup> *Heidegger and the Project of Fundamental Ontology*, p. xix.

<sup>79</sup> *Heidegger and Aristotle*, p. 14. Sadler states that the period between 1917-21 is the key to seeing this but does not indicate if his analysis is limited to this period. Rather, he implies that his argument is indicative as a whole of Heidegger since he takes as its centre the question of being (*Seinsfrage*), pp. 1 & 19-20.

<sup>80</sup> *Heidegger and Aristotle*, p. 199. I take liberties in paraphrasing Sadler's position (i.e., use of stabling presence), but I have done so in order to be more consistent with my argument as a whole.



or other than being—e.g., God as *prima causa*.<sup>81</sup> This point requires further consideration before it can be addressed.

Second and specifically against Volpi et al who see Heidegger as in some way reconciling the relation between *sophia* and *phronesis*, Sadler maintains that Aristotle's practical philosophy prohibits a relation between *sophia* and *phronesis*.<sup>82</sup> Sadler adopts what I presented in Chapter VIII under the name 'the intellectualist' interpretation of Aristotle, i.e., the unconditional separation of *sophia* and *phronesis*. I believe the argument from Chapter VIII makes a strong case for understanding the relation between *sophia* and *phronesis* hermeneutically related rather than as categorically exclusive. And if this is so, then Sadler's argument becomes less tenable.<sup>83</sup> And if one can reject Sadler's second criticism, then one should return to point one to reassess its validity.

Here, it is *ousia* that is broadened within an ontological reconceptualisation. *Sophia* and *theoria* are not overcome by Heidegger but assimilated. That is to say: if in Aristotle *sophia* and *theoria* have to do with a contemplation of the eternal, and if for Aristotle eternity is that which is present in the being of an everlasting cosmos

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<sup>81</sup> E.g., Hubert Dreyfus, 'Being and Power: Heidegger and Foucault', *International Journal of Philosophical Studies*, 4:1 (1996), p. 3. For a more recent criticism of Sadler, see Mark Sinclair, *Heidegger, Aristotle and the Work of Art*, pp. 13-15.

<sup>82</sup> *Heidegger and Aristotle*, pp. 145-6.

<sup>83</sup> Mark Sinclair would disagree with me over this point, noting that Heidegger himself allowed for such a generous interpretation of Aristotle but then rejected it later as an 'over-interpretation'; *Heidegger, Aristotle and the Work of Art*, pp. 66-70. Simply speaking, it is argued Aristotle did not fully understand this ontological notion of use and so did not see the wider domain of *poiesis*. Sinclair, nonetheless, bases this argument on the fact that Aristotle did not understand the 'concept of world', and that therefore any greater understanding of use was barred on this basis. Without a notion of world, use has no supra-practical meaning and becomes merely the application of things (p. 65). However, and this is a key point, the Greeks had a conception of cosmos which is a thematic (and not phenomenological) determination of Heidegger's notion of world. Heidegger himself recognises this [*Four Seminars*, p. 7 and *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, p. 171]. So use for Aristotle, as I have argued in the previous chapter, was linked to a wider understanding of human involvement in the cosmos, an involvement whose expression is precisely one of virtue. To be sure, Aristotle is not phenomenological, but this does not mean that the *pragmata* are not related to a wider domain of meaning. In this sense, the phenomenological concept of the world (which is supposed to get to the thing itself) prohibits access to the specifically Greek notion of the cosmos as divine and ordered. Interestingly, there is a caveat in Sinclair's argument, for later on he argues that Heidegger's critique of Aristotle and the vulgar conception of time [*Being and Time*, §6], is not a unilateral one. There is, he argues, the possibility of seeing a more ontological reading of time in Aristotle since there is nothing in Aristotle that precludes the 'pre-thematic' (pre-ontic) apprehension of time in its 'ecstatic structure' (p. 109). This same kind of argument can be, as I suggest above, applied to Aristotle's notion of world—i.e., that in the Greek conception of cosmos is an ontological conception of use. If time in Aristotle can be retrieved, then so can use.

(*ousia*), then Heidegger's ontologisation does not dismiss *sophia* and *theoria* but necessitates their revision according to finitude. Of course, because of the wide range of interpretations offered on Aristotle it is problematic from the start to try and juxtapose scholarship on Aristotle with Heidegger's own interpretation. Volpi alludes to this disparity in his essay when commenting, 'had Aristotle lived in our century, he would not have lived in Oxford for the sake of discussion with Jonathan Barnes . . . rather he would have preferred philosophising in the Black Forest with Heidegger'.<sup>84</sup> Heidegger himself maintains a complex relationship to Aristotle that places a special demand on his commentators: namely, that in order to understand what Heidegger is saying in relation to Aristotle, a novel interpretation of Aristotle is required. One can see this quite readily when opposing Anglo-American classical translations of Aristotle's with Heidegger's. In referring to a passage from *Metaphysics*, Heidegger comments:

His [Aristotle] persistence in that questioning attitude separates the thinker Aristotle by an abyss from all that Aristotelianism which, in the manner of all followers, falsifies what is problematical and so produces a clear-cut counterfeit answer.<sup>85</sup>

Elsewhere, attesting to the unique and subtle milieu in which the Greeks thought:

Post-Aristotelian metaphysics owes its development not to the adoption and elaboration of an allegedly pre-existent Aristotelian system but to the failure to understand the doubtful and unsettled state in which Plato and Aristotle left central problems.<sup>86</sup>

As we will see presently, this reference to Aristotle, which is in no way dismissive of him, makes less tenable Sadler's interpretation of Heidegger.

Sadler's first point is made in view of a common misunderstanding, namely, that Heidegger dismisses the whole of traditional metaphysics—i.e., *theoria*.<sup>87</sup> Within traditional metaphysics, *ousia* has been adopted as an interpretation of beings as

<sup>84</sup> 'Being and Time: A "Translation" of the *Nicomachean Ethics*?' *Reading Heidegger from the Start*, p. 195.

<sup>85</sup> *What Is Called Thinking?* p. 212. Heidegger quotes in the Greek from *Metaphysics* Z1, 1028, b2 sqq: 'Kai dē kai to palai te kai nun kai aei zētoumenon kai aei aprohoumena ti to on . . .' [And so it remains something to be looked for, from of old and now and forever, and thus something that offers no way out: what is being . . .]; *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, p. 255.

<sup>86</sup> *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, p. 12.

<sup>87</sup> See my note below referencing my 'Heidegger and the Appropriation of Metaphysics', *The Heythrop Journal*, forthcoming.

existing as merely present-to-hand, i.e., manipulable and to be determined by the human subject.<sup>88</sup> Thus a commensurate discussion of Sadler's first point demands a treatment of the history of philosophy and would require a detour into Heidegger's understanding of metaphysics. While such a maneuver is beyond the scope of this study, I can allude to a key point which has been articulated in much more detail in other studies.<sup>89</sup> An absolutisation of Heidegger's position as one of rejection or overcoming metaphysics ultimately ignores the historical core of his hermeneutics. In other words, Heidegger's notion of retrieval involves a constant reengagement with the past which, as I hope I have shown above, is not something that is executed once and for all but recurs according to the necessities of an age.<sup>90</sup> His treatment of Aristotle and metaphysics is therefore set against a certain interpretation of the past that reinforces what has culminated in the technological age. It would seem that if Heidegger is faithful to his own hermeneutical approach, he is not concerned with placing judgment on the players and figures in the history of philosophy but in trying to think with them in the openness of being, something which he characterises as a risk and danger.<sup>91</sup> 'Heidegger's "deconstruction",' as Sinclair notes, 'should not be confused with Descartes' "demolition"'.<sup>92</sup> In the end, if Sadler relies on the argument that Heidegger takes the question of being (*Seinsfrage*) to be the 'one single thought' that a philosopher always thinks,<sup>93</sup> then it is here I disagree with him on what this thought was. To be sure, it is the question of being but Heidegger's response to this question does not entail a rejection of past thinkers who thought within the provenance of being and who, without doubt, are a part of its "historing".

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<sup>88</sup> E.g., 'Age of the World Picture', *The Question Concerning Technology*, pp. 115-54. Cf. Mark Sinclair, *Heidegger, Aristotle and the Work of Art*, pp. 20-46.

<sup>89</sup> In my 'Heidegger and the Appropriation of Metaphysics', *The Heythrop Journal*, forthcoming, I give a summation of key arguments to date and argue how Heidegger did not seek to overcome metaphysics but appropriate it, that is, instil it with ontological concerns.

<sup>90</sup> Cf. Bernstein in relation to Gadamer and Heidegger, 'From Hermeneutics to Praxis', *Hermeneutics and Praxis*, pp. 275-6.

<sup>91</sup> 'The Turning', *The Question Concerning Technology*, pp. 42-3.

<sup>92</sup> Heidegger, *Aristotle and the Work of Art*, p. 5.

<sup>93</sup> Heidegger and Aristotle, p. 20. John van Buren disagrees that being is the central concern of Heidegger, stating that it is rather 'being as effect; *The Young Heidegger: Rumour of the Hidden King*, p. 38. But this seems to confuse Heidegger's historical recursion with his concern. The recursion is the necessary means by which Heidegger can uncover the question of being; this question does not have an unmediated, non-temporal access.

With this qualification in mind, the alternative this study will take is one of seeing how Heidegger's ontologisation assumes a unity of *theoria-praxis-poesis*. Volpi does not give any discussion to this unity, not even to *theoria* except in mentioning that Heidegger's radicalisation reveals that Aristotle did not understand 'the unitary ontological nexus of the basic uncovering compartments belonging to the human *psyche* (i.e., *theoria*, *praxis*, and *poiesis*)'.<sup>94</sup> Catriona Hanley, to whom I will allude in the next section, makes this unity an express theme of her study of Heidegger and Aristotle and subsequently repudiates the notion that Heidegger simply wished to renounce metaphysics. Similarly, Taminiaux accepts that Heidegger in fact maintains a 'Platonic bias' towards *theoria*. Furthermore, he sees Heidegger's project of fundamental ontology as an assimilation of finitude (i.e., *praxis*) to *theoria*—or as he puts it in terms of a circle, 'Authentic *praxis* culminates in *theoria* as the knowledge of Being' and '*theoria* culminates in the speculative justification of resolute or authentic *praxis*'.<sup>95</sup> This, in turn, places thinking within the highest mode of being, removing *praxis* from the world of everyday plurality. Thus, Taminiaux's reluctance over Heidegger's fundamental ontology is that it succumbs to the theoretical bias in designating thinking as a privilege for the few.<sup>96</sup> In the next section, I attempt to show how Heidegger conceived of the unity of *theoria-praxis-poesis* and that this unity was not exclusive of the everyday but exists as the ontological calling to which each *Dasein* is inevitably drawn. It is through the everyday that being opens and draws one into thinking. If it is for a privileged few, as Taminiaux maintains, this is because in the end thinking for Heidegger poeticises the everyday. The transformation of *poiesis*, as I discussed in Chapter VII, is a rendering of the familiar into the unfamiliar in order to refigure being. So the privilege Heidegger extends on this behalf is no more elitist or dismissive of the world and its plurality than Blake's poetic eye: 'The tree which moves some to tears of joy is in the Eyes of others only a Green thing that stands in the way'.<sup>97</sup> Participation in the poeticised is not pre-given to only a few; rather, it is select

<sup>94</sup> 'Being and Time: A "Translation" of the *Nicomachean Ethics*?' *Reading Heidegger from the Start*, p. 210.

<sup>95</sup> *Heidegger and the Project of Fundamental Ontology*, p. xxi.

<sup>96</sup> *Heidegger and the Project of Fundamental Ontology*, p. 136-7.

<sup>97</sup> 'Letter to Dr. Trussler', *The Letters of William Blake*, p. 35.

because it requires first that Dasein apprehend the ontological depth of its finiteness.<sup>98</sup> This is why, for Heidegger, the fullness of time is crisis, that is, *kairological*.

### The Hermeneutical Unity of *Theoria-Praxis-Poiesis*

Using the above discussion of *praxis* and finitude as the departure point for my analysis of *theoria* and *poiesis*, one finds that it is the conceptual axis by which the other activities are reconfigured. First, with respect to *theoria*, *praxis* refigures the mode of thinking that is associated with the contemplation of the eternal so that it is no longer disassociated with human existence according to its concern for the eternal and yet not entirely reduced to it. Second, with respect to *poiesis*, *praxis* allows the production and making that is often associated with everydayness to actualise a concern for being in the world, as the world. This section is devoted to an analysis of these two praxical transformations, after which a concluding argument will be added concerning the nature of the unity of the three.

#### a) *theoria* and finitude

If *theoria* is the contemplation of the eternal, it is through *praxis* that this contemplation is grounded in temporality. Let us draw this qualification out in more detail. *Theoria* is the mode of thinking addressed to the divine and eternal things of the cosmos. This alone designates it as the highest mode of activity for Aristotle since it thinks on those things that are everlasting and commensurate with the divine itself. Indeed, if the cosmos is ordered according to *dike*, to recall my analysis in the previous chapter, then *theoria* is the activity which harmonises the human intellect to this ordering. In this relation of human to divine, it is presupposed that the outward appearances, when related to correctly, body forth their essential meaning. Heidegger comments,

For *theoria* is pure relationship to the outward appearances belonging to whatever presences, to those appearances that, in their radiance, concern man in that they bring the presence of the gods to shine forth.<sup>99</sup>

<sup>98</sup> Cf. Rojcewicz, *The Gods and Technology*, p. 217.

<sup>99</sup> 'Science and Reflection', *The Question Concerning Technology*, p. 164.

Similarly, Gadamer notes in relation to Plato:

What is ultimately open to the human being looking ahead to his highest possibilities, the possible human existence to which finally all else must be subordinated, is the pure viewing of truth. . . .The mind's living existence...is the nearest thing to the all-present wakefulness of the divine, to being purely present with what is purely thought.<sup>100</sup>

This interpretation of *theoria* recalls its more original meaning prior to Plato in which *theoria* designated a journey to a religious festival as an outsider in order to witness the divine.<sup>101</sup> With Aristotle, however, *theoria* is given another role in which one seeks the nature of causes within the cosmic order,<sup>102</sup> and this relation to it is overdetermined, according to Heidegger, in the metaphysical question "Why something instead of nothing?"<sup>103</sup> Despite whatever nuanced meaning *theoria* might have maintained for ancient Greek thinkers, it is this modern rendition of it in metaphysics against which Heidegger directs his destructive retrieve.

In this instance, *theoria* is concerned with entities as objects, involving a 'stepping back from the world, and conducting a cold analysis of things seen as merely present in the world'.<sup>104</sup> While the word *object* is generally understood to designate the thing in itself, that is, the thing as it really is (e.g., as in objectivity), Heidegger points out this way of designating entities is foreign to the Greek and Medieval thinking.<sup>105</sup> He supports this claim in showing how the notion of the object is a misleading description. It is not the thing in itself but a representing of reality [*Vor-stellen*] that stands out against being. Thus, an object is literally that which stands out against [*Gegen-Stand*],<sup>106</sup> a sense that is present in the English word objection. But how is an object a representation?

<sup>100</sup> 'Amicus Plato Magis Amica Veritas', *Dialogue and Dialectic*, p. 218.

<sup>101</sup> As noted earlier in Chapter VII in Andrea Nightingale, *The Spectacles of Truth in Classical Greek Philosophy*, pp. 11-13; cf. Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p. 124.

<sup>102</sup> 'Science and Reflection', *The Question Concerning Technology*, p. 164; Nightingale, *The Spectacles of Truth in Classical Greek Philosophy*, p. 187ff.

<sup>103</sup> E.g., 'What is Metaphysics?' *Pathmarks*, p. 84; cf. *The Principle of Reason*, pp. 32-40.

<sup>104</sup> Hanley, *Being and God in Aristotle and Heidegger*, p. 164.

<sup>105</sup> 'Science and Reflection', *The Question Concerning Technology*, p. 163; See also, Heidegger, 'Phenomenological Interpretations with Respect to Aristotle: Indication of the Hermeneutical Situation', *Man and World*, 25 (1992), p. 378.

<sup>106</sup> 'Science and Reflection', *The Question Concerning Technology*, p. 162-3.

Heidegger answers this in arguing that the manner of interpretation assumed in objectification is a reduction of being to static presence. Hence, being as a process is omitted and an object is not perceived in terms of its manner of being as it actually is but according to a fore-structure of interpretation. This fore-structure does not attempt to see an entity as it shows itself, but precisely because it is designated as an object, sees it as being manipulable by human investigation.<sup>107</sup> The idea that objectivity is possible rests upon a certain kind of fore-structure in which one is not aware of it and supposes that representation is an adequate means to the real.<sup>108</sup> This supposition, in turn, utilises a predetermined interpretation of time and space.

Time is understood as the sequence of nows which orders temporality according to a schedule while space is geometrical and reinforces a homogenous conception of it. As Maria Villela-Petit notes,

The result [of Galileo's and Newton's thinking] is a flattening of physical space which, in accordance with a purely geometrical representation, is, from now on, nothing but a homogenous medium whose attributes can only be derived from mathematical representation. Conceived in this way, space does not have much to do with the spatiality of the world in which we find ourselves. What is more, it conceals this spatiality.<sup>109</sup>

It is, of course, in the natural, experimental sciences that objectivity gains its greatest stature. Indeed, as Gadamer shows, the general notion of scientific experimentation is what led to the rift between the natural sciences and the so-called human sciences.<sup>110</sup> It threw up a barrier by which the human sciences were left to either carve out a methodology unique to "the human spirit" or replicate the scientific

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<sup>107</sup> Heidegger, 'Science and Reflection', *The Question Concerning Technology*, pp. 162-9. Cf. Jeff Malpas, *Heidegger's Topology: Being, Place, World*, p. 230.

<sup>108</sup> Heidegger, 'Phenomenology and Theology', *Pathmarks*, pp. 58-9. Giving an instance of how thinking is not objectifying, Heidegger writes, 'The statue of Apollo in the museum at Olympia we can indeed regard as an object of natural-scientific representation; we can calculate the physical weight of the marble; we can investigate its chemical composition. But this objectifying thinking and speaking does not catch sight of the Apollo who shows forth his beauty and so appears as the visage of the god' (p. 58). While one can say that we in general do not approach things through a 'natural-scientific' manner of representing, one can point out that our encounter with the statue is one that precludes seeing it as a god. We, for instance, see it simply as an artefact whose meaning lies in aesthetic qualities. This, too, is a manner of objectification that sees the thing as being defined by physical-aesthetic criteria rather than in terms of its presencing.

<sup>109</sup> 'Heidegger's conception of space', *Critical Heidegger*, pp. 147-8. For a detailed study of space and place in Heidegger see Jeff Malpas, *Heidegger Topology: Being, Place, World*.

<sup>110</sup> *Truth and Method*, pp. 3-9. Cf. See also, Heidegger, 'Phenomenological Interpretations with Respect to Aristotle: Indication of the Hermeneutical Situation', *Man and World*, 25 (1992), p. 362.



model of experimentation according to its own subject matter. While the subsequent development of hermeneutics and other methods of interpretation provided a critique of objectivity, the predominance of modern technology that removes distance and places things within a deceptive presence indicates that a response to the limitations of objectivity is not simply a matter of having an alternative method at one's disposal. In Heidegger's words, the technological 'holds complete dominion and 'grounds an age';<sup>111</sup> it therefore requires a much subtler response than simply positing an alternative method. It requires a *metanoia* in human understanding in order to step outside its dominion, that is, in order to dissolve the "default" way of perceiving and evaluating things according to the measure of objectivity. Were an alternative method simply applied in lieu of a scientific one, this would not serve to illuminate the territory but most likely conceal it. This is because a method, as a *techne*, does not require a reflection on the source of the problem but merely an application of its know-how.<sup>112</sup> As Gadamer points out, one central characteristic of *techne* is that it can be forgotten.<sup>113</sup> This forgetting is possible because the technique learned arrives subsequent to the understanding of a problem or obstacle. The creator of the technique is presumably the one who understands the problem. He or

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<sup>111</sup> 'Age of the World Picture', *The Question Concerning Technology*, p. 115.

<sup>112</sup> Contrary to this view, Lorenz Krüger ['Why do we study the history of philosophy?' *Philosophy in History*, pp. 77-101] argues that science and technology have become inextricably bound up with life to the point that philosophy can no longer manage to think apart from them (pp. 98-9). He appeals to a broadening of the philosophy of science to include historical interpretation, and this he suggests allows for a more expansive 'global historicity' in which scientific progress is possible rather than the replacement of one theory with another (pp. 93-4). In this respect, he tries to accommodate Gadamer's notion of historicity to science, therefore ultimately repudiating Gadamer's insistence that self-understanding within a tradition is separate from methodology and the natural sciences (pp. 90-2). The difficulty with this view is that Krüger falls prey to an oversight common to many thinkers e.g., (Feenberg, *Questioning Technology* and Glendingning, 'Heidegger and the Question of Animality', *International Journal of Philosophical Studies*, 4:1 (March 1996), pp. 67-86) who wish to overstep or begin after ontological concerns. In this case, Krüger assumes ontology is made obsolete by the scientific-technological amalgam that characterises the world today. But in this conflation, the question of ontology recedes. Krüger argues that ontological and transcendental concerns remain unattached to the present situation of the scientific and technological; however, and this is precisely symptomatic of the problem I wish to identify, to discard something like ontology or transcendentalism on the basis that it cannot be "applied" is to make it conform to a paradigm consistent with the scientific-technological methodology that posits means towards ends. To this end, ontology should remain separate and distinct, and as I mentioned earlier in Chapter I, the philosophy of technology (in its concern to understand technology) more or less overlooks the question of the meaning of work that resides at its foundation. It would be a mistake to think technology replaces work or qualitatively changes it to the point where we no longer need to think of work and labour.

<sup>113</sup> *Truth and Method*, p. 317.

she differs from the student of the technique who learns how to use it and apply it. So, the technique is something that can be learned and repeated without an actual knowledge of the problem. One merely has to identify when and where to apply the technique. A common example is bodily health in which we rely upon technical experts (physicians) to cure illnesses. Medicine is so advanced today that we tend to relinquish any role in the curative process (save following instructions) to the medical experts. In this sense, medical expertise often retard one's own understanding of one's body and the ability to listen to it in order to apprehend what may be wrong.

The repeatableness of experimentation, through its conception of time and space, is integral to its ability to verify hypotheses. The success of this procedure subsequently allows scientific *episteme* to ignore any other conceptions of time that are not included in the experimental model. Hence while the utility of science experimentation proves its usefulness in terms of solving certain problems, what remains concealed by this, according to Heidegger, is its fore-structure of interpretation that allows for its questions to be posed as problems in the first place.

The area-character of objectness is shown in the fact that it specifically maps out in advance the possibilities for the posing of questions. Every new phenomenon emerging within an area of science is refined to such a point that it fits into the normative objective coherence of the theory.<sup>114</sup>

In this sense, science secures an area in which its interpretation of time is sedimented in a method that can assure the attainment of an end. Hence, its manner of representation is concealed because its method "stands out", before any such questions can arise. The method attests to the validity of its manner of representing, and ironically because it is valid, it is no longer seen as a representation but as being true to reality itself. In the end, a method concretises its representation of reality.<sup>115</sup> Nevertheless, this is not to say that the success of science is an illusion or is somehow false. Yet, because its validity precludes the possibility of holding viable any other

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<sup>114</sup> 'Science and Reflection', *The Question Concerning Technology*, p. 169. This aspect of Heidegger's thought remains consistent throughout his life; see, for example, *Being and Time*, H363 where he speaks of thematisation as objectification.

<sup>115</sup> 'Science and Reflection', *The Question Concerning Technology*, p. 169.

interpretation of being it in turn precludes a fuller understanding of the things it sets upon from within its method. Referring to physics as an example Heidegger writes,

Physics may well represent the most general and pervasive lawfulness of nature in terms of the identity of matter and energy . . . but undeniably it is only nature as the object-area, whose objectness is first defined and determined through the refining that is characteristic of physics and is expressly set forth in that refining. Nature, in its objectness for modern physical science, is only *one* way in which what presences—which from old has been named *physis*—reveals itself. . . Even if physics as an object-area is unitary and self-contained, this objectness can never embrace the fullness of the coming to presence of nature.<sup>116</sup>

One of the consequences of this monolithic way of seeing is, of course, the utilitarian understanding of entities which exists as things to be used according to human being. ‘The mind systematically selects what it desires to learn,’ writes Dupré, ‘while discarding those elements it considers irrelevant to its [scientific] investigation’.<sup>117</sup> Herein is the denying of an entity’s manner of being and its subjugation to human ends, ends that are sedimented in a *techne* that reveals and uses. But in addition, one can see how *theoria* is transformed into “theory” in a loose scientific sense.

*Theoria*, which for the Greeks was a contemplation of the divine and eternal, becomes *theory* which attempts to construct models of reality according to hypotheses. Theory derives from an investigation of objects as statically present with the aim of conforming them to a hypothetical model of reality. Herein operates the concept of truth as adequation: the model is true according to how accurately it represents the observable phenomena. The model then stands for reality. The caveat with this method is that there is a gap between being and understanding to the extent that lived experience of being must always be mediated by a conceptual model. Heidegger refers to this as the ‘absolutization of the theoretical attitude’, on which George Kovacs writes,

The theoretical comportment does not re-live the lived (living) experience; rather, it divests (“de-lives”) the lived (living) experience. In the final

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<sup>116</sup> ‘Science and Reflection’, *The Question Concerning Technology*, pp. 173-4; *Italics* in original. Cf. ‘The Question Concerning Technology’, *The Question Concerning Technology*, p. 21.

<sup>117</sup> *Passage to Modernity*, p. 73. Cf. Rojcewicz, *The Gods and Technology*, p. 112.

analysis, the reflectionless living experience becomes a "looked at" experience through the reflective turning of the look.<sup>118</sup>

Nevertheless, the rebuttal to this is quite convincing: lived experience is not homogeneous to reflection; '[t]here is no immediate grasp of lived experience'.<sup>119</sup>

It is here that *praxis* and finitude figure into Heidegger's response. Because the notion of a theoretical grasping of life assumes that it can do so without regard for time, it necessarily means that theoretical knowledge interrupts the continuity with life. Truth as adequation therefore attempts to adequate the lived experience (as reality) and the theoretical representation that approaches it from "elsewhere". In response to this, Heidegger proposes that Dasein's reflective transcendence proves essential to the disclosure of truth. It in fact bridges the gap between lived experience and understanding because: 1) transcendence is only possible through temporality, and so an understanding of time that includes reflective interpretation as a part of the disclosure of entities is sought; and 2) the transcendence that therefore results is not separate from life's productive nature; rather, it is an explicit interpretation of the things in lived experience in terms of Dasein understanding of its possibilities. Transcendence, in other words, is the synthesis between human life and reality; it interprets it and so changes it. Hence, contrary to the objective world-view, there is no ground zero of perception that Dasein can seize. And this suggests that the gap between lived experience and reflection is not a real one but a lacuna that arises from a deficient understanding of time and Dasein's involvement with things in time. As Hanley notes,

In every movement of understanding, every relationship of involvement, Dasein deals with entities in various ways that it can be what it is; Dasein is always for its own sake. This does not mean that things are there for us, but that we bring things into relation with ourselves. In understanding entities,

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<sup>118</sup> 'Philosophy as Primordial Science in Heidegger's Courses of 1919', *Reading Heidegger from the Start*, p. 101. Words in quotations are from Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe* 56/57, p. 100). Many of Heidegger's commentators refer to his *Gesamtausgabe* instead of the various independent publications in English. Obviously, German speaking scholars rely on the collected works. For this reason, any text quoted from the *Gesamtausgabe* will be abbreviated as GA with the volume and page number. Detailed information in the English for each volume can be found, for instance, in *The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger*

<sup>119</sup> Heidegger's summation of Natorp's critique of Husserl's lived experience in GA 56/57, p. 101, as quoted in 'Philosophy as Primordial Science in Heidegger's Courses of 1919', *Reading Heidegger from the Start*, p. 101.

we posit something about ourselves; we are primarily concerned with our own becoming.<sup>120</sup>

Dasein therefore always understands itself in terms of the beings it encounters in the world. This is true even for 'theoretical absolutization' where it understands the possibility of being through its designation of beings as objects. Its conception of time becomes problematic to the extent it seeks to account for human being, that is, how lived experience stands in relation to the objects it has secured through experimentation. Similarly, much of contemporary economic science relies on calculative methods, bracketing out the human being as an unknown, uncalculable factor.<sup>121</sup> Thus, such economic science can only perceive the human being as a factor within economic growth, game theory and so on. It cannot apprehend the relationship between economic activity and human creativity in terms of its ontological possibilities of rendering the world. Whatever rendering occurs is secondary to the calculability that can adequately translate human creativity into its science of forecasting.

Point one—transcendence is only possible through temporality—recalls the analysis of *praxis* set forth above: Dasein is motivated to understand by virtue of the horizon of finitude. This horizon instills a concern 'that is grounded in temporality'.<sup>122</sup> Point two—transcendence is the synthesis of lived experience and understanding—refers to Dasein's ability to understand and therefore disclose truth

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<sup>120</sup> *Being and God in Aristotle and Heidegger*, p. 170.

<sup>121</sup> Even behavioural economics, which challenges neo-Classical economic theory for its lack of including non-rational human decision-making factors, in the last analysis accounts for human being as a factor to be calculated more accurately within an economic model. See, for example, Richard Cyert and Herbert Simon, 'The Behavioural Approach: With Emphasis on Economics', *Behavioural Economics*, Vol. I, pp. 45-58 and F. Thomas Juster, 'Macroeconomic Insights from a Behavioral Perspective', *Handbook of Behavioral Economics*, Vol. B, pp. 51-81. In this respect, behavioural economics fails to see human beings as those with uniquely human questions—i.e., the question of being—according to which an economic system might lend itself in fostering. Amartya Sen makes the discernment of needs as the basis of rectifying economic inequality since its complexity prohibits an overly calculated treatment of the human subjects suffering from inequality; *On Economic Inequality*, pp. 77-85 & 104-6. Karl Polanyi is famous for arguing that the transformation that took place in the early Twentieth century was a reduction of humankind to calculations of a 'self-adjusted market'; *Origin of Our Times: The Great Transformation*, pp. 13ff. Philip Goodchild suggests that this economic malaise is to quickly change in view of the global, ecological catastrophe that is imminent; *Capitalism and Religion*, p. xiv. However, even in this case, a global concern does not guarantee that an economic system of sustainability will actually foster such ontological concerns since sustainability can be seen merely as an economic restriction to which its model must adapt. In Heidegger's thinking, ecologically sound economics can be a technological aim that conceals the question of being.

<sup>122</sup> Hanley, *Being and God in Aristotle and Heidegger*, p. 171.

by virtue of being able to transcend its situational context. But because the context is itself always defined by a unique limit, it is finite with respect to what is actually possible.<sup>123</sup> This limitation is what underlies Heidegger's notion of destiny and historicity in the sense that a present understanding, whose concern is the future, is necessarily situated with respect to and determined by the past. Understanding can therefore never claim a non-relational—and this is to say eternal—claim upon truth. Retrieval is therefore the means by which Dasein reinterprets the past in order to free itself towards the future.<sup>124</sup> In this respect, Heidegger writes 'Freedom is the realm of destining that at any given time starts a revealing upon its way'.<sup>125</sup> The freedom involved in transcendence commences with a confrontation with the past, and only then does it set out to reveal.

To be sure, this manner of transcendence is what Heidegger identifies in the Greek *theoria* when he writes, '*sophia* manifests a possibility of existence in which Dasein discloses itself as free, as completely delivered over to itself'.<sup>126</sup> However, Heidegger asks to what extent such a mode of being, that is autonomous and untouched by contingency, could ever be a possibility.<sup>127</sup> This point is not a skeptical dismissal; rather, Heidegger alights on the temporal lacuna I mentioned in the previous section. Such a mode of being is not *humanly* possible because it forgets temporality, and so the kind of freedom that arises through *theoria* is ironically one that is not apart from temporality but comes through it. Taminiaux comments:

this transformation, by displacing the theme of *theoria*—no longer connected to the eternal, but to finite temporality—is still in line with the ambition of ancient onto-theo-ology since finite temporality is supposed to reveal the ultimate center of intelligibility for the Being of beings.<sup>128</sup>

<sup>123</sup> Hanley, *Being and God in Aristotle and Heidegger*, p. 172.

<sup>124</sup> I have attempted to avoid using the terms specific to Heidegger's fundamental ontology (e.g., fallenness) in order to keep my analysis from digressing into a technical discussion. Hanley provides an analysis of this kind that in turn supports my argument. See the section entitled 'Transcendence' in *Being and God in Aristotle and Heidegger*, pp. 168-73.

<sup>125</sup> 'The Question Concerning Technology', *The Question Concerning Technology*, p. 25; cf. in terms of project, Jean Grondin, 'The Ethical and Young Hegelian Motives', *Reading Heidegger from the Start*, p. 348.

<sup>126</sup> *Plato's Sophist*, p. 89.

<sup>127</sup> *Plato's Sophist*, p. 89.

<sup>128</sup> *Heidegger and the Project of Fundamental Ontology*, p. xx.

While agreeing that finitude becomes the guiding concept for Heidegger's rethinking of *theoria*, Taminiaux interjects his critique that despite this reformulation Heidegger disguises within it a privileged status for thinking the Being of beings.<sup>129</sup> I do not believe, however, that Heidegger's position on *theoria* can be radicalised to this degree. Finitude does not replace the eternal but refers to *praxis* as the grounding activity for Dasein. Indeed, in arguing for the unity of *theoria-praxis-poiesis*, I maintain that *praxis* is central because it engages with historical necessity in which Dasein finds itself in order to retrieve an understanding.<sup>130</sup> The eternal cannot come first, from Dasein's point of view, since it jumps over this hermeneutical step. Because *praxis* is first for Heidegger, the concept of *actuality* that gains a prominent place in Aristotle's rendering of *theoria* as a contemplation of the eternal is replaced with *possibility*. In this case, possibility means potential interpretations of being that are recognised by Dasein in its confrontation with finitude. It is upon this turn that Hanley notes boldly: '*actuality in Heidegger is possibility*'.<sup>131</sup>

The history of philosophy is itself a testament to this claim since the philosophical sources are reinterpreted by each age according to what it apprehends in advance as its possibility for understanding being. While a specific analysis of something like the Platonic *theoria* of the Good is not possible within this study's framework, I can point to a general trend by which the role of possibility figures significantly. John Cottingham notes how much modern moral philosophy chooses not to contend with philosophical interpretations on a grand scale because, by and large, it cannot defend or commit to a teleological notion of the universe that is necessary for such 'synoptic' views.<sup>132</sup> Philosophy therefore descends into analysis,

aiming not at grand theories of the cosmos or of human welfare, but confining itself instead either to second order classifications, or to puncturing

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<sup>129</sup> Hanley sees Volpi as conforming more or less to Taminiaux's critique, and she is the one who is the first to rigorously argue for the unity of *theoria-praxis-poiesis*; *Being and God in Aristotle and Heidegger*, pp. 119-20 & 140 n.21-22.

<sup>130</sup> I realise fully that this implies my own reading of Heidegger is reacting to historical necessity, and I believe this can be best summed up in my critique of the reduction of reality to mechanism and necessity. It should be noted, nonetheless, that something always remains concealed from and within one's own self-understanding, or what is hermeneutical prejudice. To this end, it is impossible to define the exact context and extent of my historical-interpretive situation.

<sup>131</sup> *Being and God in Aristotle and Heidegger*, p. 120; emphasis in original.

<sup>132</sup> *Philosophy and the Good Life*, pp. 9-15.



the pretensions of earlier philosophizing. In the new academicized subject, there was no room for overarching visions of the good life.<sup>133</sup>

Indeed, for Dupré this absence of teleology is not because of the rise of science and the mechanistic universe by themselves but because theology failed to incorporate adequately and adjust to the scientific revolution.<sup>134</sup> In both instances, Dasein's understanding is limited by the possibility which it apprehends, namely, that teleology is not capable of being articulated, upheld, or defended for some reason or another. The limitation is not an actual physical barrier but, in this case, a limitation within the communal discourse that can no longer hold viable what once was. This suggests that Heidegger's conception of Dasein's anticipation of its end is not as individually-centered as is often assumed.<sup>135</sup> Instead Dasein participates in a communal understanding that, beyond the publicness of the fallen *das Man* (the They), circumscribes the reflective limit by which a culture can apprehend its destiny, a destiny that extends beyond a single human being and in terms of the entire race and perhaps over generations. Heidegger thus comments,

Yet even where once, through a special favor, the highest level of reflection might be attained, reflection would have to be content only with preparing a readiness for the exhortation and consolation that our human race today needs.<sup>136</sup>

To be sure, this passage is taken from Heidegger's later works and it is with his analysis in *Being and Time* with which the above footnoted commentators take issue. Allowing that no one thinker can address every question that might arise through his or her analysis, one must bear in mind that Heidegger's concern was a rethinking of the human self apart from the transparency it had attained through the rise of objectivity. Nevertheless, the foregoing analysis has made it clear that *praxis* is the

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<sup>133</sup> *Philosophy and the Good Life*, p. 15.

<sup>134</sup> *Passage to Modernity*, p. 248. Cf. Alasdair MacIntyre, *The Religious Significance of Atheism*, pp. 8-29.

<sup>135</sup> See, for example: Peter Kemp, 'Ricoeur between Heidegger and Levinas', *Paul Ricoeur: The Hermeneutics of Action*, pp. 53-4; Lawrence Vogel, *The Fragile "We": Ethical Implications of Heidegger's "Being and Time"*, pp. 106-8; Simon Glendinning, 'Heidegger and the Question of Animality', *International Journal of Philosophical Studies*, ed. Dermot Moran, 4:1 (March 1996), p. 106; Seyla Benhabib, *The Reluctant Modernism of Hannah Arendt*, p.107; and, of course, Levinas' critique of ontology as the ground for philosophy in *Otherwise than Being*.

<sup>136</sup> 'Science and Reflection', *The Question Concerning Technology*, p. 182. This communal feature is accepted, of course, by Gadamer in his appeal to tradition.

ground of self-understanding, and it is through temporality and finitude that Dasein comes to know itself first and then others (including the divine) necessarily second. Such is the approach of hermeneutics that must first grapple with the enemies of error and dissemblance that arise with self-reflection.<sup>137</sup>

*b) poiesis and finitude*

*Poiesis* concerns the realm of the most familiar since it involves an encounter with the things one uses in everyday routine. To recall the *as*-structure I mentioned when discussing work as metaphor (Chapter VII), the “*as*” arises through the interpretation of things for specific uses. One therefore sees a thing “*as*” a door. The door, in this case, is not just an object, but as a door it takes into account the passage from one room to the next, demarcating the purpose for different rooms: privacy when closed, invitation when open and so forth. This is the equipmental make-up of the *Zuhandenheit* for Heidegger.<sup>138</sup> And this in turn is due to *praxis* because use can only arise when Dasein takes up a concern in its daily existence for-the-sake-of how it understands its being. *Poiesis* is in this way related to *praxis* by virtue of Dasein’s extended movement since productive activity both makes in view of the *praxical* for-the-sake-of and allows one to be grounded in the world through the many things it produces. Nonetheless, so long as this tie to *praxis* remains solely in view of *praxis*

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<sup>137</sup> This should be contrasted with ethical concerns which place one’s relation to the good before problems of interpretation. In this sense, ethics assumes not a problem of interpretation but an adequate conception of the good and how it can be practiced. With regard to Levinas’ ethics there appears, to the contrary, a hermeneutics involving the assignation of responsibility, how it is heard, and what it necessitates. But this hermeneutics assumes a transparency of the self which hears this assignation prior to any ontological determination of the self. This involves the major presupposition that the self is not mediated through any other existential structure than the summoning to the other. Hence, to question otherwise than the ‘otherwise than being’ is, as Ricoeur notes, ‘inadmissible’ [‘Emmanuel Levinas: Thinker of Testimony’, *Figuring the Sacred*, p. 126.] This seems to me to be a supposition that closes the hermeneutical circle since self-understanding is never the constituent of its own project but always subsumed under what it apprehends to be its obligation to the other. In the end, the ontology of the self is an illusion, and one must ask how it is the false ego can recognise the infinite in the face and voice of the other without a recollection that occurs “somewhere”. Levinas’ attempt to remove the thematisation of being in Heidegger’s ontology assumes that his fundamental ontology does in fact thematise. Adriaan Peperzak notes that Levinas sought from early on (1935) to escape Heidegger’s ontology because he saw it as being determined according to the themes of domination and power; *Beyond: The Philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas*, p. 51. For a consideration of the ethical side to Heidegger’s ontology (contra Levinas’ accusation), see Jean Grondin, ‘The Ethical and Young Hegelian Motives’, *Reading Heidegger from the Start*, pp. 345-57.

<sup>138</sup> E.g., *Being and Time*, H69ff. For a detailed analysis of equipment [*Zeug*] in Heidegger, see Mark Sinclair, *Heidegger, Aristotle and the Work of Art*, pp. 47-77.

and irrespective of what is unique to *poiesis*, human poetical activity tends towards a pragmatic reduction. By this I mean, the things of *poiesis* are seen merely as things for human ends anticipated and apprehended by *phronesis*.<sup>139</sup> But are things merely the material for the play of human beings?

In this section, I will argue that the unique status of *poiesis* cannot be fully appreciated until its productive nature is seen as the means by which ontological meaning is made actual. In this sense, I follow Hanley's point that for Heidegger possibility is actuality, and this here means that the interpretation apprehended by *phronesis* in view of finitude is given a sense of actualisation only through *poiesis*. *Poiesis* is meaning manifest. Furthermore, in pursuing the unity of the three modes of *aletheia* (*theoria-praxis-poiesis*), I will extend the poetical dimension to include *theoria*. The poetical, too, is the manifestation of the *theoretical* by means of reciprocation. That is to say, if the theoretical involves the question of meaning on the grandest scale of human existence, then the poetical domain is the concrete attestation to this question.<sup>140</sup> Nevertheless it is not the final answer to this question but a manner of testifying, through productive deed, what the fullness of the relation of human existence to the mystery of its meaning might be.<sup>141</sup> The reciprocal bond is therefore one in which the poetical manifests the questions of ultimate concern only through the human participation that uses it. This is possibility in actualisation. Furthermore, in anticipating the next chapter it should be noted here that because the nature of the reciprocation involves not simply a 'mundane'<sup>142</sup> exchange within the world, but a pre-productive affirmation of the very givenness that has bestowed being [*es gibt*], the bond of reciprocation is super-animated by the superabundance or

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<sup>139</sup> A pragmatic interpretation of Heidegger was made fashionable by Rorty [e.g., 'Heidegger, Contingency, and Pragmatism', *Heidegger: A Critical Reader*, pp. 209-30.], but as William Blattner points out Heidegger's thinking in *Being and Time* cannot be reduced to pragmatism because Dasein's manner of acting is always beholden to an original temporality which subjugates practical means-ends activity under the interpretation of finitude ['Existential Temporality in *Being and Time* (Why Heidegger is not a Pragmatist)', *Heidegger: A Critical Reader*, pp. 99-129].

<sup>140</sup> Cf. Mark Sinclair, *Heidegger, Aristotle and the Work of Art*, p. 33.

<sup>141</sup> Though I use the term 'productive' in a positive way while Michael Zimmerman does not, we can still take note of what he remarks of Heidegger's understanding of *techne* as the 'ontologically disclosive power' that culminates in art and which, in turn, opens up the world. Every form of *techne* is therefore a form of art that renders, including modern technology; see *Heidegger's Confrontation with Modernity*, p. 229.

<sup>142</sup> Philip Goodchild, 'Money, Gift and Sacrifice', *Angelaki*, 4:3 (1999), p. 34.

excess of being itself. In this way, the reciprocity is freed into a mode of giving thanks that is not required or necessary but arises through the appropriation of human being into the very nature of the gift itself.

Taminiaux suggests that if we are to understand Heidegger's understanding of *poiesis* we should look to the two drafts of his lecture 'The Origin of the Work of Art' (1935 & 1936).<sup>143</sup> He argues that Heidegger struggled with *poiesis* in terms of trying to understand the nature of its everydayness in relation to its authentic, ontological power of truth-disclosure.<sup>144</sup> Does *poiesis* merely disclose the everyday, fallen world of *das Man*, or does it have another function beyond this?

To begin we can note what Taminiaux wishes to bring to our attention, namely, that *poiesis* in general 'cannot go beyond an improper or inauthentic understanding of existence'.<sup>145</sup> This is because in *poiesis*, the artificer and craftsman can only refashion and reshape what is given in terms of an interpretation of the world that already is. Here, the alreadiness does not correspond to the original or primordial unity of being but the public realm of *das Man*, that is, the fallen realm in which the exigency of finitude and the *Seinsfrage* are not heard. Hence, in *Being and Time* Heidegger refers to work as 'not only at hand in the domestic world of the workshop, but rather in the *public world*'.<sup>146</sup> The public world is composed of the innerworldly beings of work which, conversely, are made possible as useful things according to the expectations the public world projects. This manner of enframing, which appears here as a closed relationship between thing and world, epitomises the oblivion of fallenness that Dasein can succumb to in its manner of being-in-the-world: 'As an authentic potentiality for being a self, Dasein has initially always already fallen away from itself and fallen prey to the "world". . . . This *nonbeing* must be conceived as the kind of being of Dasein nearest to it and in which it mostly maintains itself'.<sup>147</sup> Along this trajectory, the artist and the poet also fall prey since each lacks the philosophical ability to recognise wherein lies his or her transcendence. 'While he [the poet] has the presentiment of what existence is,' writes

<sup>143</sup> 'The Origin of "The Origin of the Work of Art"', *Reading Heidegger*, pp. 392-5.

<sup>144</sup> 'The Origin of "The Origin of the Work of Art"', *Reading Heidegger*, pp. 392-5.

<sup>145</sup> 'The Origin of "The Origin of the Work of Art"', *Reading Heidegger*, p. 395.

<sup>146</sup> H71. *Italics* in original.

<sup>147</sup> *Being and Time*, H175-6. *Italics* in original.

Taminiaux, 'he either projects existence upon things or projects upon existence the mode of being of things'.<sup>148</sup> This allows Taminiaux to support his larger claim that in Heidegger's fundamental ontology '*techne* as a whole is minimised and downgraded'.<sup>149</sup>

In this respect, Taminiaux identifies Heidegger's shift away from his original ontological project as one in which his conception of *poiesis* is transformed. The lecture 'The Origin of the Work of Art' expresses this shift most completely wherein: '*Techne*, which formerly was narrowly confined within the inauthentic and fallen realm of everydayness, now suddenly climbs to the top of the ladder of authenticity'.<sup>150</sup> I do not wish to contest Taminiaux's point on the location or significance of Heidegger's "turn" since this would open up another dimension of inquiry concerned with historical, biographical analysis. Yet what I wish to alight upon is the extent to which Taminiaux's premise is viable: that *techne* is unqualifiedly inauthentic during the period of *Being and Time* (1927) and lectures printed as *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology* (1928). Taminiaux's thesis surprisingly rests upon one reference, namely, the few pages of *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology* in which Heidegger refers to a passage from Rilke. From a reading of this Taminiaux concludes 'the poet cannot be on equal footing with the thinker' because he cannot interpret the things in the world according to the authentic concern for finitude.<sup>151</sup> Examination of this passage, however, does not confirm this conclusion. In fact, the opposite seems to be the case.

The context of the passage comes within Heidegger's discussion of the difference between the fallen, everydayness of existence and the original mode of being that apprehends 'existential possibility'.

What is important is only whether the existent Dasein, in conformity with its existential possibility, is original enough still to *see* expressly the world that is

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<sup>148</sup> 'The Origin of "The Origin of the Work of Art"', *Reading Heidegger*, p. 395. Taminiaux cites Heidegger, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, pp. 171-3.

<sup>149</sup> 'The Origin of "The Origin of the Work of Art"', *Reading Heidegger*, p. 395.

<sup>150</sup> 'The Origin of "The Origin of the Work of Art"', *Reading Heidegger*, p. 395. Taminiaux says this with respect to Heidegger's Rectoral Address of 1933, but I reference it here in relation to 'The Origin of the Work of Art' because he sees the address as initiating the change that was to culminate in latter lecture.

<sup>151</sup> 'The Origin of "The Origin of the Work of Art"', *Reading Heidegger*, p. 395.

already unveiled with its existence, to verbalize it, and thereby to make it expressly visible for others.<sup>152</sup>

The key adjective is 'original' since it corresponds to authenticity and Dasein's ability to recognise its ownmost possibility of being, or 'the-for-sake-of-which' and 'mineness', all terms of which are included in the lecture's sub-heading for the passage in question. Notice also how Heidegger refers to verbalisation as one of the key ways in which world can be expressed originarily. In the next paragraph of the text, Heidegger refers to poetry which is 'nothing but the elementary emergence into words, the becoming uncovered, of existence as being-in-the-world. For the others who before were blind, the world first becomes visible by what is thus spoken'.<sup>153</sup> And finally after referring to Rilke, Heidegger comments: 'Notice here in how elemental a way the world, being-in-the-world . . . leaps towards us from things. . . . Not only is the writer able to see this original world, even though it has been unconsidered and not at all theoretically discovered'.<sup>154</sup> On my reading there can be no doubt that Heidegger sees the words of the poet as corresponding to the *legein*, or letting-lie-before, of truth, that is, the original and elemental world disclosure.<sup>155</sup> The poet verbalises and therefore allows one to see what one before could not. Poetry is original *logos*. One should also take into account that even in the earlier writings, Heidegger holds the Greek beholding (*noien*) as a manner that still produces.<sup>156</sup> Why, then does Taminiaux draw the conclusion that Heidegger holds the poet to be less than the thinker?

I would suggest that this has to do primarily with the phrase 'theoretically discovered'. Because Taminiaux maintains that Heidegger holds to thinking (and theory) as the highest mode of being,<sup>157</sup> he assumes that poetry's world disclosure is less. One can read this into Heidegger's phrasing that reality in poetry is

<sup>152</sup> *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, p. 171. *Italics in original.*

<sup>153</sup> *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, pp. 171-2.

<sup>154</sup> *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, p. 173.

<sup>155</sup> Cf. Werner Marx, *Heidegger and the Tradition*, pp. 151 & 237. Zimmerman points out that while accepting Rilke at this point in his life, Heidegger later came to see his poetry as still too anthropocentric, but this does not alter my argument as Taminiaux remains specific to the time period of *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology; Heidegger Confrontation with Modernity*, pp. 238-9.

<sup>156</sup> Heidegger, 'Phenomenological Interpretations with Respect to Aristotle: Indication of the Hermeneutical Situation', *Man and World*, 25 (1992), p. 380.

<sup>157</sup> *Heidegger and the Project of Fundamental Ontology*, pp. xix-xx.

'unconsidered and not at all theoretically discovered'. But here one must be cautious in assuming what Heidegger means by 'theoretically'. I suggest it refers to the mode of seeing that attempts to apprehend things as objective presence and therefore orders things.<sup>158</sup> One must recall that this passage falls within the section on modern ontology and furthermore that Heidegger alights upon '*seeing*' as the key for original apprehension. The authentic seeing refers not to theory but to *praxical* apprehension of finitude. In other words, the kind of theory that Heidegger contrasts poetry with is the fallen theory of traditional metaphysics that has forgotten the *Seinsfrage*. And in this sense, one can see how Taminiaux's argument, that Heidegger adheres to a Platonic bias for *theoria*, can confuse the meaning of this passage.

In *Being and Time*, Heidegger's discussion of work and the public world, as referred to above, is likewise not a final pronouncement of the nature of work itself. Subsequent to the comparison of work and the public world, Heidegger embarks on an analysis of things in order to determine in what ways things can be understood ontologically. He moves from the status of innerworldly beings as things at hand (§16) to the ontological significance of sign and reference (§17). It is within his treatment of reference as 'a relevance for being' that he shows how things at hand have a dual role, one ontic and the other ontological.<sup>159</sup> The ontic more or less corresponds to the concrete extantness of things by which Dasein apprehends them as being useful within the context of the public and everyday world. Hence, to recall the use of a tool like a hammer, the ontic, extant aspect of the hammer calls for its use in hammering but also conceals the actual (ontological) nature of the hammer itself; it becomes bound up in a relation to an immediate end: 'a hammer has to do with hammering, the hammering has to do with fastening something, fastening something has to do with protection against bad weather. This protection "is" for the sake of providing shelter for Dasein, that is, for the sake of a possibility of being'.<sup>160</sup> In this, the hammer is no longer seen as a hammer but in its use to actualise another end. This seems to be in accord so far with Taminiaux's argument that *poiesis* is oblivious to being; yet, Heidegger goes on to argue how things reveal their ontological

<sup>158</sup> As, for instance, in 'The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking', *Basic Writings*, p. 435.

<sup>159</sup> *Being and Time*, H 84-5.

<sup>160</sup> *Being and Time*, H84.



meaning. The immediate network of use and relevance in which a thing is used refers back to a 'primary . . . for-the-sake-of-which'.<sup>161</sup> The problem here is how this ontological meaning is revealed, and Heidegger comments that this depends upon how one interprets human understanding, a subject that will not be taken up until §31. I have already answered this question in a similar fashion to *Being and Time* according to the *praxical* mode of Dasein that chooses *to be* in view of an interpretation of finitude (cf. *Being and Time*, H144). Nonetheless, what is crucial here is that *poiesis*, even in the earlier works of Heidegger, is not a fallen mode of *aletheia* but a complex one, for it bears two sides: one related to the everyday and one related to the question of being. But this double relation is necessary because it reveals the hermeneutical tension in which the everyday calls to be reinterpreted in view of a deeper ontological understanding. And here we can return to Taminiaux's conclusion if we remember that it is not specific to Heidegger's later writings but one that runs throughout: 'everydayness is no longer the "familiar, all too familiar" that resoluteness has to avoid and overcome. It is now strange despite being familiar'.<sup>162</sup>

The strangeness that arises through *poiesis* transforms the world through its modes of making and rendering. According to Taminiaux, this is what Heidegger identifies as 'the setting-into-work of truth'.<sup>163</sup> The distinction that one must bear in mind, nonetheless, is that work is not 'self-sufficient' like the work of art is. Self-sufficiency is determined on the basis of whether or not a thing of work requires a hermeneutical involvement in order to keep it from being closed-off and taken for granted. The artwork, on the one hand, is encountered as strange and unfamiliar by virtue of its use of metaphor and symbolism (whether linguistic or visual). A hermeneutics is required by default if one is to interpret it. To regard a work of art as merely an object, an ornament, or fancy words on a page is to not take it up at all. In this sense, art remains unengaged. Its autonomy as a thing of art is unaffected by the unconcerned passer-by. Work, on the other hand, participates in the everyday and refers immediately to its use-relations. One does not need to have a hermeneutical involvement in order to be-with the things of work. One can merely participate in

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<sup>161</sup> *Being and Time*, H84.

<sup>162</sup> 'The Origin of "The Origin of the Work of Art"', *Reading Heidegger*, p. 404.

<sup>163</sup> *Heidegger and the Project of Fundamental Ontology*, p. 223.

them at the everyday level. Because all use-relations refer to the “non-relevant” domain of ontology only tacitly, what is required is a *praxical* reflection. And this holds true for both ends of work, namely, making and use. On the one hand, *poiesis* arises from a reflection that is rooted in non-immediate use insofar as every use leads ultimately to the question of being; on the other hand, it culminates in a reflection on being insofar as every making has a use that refers beyond it.

### Conclusion: The Unity of the Three Activities

The unity of *theoria-praxis-poiesis* can be maintained only if one of three fulfills a mode of constant, self-reflective re-engagement that maintains a jointure between each one. This, according to my analysis above, is *praxis*. As Hanley points out, the ground of being for Heidegger is no longer the eternal *prima causa* but is ‘the kinetic praxis of human being in finite transcendence’.<sup>164</sup> Because the question of finitude is one that is always apprehended, posed and responded to within finitude itself—that is, within temporality—*praxis* is never guaranteed a sure way of interpreting its possibilities. Finitude assures that its reflection is constantly provoked, and subsequently, its mode of engagement is one of constantly retrieving the past in order to reinterpret the present and future.

Looking at the *praxical* relation to *poiesis*, the concern for finitude allows for the poetical activity in the world to attain a double meaning. Because *poiesis* establishes and structures, it orders relations such that things have a double meaning in which Dasein can reside in an everyday complacency or be open to the direction in which the work of its hands seems to gesture.<sup>165</sup> The choice to reside in complacency or open oneself to the revelatory quality of the poetic relies on *praxis*, whose comportment towards reality is such that it places Dasein in view of a reflection on finitude—how to be? This mode of transcendence constitutes the freedom of Dasein insofar as it brings a reflection on its activities in view of ontology and is not simply confined to utility. In other words, this transcendence is a freedom that in turn sets free the things Dasein encounters because the *praxical* concern reveals them as a

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<sup>164</sup> *Being and God in Aristotle and Heidegger*, p. 183.

<sup>165</sup> *Being and God in Aristotle and Heidegger*, p. 185.

concern for being itself. Heidegger refers to this in his later writings as Dasein's being in 'the Open',<sup>166</sup> and Heidegger often refers to this in terms of the Greek *to eschaton* which is

the presence in which presencing contains its utmost and ultimate. This highest manner of presence also grants the first and nearest presence of everything which in each case lingers as this and as that in unconcealment.<sup>167</sup>

Nonetheless, the freedom of this transcendence cannot be held open unless *poiesis* in turn makes and renders, that is, establishes the world according to this transcendence.<sup>168</sup> In this sense, the transcendence of Dasein is made immanent, that is, manifest in the world.

A work, by being a work, makes space for that spaciousness. "To make space for" means here especially to liberate the free space of the open region and to establish it in its structure. . . . The work as work sets up a world. The work holds open the open region of the world.<sup>169</sup>

Of course, this manner of setting forth is subject to the everyday, to concealment of its actual manner of setting forth. Here, *praxis* is central as the mode of reflection that reinterprets the setting forth, once more freeing it from its stagnation. This interplay is a jointure or belonging together that constitutes the hermeneutical movement. Neither pole of *poiesis* nor *praxis* is sufficient unto itself but requires the other in order to establish the Open and maintain its openness.

Looking at *theoria* as it relates to *praxis*, one can begin by observing that *praxis* brings to bear a certain kind of call to understand finitude beyond mere ends that cope with it. It requires a manner of reflection that can embrace it, that is, interpret it beyond its finite limit. It is by virtue of the constant confrontation with finitude that *praxis* places human being in a situation where this is possible. Because of its concern for finitude, *praxis* is led to the theoretical domain which attempts to comprehend that by which finitude is contained. The theoretical is precisely the resolution of finitude while at the same time existing within it. The theoretical is the highest mode

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<sup>166</sup> Stambaugh, *The Finitude of Being*, pp. 46-7; cf. Joseph Kocklemans, *Heidegger and Science*, pp. 99-100.

<sup>167</sup> *The End of Philosophy*, p. 64.

<sup>168</sup> Cf. Hanley, *Being and God in Aristotle and Heidegger*, p. 187.

<sup>169</sup> Heidegger, 'Origin of the Work of Art', *Poetry, Language, Thought*, p. 45.

of being because it presents the greatest possibility of being that can cope with finitude itself, and by virtue of this, transforms how Dasein is in the everyday sense. *Theoria* for Heidegger is, as Taminiaux notes, 'the thinking of Being'.<sup>170</sup> Or as Heidegger writes, 'every way of thinking takes its way already within the total relation of Being and man's nature, or else it is not thinking at all'.<sup>171</sup> It is clear that *praxis* is the primary level of encountering for Dasein, but *theoria* is something special unto itself because although provoked by finitude it concerns that which is beyond it. Gadamer understands this respectively as the difference between theoretical knowledge and self-knowledge.<sup>172</sup> *Theoria* and *praxis* are two different noetic activities, but they are linked through the hermeneutical nature of Dasein to go beyond in order to be. Hanley insists on this link and that it was Heidegger's motive for critiquing of metaphysics.<sup>173</sup> And yet, because this theoretical transformation is within finitude—that is, within being-in-the-world—it, too, is finite and therefore subject to a praxical re-encounter with finitude.

But far from being a reduction of *theoria* to finitude, this distinction takes into account the temporal basis upon which theoretical reflection is constantly reprovoked. It therefore provides a positive demarcation whereby *theoria* may in fact be situated in finitude, yet its gaze is concerned elsewhere. In this respect, one can say that *theoria* resides apart from the *praxis-poiesis* interplay because what *theoria* concerns itself with is not the content of *praxical* and *poetical* concern.<sup>174</sup> In other words, the *theoretical* does not necessarily arise as a concern within the operations of *praxis* and *poiesis*. And this is because the content of *theoria* is provoked by the superabundance, or generous divinity, that prefigures all finite concerns and circumspection. It marvels at the ordering of the cosmos, as with the Greeks, or at the throwness of its being in the pre-given world, for Heidegger. The theoretical

<sup>170</sup> Heidegger and the Project of Fundamental Ontology, p. 216.

<sup>171</sup> What Is Called Thinking? p. 80.

<sup>172</sup> Truth and Method, p. 316.

<sup>173</sup> Being and God in Aristotle and Heidegger, p. 165 & 180.

<sup>174</sup> Richard Rojcewicz argues persuasively that Heidegger maintains the link between *techné* and *sophia* [*The Gods and Technology: A Reading of Heidegger*, pp. 55-66]; however, in doing so, he fails to account for in what way they also need to be demarcated. In other words, given Heidegger's destruction of metaphysics *sophia* no longer retains an immovable place within human understanding but must be seen as that which is constantly provoked and reinterpreted through praxical involvement. Cf. Jeff Malpas; Heidegger's Topology: Being, Place, World, pp. 140-1.

resides as an over-plus that Dasein reflectively enters into by virtue of being free, that is to say, what is the space is opened by Dasein's transcendence (*praxis*) and maintained by its establishing (*poiesis*). This is specifically a "Heideggerian" kind of turn: God is no longer required as the *prima causa* or the reason for being by which all things in the finite realm become oriented towards. Rather, *theoria* concerns the mystery of what is given in advance and so makes the nature of this gift its locus, and this means that Dasein's finitude does not become focused on a transcendent cause but on a meditation of its being and being itself as gift: finitude gives rise to gratitude.<sup>175</sup>

Finite being is presupposed by being-there already, and this in itself constitutes its given nature, that is to say, as gift. Hope and gratitude figure into finite being since the givenness provokes a response—to choose and to be. This givenness is therefore 'the ground of Dasein's transcendence as reaching out beyond itself towards the finite possibilities open to it'.<sup>176</sup> Indeed, Dasein exists within the givenness open to it, giving the givenness, as it were, greater articulation through its praxical and poetical endeavors. But there should be no confusion over where the reflection on the givenness resides. Because finitude concerns praxical deliberation and know-how occupies poetical activity (*vis-a-vis praxis*), the givenness that precedes these modes is the subject of theoretical meditation. Furthermore, because it prefigures the formative and figurative capacity of work, should it not in some way bear upon how human beings engage in work? Heidegger's answer, so I argue, is "yes".<sup>177</sup> In the passage below Heidegger speaks of *noein*, beholding, as that which comes to actualise itself in production (*poiesis*):

*Nous* is beholding per se . . . Beholding produces *everything* as a [kind of] being-able-to-have-at-one's-disposal, and it does so like light. *Nous* exists [ist] as the *idion tou anthropou* in its concrete actualization, as *energeia* – as at work – its own work – that means providing-sight, always such in a manner of concrete dealings with, in orienting, producing, handling, determining.<sup>178</sup>

<sup>175</sup> Hanley, *Being and God in Aristotle and Heidegger*, p.p. 191-200; cf. Werner Marx, *Is There a Measure on Earth?* pp. 57 & 121.

<sup>176</sup> Hanley, *Being and God in Aristotle and Heidegger*, p. 200.

<sup>177</sup> Cf. Rojcewicz, *The Gods and Technology*, pp. 57-65.

<sup>178</sup> 'Phenomenological Interpretations with Respect to Aristotle: Indication of the Hermeneutical Situation', *Man and World*, 25 (1992), p. 380; *italics* and brackets in original translation.

*Sophia* is but another form of *noien*, in fact, the highest: 'Only *noesis* as pure *theorein* is adequate for the highest idea of pure movement'.<sup>179</sup> Thus, the disposition (*hexis*) that is *sophia* brings about works without the actual intention of doing so. It bears on *poiesis* because the regard from which Dasein understands itself is changed: a *metanoia* of understanding equals a *metanoia* of action. But this change is never something like a plan or deliberate intellectual endeavor to create change. If it was, it would no longer be *sophia* but *phronesis*; it would no longer behold in terms of a pure looking but think in terms of ends by which it can deliberate and order its activity. Instead, *sophia* initiates a movement that, complete in itself, has its ontological reverberations: 'On the account of the authentic movement which is available to *sophia*, the Being of life must be seen exclusively in the pure temporalising of *sophia* as such'.<sup>180</sup> That is to say, the 'pure' beholding of *sophia* manifests in the 'pure' temporalisation of it through lived being.

In summation, the unity of *theoria-praxis-poiesis* is maintained through the *praxical* axis that corresponds to Dasein's concerned manner of being-in-the-world. Furthermore, it is hermeneutical precisely because it is *praxis* which constantly attends to the particularities of lived existence in attempting to correlate human life to the possibilities it interprets. As noted above, this *praxical* axis is so central to Heidegger that even the human apprehension of the eternal is determined by it. Hence, there is no certain and eternal view of the eternal itself that does not come through the conditions of temporality. In turning to the next chapter, the unity of *theoria-praxis-poiesis* provides the hermeneutical structure through which we can see human work more readily as a response to the givenness of being, that is, what I have heretofore characterised as the theoretical superabundance that inevitably informs and provokes human reflection.

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<sup>179</sup> Heidegger, 'Phenomenological Interpretations with Respect to Aristotle: Indication of the Hermeneutical Situation', *Man and World*, 25 (1992), p. 384; cf. *Plato's Sophist*, pp. 41-2.

<sup>180</sup> Heidegger, 'Phenomenological Interpretations with Respect to Aristotle: Indication of the Hermeneutical Situation', *Man and World*, 25 (1992), p. 383. In Heidegger's later thinking, he refers to this revised, non-representational understanding of *theoria* as the matter of thinking itself; cf. 'The Letter on Humanism', *Basic Writings*, p. 262 and 'The Onto-Theo-Logical Constitution of Metaphysics', *Identity and Difference*, p. 65.

## PART 4

### REINTERPRETATION



## X An Ontological Understanding of Use

By laying up “much goods” in the present—and, in the process, *using up* such goods as topsoil, fossil fuel, and fossil water—we incur a debt to the future that we cannot repay. That is, we diminish the future by deeds that we call “use” but that the future will call “theft”.

-Wendell Berry<sup>1</sup>

A rehabilitation of human use confronts a difficult impasse insofar as the discourse by which we tend to speak of use is itself permeated by the pre-understanding that it must somehow be effective, necessary and utile in what it serves. The analogy I wish to borrow that helps illustrate my point is one devised by MacIntyre when he refers to the contemporary situation of moral philosophy as an inherited, broken discourse. ‘What we possess,’ he writes, ‘. . . are the fragments of a conceptual scheme, parts which now lack those contexts from which their significance derived’.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, states MacIntyre, this broken discourse has gone unrecognised and is a philosophical ‘catastrophe’ that perpetuates itself by virtue of the tradition’s inability to perceive the problem.<sup>3</sup> While this is arguably the case for moral philosophy, the situation of human work is slightly different, though fundamentally sharing in a dispersed state of reflection. With work, as I have argued in the last two chapters, the conceptual schemes are derived from the ancient Greek philosophy insofar as those key concepts (*poiesis*, *praxis*, *theoria*) permeate our modern thinking. We have seen this in relation to general conceptions of making and rendering as modes of metaphoric activity (Chapter VII) and critically in terms of Marx’s identification of *praxis* rather than *poiesis* as work (Chapter VIII). In its modern inception the Greek derivation has, however, been inverted; and this concerns how the elevation of necessity and efficiency in the highest regard generate a discourse confined to these terms. Hence,

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<sup>1</sup> ‘Two Economies’, in Brian Keeble, *Every Man an Artist*, p. 189. *Italics* in original.

<sup>2</sup> *After Virtue*, p. 2.

<sup>3</sup> *After Virtue*, pp. 3-4.

“use” means nothing more than the activity that achieves an end that is effective, necessary and utile. Function resides over and against meaning.

In view of this, I contend that what remains unsaid in this discourse of human work cannot easily be voiced. What I have been hitherto referring to as the supra-necessary meaning of work remains, by and large, inarticulate and inarticulable. It is this very lack or lacuna that Heidegger would say calls for the most worthy of human questioning.<sup>4</sup> Marcuse provides a portrayal of this situation according to the one-dimensionality of technological rationality when he writes, imitating the voice of technological authority:

once you speak, you have to communicate your thoughts to us—in our language or in yours. Certainly, you may speak your own language, but it must be translatable, and it will be translated. You may speak poetry—that is all right. We love poetry. But we want to understand your poetry, and we can do so only if we can interpret your symbols, metaphors, and images in terms of ordinary language.<sup>5</sup>

It would seem that because utility is the measure of all things it therefore determines what is valuable, on one end, and what is an anomaly to its system, on the other. The humanities student is, in this way, chief witness to such a disproportion when he/she is asked to state or even justify the use of his/her discipline.<sup>6</sup> The humanities and liberal arts seem to neither contribute to the market economy nor produce utile systems of knowledge. How can one rethink use in this respect?

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<sup>4</sup> E.g., *What Is Called Thinking?* pp. 35 & 76-7.

<sup>5</sup> *One-Dimensional Man*, p. 196.

<sup>6</sup> This common incident is symptomatic of the larger philosophical issues at stake when the model of the natural sciences is seen to be the one methodology of knowledge. See Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, pp. 3-42 and Ricoeur's critique of the implementation of scientific causality in the philosophy of history, 'The narrative function', *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*, pp. 274-7. This has ramifications at the "professional" level—i.e., should academics and scholars within the humanities be seen as professionals who provide a service? Service, in this case, refers to a tangible product removed from truth and applicable to social and political concerns. Cecil Miller refers to this, saying that 'The philosopher's chief duty would be not "to speak the truth as he sees it, come what will" but to elaborate as many coherent word-systems as possible within a given domain'; 'Vocation versus Profession in Philosophy', *Philosophy of Science* 7:2, (April 1940), p. 150. This analysis can be compared to John Cottingham's more recent observation that (moral) philosophy has become 'pure analysis', aiming not at grand theories of the cosmos or of human welfare, but confining itself instead either to second order classifications, or to puncturing the pretensions of earlier philosophizing. In the new academicized subject, there was no room for overarching visions of the good life'; *Philosophy and the Good Life*, p. 15.

In this chapter, I provide a response to this question in proposing a hermeneutical structure that can be grafted onto Heidegger's ontologisation of the Greek concepts. This maneuver provides a practical structure by which we can begin to rethink the relationships opened by human work and the kind of responsibility involved in it, extending beyond the human subject.<sup>7</sup> In addition, this elaboration is an attempt to burst open the one-dimensionality of technical rationality that often invalidates any other modes of knowing truth. My further considerations to such modes—i.e., *theoria* (*sophia*) and *praxis* (*phronesis*)—not only hope to accomplish this task, but as well to retrieve *poiesis* (*techne*) from its technological distortion.

My thesis suggests that what we normally conceive to be the usefulness of work activities—i.e., its practical application—is ultimately guided by that which resides outside the immediacy of the useful means-ends relationship and would therefore appear to have “no” relation to it.<sup>8</sup> This is the domain of the “useless”, that is, of the contemplative domain (*theoria*) that has no *necessary* relation to applicability since the nature of applicability is itself the subject of its reflective gaze. It is the role of contemplation to question and meditate upon how it is that any thing like applicability can be understood within the total movement of human being. We noted earlier (Chapter I) that this is the severe shortcoming of technological rationality which sees any problems arising from its procedures as being rectifiable by further technological innovations. In this enclosed system, the advance of the technological dominance of things never comes into critical reflection.<sup>9</sup> From the point of view of the practically-aimed human agent, a contemplative reflection on the nature of use as such appears to be the most trivial because it bears no immediate relation to the aim and task at hand. In this sense, we can recall my distinction in Chapter VII (Form and Figure) of the focus of a task (e.g., hammering a nail into a plank) that does not readily refer to the larger ontological milieu, or enframing, in which it has meaningful consequences (e.g., mending a fence that divides property).

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<sup>7</sup> Werner Marx conducts a similar project in responding to Heidegger's question “Is there a measure on earth?”; *Is There a Measure on Earth*, pp. 1-11.

<sup>8</sup> Mark Sinclair refers to the distinction that shoes are not used but actually worn—that is, providing contact with the earth, and in the case of the peasant woman, a relation to the soil and the seasons. Pure utility is a misdescription of things; *Heidegger, Aristotle and the Work of Art*, pp. 152-3.

<sup>9</sup> See, for instance, David Lewin, ‘Freedom and Destiny in the Philosophy of Technology’, *Blackfriars* 87:1011, (September 2006), pp. 524-9.

In the background is, of course, the pitfall of elevating contemplation over work itself, but I hope my preceding analysis of the hermeneutical unity of *poiesis-praxis-theoria* has shown that no one mode of activity takes an unmitigated precedence over the other. And this is why I am keen to describe the realm of contemplation as the useless: it at once sets apart the realm of *theoria* from *praxis* and *poiesis* but at the same time, by virtue of its otherness, shapes a reciprocal bond. Otherness beckons an interpretive movement to traverse the distance that separates the two; and yet, as I hope I have shown, this distance is hermeneutical and so cannot be bridged once and for all.<sup>10</sup> The risk is that there is no guarantee that prevents one from, at any one moment, elevating work over reflection, or vice versa. This peril reflects, to be sure, the hermeneutical nature of being itself that constantly requires an attentive looking of human being. So my project here is not to denigrate necessity but to unify it with higher degrees of self-reflection, and therefore, participation in being. To recall the nature of work as metaphoric, the necessary level must be passed through in order for one to engage the greater significance of use. This greater significance is one that I will develop in terms of thanking, or what defines the nature of human work itself. Human use, I will argue, is thanking. In particular, it gives thanks to the pre-givenness of being that has let human being and work emerge in the first place.

This reinterpretation of use as thanking is not only a redescription, but it also invokes a radical shift in the way in which one conceives of how one should be involved in work. So the interpretative change is not merely a psychological alteration since it suggests that a new mode of interrelation is emergent in work when understood as a manner of thanking. Furthermore, if this shift is as radical as I am making it to be, then understanding what is entailed in this transformation becomes difficult to see and predict. In this respect, that work should suddenly be apprehended as an act that addresses being itself in terms of a dedicated act of gratitude would be something entirely novel. This is because our current philosophical disposition does not admit it and so cannot see it as a viable possibility. We know the thanking nature of work only by the absence of it, for instance, in terms

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<sup>10</sup> Ricoeur, 'Narrated Time', *A Ricoeur Reader*, p. 348.

of how we separate the mundaneness of the working-world from our ownmost individual desires, how current work practices often neglect nature, how we reduce the majority of social practices and institutions to the measure of business and market viability and so on. The task of this chapter is to provide a hermeneutical structure through which use as thinking can be seen more immanently (as opposed to conceptually).

I argue the case for a hermeneutical structure of work according to two points. Again, this hermeneutic continues my invocation of Ricoeur's critique of Heidegger which, in this chapter, seeks to disclose a structure from Heidegger's meditation on the kind of thankfulness required in human dwelling and that informs human use. It is necessary, in other words, to see how the ontological nature of thanking can be seen to permeate and relate to the more concrete actions of human being in addition to the emphasis Heidegger places on thinking.

First, the conventional notion of use is derivative of a certain philosophical anthropology that conceives human agency as a controlling force over nature. This anthropology severely limits the way in which we conceive of the relation between human being and nature and so must be deconstructed. I propose to do this by initiating a reversal. My argument will examine how the human agent is not an autonomous and radically free being but responsible to the nurturing of being itself.<sup>11</sup> I will show how Heidegger's understanding of Aristotle's four causes<sup>12</sup> define this nature according to an ontological responsibility, or a nurturing of being. Nurture is opposed to technical use that imposes human will unnaturally upon things. Furthermore, the choice between nurturing and imposing exists according to the inherent structure of the cosmos itself as justice (*dike*) which Heidegger translates into the destining of being. In short, the manner in which we understand use sets forth a corresponding mode of work that, in turn, determines, or destines, a specific world. This mode of work can either provoke thinking as a self-reflexive activity or it can obscure its role within a forgetfulness. What is destined by this relationship

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<sup>11</sup> Richard Rojcewicz, *The Gods and Technology*, pp. 35-40.

<sup>12</sup> As discussed mostly in 'The Question Concerning Technology', *The Question Concerning Technology*, pp. 3-35.

between use and disclosing a world is therefore either in tune with being or set against it by virtue of its oblivion to it.

Second, my response to this dilemma is to elaborate the threefold unity of *theoria-praxis-poiesis* according to the actions of *giving-receiving-returning*. I will not take the time to explain the relations here in my introductory remarks, but let it suffice to say that this tri-fold structure allows us to situate work within a context that exceeds the immediate literalness of use. This structure in short allows work to be conceived as a mode of thanking which, in turn, I will develop in terms of three ontological events: 1) the emergence of an *openness* of contemplation wherein the human gaze sees more and becomes responsible for more; 2) an *individuation* that engenders a meaningful relationship between the human being and what can be done in view of this openness; and 3) *repetition* in which this relationship is secured, instilled, transmitted and retained both in the activity of work and in the structures and artefacts that result from it. Stating my thesis here, I see *theoria* as corresponding to the human ability to be open to the pre-giveness and unity of being; *praxis* is the specific and individual reception to this openness that manifests and seeks actualisation in the world; and *poiesis* is the concrete attestation to the *praxical* identity that gives thanks to the original pre-giveness of being in terms of its repetition of production and use. Hence, in order to further articulate the way in which ontological use can be seen in relation to human activity more broadly, I propose the following structure:

<i>theoria</i>	<i>praxis</i>	<i>poiesis</i>
giving	receiving	returning
openness	individuation	repetition

I should note a further development of the previous chapter that arises in my discussion of *praxis* as receiving and individuation. Antecedent to this chapter, I examined *praxis* according to how it functioned by virtue of setting human action within the encounter with finitude. In this chapter, I will expand the praxical function according to Heidegger's more positive notion of appropriation [*Ereignis*]

which arises in his later thinking and subsequently gives to finitude a more hopeful horizon.<sup>13</sup> This means that while *praxis* exists as the central mode of understanding for Dasein, it is not simply concerned with temporality and finitude. Here, we will see how the inclusion of appropriation in Heidegger's analysis requires of *praxis* that it be open towards the pre-giveness of being at the same time. This is to say that *praxis*, while being the primary mode of understanding, must acknowledge its theoretical complement.

My comments in this chapter concerning *praxis* seek to disclose the fundamental attributes of receiving and individuation. In the concluding chapter I offer a more comprehensive treatment of individuation in terms of human vocation since it is a further path of thinking that requires singular treatment. Let it suffice to say for now that vocation implies a particular understanding by which the pre-given unity witnessed in *theoria* is interpreted through a unique relation to reality (*praxis*) according to one's own natural gifts.

### Ontological Responsibility and the Four Causes

Before deconstructing the philosophical anthropology that assumes the human subject to be the controlling agent over nature, it is worth recalling some earlier reflections from Chapter III (A Hermeneutical Approach) where I mentioned that philosophical hermeneutics in general presupposes that the universe is inherently meaningful rather than simply mechanistic. Within a mechanistic cosmology the human subject assumes an authority that seeks to justify its existence and legitimacy according to its capacity to gain control over the value-neutral and, as Kant would say, non-moral<sup>14</sup> processes of nature. It is important to note that my deconstruction does not critique a philosophy that places the human subject at the center of being; rather, it repudiates the attribution of control and mastery of a completely autonomous agent beholden to nothing greater than itself.<sup>15</sup> To recall comments in

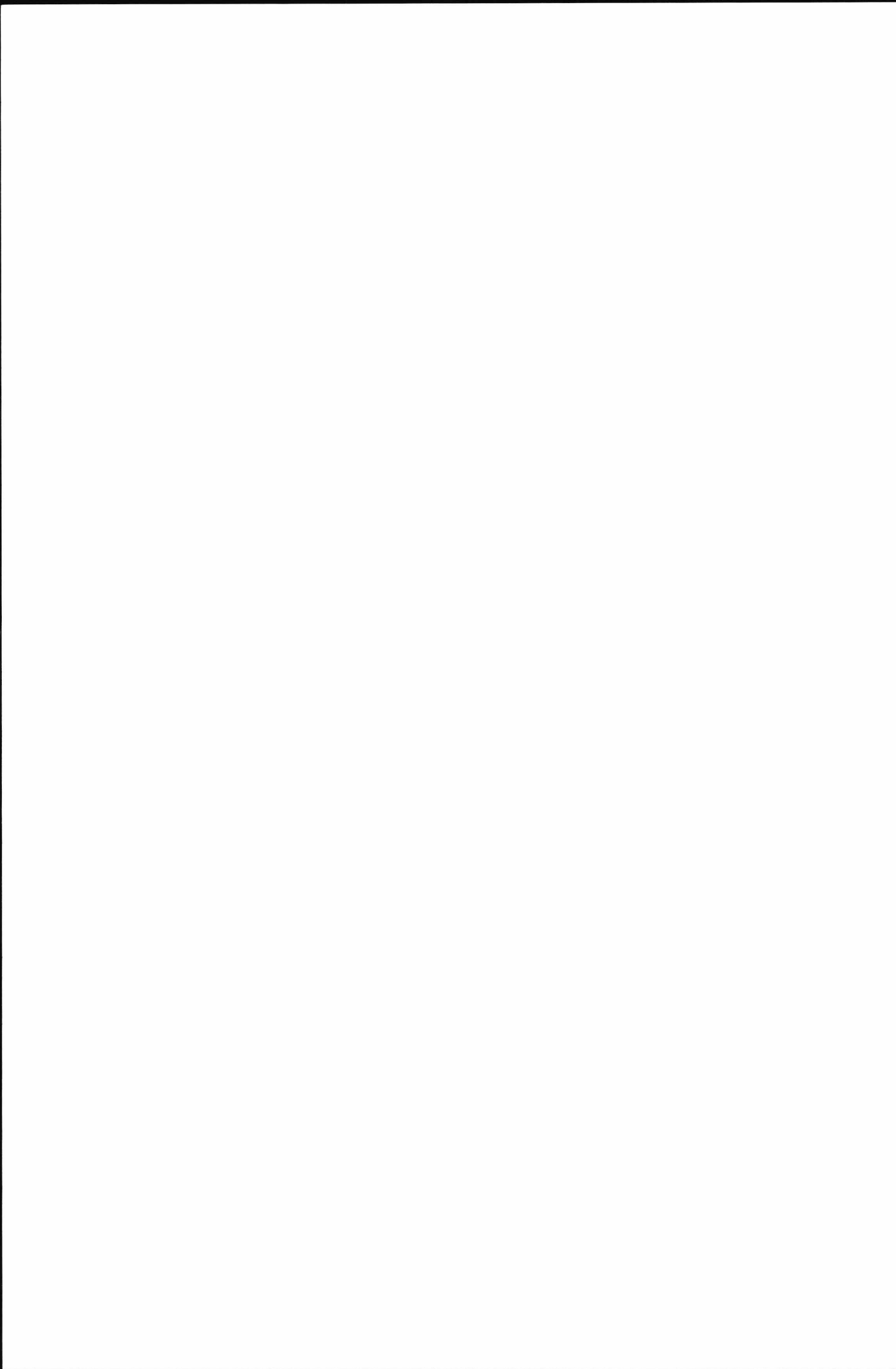
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<sup>13</sup> Cf. Joanna Hodge, 'Phenomenologies of Faith and Hope', *Journal of the British Society of Phenomenology* 37:1, (Jan 2006), pp. 37-52.

<sup>14</sup> MacIntyre, *A Short History of Ethics*, p. 191. Cf. Ricoeur and André LaCocque, *Thinking Biblically*, p. 56.

<sup>15</sup> Dupré refers to a 'reduced anthropology' in relation to the work of Lothar Kramm, *Die politische Wissenschaften der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft* (Berlin: Dunker & Humboldt, 1975), p. 126 (Dupré's translation) in *Marx's Social Critique of Culture*, p. 208 n37. Cf. Jeff Malpas: 'Human being is not the





Chapter VI (Ontological Disproportion), my thesis assumes human being occupies a central and unique role in the universe and therefore has a responsibility to accept because of the human capacity to refigure reality through work. What I propose is a human subject who is responsible to being itself by virtue of being's pre-giveness. What is given before, or already, places human agency within an ontological debt.<sup>16</sup> I will later clarify what I mean by debt as it can be misconstrued to mean a kind of legalistic obligation.

In this section I argue that the notion of the human subject perceived as a radically autonomous agent is due to the conflation of causation into efficiency, that is, the efficient cause. My general criticism is that when the efficient cause is held to be synonymous with causality as such, it sees action as occurring only because of an agent. In part this parallels my critique of efficiency and utility in Chapter V (Deconstructing the Modern Understanding of Work), and here I argue that these are tenable concepts in contemporary thinking only because of the collapse of causality into its one-dimensional, efficient interpretation. I refer to Heidegger's interpretation of Aristotle's four causes to show how human being is in fact situated in a much subtler—that is, a non-one-dimensional—structure of causation. Next I argue how this ontological placement has, according to the ancient Greek conception of justice which Heidegger appropriates, a kind of lawfulness in which the human understanding of use is directly proportionate to how being and the world is henceforth disclosed. This correspondence is what Heidegger encapsulates in his term destiny [*geschick*] where the 'disclosive looking'<sup>17</sup> of human being reveals the world. Hence, if being is understood in a utilitarian way, the world disclosed will be

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ground for such gathered unity even though human being is a necessary participant in such unity'; Heidegger's *Topology: Being, Place, World*, p. 232.

<sup>16</sup> Heidegger, as we will see, understands debt in terms of that which is owed to something that has allowed it to be. For Heidegger, an adequate or, in the language of *Being and Time*, authentic response is possible. Cf. Hodge, *Heidegger and Ethics*, p. 100. Derrida, on the other hand, reads debt in terms of a responsibility that is caught within a dichotomy of general 'substitution' and 'absolute singularity' which results in an *aporia*; *The Gift of Death*, pp. 61-3. Debt, when taken solely in the former sense, corresponds to the principle of reason that makes a necessity of owing and hence reduces responsibility to the circle of exchange; *Given Time: I. Counterfeit Money*, pp. 62-3. Cf. Goodchild, *Capitalism and Religion*, p. 119. I will look at the role of gift in Derrida's thinking in more detail in this chapter and the next.

<sup>17</sup> A phrase used by Richard Rojcewicz in describing Dasein's relation to *poiesis* and reality; *The Gods and Technology*, pp. 54-6. I will adopt this phrase throughout this chapter and therefore leave out the quotation marks.

revealed accordingly as, for example, a storehouse of goods to be plundered. To recall MacIntyre's point: 'The cosmic order can be transgressed, but the consequences of transgression are themselves signs of that same order'.<sup>18</sup>

a) *the four aitia*

Aristotle's four causes are well known: efficient, formal, material, and final. It is commonplace to describe these causes according to an instance of human *poiesis*. Heidegger refers to the example of a silversmith who fashions a chalice: the efficient cause is the silversmith who is responsible for making the chalice; the form of the chalice (chaliceness) is the idea that gives rise to the artefact itself; the material of silver is that which receives the shape of the chalice and determines how it will be made due to the subtlety of its composition; and the final cause is the purpose for which the chalice owes its manner of being—e.g., consecration and sacrifice.<sup>19</sup>

Heidegger's contention, however, is that we misunderstand the Greek notion of *aition* if we translate it into the Latin *causa*. While Heidegger shifts the focus of his meditation on the four *aitia* to discovering what has hitherto been concealed by the destining of Western metaphysics,<sup>20</sup> there is a sub-textual argument ongoing in his discussion that can be overlooked in favour of his critique of metaphysics and technology. Richard Rojcewicz argues that the conventional reference to the well-known efficient cause is itself unreliable, both textually and philosophically. Textually, he notes that in Aristotle the Greek term translated into *efficiens* is *hōthen* [ὄθεν], which is a substantive term meaning 'the whence'.<sup>21</sup> Rojcewicz points out that Aristotle refers to this *aition* by other phrases involving 'whence', and that there is in no way a consistent, exact terminology. Aristotle's intention, wagers Rojcewicz, is to 'indicate where we are to look for it [the *aition*], namely by following motion to its source. But nothing is there determined as to how the source is to be understood'.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>18</sup> *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* p. 23; cf. *A Short History of Ethics*, pp. 5–13.

<sup>19</sup> 'The Question Concerning Technology', *The Question Concerning Technology*, pp. 7–8.

<sup>20</sup> On the inadequacy of translating *aition*, many Anglo Classics scholars would agree. See, for example, Julius Moravcsik, 'What Makes Reality Intelligible?' *Aristotle's Physics*, p. 35, John Cooper, 'Aristotle on natural teleology', *Language and Logos: Studies in Ancient Greek Philosophy*, p. 199 and Sinclair, *Heidegger, Aristotle and the Work of Art*, pp. 158–9.

<sup>21</sup> *The Gods and Technology*, p. 20.

<sup>22</sup> *The Gods and Technology*, p. 20.

One would be hasty, in other words and according to Rojcewicz, to interpret the source of this motion in terms of a mechanistic causation where *A* effects *B*. This is because in a mechanistic determination of causality one tends to see the causal agent as that which produces the effect of its own accord. To the contrary, argues Rojcewicz, the notion underlying Aristotle's efficient causality is not an efficiency that can be located within the agent; rather, one must see that the agent is already acting because of something that has in fact allowed it to emerge into such a relationship of agency in the first place.<sup>23</sup> The silversmith is not the efficient cause in this sense but performs a mediating role of bringing something forth according to pre-given material that is in view of an occasion for having something like a chalice. That is to say, the *hothen* (*efficientes*) describes the human as a midwife rather than an agent. Rojcewicz's point parallels my earlier observation in Chapter VII that work is not a radically free act that creates out of nothing. Rather, it performs its task according to the pre-given *hyle*, and so human work takes the role of nurturing matter into form. Another way of seeing this transformation of the Greek is offered by Jean Beaufret when highlighting the difference between a self-willed act and the Greek notion of *ergon* as a harmonisation with order—i.e., truth: '*actus* presupposes that a will has procured for itself the means to its end; *ergon* presupposes rather *aletheuein*, *aletheia*, an epiphanic or rather anti-phanic plentitude'.<sup>24</sup>

Within any given example, therefore, efficient causality is one of bringing forth something that lies in potential. A sculptor, for example, "nurtures forth" the statue according to the other causes and is therefore beholden to aims and meanings beyond the autonomy of human agency.

The sculptor . . . does not impose form, he merely allows the form to emerge by *releasing* it. He takes direction from the marble, determining what the marble itself wants, as it were, to bring forth. His activity then is to nurture that form into existence.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>23</sup> *The Gods and Technology*, p. 21. Cf. Beaufret on efficient cause, *Dialogue with Heidegger*, p. 101ff.

<sup>24</sup> *Leçons de Philosophie*, Seuil, Paris, 1998, p. 126 as quoted in and translated by Sinclair, *Heidegger, Aristotle and the Work of Art*, p. 162.

<sup>25</sup> Rojcewicz, *The Gods and Technology*, p. 26. Cf. Heidegger 'The Origin of the Work of Art', *Poetry, Language, Thought*, p. 76.

A decisive term in Rojcewicz's analysis of Heidegger is the word 'impose'. This is because the four *aitia* refer to an ontological structure in which human being is already situated and so is obligated ontologically to pay heed to being rather than impose its will. This ontological structure is one where humans are already within a relationship that is responsible to something other than themselves. To think to the contrary—i.e., that the human agent is a self-determining being—is to ignore the beingness of the other through an imposition of the human will that has, in advance, decided what role the other is to assume. We can recall here my critical remarks on Marx's failure to acknowledge the alterity of nature (Chapter IV)—i.e., that Marx fails to see nature as something other than "material" for humans. Rojcewicz's intention to clarify the meaning of the efficient cause is the first step in a destructive retrieve that attempts to understand Aristotle's *aitia*. This clarity becomes all the more impressing when one sees how the technological world-view places human being at the center of all relationships as the one who subjects other things to its will for its own use.

Heidegger uses the German word *das Entbergen* [disclosive looking]<sup>26</sup> to encapsulate the human ability to reveal the world through its interpretation. This is perhaps most painfully present in terms of technological reductions, and Rojcewicz stresses that although human being is caught within this reductive mode of being, the disclosive looking still harbours within itself the ability to transcend it. Rojcewicz quotes from Heidegger: 'Yet precisely because humans are challenged more originally than are the energies of nature, i.e., challenged into the realm of disposability, humans never become mere disposables. Since it is humans who carry on technology, they participate in disposability by way of a disclosive looking'.<sup>27</sup>

Given that the concealment is at the same time a kind of unconcealment,<sup>28</sup> one finds in Heidegger's apparent pessimism a great deal of philosophical hope.<sup>29</sup> To

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<sup>26</sup> Rojcewicz, *The Gods and Technology*, pp. 54-6. William J. Lovitt translates the word as 'revealing'; 'The Question Concerning Technology', *The Question Concerning Technology*, p. 11 n10.

<sup>27</sup> This is Rojcewicz's translation of 'The Question Concerning Technology', *The Gods and Technology*, p. 95.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Heidegger on metaphysics, 'Letter on Humanism', *Basic Writings*, p. 235 and on the truth, 'On the Essence of Truth', *Pathmarks*, p. 151.

<sup>29</sup> Joanna Hodge, 'Phenomenologies of Faith and Hope', *Journal of the British Society of Phenomenology* 37:1, (Jan 2006), pp. 37-52.

recall my comments on the Greek *peras* (limit) in previous chapters (e.g., VI, VIII, and IX), the double nature of a bounding limitation is that in circumscribing, it provokes reflection. Reflection is the means by which human beings then free themselves towards a possibility of being that moves beyond the limitation. This remark certainly holds true for Dasein and what I referred to as the central role it occupies as the being who is and thinks ek-statically, that is, outside and within temporality. But, there is something subtler at work that Heidegger brings to our attention in his later thinking.

In *Being and Time*, this uniquely human role was grounded in the phenomenological analysis of the “there” [*Da*].<sup>30</sup> In his later thinking the “there” is connected to the realm of givenness that bestows the “there” for existing. The “there” of being that gives rise to human thinking is, along this trajectory, related fundamentally to a mode of thanking for what has been given. In short, the primacy of understanding in the phenomenology of *Being and Time* allows for a further development of this primacy whose appropriate manner turns from self-disclosure to giving thanks:

Real thanks . . . never consists in that we ourselves come bearing gifts, and merely repay gift with gift. Pure thanks is rather that we simply think—think what is really and solely given, what is there to be thought.<sup>31</sup>

This ontology of thanking is evinced insofar as human understanding relies on something more fundamental than its own ability to determine, order and carry through tasks. The ability to act in any capacity—that is, the ability to see what and how to do in the “there” of being—presupposes that being gives itself to human being. In this respect, the notion of causation is radically altered. It is no longer conceived along the lines of efficient causality, where human beings conceive of themselves as the authoring agent there to create anew whatever it desires.<sup>32</sup> Rather,

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<sup>30</sup> ‘Dasein is its disclosedness’; *Being and Time*, H133.

<sup>31</sup> *What Is Called Thinking?* p. 143.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. MacIntyre’s critique of modern liberalism which makes individual desire (“I want”) the premise for rational action; *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* pp. 338-9. This, according to MacIntyre, is radically new since individual desire was traditionally held to be adequate for expressing reasons for an action, but it was not the premise for rational action as such.

causation refers to an indebtedness that is responsible in some way to the givenness that gives itself. To recall Jean Greisch's comment quoted earlier (Chapter VII): 'Between "there is" [Dasein] and *es gibt* [It gives] no passage is possible'.<sup>33</sup> That is to say, between human being and being as such, no gap actually and ontologically exists. Human being arrives too late to think otherwise.

It is clear from the foregoing analysis that Heidegger interprets *aition* as indebtedness, but not simply as obligation or repayment. 'What we call cause,' writes Heidegger, '. . . is called *aition* by the Greeks, that to which something is indebted. The four causes are the ways, all belonging at once to each other, of being responsible for something else'.<sup>34</sup> The nature of this indebtedness is not like a promissory note where human being is placed within a legalistic commitment to repay someone or something else. The indebtedness is one of being responsible to that which has allowed for such an emerging to occur, that is, that which lies underneath the emerging of being [*hypokeimenon*]. The bond of the indebtedness determines how one engages in the act of *poiesis* itself. Heidegger expresses this as piety, a determination which becomes much clearer if one sees Aristotle's four *aitia* in terms of Heidegger's fourfold: divinities, mortals, earth, and sky.<sup>35</sup>

Mortals are the nurturing, or efficient, *aition* who engage in *poiesis*. Divinities are the realm of the final cause to which a thing finds its dedicated purpose. Earth is the realm of matter, the primordial material by which something greater than *phusis* emerges through human *techne*. Sky is the realm of form as it gives shape to all things by virtue of the horizon and how things, such as a cup, cannot have form without the emptiness that allows it to receive water. To recall Heidegger's description of a jug according to the fourfold:

The holding of the vessel occurs in the giving of the outpouring. The spring stays on in the water of the gift. In the spring the rock dwells, and in the rock dwells the dark slumber of the earth, which receives the rain and dew of the

<sup>33</sup> As quoted in Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor*, p. 334, from Greisch, 'Les mots et les roses. La métaphore chez Martin Heidegger', *Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques* 57:3 (Paris, Vrin, July 1973), p. 473.

<sup>34</sup> 'The Question Concerning Technology', *The Question Concerning Technology*, p. 7.

<sup>35</sup> In my research I have not found a scholar in the Anglo-Saxon literature who has made this connection. Certainly, I was expecting to find such a relation in Rojewicz's book, *The Gods and Technology*, but did not. This may be because he concentrates mostly on Heidegger's essay on technology and not on such essays as 'The Thing'.



sky. In the water of the spring dwells the marriage of sky and earth. It stays in the wine given by the fruit of the vine, the fruit in which the earth's nourishment and the sky's sun are betrothed to one another. In the gift of water, in the gift of wine, sky and earth dwell. But the gift of the outpouring is what makes the jug a jug. In the jugness of the jug, sky and earth dwell. The gift is the pouring out as drink for mortals. It quenches their thirst. It refreshes their leisure. It enlivens their conviviality. But the jug's gift is at times also given for consecration. If the pouring is for consecration, then it does not still a thirst. It stills and elevates the celebration of feast. The gift of the pouring is now neither given in an inn nor is the poured gift a drink for mortals. The outpouring is the libation poured out for the immortal gods. The gift of outpouring as libation is the authentic gift. In giving the consecrated libation, the pouring jug occurs as the giving gift.<sup>36</sup>

While this manner of indebtedness can be described as a kind of religious or mystical piety,<sup>37</sup> one must note first that for Heidegger this description arises through the thinking of being, and in this respect, consistently emerges from his original phenomenological and fundamental ontological endeavours.<sup>38</sup> In other words, Heidegger sees this piety arising through the very openness of thinking itself and not through an inheritance of unquestioned theological doctrine or nostalgia, or what would have been in Heidegger's early thinking called an ontic, positive science.<sup>39</sup>

*b) use and the unfolding of historical destiny*

The depth of Heidegger's notion of the thankfulness inhering in being is further evinced in his lectures on early Greek thinking, in particular his interpretation of Anaximander's fragment. The Diels translation of this fragment runs:

<sup>36</sup> Heidegger, Martin, "The Thing," *Poetry, Language, Thought*, pp. 172-3.

<sup>37</sup> 'The Question Concerning Technology', *The Question Concerning Technology*, p. 35; cf. Rojcewicz, *The Gods and Technology*, pp. 207-8. Cf. David Halliburton, *Poetic Thinking: An Approach to Heidegger*, pp. 216-17.

<sup>38</sup> As stated at the outset in the Introduction, I interpret the whole of Heidegger within a unified project. Where Heidegger's fundamental ontology is left behind concerns the notion of overcoming which, as Iain Thomson shows, was replaced by the passive *gelassenheit* because Heidegger learned from his mistake of attempting to enforce university reform through the Nazi party. See his 'Heidegger and the Politics of the University', *Journal for the History of Philosophy* 41:4, (Oct 2005), pp. 515-42.

<sup>39</sup> Heidegger, 'Phenomenology and Theology', *Pathmarks*, pp. 45-50; for his claim that his method is consistent with phenomenology, see especially p. 57.

But where things have their origin, there too their passing away occurs according to necessity; for they pay recompense and penalty to one another for their recklessness, according to firmly established time.<sup>40</sup>

Taken superficially, this fragment seems to be an observation of how time is related to the decay of things which return to their origin, or base elements. Hence, Simplicius reads the fragment as a poetic, but nonetheless scientific, exposition of how different elements constitute the origin of all things into which, by necessity, these things return.<sup>41</sup> Heidegger, however and as he is notorious for, reads the fragment “ontologically”. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to enter into a debate concerning Heidegger’s philological accuracy, and I would like to concentrate instead on what Heidegger interprets from the fragment. This shift centers on what we can see in Heidegger’s thinking and away from whether or not Heidegger’s historical recursion is accurate.<sup>42</sup> If every act of translating is an act of interpretation,<sup>43</sup> I wish to focus on how Heidegger interprets the fragment in order to see more clearly his thinking on human use in relation to being itself.

Without retracing the arduous path by which Heidegger arrives at his own translation of Anaximander’s fragment, I will provide his translation first and then discuss the significant changes and insights behind these changes. Heidegger offers the following:

But that from which things arise also gives rise to their passing away along the lines of usage; for they let order and thereby also reck belong to one another (in the surmounting) of disorder.<sup>44</sup>

The first significant change is the removal of the phrase ‘according to necessity’, taken from the Greek *kata to chreon*. Heidegger sees in the Greek the need to translate the phrase according to the word *chre*, that is, use. Hence, he writes ‘along the lines

<sup>40</sup> As quoted in Heidegger, ‘The Anaximander Fragment’, *Early Greek Thinking*, p. 13.

<sup>41</sup> *Commentary of Aristotle’s ‘Physics’*, CAG IX, 24.14-25 as quoted in *The First Philosophers*, p. 14.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. Jeff Malpas, *Heidegger’s Topology: Being, Place, World*, p. 36.

<sup>43</sup> See, for instance, MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* pp. 384-8. Heidegger’s entire lecture on Anaximander is an argument for his translation as it attempts to think the meanings of the words within their ancient Greek origins.

<sup>44</sup> He does not translate the passage all at once, and so here I have joined together the argument and analysis for his translation from several pages; ‘The Anaximander Fragment’, *Early Greek Thinking*, pp. 40-58. My italics.

of usage' when translating this phrase. 'Chreon is derived from *chrao*, *chraomai*. It suggests . . . the hand; *chrao* means: I get involved with something, I reach for it, extend my hand to it'.<sup>45</sup> From this Heidegger asserts that this handing over is not an imperative, of 'what "must be"'.<sup>46</sup> This ability to extend the hand is reliant on a more primordial relation. "To use", says Heidegger, is to allow something to come into fruition.<sup>47</sup> Indeed, elsewhere Heidegger says *chre* (use) is safe-keeping since it allows something to lie before one and emerge.<sup>48</sup> Use, as Heidegger goes on to show through the relation of *chreon* to *dike* in the fragment, is co-emergent with the order of the cosmos. In other words, the primordial fruition of being that comes to presence in use is intrinsic to the cosmos as order. Heidegger summarises this pithily as 'Order is *kata to chreon*',<sup>49</sup> that is to say, order follows along the lines of usage.

Using, thought of in this way, is no longer, is never the effect of man's doing. But conversely, all mortal doing belongs within the realm in which the *chre* makes its appeal. Using commends the used thing to its own nature and essence.<sup>50</sup>

If order is integral to use, then what follows is that appropriate use will render proportionate consequences according to this order. Likewise, misuse (whatever this may be) will render tragic consequences. To recall MacIntyre's observation: 'The cosmic order can be transgressed, but the consequences of transgression are themselves signs of that same order'.<sup>51</sup>

It is in this spirit, so I am arguing, that Heidegger (or rather the English translators of Heidegger) introduces 'reck', denoting the inter-communication between things and human beings. If the things used by humans attest to the

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<sup>45</sup> 'The Anaximander Fragment', *Early Greek Thinking*, p. 51. Cf. Van Johnson on the etymological closeness of *chresis* and *chreia*—that is, what is conventionally translated as use and need; 'Aristotle's Theory of Value', *The American Journal of Philology*, 60:4 (1939), p. 448.

<sup>46</sup> 'The Anaximander Fragment', *Early Greek Thinking*, p. 52. Cf. Heidegger, *What Is Called Thinking?* p. 186.

<sup>47</sup> 'The Anaximander Fragment', *Early Greek Thinking*, p. 53.

<sup>48</sup> *What Is Called Thinking?* p. 192.

<sup>49</sup> 'The Anaximander Fragment', *Early Greek Thinking*, p. 49. In his book, *The Incarnality of Being: The Earth, Animals, and the Body in Heidegger's Thought*, Frank Schalow inverts the ontological understanding of use. Schalow, instead, sees use arising from technological and equipmental involvement (p. 33). In contrast, I am arguing that use does not arise after but is co-emergent with an interpretation of being.

<sup>50</sup> *What Is Called Thinking*, p. 196; cf. pp. 187 & 191.

<sup>51</sup> *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* p. 23.

ordering of the cosmos, then it is by virtue of this use (or misuse) that other things are cared for (reck) and further articulated and actualised in being.<sup>52</sup> Heidegger's translation interprets the fragment as offering an insight into the nature of reality, being and the cosmos as it stands in relation to human being.<sup>53</sup> Furthermore, because human use (or misuse) is itself an attestation to the cosmic order, it means that human beings are responsible and indebted to this order because it is pre-given, pre-established and pre-dictating (proclaiming beforehand), though not pre-determined. Order does not negate human freedom but can be seen as its complement insofar as for there to be order for the human being, there must also be the free capacity of human being to stand apart from order to be able to recognise it. This tension is what I encapsulated in another way in Chapter VI as the ontological disproportion within the pre-giveness of being.<sup>54</sup>

For Heidegger, the enactment of human use and misuse is actualised and sedimented in history and subsequently emphasises a narrative quality in terms of revealing a destiny.<sup>55</sup> He sees *moira*, or what is apportioned out as destiny, as playing out, or presencing, being according to human use: 'Apportionment is the dispensation of presencing, as the presencing of what is present, which is gathered in itself and therefore unfolds of itself. *Moira* is the destining of "Being"'.<sup>56</sup> Use and misuse become apparent only in terms of a self-reflection on what has been revealed. That is to say, it reveals the human mode of thanking which, of course, can be thankless:

In the sending of the destiny of Being, in the extending of time, there becomes manifest a dedication, a delivering over into what is their own, namely of Being as presence and of time as the realm of the open.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Rojcewicz, *The Gods and Technology*, pp. 136-9.

<sup>53</sup> Anaximander's fragment is often interpreted as being scientific since, according to Charles Kahn, he initiated in Western history *περί φύσεως ιστορία*--i.e., 'the investigation of Nature'; *Anaximander and the Origins of Greek Cosmology*, p. 3.

<sup>54</sup> For an understanding of the paradoxical yet non-contradicting relation between order and freedom, see Bernard Williams, *Shame and Necessity* and the section on 'Freedom and Destiny' in Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. 1.

<sup>55</sup> Dreyfus, 'History of the Being of Equipment', *Heidegger: A Critical Reader*, p. 176.

<sup>56</sup> Heidegger, 'Moira (Parmenides VIII, 34-41)', *Early Greek Thinking*, p. 97.

<sup>57</sup> Heidegger, *On Time and Being*, p. 19.

The 'open' refers to the manner in which human thinking and action opens the world and declares a manner of belonging within and to being. This is the event of appropriation [*Ereignis*] which I will address later. But for now, we should note that *techne* not only makes and produces but reveals the manner of caring involved in the use it takes up as its theme. This is why Rojcewicz insists that human beings stand within the enframing of disposability but also, by virtue of their disclosive gaze, can reveal another manner of being more appropriate to the given order of things. What is destined, in this sense, is that which is consequential to the manner of human use and how it is seen.<sup>58</sup> But *techne* cannot in and of itself see this. Only *theoria* can, and this is why the useless realm of *theoria* becomes, as it were, the most pertinent or useful. But how should this relation be carried out? Heidegger's interpretation of Anaximander's fragment only attests to the relation and not "the how" of paying heed and giving thanks. Can Heidegger's account of the jug, for instance, become something more than an alternative, ontological description?

### *Theoria, giving and openness*

The first step I propose is to see to what extent *theoria* inherently has thanking as its mode of contemplative activity. Let us recall that human production (*poiesis*) concerns a kind of knowing that is not self-reflexive (*techne*) since its focus is on technique and skill. However, because use is implicit in the production of artefacts, *poiesis* is linked to the broader domain of human action (*praxis*) wherein one deliberates (*phronesis*) how to attain an end but also recognises that this manner of attaining occurs within a larger, theoretical interpretation of the meaning of being. Use calls into question the appropriateness of use, the "why" of its being used, and the overall relationship such use engenders as it stands to nature, other human beings and the future. Hence, complimenting *poiesis* and *praxis* is the theoretical domain which places production and use within a larger ontological milieu

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<sup>58</sup> In this sense, Heidegger speaks of *ergon*, 'The Anaximander Fragment', *Early Greek Thinking*, p. 56. Cf. 'Building Dwelling Thinking', *Poetry, Language, Thought*, p. 157: 'Even when mortals turn "inward," taking stock of themselves, they do not leave behind their belonging to the fourfold. . . . Indeed, the loss of rapport with things that occurs in states of depression would be wholly impossible if even such a state were not still what it is as a human state'.

concerned with the meaning of being. However, because the nature of *theoria* is to contemplate ontological meaning as such, it cannot have ties or obligations to having direct applicability to practical concerns. *Theoria*, in this sense, sustains the general disposition towards reality itself. As I have argued, the modern disposition is one characterised by dominance and control, something that inevitably occurs when there is a mis-relationship to *theoria*.<sup>59</sup>

Ricoeur speaks of *theoria* in terms of a contemplative space that is 'without resistance' and is set alongside work:

one selects for it [work] a contrary which is too remote, too vague, and, in short, one which is visionary and foreign to the human condition: contemplation. This does not mean a human contemplation which is pragmatic, but *pure* contemplation, the gaze which would make itself present to everything in the instant, vision without effort because it is without resistance, possession without duration because it is without effort. To identify existence with work amounts to excluding pure contemplation from the properly human condition.<sup>60</sup>

*Theoria*, in this respect, is the passive openness to what is pre-given in being. It concerns a manner of 'essential response', to use Heidegger's phrase: 'The essential response is only the beginning of a responsibility. In such responsibility, questioning awakens in a more originary manner'.<sup>61</sup> Described as an essential or originary responsibility, *theoria* exists as the contemplative ground upon which *praxis* and *poiesis* are subsequently shaped. The pre-giveness describes an ontological debt by which human beings make themselves appropriate to being prior to actual production. The giving that corresponds to *theoria* is not a giving by the human subject but a giving by something beyond it. As noted earlier, Heidegger refers to this as '*Es gibt*', or It gives/There is. It is Being that *gives* or *is there* prior to any

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<sup>59</sup> The whole of Heidegger's critique of metaphysics can be seen precisely as showing this mis-relationship that has, in turn, inspired many post-structural criticisms of metaphysics (e.g., Richard Rorty's dismissal of traditional epistemology and Derrida's critique of presence and logocentricity).

<sup>60</sup> 'Work and the Word', *History and Truth*, p. 199. Cf. Heidegger, 'The Age of the World Picture', *The Question Concerning Technology*, pp. 138-9 wherein he speaks of the 'ongoing' nature of scientific research which becomes the model of 'industrious activity' and yet can never question about anything outside its 'pursuing of its methodology'.

<sup>61</sup> 'Postscript to "What Is Metaphysics?"', *Pathmarks*, p. 232.

human act.<sup>62</sup> The recognition of this pre-giveness, which interestingly enough Heidegger traces back to the origins of memory [*Mnemosyne*],<sup>63</sup> is what, according to Julian Young, lies at the basis of human experience: 'To experience one's world as a holy place is . . . to inhabit the mood of cosmic gratitude, to 'give thanks' for the 'gift' of such a world and for one's existence in it'.<sup>64</sup>

It is by sustaining this linkage between being, gratitude and thinking that Heidegger etymologically and philosophically states that thanking [*thancan, danken*] is really thinking [*thancian, denken*].<sup>65</sup> Thinking arises because of the sense of thanks we have, that is, the sense of concern and care located in and dedicated to being:

The *thanc*, the heart's core, is the gathering of all that concerns us, all that we care for, all that touches us in the sense that it defines and determines our nature, what we care for, we might call contiguous or contact.<sup>66</sup>

Summarising Heidegger's movement of thought that unites thinking with thanking, John Caputo writes, 'The correct disposition of Dasein towards self-revelation of Being is "openness", which is "thinking" (*Seinsdenken*). Hence, Dasein's "gratitude" is "thinking"; its "thinking" (*Denken*) is "thanking" (*Danken*)'.<sup>67</sup>

But if this is so, the theoretical tribute to the pre-giveness of being is one that seeks further articulation through the corporeality of human action and interaction. That is to say, if *theoria* is the acknowledgement and openness to being as gift, this acknowledgement has yet to be inscribed in the locality of human action. It is important to emphasise, nonetheless, that because *theoria* has no direct correspondence to human action, the theoretical disposition should be seen as a disclosure or bearing *towards* being, that is, in the language of *Being and Time*, 'a *prior* interpretation' from which a manner of being-in-the-world is then possible.<sup>68</sup> This

<sup>62</sup> *On Time and Being*, pp. 16-18. Cf. Rojcewicz, *The Gods and Technology*, p. 208.

<sup>63</sup> *What Is Called Thinking?* pp. 10-11 & 138-43. Heidegger notes elsewhere that the phrase *es gibt* refers to Being already there which prevents one from thinking that a being is responsible for the alreadiness of being as such; 'Letter on Humanism', *Basic Writings*, p. 238 and *On Time and Being*, pp. 18-19.

<sup>64</sup> *Heidegger's Philosophy of Art*, p. 105.

<sup>65</sup> *What Is Called Thinking?* p. 138ff.

<sup>66</sup> *What Is Called Thinking?* p. 144. Cf. Goodchild, *Capitalism and Religion*, pp. 103-4.

<sup>67</sup> *The Mystical Element in Heidegger's Thought*, p. 250.

<sup>68</sup> *Being and Time*, H62. *Italics* in original. I must stress that my interpretation of *Being and Time* is one that sees Heidegger's critique of *theoria* as not a critique of it *per se*, but a destructing of its conventional



disposition, as Heidegger takes pains to show over and over again, can be a conscious one where 'Reflection is the courage to make the truth of our own presuppositions and the realm of our own goals into the things that most deserve to be called into question'.<sup>69</sup> Or, it can be an oblivious one that succumbs to a nihilistic regard for being.<sup>70</sup> In any case, this disposition is that which grounds an age, and one can say that an epoch of history, that we can identify in terms of its philosophical presuppositions, is defined by the way in which humanity attests to what is most worthy. This is not to say that there is a simple conformity to this worthiness, but that even in disagreement and rebellion against a prevailing conception of worth, there is a dominant discourse of what worth is that fashions subsequent thinking in terms of a reaction against it (e.g., modernism v. postmodernism).

This suggests that an ontology of meaning by which human understanding comes to interpret its life-world remains perpetually on insecure grounds.<sup>71</sup> As Ricoeur notes, interpretation is the core of this ontology of meaning:

The ontology proposed here is in no way separable from interpretation; it is caught inside the circle formed by the conjunction of the work of interpretation and the interpreted being. It is thus not a triumphant ontology at all . . . since it is unable to avoid the *risk* of interpretation.<sup>72</sup>

There is not only a contrast here that I wish to bring to mind with Marx's declaration, that the point is to change and not interpret the world, since the intent to change

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meaning as a thematic mode of knowing. Thus, the project of *Being and Time* is one of showing how Dasein does not have a thematic mode of understanding as its primary way of being, and therefore, the ground that Heidegger clears is one where *theoria* is destructed so it can be retrieved anew.

<sup>69</sup> 'The Age of the World Picture', *The Question Concerning Technology*, p. 116.

<sup>70</sup> Dorothea Frede identifies two aspects of this oblivion, or self-forgetting: 1) the concealing effect of everyday interpretations of being and reality that provide ready-to-hand understandings of "the They" [*das Man*]; and 2) theoretical representation that conceals the ontological nature of things in terms of temporality; 'The question of being: Heidegger's project', *The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger*, pp. 57-8.

<sup>71</sup> According to John Milbank, this is evinced in Kant's attempt to place aesthetic judgment outside the flux of time: 'Prior to any theoretical grasp of objectivity, and as the pre-condition for it, the aesthetic judgment isolates a discrete object snatched from the continuum of time, and thereby actually occludes—as Kant astonishingly admits—the reality of this flux'; 'Beauty and the Soul', *Theological Perspectives on God and Beauty*, p. 5. He refers to Kant's *Critique of Judgment*, trans. J.C. Meredith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp. 105-9. Cf. Philip Goodchild, *Capitalism and Religion*, p. 131. For a discussion on the role of the unsecurable ground [*Abgrund*] see Karsten Harries, 'Heidegger as a Political Thinker', *Heidegger and Modern Philosophy*, p. 322.

<sup>72</sup> 'Existence and Hermeneutics', *The Conflict of Interpretations*, p. 23. *Italics* in original.

declares that *an* interpretation has successfully secured the ontological ground. In addition, I want to point out that it is precisely the 'risk of interpretation' that, against the backdrop of temporality and finitude, discloses a unique kind of reflective ground. In other words, if temporality in general constitutes the limits that threaten an understanding of being, it is by virtue of this exigency that the human being is brought to account for it by opening a space within time in which to do so. It is this opening, in reflectively accounting for temporality, that remains unconstrained by temporality; for the opening proffers a self-reflexive space by which it can stand in a more participatory relationship to it.<sup>73</sup> It is in this sense that we can re-appropriate the Greek notion of *theoria* as the highest form of *praxis*. *Theoria* maintains the human bond to the pre-given being, free of necessity.<sup>74</sup>

The gift of being, by virtue of being a gift, cannot necessitate any particular action. Though it does provoke the response of thanks, this response is one that must be undertaken deliberately—that is, according to its own will—by the free, human subject. This is not to say, as Derrida does, that we should not acknowledge givenness at all. In over-determining the *gratis* nature of gift, he observes, 'For there to be a gift, there must be no reciprocity, return, exchange, counter-gift, or debt . . . . For there to be a gift, *it is necessary* that the donee not give back, amortize, reimburse'; and later, 'It is thus necessary, at the limit, that he [the donee] not *recognize* the gift as gift'.<sup>75</sup> While Goodchild points out that Derrida's argument is situated within a critique of commodification and the reduction of things to exchange value,<sup>76</sup> we see here at the same time the aspect of Derrida's thinking that is often criticised for being

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<sup>73</sup> This concerns the nature of historicity which can be interpreted as an infinite regress into historical causes or hermeneutically as the confrontation between past and present in order to clarify both. For fuller account of this, see my 'Commitment and Communication: The Aesthetics of Receptivity and Historicity', *Contemporary Aesthetics*, 4 (2006); accessed May 27, 2006, available at <http://www.contempaesthetics.org/newvolume/pages/article.php?articleID=407>.

<sup>74</sup> 'The Question Concerning Technology', *The Question Concerning Technology*, p. 164.

<sup>75</sup> *Given Time: I. Counterfeit Money*, pp. 12-13, respectively, as cited in Goodchild, *Capitalism and Religion*, p. 114. Cf. Derrida, 'Sauf le nom', *On the Name*, pp. 68 & 85. This critique of gift and exchange was first made popular by Marcel Mauss as, for example, in *The Gift: Form and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Studies*, trans. W.D. Halls (New York: W.W. Norton, 1990).

<sup>76</sup> *Capitalism and Religion*, pp. 114-15. Derrida's notion of gift is therefore set against Claude Lévi-Strauss's conception of gift as reciprocity; 'The Principle of Reciprocity', *The Gift: An Interdisciplinary Perspective*, pp. 18-25.

over-enthusiastically tied to a deconstructive emptiness and infinite regress.<sup>77</sup> Whether or not Derrida is liable to such accusations is another matter, and it seems in this case that the superlative negativity he attributes to gift is reacting against an economy of equivalence. Equivalence reduces encounter and occasion to simple reciprocation vis-a-vis the principle of reason, wherein all things are reflected and rebounded off one another within a one-dimensionality.<sup>78</sup> W. David Hall summarises Derrida's position as one where '[g]ift stands as the irreducible (and impossible) other of economy, fundamentally an *aneconomic* phenomenon'.<sup>79</sup> In any event, Derrida's over-determination of the nature of gift is entirely different from Heidegger's understanding.<sup>80</sup>

Heidegger sees thinking (*theoria*) as the proper form of response to gift. This is because gift is not a response tied to recompense but an offering. Its

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<sup>77</sup> For instance, John Milbank refers to Derrida's thinking on gift as a 'positive nihilism'; 'Can a Gift Be Given? Prolegomena to a Future Trinitarian Metaphysics', *Modern Theology* 2:1, (Jan 1995), p. 132. See also M.C. Dillon, *Semiological Reductionism: A Critique of the Deconstructionist Movement in Postmodern Thought*, pp. 149-63 and David Roodnik, *The Tragedy of Reason: Toward a Platonic Conception of Logos*, pp. 154-6. For critical discussions of how Derrida's thinking is mistakenly aligned to relativism, see Christopher Norris, *Derrida*, pp. 170 & 228-37, *Against Relativism: Philosophy of Science, Deconstruction and Critical Theory*, pp. 11-18 and Rodolphe Gasché, *Inventions of Difference: On Jacques Derrida*. For discussion in reference to Habermas' debate with Derrida, see Christopher Norris, 'Deconstruction, Postmodernism and Philosophy: Habermas on Derrida', *Derrida: A Critical Reader*, pp. 167-92.

<sup>78</sup> Derrida, 'The Principle of Reason: The University in the Eyes of Its Pupils', *Diacritics* 13:3, (Fall 1983), p. 9.

<sup>79</sup> 'The Economy of the Gift: Paul Ricoeur's Redescription of Reality', *Literature and Theology* 20:2, (June 2006), p. 191.

<sup>80</sup> See Derrida on *es gibt*, 'Sauf le nom', *On the Name*, p. 56. Charles Spinosa points out that Derrida cannot accept bestowal and gift as actions of 'authentic temporalizing', or of *différance*, because it inevitably conceals 'the radical unexperientable quality of the shift' from mere presence to seeing difference ['Derrida and Heidegger: Iterability and *Ereignis*', *Heidegger: A Critical Reader*, p. 280 & 292]. In this respect, one can see how Derrida constantly invokes a negative repulsion towards the sedimentation of meaning. Without opening a debate about Derrida, I believe it is accurate for the intents and purposes of this chapter to point out that Heidegger locates adaptability of an interpretation within the regard one has for being as such. Hence, appropriation is the central event, and Heidegger takes pains to show the revealing-concealing play of being is the main hermeneutical obstacle we must face. Derrida, on the other hand, places this onus within language itself so that no form of writing (and especially speech) can ultimately contain the open relation that is *différance*. Hence, Derrida takes great pains to show how language betrays the intended meaning of the speaker in iterability. Spinosa points out that Derrida accuses Heidegger of concentrating only on speech when speaking about language [*Ibid.*, p. 287]. On the difference between Heidegger and Derrida with respect to being and language, see Gadamer, 'Destruction and Deconstruction', *Dialogue and Deconstruction: The Gadamer-Derrida Encounter*, p. 112, Herman Rappaport, *Heidegger and Derrida: Reflections on Time and Language*, pp. 57-67 and Richard Polt, *The Emergency of Being: On Heidegger's Contributions to Philosophy*, pp. 121-3. It should be noted that John Milbank sees Derrida's philosophy of gift as derivative of Heidegger's emphasis on the nothing ['Can a Gift Be Given? Prolegomena to a Future Trinitarian Metaphysics', *Modern Theology* 2:1, (Jan 1995), pp. 119-61], but Milbank's interpretation of Heidegger is more or less consistent with those scholars who see his ontology as wanting to overcome and do away with metaphysics.

acknowledgment occurs as an offering in the form of a free mediation unbound from necessity. Hence, the free nature of gift elicits an appropriately (but not proportionately) free offering in thinking, that is, *theoria*.

This thinking which recalls, and which *qua* thinking alone is true thanks, does not need to repay, nor be deserved, in order to give thanks. Such thanks is not a recompense; but it remains an offering; and only by this offering do we allow that which properly gives food for thought to remain what it is in its essential nature.<sup>81</sup>

Heidegger's language undeniably calls up imagery and significance associated with ritual and sacrifice, and I will turn to this in looking at *poiesis* and repetition. For now, what is crucial to mark is that Heidegger sees thinking as the proper mode of thanks because it alone can remain free to think and recall the original gift of being that precedes human being. This recollection then becomes the manner which determines human dwelling and the way in which human being thinks difference. That is to say, human being dwells in thanks so long as *theoria* remains unfettered by necessity and any necessary determinations that predicate how one is to think difference. To phrase the importance of thinking and gift in Heidegger's language, one might say that the *offering* of thinking *occasions* human *dwelling*.<sup>82</sup> One can see how thinking (*theoria*) is, when understood in this way, the fundamental orientation towards being that is presupposed by any practical and poetical endeavour.

### **Praxis, receiving and individuation**

In order to see how the theoretical openness becomes inscribed in human action, we must first broaden the significance of *praxis* which, in the previous chapter, was linked to being-towards-death. This I propose to do in terms of Heidegger's later reflection on appropriation. I will proceed from his notion of reference in *Being and Time* and show how it leads in the more positive, or hopeful,<sup>83</sup> direction of his later

<sup>81</sup> *What Is Called Thinking?* p. 146; cf. p. 151.

<sup>82</sup> Cf. 'Building Dwelling Thinking', *Poetry, Language, Thought*, pp. 156-7.

<sup>83</sup> For a critique of the limitations of philosophical hope in *Being and Time*, see James Dodd, 'The Philosophical Significance of Hope', *The Review of Metaphysics*, 58:1 (September 2004), pp. 117-146. Against Dodd's position, see Joanna Hodge, 'Phenomenologies of Faith and Hope', *Journal of the British Society of Phenomenology* 37:1, (Jan 2006), pp. 37-52.

thinking concerning a participatory belongingness that is a mutually articulating relationship between human beings and being itself—that is, *Ereignis*, or Appropriation. Ricoeur summarises this shift as one where the self no longer finds ‘its authenticity in freedom for death but in *Gelassenheit* [releasement, openness, letting be], which is the gift of a poetic life’.<sup>84</sup> In short, my argument is that being and human being require one another in their ontological development. However, this mutuality is not on equal footing since the activity of human beings is defined by thanking and the activity of being as giving. In this way, theoretical openness comes to exist in *praxical* terms as a unique, individuated relation to being where one’s work is a specific form of thanking, continuously indebted to that which it thanks. Here, as mentioned earlier, is the moment when *praxis* is expanded beyond the concern for finitude, towards openness. Or, one can say, in combing the language of releasement [*Gelassenheit*] with *Being and Time*, Dasein’s concerned mode of understanding in *praxis* is released towards the pre-givenness of being. This releasement marks the essential nature of human dwelling.

*a) receiving and referentiality*

Ontologically, the phenomenon of self-referentiality is possible only because something in advance is apprehended as the backdrop against which one interprets oneself. In other words, self-reference is ultimately “referred” to something other than the self. While self-reference constitutes, on the one hand, the means by which one comes to interpret oneself, it stands, on the other hand, dialectically opposed to a totality of signification according to which one’s self-understanding has meaning. In *Being and Time*, the referent against which one interprets oneself is the ontological phenomenon of the world: ‘In that it *is*, Dasein has always already referred itself to an encounter with a “world.” This *dependency of being referred* belongs essentially to its being’.<sup>85</sup> Dasein’s self-understanding is correlative to its interpretation of the world.<sup>86</sup> How it understands the self and its range of possibilities is mirrored in how

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<sup>84</sup> ‘Heidegger and the Subject’, *A Conflict of Interpretations*, p. 235.

<sup>85</sup> *Being and Time*, H87. *Italics* in original.

<sup>86</sup> Peter Kemp points out that Ricoeur takes up this theme in Heidegger in terms of how the world should not be seen as the obstacle that must conform to human reason (i.e., correspondence), but rather

it understands the depth and possibilities of the world. Because this manner of encountering is contiguous with the presencing of human being, it follows an ascending road of clarification. So the process of self-reference is dialectical and occurs within the hermeneutical circle where each pole—of the self and the world—mutually illuminates the other.<sup>87</sup> In his later writings, Heidegger no longer speaks of the world as the totality of signification but instead being. This is due partly because world is a phenomenological concept and Heidegger is concerned in his later writings not with a phenomenology but a direct meditation on the nature of being.<sup>88</sup> Heidegger thus observes, 'But man's distinctive feature lies in this, that he, as the being who thinks, is open to Being, face to face with Being; thus man remains *referred* to Being and so answers to it'.<sup>89</sup>

What this suggests for the act of receiving is that it is possible because the person who is to receive has opened him/herself in advance. In short, the receiver must face the giver, and therefore, one can receive only to the extent that one has given oneself over to that which bestows. We can see here how *praxis* further relates to *theoria*. The praxical level of action cannot receive an interpretation of how to act (for-the-sake-of-which) unless at the theoretical level it has made itself open to the pre-giveness of being. This pre-giveness does not direct itself like an imperative according to which the human subject must respond; rather, it is the ground upon which a stance within and towards being is made: 'All thinking that recalls what can be recalled in thought already lives in that gathering which beforehand has in its keeping and keeps hidden all that remains to be thought'.<sup>90</sup>

For the earlier Heidegger the pre-giveness of being, as we saw in Chapter III, was phenomenologically apprehensible as the world, and it was praxically set within *possibility*. Not simply "a" possibility, that is, a plan or specific choice.

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world is the correlate of one's existence. It mirrors its understanding and possibilities; 'Ricoeur between Heidegger and Levinas', *Paul Ricoeur: The Hermeneutics of Action*, pp. 44-5.

<sup>87</sup> Dreyfus, 'Being-in-the-world', pp. 96-9, Charles Guignon, *Heidegger and the Problem of Knowledge*, pp. 93-4 and Mark Sinclair, *Heidegger, Aristotle and the Work of Art*, p. 57.

<sup>88</sup> William Richardson, as the title of his famous book suggests, argues that one of the differences between 'Heidegger I' (Heidegger pre-Kehre) and 'Heidegger II' is the move from phenomenology to thinking (or thanking being); *Heidegger: Through Phenomenology to Thought*, pp. 412-17.

<sup>89</sup> 'The Principle of Identity', *Identity and Difference*, p. 31. My italics.

<sup>90</sup> Heidegger, *What Is Called Thinking?* p.150. The relation between thinking and recalling (memory) is, for Heidegger, the 'originary expression' (p. 147) of human dwelling and therefore of thanking.

Possibilities of being do not merely refer to a range of choices but the phenomenon of possibility itself that is presented to humankind as a distinctive apprehension of being-towards-the-future and so determines the way in which one perceives how to live. 'It is rather,' states James Dodd, 'to have as an issue the manner in which one is to be, to have an understanding of what is at stake in being oriented to it'.<sup>91</sup> In the later Heidegger, the notion of possibility is replaced by the notion of appropriation [*Ereignis*], partly because the term possibility accorded itself to the traditional metaphysics in which the understanding of human will took pre-eminence over an openness to the presencing of being.<sup>92</sup>

*Ereignis* will be translated as Appropriation or event of Appropriation. One should bear in mind, however, that "event" is not simply an occurrence, but that which makes any occurrence possible.<sup>93</sup>

When Heidegger describes *Ereignis* as 'that which makes any occurrence possible', he is referring to a fundamental relationship in which a pre-given unity (or identity) expresses itself in being by means of difference. The 'occurrence', therefore, cannot occur unless the unity is at the same time different. In this respect, identity for Heidegger is not a simple unity but a complexified, or differentiated one, whose unity is a 'belonging together'. He refers to this identity as 'the Same'.<sup>94</sup> Joan Stambaugh comments that for Heidegger,

Identity is belonging-together. If the element of *together* in belonging-together is emphasized, we have the metaphysical concept of identity which orders the manifold into a unity mediated by synthesis. . . . But if the element of *belonging* in belonging-together is emphasized, we have thinking and Being held apart and at the same time held together (not fitted together) in the Same.<sup>95</sup>

<sup>91</sup> 'The Philosophical Significance of Hope', *The Review of Metaphysics* 58:1, (Sept. 2004), p. 125. Cf. Levinas, 'Time and the Other', *The Levinas Reader*, p. 40.

<sup>92</sup> Cf. *Ereignis* in Pöggeler, 'Being as Appropriation', *Heidegger and Modern Philosophy*, pp. 101-2 and Dupré's analysis of the separation between Divine Will and Divine Intellect during the Middle Ages and how the emergence of voluntarism tends towards a radical separation between human understanding and divine redemption; *Passage to Modernity*, pp. 167-89.

<sup>93</sup> Heidegger, *On Time and Being*, p. 19.

<sup>94</sup> 'The Principle of Identity', *Identity and Difference*, pp. 23-30.

<sup>95</sup> 'Introduction', *Identity and Difference*, pp. 12-13.



According to this, it is only by virtue of this difference in the Same that things can belong together through Dasein's reception of being and its capacity to think: 'Being itself, however, belongs to us; for only with us can Being be present as Being, that is, become present'.<sup>96</sup>

*b) individuation*

Applying the above analysis to the nature of *praxis*, one can say that appropriation refers to the event in which the pre-givenness of being is received and interpreted by Dasein. It is the sense of belonging together that forms the praxical application of Dasein to particular instances. It receives in the event of appropriation in order to render how it understands its life should be lived. This is expressed enigmatically by Heidegger when he says, 'Thus looking toward the present, beyond the situation of man, thinking sees the constellation of Being and man in terms of that which joins the two—by virtue of the event of appropriation'.<sup>97</sup> '[L]ooking toward the present' refers to the immediate orientation towards being that is metaphorically inscribed as the horizon. By referring to the present, as opposed to the 'situation of man', Heidegger suggests that a reflection on the present is the point at which 'a path would be open for man to experience beings in a more originary way'.<sup>98</sup>

Implicit in Heidegger's notion of appropriation is that both being and Dasein become more themselves. Appropriation, as a manner of making one's own, is a joint and mutual occasion. In appropriation, one can say that, on the one hand, being comes to fuller expression through the articulation of its presence in every ontic determination. On the other hand, the human being comes to fuller individuation—that is, Dasein becomes more itself—through this more in-depth encountering. Relating appropriation to my earlier analysis of destiny, one can see that any ontological identity (i.e., personhood) is vitally linked to how one sees what is deemed appropriate to be thought and done. This is suggested in Heidegger's allusion to technology at the end of his lecture on 'The Principle of Identity'. In his closing remarks he refers to the modern conception of nature as calculable and

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<sup>96</sup> 'The Principle of Identity', *Identity and Difference*, p. 33.

<sup>97</sup> 'The Principle of Identity', *Identity and Difference*, p. 40.

<sup>98</sup> 'The Principle of Identity', *Identity and Difference*, p. 40.

mechanistic: 'But what authority has decided that nature as such must forever *remain* the nature of modern physics'.<sup>99</sup> The interpretation of nature as calculable corresponds to the technological world-view in which things are merely disposable and at our will. The concealment of this reduction is that possible solutions, which must be posed first as questions, are determined by the calculable method. Hence, possible solutions are ones that have calculable answers, or as in the case with some environmental problems, technological ones. Heidegger questions this: 'Do *we* then have a right to the opinion that the thinking entry into the essential source of identity could be achieved in a day?'<sup>100</sup> In other words, the idea that such a solution can be enacted like a plan is part of the technological rationality that posits ends as if an equation or logic of action could easily accomplish it.

That *praxis* leads to a greater degree of individuation is, of course, at the heart of the role that MacIntyre ascribes to the Aristotelian virtues.<sup>101</sup> Similarly, according to Nussbaum, the centrality of suffering and tragic experience is important to Aristotle who saw fortune as integral to the realisation of the good life and thus refused to eliminate it.<sup>102</sup> Without *phronesis* the decisions by which one relates an immediate situation to the whole of one's life and the lives of others would be reduced to pre-reflective reaction. MacIntyre has argued along similar lines that when an understanding of virtues is eliminated or absent from a tradition, the general effect is a stoic reaction to positive laws—i.e., where one adheres to the law at the cost of suppressing the self.<sup>103</sup> This is because an understanding of virtues, in particular *phronesis*, allows for the expression of common goods within a community and tradition. This is, of course, not to say there is a simple conformity. The presence of the virtues, rather, provides an individual, self-reflexive grounding of the laws a society establishes. One does not suppress the self in this grounding but articulates the self in interpreting the laws.<sup>104</sup> This suggests that individuation gains a greater potential of being realised only when a greater apprehension of the whole

<sup>99</sup> 'The Principle of Identity', *Identity and Difference*, p. 40. *Italics* in original.

<sup>100</sup> 'The Principle of Identity', *Identity and Difference*, p. 41. *Italics* in original.

<sup>101</sup> *After Virtue*, pp. 170-2.

<sup>102</sup> *The Fragility of Goodness*, p. 353.

<sup>103</sup> *After Virtue*, p. 170.

<sup>104</sup> See Gadamer's analysis of legal hermeneutics as the prime example of practical science; *Truth and Method*, pp. 324-41.

occurs. One can see, for example, that a life defined by survival articulates a truncated understanding of human being as opposed to a life defined by political participation and negotiation—that is, what was the very demarcation between the non-citizen and the citizen of the *polis* for the Greeks.<sup>105</sup> For Heidegger, being open to the pre-givenness of things is the apex of this apprehension. This is because in giving itself over to that which precedes it, Dasein opens itself towards the greatest possibility that is commensurate with being itself. The suggestion here is that where and when Dasein is open to the pre-givenness of being, its manner of thinking is in accord with, or appropriate to, that which has allowed it to be.<sup>106</sup>

Extending the foregoing analysis to use, one finds that praxical action always stands in regard to different levels of use according to which one is willing to enlarge the narrative in which different use relations can occur. The broadening of the narrative scope according to which one can analyse human action is essentially—that is, at the ontological level—a means of self-reference. It is a self-referentiality bound up with the problematic of the degree to which human actions are held responsible. Under this premise, appeals to functionality waver since what would present itself as the immediate, practical need is undermined by further consideration of extended relationships. For example, the use of a car to get oneself from one point to another depicts a self-referentiality concerned with functional ends. When this functionalism is set against concerns for the environment, the boundaries of signification take on an entirely different meaning. The car is no longer a vehicle that serves a practical function (e.g., to get to work) but is now a main contributor to environmental destruction (e.g., emission of carbon-based gases and the depletion of fossil fuels).<sup>107</sup> Furthermore, it is not only that one's own practices come into question, but as well, the scope of those who are involved is enlarged to others who drive, the automobile industry, the politicians who can legislate new environmental policies, future generations who will inhabit the earth and so on.

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<sup>105</sup> Arendt, *The Human Condition*, pp. 12-17.

<sup>106</sup> Cf. Caputo, *The Mystical Element in Heidegger's Thought*, p. 249.

<sup>107</sup> Cf. Zimmerman on Heidegger and ecology, 'Heidegger, Buddhism, and deep ecology', *The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger*, pp. 260-4.

In every case where use is applied, use is not simply a human being applying or making use of something else in order to do something. Rather, it is a way of interpreting one's relation to the world, others and, indeed, being as such. So what becomes vital in any manner of participation with things in human use is the reciprocal bond between *praxis* and *theoria*; or as I expressed earlier, the extent to which receiving is understood as being predicated upon an openness to the pre-giveness of being. This decisive orientation to openness and what is pre-given is, for Heidegger, a manner of safe-keeping that becomes the essential way in which human beings can give back, or return.<sup>108</sup> What this suggests, at the level of *poiesis*, is that the relation of *praxis* to work (*poiesis*) designates this openness as that which guides the hand, so to speak. This should be contrasted to the assumptions of contemporary attitudes that see work as being oriented towards efficiency since it confines any gesture of the hand to a means-ends system.

#### ***Poiesis*, returning and repetition**

Use finds its direct application in the realm of *poiesis* since it is here that every instance of rendering through poetic activity comes into a manner of being used, applied and directed. If Dasein has as its mode of being an interpretive intentionality, then the human hand that makes and renders is vitally a part of this ontological comportment. For Heidegger this relationship is so vital that in his later thinking a reversal appears to take place. He locates the realm of thinking *in* the poetic—that is to say, thinking has as its subject of meditation not eternal principles (i.e., *theoretical knowledge*) but the very matter involved in the human being's relationship to the world. 'All work of the hand,' writes Heidegger, 'is rooted in thinking. Therefore, thinking itself is man's simplest, and for that reason hardest, handiwork, if it would be accomplished at its proper time'.<sup>109</sup> However, this identification of thinking with the poetic—or what has often been referred to as

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<sup>108</sup> *What Is Called Thinking?* p. 151. Cf. Pierre Defourny when he writes that *phronesis* 'is the activity of understanding which is both immersed in study of the divine and simultaneously the guiding principle of moral action'; 'Contemplation in Aristotle's Ethics', *Articles on Aristotle*, p. 107.

<sup>109</sup> *What Is Called Thinking?* pp. 16-17.

'poetic thinking'<sup>110</sup>—is not the usurpation of *theoria per se*.<sup>111</sup> To relate my argument in the previous chapter, one can say that the hermeneutical unity of the intellectual virtues explicitly acknowledges and therefore seeks to disclose the openness witnessed by *theoria* in the everyday activities of the poetic.

*a) returning: interpretation and structuring*

One can define the activity of *poiesis* in terms of how it consciously understands the ground from which it renders and makes things appropriately for the needs expressed in and derivative of this interpretation. We can distinguish a phenomenological feature of *poiesis* that sets it apart from *theoria* and *praxis*. Insofar as *poiesis* renders and makes, it *interprets* reality and allows it to be accessible through its objects. This phenomenological feature marks a transition: namely, an understanding is made visible and public as a world-interpretation, that is, a world disclosure. Without *poiesis*, there would be no difference between nature (*phusis*) and human dwelling. There would be no phenomenon one could refer to as "world". The significance of the interpretative feature of *poiesis* implies that a more crucial distinction needs to be made since poetic activity attains a special transformative relation to being. In other words, is poetic activity simply transformation for the sake of the human self who identifies its needs biologically, historically, technologically and religiously? Or does this transformative feature require a further understanding of what is asked of human beings in *poiesis*?

Interpretation demands a certain relinquishment of the ego involved in the hermeneutical act. It was Gadamer who clearly articulated the role of prejudice in 'the fusion of horizons'—that is, how prejudice is actually the sign of openness to others and the world (Chapter III). At the level of *poiesis*, a similar event requires a suspension of the ego, or more accurately and following upon the preceding analysis

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<sup>110</sup> Cf. Heidegger, 'What Are Poets For?' *Poetry, Language, Thought*, p. 94. Véronique Fóti refers to 'poeticizing thinking' in *Heidegger and the Poets*, p. 14. Ronald Bruzina looks at this aspect of Heidegger in 'The Metaphor and Philosophy', *Heidegger and Modern Philosophy*, pp. 184-200. Jeff Malpas uses the phrase 'the poetry that thinks'; *Heidegger's Topology: Being, Place, World*, p. 211.

<sup>111</sup> Bruzina, 'The Metaphor and Philosophy', *Heidegger and Modern Philosophy*, p. 200: 'The metaphor is not proper philosophical expression, yet the metaphor, inexplicably, generates philosophical expression'. Ricoeur would speak of the speculative and metaphorical aspects of thinking; *The Rule of Metaphor*, pp. 300-3.

of causality, a suspension of the prejudice that the human subject is the efficient cause of the poetic process. It is here that the hermeneutical language of suspension is, in the later Heidegger, given overt mytho-poetic meaning in terms of sacrifice [*opfer*]. Sacrifice refers to the turning event (or appropriation) that turns away from calculative domination as a mode of being to an ontological releasement. This releasement is characterised by a self-emptying into being because being has given itself in order for humans to dwell.

In sacrifice there occurs [*ereignet sich*] the concealed thanks that alone pays homage to the grace that being has bestowed upon the human essence in thinking, so that human beings may, in their relation to being, assume the guardianship of being.<sup>112</sup>

There is a double meaning to sacrifice alighted upon by Heidegger in the last remark. The thanking of being in turn bestows upon human beings the role of guardianship, and, of course, this recalls his well-known statement that 'Man is the shepherd of being'.<sup>113</sup> However, Heidegger is not simply referring to the notion of humans as stewards who tend to being. Such an ascription would itself fall prey to a definition of human being that becomes oblivious to the essential response humans are at every moment witness to.<sup>114</sup> The guardianship referred to here, I suggest, is the same as what Rojcewicz noted in the act of nurturing, where the human agent does not perceive itself as being in control.<sup>115</sup> Human beings act in such a way as to further articulate being. It is the 'bursting open' of being 'in another', i.e., the craftsman.<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> 'Postscript to "What Is Metaphysics?"', *Pathmarks*, p. 236. Cf. Michael Zimmerman, *Heidegger's Confrontation with Modernity*, p. 237: 'Heidegger indicated that we must no longer conceive of space in terms of Kant's transcendental philosophy, namely, as spatial horizon—projected by the subject—in which objects can appear. Instead, we must learn to see that human understanding is itself "appropriated" (*ereignet*) by a region (*Gegend*) that transcends the merely human. Human openness arises within and from a greater, non-human "opening" or "region." The "region" makes possible a non-anthropocentric clearing in which entities may gather each other into a mutual play that constitutes the "worldhood" of the world'.

<sup>113</sup> Heidegger, 'Letter on Humanism', *Basic Writings*, p. 234.

<sup>114</sup> Dreyfus, 'Heidegger on the connection between nihilism, art, technology, and politics', *The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger*, p. 303.

<sup>115</sup> Cf. Charles Taylor, 'Heidegger, Language, Ecology', *Heidegger: A Critical Reader*, p. 263 and William Richardson, *Heidegger: Through Phenomenology to Thought*, p. 439.

<sup>116</sup> 'The Question Concerning Technology?' *The Question Concerning Technology*, p. 11. Cf. Haliburton, *Poetic Thinking*, p. 214.

Caputo interprets the relation between poetic making and ontological responsibility in terms of 'the preservation of the truth of Being':

Dasein "surrenders" its being (*Wesen*) to the simple necessity—a necessity without force—which man is under to think the truth of Being. Now this "surrender" is a "sacrifice" (*Opfer*). The sacrifice is the expending of the human essence for the preservation of the truth of Being. Dasein becomes less and less so that Being can become more and more.<sup>117</sup>

The 'truth of Being' is the openness that seeks to remain open through human thinking, for in remaining open it allows all other things to become open themselves. Heidegger refers to this in terms of 'the Open' in *poiesis* which 'brings beings to shine and ring out'.<sup>118</sup> He is without doubt referring to art and poetry.

But, if we bear in mind my thesis that work is metaphorical (Chapter VII), then this ontological quality inheres, too, in work.<sup>119</sup> Here, one can see how the hermeneutical circle is elevated to another level. Heidegger is stating that the relationship between the human being and the object of work is not simply a mode of self-interpretation, where the world of the work encounters the world of the individual and so fuses in an interpretive horizon. He is saying, moreover, that this circularity is mutually illuminating, as if being is attaining to greater degrees of articulation in terms of the historical narrative that unfolds. 'Whenever art happens,' writes Heidegger

—that is, whenever there is a beginning—a thrust enters history, history either begins or starts over again. History means here not a sequence in time or events of whatever sort, however important. History is the transporting of a people into its appointed task as entrance into a people's endowment.<sup>120</sup>

In this regard, sacrifice and guardianship refer to a role that constantly holds itself in view of being and for the sake of being. What flows from this relationship is present

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<sup>117</sup> *The Mystical Element in Heidegger's Thought*, p. 27.

<sup>118</sup> 'The Origin of the Work of Art', *Poetry, Language, Thought*, p. 72.

<sup>119</sup> Cf. George Pattison, *The Later Heidegger*, p. 49.

<sup>120</sup> 'The Origin of the Work of Art', *Poetry, Language, Thought*, p. 77. For a critique of this lecture in relation to Heidegger's affiliation with the Nazi party, see Christopher P. Long, 'Art's Fateful Hour: Benjamin, Heidegger, Art and Politics', *New German Critique* 83, special issue of Walter Benjamin (Spring-Summer 2001), pp. 105-115. As mentioned earlier, I believe Iain Thomson has shown the larger context in which Heidegger's dubious involvements were situated.



to us as history, both as a narrative we reinterpret and as a historically effected consciousness grappling with a historical antinomy: an interpretation of the 'composite unity' of historical events, on the one hand, that is outrun by the 'dramatized narrative' of historical time that moves 'from episode to episode', on the other hand.<sup>121</sup> This antinomy refers to a dialectical playing in which an interpretative commitment sedimentises a 'composite unity' of how history *is* in order that a future possibility can be articulated. If the role of human being as the one who tends to this historical unfolding is forgotten, as Heidegger contends it has through modern technology which praises efficiency as that which is worthy, then being as such unfolds in terms of a correlative forgetting—that is, a tragedy.

The correlation between *theoria*, *praxis* and *poiesis* can be further described in relation to how humans engage in the act of return. In this case, the openness received in *theoria* and its subsequent determination through *praxis* in terms of individual intentionality is manifested in and through *poiesis* as an occasion of making that is simultaneously an occasion of thanking. So the use that arises in the encounter with being in order to do, make and live is situated at the same time within this less noticeable realm of thankfulness: to do, to make and to live are all forms of action that are grounded in thanking. This realm is less obvious because it is, as both Ricoeur and Caputo have noted, without effort and force. There is no compulsion for such a mode of being to be taken up, and this is why Heidegger describes sacrifice as freedom.<sup>122</sup> Given this elevation of human making, Heidegger sees human use as a manner of admitting something 'into its essential nature, and there to keep safely what has been admitted'.<sup>123</sup> Because, as I have argued, use is an activity reciprocating to being, it declares in what way human understanding has admitted things in interpreting being. We can, in this sense, refer to use as an ontological returning where the things made in work and subsequently used in dwelling declare an understanding of how being is to unfold. The *techne* of *poiesis* can then be seen as the technical knowledge that discloses, or holds open the world,

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<sup>121</sup> Ricoeur, 'Objectivity and Subjectivity in History', *History and Truth*, p. 39. Cf. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 20.

<sup>122</sup> 'Postscript to "What Is Metaphysics?"', *Pathmarks*, p. 236.

<sup>123</sup> *What Is Called Thinking?* p. 192.

according to the skills it sees as being appropriate to how it apprehends the applicability of any particular use. The modern techniques of farming, for example, often include inhuman treatment of animals in order to extract the most bounty per unit. The injection of hormones into cows to produce greater quantities of milk attests to an understanding of use that declares an instrumental relation to cows, and so declares that the instrumental subjugation of animals is appropriate for human dwelling. This technological rendering can be contrasted to Heidegger's example of the jug referred to earlier or his appeal to the windmill that is 'left entirely to the wind's blowing' and 'does not unlock energy from the air currents in order to store it'.<sup>124</sup>

This returning, moreover, is marked not simply by the acts of rendering and making but by the subsequent space and time it bestows for human activity. In this respect, returning builds and cultivates a structure in which things become interpretable through their repeated accessibility. Returning grants the structures through which human beings can repeatedly retrieve things, histories and themselves for reinterpretation. It understands, in Heidegger's words, 'history as "recurrence" of what is possible and knows that a possibility recurs only when existence is open for it'.<sup>125</sup>

#### *b) repetition and retrieval*

What occurs through poetic activity is an erecting of structures that allow for a repetition of human dwelling in the sense that lived-structures exist as the locations in which meaningful activities can be recalled, repeated and more fully lived. In this sense, as Gadamer points out, the "there" [*Da*] of being is no longer simply 'the site of an activity of Dasein' but the scene of world disclosure.<sup>126</sup> Human being, in other words, gives 'place' in what it allows to take place.<sup>127</sup> While this kind of repetition can in fact become routine—that is, a dead rehearsal of activities that have lost their

<sup>124</sup> 'The Question Concerning Technology', *The Question Concerning Technology*, p. 14.

<sup>125</sup> *Being and Time*, H391-2. Cf. Hoy, 'History, Historicity, and Historiography in *Being and Time*', *Heidegger and Modern Philosophy*, p. 336.

<sup>126</sup> 'The Way of the Turn', *Heidegger's Ways*, pp. 129-30 as quoted in Malpas, *Heidegger's Topology: Being, Place, World*, p. 178.

<sup>127</sup> Malpas, *Heidegger's Topology: Being, Place, World*, p. 178.

meaning—this reduction is itself subsequent to the loss of the meaning of sacrifice in work.<sup>128</sup> Nonetheless, no individual is responsible for this loss since it cannot be compelled or forced upon one. What lies inherent in the nature of repetition is a double meaning as Heidegger understood *Wiederholung*, that is, repetition as also retrieval. In repetition the everyday finds location and proportion to that which exceeds it, or that in view of which activity is repeated. Repeatability is a mode of acknowledging that which allows for it, and in this way, exists as a form of thanking. But for the explicit link of repetition to thanking in Heidegger, one must move beyond the period of *Being and Time*. In his later thinking, Heidegger's notion of 'the leap away'<sup>129</sup> or 'spring away'<sup>130</sup> fulfills the function of repetition/retrieval since in leaping away, one proceeds through the history of thinking to its ontological inception.<sup>131</sup> This inception is not an original beginning in the sense of chronological time, but as ontological, it refers to a reflective movement that resides in view of how being and human being belong together. 'A belonging to Being prevails within man,' writes Heidegger, 'a belonging which listens to Being because it is appropriated to Being'.<sup>132</sup> It is precisely the character of this belonging as appropriation that defines its nature as thanking.

The spring is the abrupt entry into the realm from which man and Being have already reached each other in their active nature [*Wesen*], since both are mutually appropriated, extended as a gift, one to the other.<sup>133</sup>

Hence, repetition is not a simple, unaware recurrence or reiteration of an event.<sup>134</sup>

What is repeated is a reinterpretation of the relation to being, within being. This

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<sup>128</sup> It can also be connected to the change of the meaning of freedom which, as Dupré notes, undergoes a decisive moment when the notion of autonomy is rooted in the individual over against the public sphere. In short, the external forces (whether natural, social or even philosophical) are viewed as threats or limitations to one's private freedom; *Passage to Modernity*, p. 125. Cf. Goodchild, *Capitalism and Religion*, pp. 112-13.

<sup>129</sup> Heidegger, *The Principle of Reason*, pp. 60-1.

<sup>130</sup> Heidegger, 'The Principle of Identity', *Identity and Difference*, pp. 32-3.

<sup>131</sup> Heidegger performs such a leap and retrieval in his lectures on the principle of reason, wherein he looks at the destiny of Western thinking [*Geschick*] in relation to seeing its essential nature only through leaping away from the representational thinking that characterises how we conventionally understand reason/ratio: 'We cannot think upon what is called the *Geschick* of being so long as we have not made the leap. The leap is the vault out of the fundamental principle of reason as a principle of beings into the saying of being *qua* being'; *The Principle of Reason*, p. 61.

<sup>132</sup> 'The Principle of Identity', *Identity and Difference*, p. 31.

<sup>133</sup> 'The Principle of Identity', *Identity and Difference*, p. 33.

simultaneousness resides in an identity and a difference, or what was mentioned earlier in terms of Heidegger's notion of the Same: 'thinking and being belong together in the Same by virtue of the Same'.<sup>135</sup>

Because thanking can never be compelled as an act, repetition becomes a non-compulsory mode of being that retrieves what lies beyond the superficial enacting of daily schedules. In other words, the structures rendered in work create a form and coherent totality of signification, or what is marked out (*dike*). This, in turn, allows human dwelling to recall continually its dedication towards being. In this sense, Goodchild observes of the repetitive nature of religious ritual that 'Ritual time is neither labour-time nor lived-time: it is given time. Such a time is not quantifiable; nor can it be said to pass. Instead, it can only be given'.<sup>136</sup> What Goodchild alights upon in ritual at least parallels Heidegger's understanding of the ontological nature of repetition. As a manner of creating structure, repetition *does* with regard to the givenness of being. This must be distinguished from the temporal and lived moments that arise from it. Without this structuring, action would occur in a free-for-all that would take any point that comes along as its meaningful referent. This situation is impossible to imagine because human action is ontologically oriented towards making sense of the pre-givenness of being. It seeks to structure, through work, a world in which it can have relationships to all things. 'What is essential,' continues Goodchild, 'is not that the static order should be reproduced, but that an order should be produced'.<sup>137</sup> While he is referring to the production of mythic time that generates a non-replicated piety, here we can note that *poiesis* does not replicate some original *phusis* or ontology but articulates it in a new direction, a direction that is precisely what Heidegger intends by the ontological force of new and utmost possibilities of being that can only arise through a retrieval of the past—that is, of tradition and the already existing structures and discourse that form the world.<sup>138</sup> Thus writes Ricoeur, 'Repetition, for him [Heidegger], means more than a mere reversal of the basic orientation of Care towards the future. It means the retrieval of

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<sup>134</sup> Robert Bernasconi, 'Repetition and Tradition', *Reading Heidegger from the Start*, p. 124.

<sup>135</sup> Heidegger, 'The Principle of Identity', *Identity and Difference*, p. 27.

<sup>136</sup> *Religion and Capitalism*, p. 184.

<sup>137</sup> *Religion and Capitalism*, p. 183.

<sup>138</sup> Robert Bernasconi, 'Repetition and Tradition', *reading Heidegger from the Start*, pp. 123-36.

our ownmost potentialities inherited from our past in the form of the personal fate and collective destiny'.<sup>139</sup>

In this sense, human use begins first with an invocation of this repetition and retrieval. Every use is a manner of taking into account how the meaning of being is to be rendered in repetition. Use is not only a manner of doing but also a manner of announcing what is understood as appropriate to how one understands being. Use retrieves an interpretation of being, and through its action, enacts this relation. This is true even at the most denigrated level: use can be commodified, emptied of meaning or manipulated according to exterior motives.<sup>140</sup> These negative possibilities, however, do not refer to an original inadequate nature of human use. Rather, the scope of what is at stake in human use calls for the most significant questions to be asked. Heidegger's recollection of the question of the meaning of being can be heard in this way, as a question that at once declares that all thinkers since Plato have forgotten the pertinence of it, and as a question that can only be answered without compulsion or force. Furthermore, recalling an earlier point, one can see here how what is interpreted to be *appropriate* in use therefore *proportions* out the destiny that will arise from it. This destiny, nonetheless, remains an open one insofar as the question of being can be retrieved within it. So destiny raises the greatest questions by virtue of marking out a more apprehensible future.

Given this hermeneutical structure of giving-receiving-returning that I have argued is immanent in the core of human being itself, the question of the viability of this immanence arises. How might the reconception of use (and therefore work) as thanking be thought? In the final chapter of this study, I will offer my responses to this provocative question in terms of how we might understand human vocation.

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<sup>139</sup> 'The Human Experience of Time and Narrative', *A Ricoeur Reader*, p. 111. Ricoeur does not elaborate on the difference between fate and destiny in Heidegger, though recognition of this difference is implicit in what he says. Fate is the personal, individual response to and within the collective world-history of destiny that has arisen through the history of Western thinking. For more on this difference, see Pöggeler, 'Destruction and Moment', *Reading Heidegger from the Start*, pp. 148-50 and Hoy, 'History, Historicity, and Historiography in *Being and Time*', *Heidegger and Modern Philosophy*, pp. 342-3.

<sup>140</sup> Cf. Goodchild, *Religion and Capitalism*, p. 185.

## XI Conclusion: Human Vocation

Superabundance becomes the truth hidden  
in equivalence . . . "repetition" henceforth  
signifies transformation.

-Ricoeur<sup>1</sup>

The main obstacle identified at the outset of this study was the reduction of work to necessity. The first third of my analysis identified the foundations and problems with this reduction in relation to Marx and the suppositions of Enlightenment thinking. The second third endeavoured to show how, beyond necessity, there is an ontological basis for the motivation of work. The last third proceeded through an arduous retrieval and ontologisation of key Greek concepts in order to show that human work is responsible to the pre-given unity of being. My concluding remarks will follow this trajectory in attempting to disclose a more concrete instance of this understanding of work. But first, let us recapitulate some key points of my analysis.

In response to the over-determination of necessity as the defining concept of work, I have proposed that work is essentially metaphorical. This metaphorical nature can be primarily discerned when seeing that the initial impetus for work is not necessity but an ontological disproportion between human being and reality. It is this disproportion that allows for the interiorisation of existence, projecting a reflective horizon that attempts to find meaning in and through the disproportion. This interpretive momentum is not unique to reflection but includes human physical activity, acknowledging that human action is innately symbolic in meaning. With work this symbolic (or metaphorical) quality is evinced in how the hand, that gestures in the rendering activity, makes according to immediate needs but also opens a world of ontological possibility. The use of any one thing escapes the *immediate* reference of necessity and is opened to an unpredictable range of possible meaning, a meaning that *mediates* new interpretations of being. Necessity, nonetheless, always remains the point of first contact since it constitutes the literal

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<sup>1</sup> 'Ethical and Theological Considerations of the Golden Rule', *Figuring the Sacred*, p. 302.

domain of resistance in order to exist. To this end, as I emphasised in following Ricoeur's theory of metaphor, the necessary level must be lived through in order to reach the metaphorical level. The reflective and metaphorical cannot replace necessity, though they may transform it.

From this ontological reinterpretation of work, it was necessary to examine a corresponding reinterpretation of its role in relation to reflection, a relation traditionally represented as an exclusive opposition—i.e., *vita activa (praxis)* versus *vita contemplativa (theoria)*. Insofar as work is metaphorical, a discreet reflective content is suggested in how it stands in relation to human being. I proposed to provide a synthesis between work and reflection through a retrieval of the ancient Greek sources in order to show that despite the fact this opposition has been located in the Greek privilege of contemplation, there is a basis for an alternative understanding: namely, that the interrelation of *theoria-praxis-poiesis* in Aristotle's philosophy refers to a tacit unity wherein work (*poiesis*) participates in the other modes of knowing truth through a specifically hermeneutical synthesis. Here, I referred to how the question of use, that derives from one's intent to render in work and make use of things in existence, inevitably is bound up with the ethical and divine modes of knowing (*phronesis* and *theoria*). As Mark Sinclair summarises, *sophia (theoria)* 'is born through and arises from our everyday technical concern with production. Aristotle's philosophical thought never leaves this ground behind'.<sup>2</sup> This occurs insofar as one's making and the use of things is inevitably linked, by virtue of the movement of human life, to ethical and divine concerns. Far from being a remote and cold intellectualist, Aristotle appears, through my retrieval, a thinker whose ethical philosophy implies a reflective redemption of necessary labour.

I further radicalised this unity according to Heidegger's treatment of *theoria-praxis-poiesis*. This strategy not only allowed me to situate the Greek concepts within a contemporary discourse, but it formed a crucial step in enabling me to offer a hermeneutical structure by which we could see, in more concrete relation, how work is both motivated by human reflection and reinvigorates it. This hermeneutical structure came to fruition in terms of the *giving-receiving-returning* acts respective to

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<sup>2</sup> Heidegger, *Aristotle and the Work of Art*, p. 33.



*theoria-praxis-poiesis* that situated work within the act of giving thanks to the pre-giveness of being. Work is therefore no longer merely a necessary act responding to specifically human needs, but addressed to a greater breadth of concern that finds itself in debt to the pre-giveness of being that we arrive “too late” to ignore.<sup>3</sup>

Nonetheless, my retrieval of Heidegger has been one engaged simultaneously with Ricoeur’s concern for grafting onto Heidegger’s primordial ontology a more concrete structure. In Chapter III (A Hermeneutic Approach), I referred to this in terms of how Ricoeur seeks to develop an epistemological complement to ontology, a regional, hermeneutical application that has its impact in specific disciplines. Throughout this study, I have more or less maintained this same project in speaking of a hermeneutical structure of work that arises in ontologising the concepts of *theoria*, *praxis* and *poiesis*. We now come to the concluding remarks of this study in which I attempt to fulfill this promise. I will define how it is that human work today may be reconceived and newly practiced when the ontological foundation of vocation is clearly discerned.

What does a practice of work become when placed within the larger domain of giving thanks to the pre-giveness and superabundance of being? My analysis in the previous chapter anticipated this question in speaking of the praxical as the level of individuation which the pre-giveness of being bestows. It is by virtue of being’s pre-given nature that the human being apprehends the possibility of becoming appropriate to being. Hence, the interpretation I give to vocation is not an addition to the activity of work. Rather, it is the motivating call that incites the core of work. Vocation, in other words, is the manner in which our response to the unity of being, that is first apprehended as ontological disproportion, is personalised. Here, the challenge of necessity is given a particularly human “touch”, one that is characterised by the interiorisation of the ontological question of meaning. Furthermore, since vocation is the motivating, interpretive drive of work, this means that in opposition to Marx, work is undergirded by an essentially “ideological” basis, one that I shall examine in terms of how Ricoeur sees a lacuna in Marx’s philosophy

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<sup>3</sup> One can recall, in this sense, what I have often cited in Ricoeur: ‘The unity of the world is too prior to be possessed, too lived to be known’. As Catriona Hanley points out this thrownness into the pre-given arises as being-guilty [*Schuldigsein*] for Dasein; *Being and God in Aristotle and Heidegger*, p. 194.

in which ideology resurfaces—i.e., no longer as a false consciousness but as a genuine interpretation of how to be.

In challenging the realm of necessity so adamantly by the hermeneutics of work that I propose, one is led to question how its thesis may not only be connected to everyday practice but be seen as economically viable when considering the socio-economic domain. The final section of this conclusion is devoted to seeing how the hermeneutics of work I have set forth as being applicable to the current situation of an understanding of work and some economic questions, for future research, that serve as the basis by which this study can be elaborated from a philosophical and theological reflection into an economic theory.

### **Vocation: the Appropriateness and Appropriation of Human Being**

In this section, I will discuss how the human relationship to the gift of being has its point of contact in vocation, or the calling according to which humans recognise a manner of work that is appropriate to themselves and to being itself. In this respect, human work may sediment the response to gift in terms of its works, artefacts, structures and technics; but prior to this is the ontological moment, or occasion, in which the human being understands what is appropriate for being, that is, through a manner of human *being* that culminates in work.

For Heidegger, this ontological moment has the undeniable quality of hearing [*hören*], in which humans orient themselves in an openness to being.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, hearing refers to a mode of receptivity, or an ontological manner of ‘keeping silent’ in which Dasein ‘lets something be understood’.<sup>5</sup> This is what I referred to in the last chapter as the openness of *theoria*, and what the quality of hearing suggests here is

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<sup>4</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*, H163. Cf. in reference to the ‘shepherd of being’, William Richardson, *Heidegger: From Phenomenology through Thought*, p. 294 n8. For a ‘secular’ definition of calling that sees vocation as ‘an intrinsic pleasure’ one finds in one’s work, see Gregory Pence, ‘Towards a Theory of Work’, *Philosophy and the Problems of Work*, p. 74. Cecil Miller makes the distinction between ‘vocation’ and ‘profession’, the former containing an archaic tie to an essential truth, goodness or beauty while the latter refers to an occupation in the service of social aims; ‘Vocation versus Profession in Philosophy’, *Philosophy of Science* 7:2, (April 1940), pp. 140-50.

<sup>5</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*, H164. Heidegger refers to an ‘existential foundation’ of keeping silent rather than an ontological one; however, as he relates silence to his notion of authenticity (which in turn implies Dasein’s utmost possibility of being), silence is clearly more than an existential event. Its ontological roots lie in opening the possibility of being through letting something be understood. Cf. ‘The Principle of Identity’, *Identity and Difference*, p. 31.

that prior to the recognition of the gift is a moment in which the call of being is heard, or can be heard. To this extent, we can recall from *Being and Time* that the recognition of being thrown into a pre-given world remains transparent and thus concealed. What stands before Dasein is the matter of concern itself, a concern existentially encountered as *Angst*.<sup>6</sup> Because Dasein is taken hold of by its thrownness, it cannot unproblematically recognise the pre-given nature of being. Dasein itself is the subject that is thrown, and this thrownness tends to keep Dasein's concern focused on itself. It cannot attend to the nature of pre-giveness directly except by means of coping with existence, and this means interpreting it.<sup>7</sup>

In view of Dasein's silence, it follows that what is heard in the call of being is a demand to actualise ontological possibility, a transition which marks the movement from the openness of *theoria* to the 'for-the-sake-of' of *praxis*. According to Heidegger, 'In order to be silent, Dasein must have something to say',<sup>8</sup> a 'something' that is not possible unless Dasein apprehends a 'for-the-sake-of' in speaking.<sup>9</sup> Elsewhere in noting the significance of possibility as an ontologically immanent determination, he writes: 'Higher than actuality stands possibility'.<sup>10</sup> As we have seen in the foregoing analysis, ontological possibility is not only a self-realisation, but the actualisation of human being as a manner of belonging together *with* and *in* being as such. For Heidegger, this is the event of appropriation [*Ereignis*] 'through which man and Being reach each other in their nature',<sup>11</sup> and it suggests that the initial response of hearing is directed towards the appropriation of being and human beings. If this is so, then vocation is the call of being that humans hear. Through this call human beings face being and consequently become appropriate to being through their work. Vocation is, in this sense, the hearing of the call of being that henceforward determines the manner, depth and quality of the human response

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<sup>6</sup> *Being and Time*, §40.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Mark Sinclair, *Heidegger, Aristotle and the Work of Art*, p. 96: 'the possibilities that *Dasein* projects do not come to it, as it were, out of thin air. *Dasein* has "in each case already been thrown" or delivered over "into a world" [SZ 92]; it always and already finds itself with a past and an understanding of itself'.

<sup>8</sup> *Being and Time*, H165.

<sup>9</sup> For Heidegger, speaking is therefore a primordial mode of disclosure and attestation, something that I mention earlier in the way in which he sees *logos* as a manner of being letting things lie before us; e.g., 'Moirai (Parmenides VIII, 34-41', *Early Greek Thinking*, p. 99.

<sup>10</sup> *Being and Time*, H38. Cf. Jeffrey Barash, 'Heidegger's Ontological "Destruction"', *Reading Heidegger from the Start*, pp. 118-19.

<sup>11</sup> Heidegger, 'The Principle of Identity', *Identity and Difference*, p. 37.

in reciprocating to the gift of being. The nature of this reciprocation, however, must be more closely examined since it can be reduced to a mechanistic exchange or obligation.<sup>12</sup>

*a) the possibility of vocation only in freedom*

As we have seen Derrida stress, one can deny that a measurable response to a gift is possible since the predilection to give back essentially forsakes what is given, and in this case, the gift would be mis-received. The intention to return precludes the reception of the gift.<sup>13</sup> This latter claim concerns gift as a 'special discourse'<sup>14</sup> of *différance* that withdraws into what seems to be an impossible situation: human response has its zenith in deconstructing itself in order to resist reduction to such things as exchange value.<sup>15</sup> My project here is to resolve this *aporia*, and I propose to do this by more clearly identifying the ontological nature of exchange.

Mechanism implies the inability or freedom to decline a certain course of action. In relation to gift, this means that humans become bound up in social and economic relations necessitating return. But does the reduction of gift to this domain therefore adequately retain the nature of gift as gift? If a gift is no longer freely received, then is it a gift? Against mechanism, one can say that humans continuously exist in a context emergent with meaning, i.e., where meaning is constantly emerging according to new encounters, temporal reinterpretations and, not least of all, the retrieval of the past by which we project a future possibility of being. Precisely because of the temporal and historical constituency of meaning, an interpretation can

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<sup>12</sup> For example, see, Claude Lévi-Strauss, 'The Principle of Reciprocity', *The Gift: An Interdisciplinary Perspective*, pp. 18-25. For variation on this, see Alvin Goulder, 'The Norm of Reciprocity: a Preliminary Statement', *The Gift: An Interdisciplinary Perspective*, pp. 49-66.

<sup>13</sup> In this way, the irreducible mystery of things is lost and recoverable only through the gift of death that creates a new experience of responding; Derrida, *The Gift of Death*, pp. 32-3. Cf. the contrasting view of Levinas, as for example, in 'Time and the Other', *The Levinas Reader*, p. 41.

<sup>14</sup> I borrow this phrase from Habermas' critique of Heidegger's notion of difference and withdrawal of being; see 'The Undermining of Western Rationalism: Heidegger,' *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, p. 139.

<sup>15</sup> Derrida, 'A Letter to a Japanese Friend', *Derrida and Différance*, p. 4. Cf. Peter Goldman's critique of Derrida's *The Gift of Death*, 'Christian Mystery and Responsibility: Gnosticism in Derrida's *The Gift of Death*', *Anthropoetics* IV:1, (Spring/Summer 1998); available at [http://www.anthropoetics.ucla.edu/ap0401/pg\\_DERR.htm](http://www.anthropoetics.ucla.edu/ap0401/pg_DERR.htm); accessed December 2, 2006. Charles Taylor refers to Derrida's discourse as being grounded in a 'super(non)subject'; 'Heidegger, Language, and Ecology', *Heidegger: A Critical Reader*, p. 266.

never be determined once and for all, and this includes what one may conceive as a thanking act since it is through thanking that one bestows worth and meaningfulness.<sup>16</sup> Nonetheless, whether or not such reinterpretation occurs resides with the responsiveness (or responsibility) of Dasein. As a hermeneutical act, reinterpretation has no guarantees.

Given this characterisation of understanding, mechanism is a failure to take into account adequately the full breadth of the emergent context. This is not only important in attempting to construe the nature and limits of human thanking, but as well, it is decisive in attempting to characterise the nature of gift itself. One cannot, in other words, assume that gift precludes, in any essential way, the hermeneutical requisites of human understanding. Milbank, in this respect, keenly points out that the central problem with Derrida's radicalisation of gift is that it remains isolated at the level of 'pure gift'.<sup>17</sup> Because it dwells too resolutely at the level of a pure phenomenology and attempts to resist any ontic reification, it removes gift as possibility—that is, gift as something possible within the existential context of human coping and interpretation. And so, Derrida's line of interpretation is 'extreme' since 'even the acknowledgment of the gift cancels the gift by rewarding the giver with the knowledge that he is a giver'.<sup>18</sup> For Derrida, nothing can escape the 'circle' of exchange that encircles us.<sup>19</sup>

Milbank proposes, instead, an understanding of gift in terms of a 'purified gift exchange' in relation to *agape*.<sup>20</sup> In pointing to exchange, Milbank is actually emphasising the hermeneutical necessity involved in coming to understand the otherness of gift, an otherness that is never finally impossible but both immanent and transcendent. It is this hermeneutical necessity that stands in between the realm of

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<sup>16</sup> Cf. Gadamer on the notion of self-understanding in hermeneutics as opposed to its Enlightenment conception where self-understanding means self-transparency. For Gadamer, self-understanding is mediated through the historical consciousness that, because history can never be known once and for all, necessitates its repetition; 'Martin Heidegger and Marburg Theology', *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, p. 206.

<sup>17</sup> 'Can a Gift Be Given? Prolegomena to a Future Trinitarian Metaphysics', *Modern Theology* 2:1, (Jan 1995), p. 131.

<sup>18</sup> 'Can a Gift Be Given? Prolegomena to a Future Trinitarian Metaphysics', *Modern Theology* 2:1, (Jan 1995), p. 130.

<sup>19</sup> *Given Time: I. Counterfeit Money*, pp. 7-9.

<sup>20</sup> 'Can a Gift Be Given? Prolegomena to a Future Trinitarian Metaphysics', *Modern Theology* 2:1, (Jan 1995), pp. 131-2.

pure gift and mundane, ontic reification and exchange, therefore attempting to prevent either 'logic' from being perverted and distorted.<sup>21</sup> In the end, the problematic of gift is not isolable as a quality of either the superlativeness of the gift or in the fragility of human understanding. The problematic is hermeneutical, requiring the appropriate reflective disposition. The very otherness of the gift that intensifies and interiorises the human sense of inadequacy is not, so I am arguing, an ontic determination setting up an unbridgeable duality. The distance refers to a hermeneutical passage focusing on the appropriate disposition of the receiver, a disposition that cannot be forced, or in recalling Ricoeur's phrase, is without resistance. Its *impossibility*, in reflecting Derrida's word in a less problematic sense,<sup>22</sup> emphasises the hermeneutical moment of appropriateness to the gift prior to the act of reciprocating. Thus, the givenness of being has no expectation that humans should or must return something to it since appropriateness cannot be forced. We should therefore not speak of gift in terms of an otherness we cannot meet but rather of the kind of response it proffers and invokes. This means that the onus of response to gift is not in the what or how of action but in looking prior to this, in terms of the appropriateness of our receptivity, or what in a word was understood by the ancient Greeks as piety [*eusebeia*].<sup>23</sup> One might say in response to Derrida's impossible situation of response, Dasein arrives too late to decline the gift absolutely. The alreadiness of being outruns its impossibility.

This clarification, nonetheless, relies on a fundamental relation between gift and freedom. The human agent must choose of his/her own accord to appropriately address the gift while the bestower (being) has no expectations that a reply will be made by those who receive its gift. On the one hand, the human agent is free to choose to affirm or deny. On the other hand, being is free to be without any

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<sup>21</sup> This is the thesis of W. David Hall's article exploring Ricoeur's interpretation of gift apart from Derrida; 'The Economy of the Gift: Paul Ricoeur's Poetic Redescription of Reality', *Literature and Theology* 20:2 (June 2006), p. 200. Hall refers to Derrida, *Given Time: I. Counterfeit Money*, p. 7.

<sup>22</sup> Impossible and impossibility are words Derrida constantly uses and indicates how he understands *aporia* which is no longer mystery *per se* but self-contradiction that leads to mystery. See, for instance, *The Gift of Death*, p. 43 & 61, *Given Time: I. Counterfeit Money*, p. 10 and *On the Name*, p. 43.

<sup>23</sup> Linking this to Aristotle, one can see the relation of piety to *eudaimonia* which is a manner of living appropriately to what is most divine. This places a significant emphasis on human reception and openness, something which Goodchild notes in defining piety as 'any determinate practice of directing attention'; *Capitalism and Religion*, p. 210. Attention is here not simply a circumspensive glance or an attraction to something, but a mode of freely given looking that is not bound by necessity.

expectations. For Heidegger, the connection between gift and freedom is evinced in the superabundant nature of being: being is the gift whose resourcefulness cannot be depleted. This overflow of being, or what Heidegger calls at one point 'overwhelming' [*Überkommnis*],<sup>24</sup> has as one of its effects ontological freedom. It is important to note here that as an ontological effect or characteristic, freedom is not something that arises in being but is innate to being itself. In this sense, and at the level of ontology (as opposed to the problems encountered at the levels of its political and social actualisations),<sup>25</sup> freedom is a "determination" of being. Heidegger writes,

Freedom is the encompassing and penetrating nature, in which man becomes man only when he is anchored there. That means the nature of man is grounded in freedom. But freedom itself is a determination of true Being in general which transcends all human being. Insofar as man *is* as man, he must participate in this determination of Being, and man *is*, insofar as he brings about this participation in freedom.<sup>26</sup>

If freedom is a property of being itself, then we see a reversal of Marx's premise: work does not begin in necessity and move towards freedom; rather, it has its ground in ontological freedom and moves towards greater degrees of articulation and rendering. In short, what I want to suggest is that genuine (ontological) human work is not founded on a response to necessity but arises from the freely given response to the gift of being. We can see this reversal in more detail if we contrast the truncated domain of work for necessity with its ontological broadening in which a mutually affirming dialectical relation arises. When this dialectic is not understood, or even acknowledged, as the basis of work, then its mutually affirming nature collapses into a fragmented, dysfunctional relation that Milbank and others have aptly described as an ontology of violence and competition.<sup>27</sup> So my account of

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<sup>24</sup> Heidegger, 'The Onto-Theo-Logical Constitution of Metaphysics', *Identity and Difference*, p. 64.

<sup>25</sup> One can speak here of different levels of freedom that arise from the original givenness of ontological freedom. Because nothing is ever secured and guaranteed in ontology and through the process of becoming, the social and political domains refer to the encounter with interpreting, or even legislating, in order to provide a structure in which freedom not only exists but can be ideally actualised in repetition. See, for example, Ricoeur's analysis of mediating between the individual and State in relation to violence, power and justice in 'State and Violence', *History and Truth*, pp. 234-46.

<sup>26</sup> Schelling's *Treatise on the Essence of Human Freedom*, p. 9.

<sup>27</sup> See, for instance, John Milbank, 'Can a Gift Be Given? Prolegomena to a Future Trinitarian Metaphysics', *Modern Theology* 2:1, (Jan 1995), pp. 119-61 and William Cavanaugh, 'The City: Beyond Secular Parodies', *Radical Orthodoxy: A New Theology*, (London: Routledge, 1999), pp. 182-200.



this dialectic in what follows should be contrasted to the more necessary relation of work in order to live, live in order to work.

*b) the mutually affirming dialectic of work*

Beings *are* more fully themselves through the freedom to decide what and how to affirm. This reciprocally means that being is more fully itself through the autonomy of beings. According to ontological difference, one can see that difference gains greater articulation and self-reflexivity through differentiation. While this seems to be a tautological statement, it actually places difference in relation to, rather than against, unity (or identity). Differentiation expresses greater coherence in being as such by virtue of beings becoming more themselves, or what Heidegger refers to metaphorically as 'the self-vibrating realm'.<sup>28</sup> We may understand this metaphor by recalling a passage from Heidegger on craft.<sup>29</sup> In craft there is a "bursting out" of being through the other (the craftsman) who is at the same time within being. It is the bursting out that vibrates, and the self-reflexivity of this bursting out of being can only occur through the other who is, at the same time, within being.

In recalling that work (*poiesis*) is not by itself sufficient as a mode of truth, one can see that the freedom of work lies in an application of its technical knowledge according to a praxical understanding of how to be. In this sense, the dialectical play makes its greatest impression on human being in terms of *praxis* which, according to Heidegger, is the unique manner of "being free to choose" that Dasein has before itself. Freedom is the root of ontological anxiety that invokes a responsibility of interpreting and actualising being-towards-an-end.<sup>30</sup> '[E]verything is bound,' writes Otto Pöggeler, 'to a "for-the-sake-of-which" [*hou heneka, das Worumwillen*] made possible by Dasein's being-able-to-Be'.<sup>31</sup> In this sense, *praxis* heeds the call of being, first made apprehensible by *theoria*, by interpreting and actualising a manner of

<sup>28</sup> 'The Principle of Identity', *Identity and Difference*, p. 38. Cf. Malpas, *Heidegger's Topology: Being, Place, World*, pp. 60-3 & 119.

<sup>29</sup> 'The Question Concerning Technology?' *The Question Concerning Technology*, p. 11.

<sup>30</sup> *Being and Time*, H191.

<sup>31</sup> 'Being as Appropriation', *Heidegger and Modern Philosophy*, p. 90.

being-in-the-world. This is what Heidegger suggests when he says, 'Freedom is freedom for ground'<sup>32</sup> since grounding is Dasein's ability to provide

a given range of what is possible . . . and it does so because being (the constitution of being), in grounding something, is, as transcendently binding for Dasein, rooted in Dasein's *freedom*.<sup>33</sup>

Dasein is the one being who can think the ground in its understanding, and regardless of whether or not this ground is accurate or sufficient for its historical moment, it is the manner in which Dasein articulates its freedom as a possibility *to be* in a certain way. In this respect, Heidegger writes, 'Freedom alone can let a world prevail and let it world for Dasein'.<sup>34</sup> The world could not prevail if human work did not seek a ground upon which it can render locality according to its works and artefacts. Hence, one sees here in every respect that the most ontological and abstract notion of freedom is tied to the manner in which humans face being through their vocation and respond in building, dwelling and thinking.

Yet, at the same time, humans are free to decline this invitation, or what is the decision to flee into the everyday where ontological questions do not arise or seem relevant.<sup>35</sup> There is a correlation suggested here between the givenness of being and the call according to which humans choose to or choose not to respond. If Jean Greisch is correct in his comment cited earlier that 'Between "there is" [Dasein] and *es gibt* [It gives] no passage is possible', then we can observe the following correlate: for human being there is no gap or distance between the "It gives" [*Es gibt*] of being and the "It calls" [*Es ruft*] of being. Emergence into the world is an emergence into a *praxical* structure that fore-gives a possible meaning to be heard. Just as we cannot reject the givenness of being, so we cannot choose to ignore its call, though we may subsequently decline to take heed of it. 'The call,' writes Heidegger, 'is precisely something *we ourselves* have neither planned nor prepared for nor willingly brought

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<sup>32</sup> 'On the Essence of Ground', *Pathmarks*, p. 127. Heidegger's *italicisation* of the entire phrase has been removed.

<sup>33</sup> 'On the Essence of Ground', *Pathmarks*, p. 133. *Italics* in original.

<sup>34</sup> 'On the Essence of Ground', *Pathmarks*, p. 126. *Italicisation* of entire sentence in the original has been removed.

<sup>35</sup> *Being and Time*, H253-5 & 276.

about. "It" calls, against our expectations and even against our will'.<sup>36</sup> In Heidegger's thinking, one can see a play between the will of oneself [*Willen*] and the praxical 'for-the-sake-of-which' [*Unwillen*] in which one's own will is called to the other that it heeds.<sup>37</sup> It is here the sacrificial nature of being can be understood since the 'for-the-sake-of-which' becomes the teleological movement by which Dasein surrenders itself, that is, surrenders its will.

However, there is a danger with leaving things as a surrendering to being or the language of being.<sup>38</sup> Dwelling in ontology tends towards a quasi-mystical poeticisation where one can simply celebrate a manner of poetic dwelling without seeing the particularities in how human beings may "poetically dwell".<sup>39</sup> In this respect, Michael Haar's criticism that Heidegger's notion of appropriation simply makes humans dependent on *Ereignis*, failing to 'fundamentally change the definition of man's essence',<sup>40</sup> provokes a further reflection on the relation between being and Dasein. How is this mutual growth and nurturing also an articulation of human being and not simply a subjugation to another metaphysical ground?

### c) vocation as differentiation

If vocation is that which draws humans into a particular form of participation that at once gives rise to usage (in terms of things made in work), then use is unique in each person's case. In work, one "uses being"—or comes into ontological participation—and I am suggesting that, in this way, one is addressed to being according to that which is the most personal and unique. Or one can say it is the "who" of each person that takes shape according to this usage. It is the "who" that no doubt is often identified with the "what" one does in usage. For example, one is a physician, one is a philosopher, and so forth. But this "what" is never final, for it

<sup>36</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*, H275. *Italics in original.*

<sup>37</sup> Cf. Heidegger, 'On the Essence of Ground', *Pathmarks*, p. 126.

<sup>38</sup> Adorno famously refers to this as the 'jargon of authenticity': 'Heidegger has praise for the "splendor of the simple." He brings back threadbare ideology of pure materials, from the realm of handicrafts to that of the mind—as if words were pure, and, as it were, roughened material . . . Heidegger wants, synthetically, to create a primal sense for pure words'; *The Jargon of Authenticity*, p. 50. From a completely different approach, Derrida sees the act of naming ('the gift of the name') as giving that which it does not have ['Sauf le nom', *On the Name*, p. 85.] Heidegger would therefore appear not to have gone far enough.

<sup>39</sup> Heidegger, ' . . . Poetically Man Dwells . . . ', *Poetry, Language, Thought*, pp. 213-229.

<sup>40</sup> Heidegger and the Essence of Man, p. 67.

refers to the role in which one, as a physician participates in being, lived as a narrative in which roles do not define the substance of “who” one is. In recalling my remarks in Chapter VII (Form and Figure), one can see that if work provides for a discourse of the word, then the tension between “who one is” and “what one is” in a vocation is a productive, narrative-like tension. It constantly calls us to question and rethink how a reinterpretation of being can refigure one’s life in relation to what one does. In this sense, the reinterpretation of being gives rise to self-interpretation, or “how to live”. This refers to a peculiarly ethical dimension of work since the self-interpretation involved in work gives rise to a definite and unique narrative according to which one sees oneself as both narrator and protagonist. This, as Ricoeur notes, is the use of *phronesis* in determining a manner of *poiesis*, that is in this case, work.<sup>41</sup>

Here, Marx’s notion of objectification, where the labourer recognises him/herself in the work-product, is enlarged. This self-recognising process includes an interpretive narrative wherein work-objects refer to an “ideological” understanding already embedded in how one chooses to live one’s life through a special calling. Ricoeur is keen to point out that what Marx attempts to identify as ‘the language of real life’<sup>42</sup> is not free of ideology, and that even in Marx there appears to be a lacuna where ideology is set against *praxis* only because ideology is reproduction or representative [*Vorstellung*] and not real production (*praxis*).<sup>43</sup> Ricoeur concludes that the crux in Marx concerning ideology ‘is not between true and false but between real and representation’.<sup>44</sup> What this allows for is a real production that is in fact a kind of primary ideology, an ideology that integrates the real language of life in its primordially symbolic form. Following Clifford Geertz, Ricoeur holds that ‘there is no social action which is not already symbolically

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<sup>41</sup> ‘Life: A Story in Search of a Narrator’, *A Ricoeur Reader*, p. 428. In Ricoeur’s example, *phronesis* determines how to narrate the story of one’s life.

<sup>42</sup> *Ideology and Utopia*, p. 77, referring to Marx, *The German Ideology*, Part I, ed. C.J. Arthur (New York: International Publishers, 1970), p. 47 (p. 42 in the edition of *The German Ideology* referenced in my bibliography). George Taylor emphasises that this notion of ideology at the integrative stage is crucial for Ricoeur’s analysis of Marx and others following after him (e.g., Geertz, Althusser and Habermas) and for the corpus of Ricoeur’s work in general that focuses on productive (as opposed to reproductive) action and communication. See Taylor’s ‘Introduction’, *Ideology and Utopia*, pp. ix-xxxvi.

<sup>43</sup> ‘Marx: The German Ideology’, *Ideology and Utopia*, p. 77.

<sup>44</sup> ‘Marx: The German Ideology’, *Ideology and Utopia*, p. 77.

mediated',<sup>45</sup> and so the language of real life refers to a productive (and not reproductive) symbolic action and self-understanding. Ideology is no longer a superstructure added on to *praxis*, but a part of the praxical base itself. Ricoeur therefore maintains that ideology is not the distortion of communication but the rhetorical basis of communication in which meaning manifests symbolically 'with reference to cultural traditions, norms, institutions, the linguistic structure of communication, and interpretation'.<sup>46</sup> Here, one can see that remaining true to his thesis of hermeneutics, Ricoeur locates the problem not in the thing as such (i.e., ideal life) but in the hermeneutical relationship to how one interprets life.<sup>47</sup> Thus, he concludes that what the philosophical encounter with Marx inevitably offers is not a complete rejection of ideology and symbolic mediation but a desymbolisation of its misconceptions. Accordingly, Ricoeur sees class struggle not as a stage leading towards a total intellectual revolution and break with tradition, but as 'a part of the movement from alienation to recognition within the symbolization process; it is a movement of desymbolization'.<sup>48</sup>

The interplay between the *phronetic* understanding of the "how" of living (*praxis*) and the "what" of work (*poiesis*) assures to some extent that the ideological content is under pressure to change and be reinterpreted by oneself. If ideology, in other words, 'preserves identity', then it can only be reinterpreted through the 'resistance' one confronts as the sedimentation of what one thinks they are.<sup>49</sup> This reinterpretation is motivated by *phronesis* which confronts dead meanings and the need to desymbolise them in apprehending new possibilities of being. The ethical debate of rights versus roles, for example, pertains to a reinterpretation of the human subject as the inalienable subject versus the participant whose ethical autonomy is in

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<sup>45</sup> 'Geertz', *Ideology and Utopia*, p. 258.

<sup>46</sup> Comparing 'Geertz' and 'Habermas (I)', *Ideology and Utopia*, pp. 259 & 226, respectively. Ricoeur therefore distinguishes three levels of meaning for ideology: 1) as distortion; 2) as legitimation; and 3) as integration. See, especially, 'Geertz', *Ideology and Utopia*, pp. 254-66.

<sup>47</sup> The former is epistemological insofar as it concerns a mode of knowledge attempting to discern the thing itself while the latter is hermeneutical since it refers to a mode of understanding in relation to how the truth of a thing discloses itself to the human subject; cf. Ricoeur, 'The Task of Hermeneutics', *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*, pp. 53-9.

<sup>48</sup> 'Habermas (I)', *Ideology and Utopia*, p. 231.

<sup>49</sup> Ricoeur, 'Geertz', *Ideology and Utopia*, p. 266.

need of desymbolisation.<sup>50</sup> Autonomy does not exist in a vacuum of universal rights, in this sense, but within a network of relations, that is, roles. This praxical dimension, nevertheless and as I have stressed, is ineluctably dependent on the mode of understanding that can stand outside any preserved identity, and this is *theoria*. That is to say, ideological refiguration and integration has its basis in a return to a theoretical meditation on symbolic action, otherwise the question of change could not be posited. The notion of a self-enclosed ethical system is a deception since no system can avoid an overall definition of a teleological concept.<sup>51</sup> Accordingly, it is not what is most useful that becomes the important, reinterpreting feature of human action but the useless domain of *theoria* that mediates between the open-ended subjectivity of who one is and the vocation through which one attempts to actualise this possibility. Without *theoria*, hermeneutics remains enclosed within its circle since the agent and the thing produced remain merely the subject of an already predicated and incorrigible ideology.

The hermeneutical unity between praxical-poetic actualisation and theoretical renewal refers to the dialectic play, or belonging together, inherent to appropriation. Appropriation is the ongoing event through which, on the one hand, being is made appropriate to human being, because it is heard and actualised in terms of one's own life. And on the other hand, human being is made appropriate to being, because one apprehends one's possibility of being as a fulfillment of life. Work, in this sense, gives greater expression to the unity of being by at once disclosing a positive meaning, as a possibility of being-in-the-world, and providing the world in which this positive disclosure calls for its reinterpretation. Work, one might say, initiates its own deconstruction because it constantly calls for its reinterpretation according to being, that is, according to a newly emergent mode of thinking that can more appropriately account for the givenness bestowed.<sup>52</sup> The meaningfulness that work

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<sup>50</sup> For an account of this, see Gavin D'Costa, 'Other faiths and Christian Ethics', *The Cambridge Companion to Christian Ethics*, pp. 161-3. MacIntyre is well-known for developing this dichotomy; *After Virtue*, pp. 66-70 & 204-25.

<sup>51</sup> MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, p. 202.

<sup>52</sup> I used a similar phrase [deconstructing itself] in reference to Derrida, though I remain close to a Heideggerian understanding of what "deconstruction of itself" means. The difference between the two can be expressed in relation to the space between different polarities, such as Being and beings. Derrida's sense of deconstruction and *différance* continuously resists reification in either pole. It

opens (in opening a world) makes being more fully present; yet at the same time, it brings to our attention that this positive disclosure can never, finally *figure* being through the things it produces and the structures it creates. It is the superabundance of being itself that overwhelms the responses that initially attempted to reciprocate to its givenness.

Heidegger's notion of overwhelming, in this sense, should not be construed as an overthrow but as an overflow of meaning.<sup>53</sup> The fecundity of being perpetually outshines the thanking acts of work that attempt to be appropriate to the gift of being. It is the overwhelming that can never be contained once and for all by human use because it remains without use, without force, without compulsion. At this level, the gift of being is not contained in the immediate meanings of use that are predicated in human work. Thus, if human usage is a manner of keeping safe, as Heidegger suggests when seeing use as a manner of admitting something 'into its essential nature',<sup>54</sup> then we should hear in the word 'safe' a double meaning. Safe means both to guard and by guarding to set against or exclude.<sup>55</sup> So, the guarding is the shepherding that nurtures and repeats an ontological interpretation while the excluding refers to a manner of choosing that takes a certain and definite path. The keeping safe is itself something that eventually calls for a reinterpretation since it

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attempts to maintain the impossibility and unthinkability of remaining in the "in between" without becoming situated in either pole [e.g., Derrida, 'A Letter to a Japanese Friend', *Derrida and Différance*, p. 3]. Hence, Derrida refers to Iterability, or repetition of this constant practice. For Heidegger, as mentioned earlier, difference refers to a belonging together of the poles in such a way that neither disappears. Rather, the two remain and this is what constitutes the hermeneutical movement of being able to think the two together. Impossibility in Derrida is therefore shifted to concealment in Heidegger. So, the hermeneutical movement is the necessary disclosure that leads to the grounds and fruit of a new interpretation. This process is the event of Appropriation [*Ereignis*] and has the quality of historical destining. Cf. Charles Spinoza on Iterability and *Ereignis*, 'Heidegger and Derrida', *Heidegger: A Critical Reader*, pp. 281-91.

<sup>53</sup> Elsewhere Heidegger refers to 'overabundance' as 'the excess of what presences' and therefore results in wonder [*thaumazein*]; *Four Seminars*, p. 38.

<sup>54</sup> *What Is Called Thinking?* p. 192.

<sup>55</sup> Derrida performs a similar play on the French word 'sauf' in 'Sauf le nom', *On the Name*, pp. 35-85. For Derrida, the negative theology that refers to that which is beyond being or God still must name the thing to which it refers. Because of this naming that rests in a thing, Derrida writes, 'The name itself seems sometimes to be there no longer safe . . .' (p. 65; cf. pp. 55-8). But instead of taking up a definitive path that might arise from negation, Derrida attempts to reside in that moment of negation that surrenders to 'the other', that is, 'the impossible' (pp. 73-5). This, of course, is also the meaning of Hegel's *Aufhebung*, that is, a sublation that preserves and destroys. My thanks to Jeff Harrison for pointing out this connection.



cannot contain being; and according to this disproportion, the open givenness of being overwhelms any one particular way of safe keeping.

One can say in this respect that Heidegger's account of the development of human being in differentiation is not, as Haar assumes, a failed attempt at appropriation because Heidegger simply conflates Dasein into being. Haar questions Heidegger's emphasis on being in asking, '[t]o be called the *mortal*, must he [man] not continue to be differentiated?'<sup>56</sup> Haar seems to miss the subtlety of how appropriation, as a mutual disclosure, means that humans become more themselves—that is, more differentiated—and are not simply dispersed into being. For Heidegger, human beings, by virtue of hearing their vocation, are situated in the midst of the play of use and uselessness, work and the word, beings and being—that is, in short, difference.<sup>57</sup> And while this role bestows a central importance to the actions of human beings, it, at the same time, intensifies the relation between the understanding that informs these actions and being itself which these actions affect. Here, what I mean by "to affect" is not to exert an influence on the surface of things, rather it is a form of affection that chooses between nurturing being or imposing itself as a form of unnatural challenging. The latter is for Heidegger the elevation of technological rationality that forgets the domain of *theoria*, that is, thanking. It remains closed to the openness that is not only uncontainable by technology but lies foreign to its instrumental gaze. In this regard, one can make some sense of his comment in the *Der Spiegel* interview, 'Only a god can save us now'.<sup>58</sup> The predicament of needing to be saved arises because Heidegger suggests that according to our technological world-view, we are not open to that realm which might retrieve us from our oblivion. The initiative falls on the side of the superabundance of being, that is, the gods as the ones who shine, or bestow a look, in order that we, as mortals, may see.<sup>59</sup> But it would seem, as indicated in my previous remarks on keeping safe, that this saving is also an excluding, there to be

<sup>56</sup> Heidegger and the *Essence of Man*, p. 66. *Italics* in original.

<sup>57</sup> Cf. in relation to the vocation of art, Lambert Zuidervaart, 'Art, Truth and Vocation: Validity and Disclosure in Heidegger's Anti-Aesthetics', *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 28:2, p. 163.

<sup>58</sup> 'Only a God Can Save Us Now', *Philosophy Today* 20:4, (1976), pp. 268-85

<sup>59</sup> Heidegger reads *theoria* as *thea* [goddess] and *ora* [esteemed bestow]; *Parmenides*, p. 108 and 'Science and Reflection', *The Question Concerning Technology*, pp. 164-5. Cf. Rojcewicz, *The Gods and Technology*, pp. 8 & 50

overwhelmed by the groundless but superabundant nature of being itself. So it would seem that this manner of saving and being retrieved is a constantly occurring invocation.<sup>60</sup>

It is within this tension that the significance of vocation gains a superlative meaning since it restores a productive and essential relation between work and thinking. The dichotomy between work and thinking is one where work must constantly be held open according to thinking. And at the same time, it is through and by work—that is, the vanity and toil that seems to pervade existence—that human being is called to greater possibilities of being than would not be possible otherwise. These possibilities, moreover, do not exclude reflection but are recognised and driven by it. In this sense, the actualisation of ontological possibility through the dialectic of work and thinking can be expressed generally as thanking. Nevertheless, the thanking act provides no guarantee against devolving into a thankless one. So, the mediation between work and thinking, that is identified through oneself in terms of a vocation, is a hermeneutic moment that always risks elevating one side of the polarity over the other; and by this measure, it is the very mediation that reflects the hermeneutical nature of being itself, that is, the difference. Without this tension, the response unique to *theoria* that I have argued is an openness to gift, would be nothing more than an unproblematic and therefore mechanical repetition. The specifically historical nature of human being, that always seems to border on tragedy, attests to this irreducible difference. But in the end, the wager of any philosophy of work—in being a philosophy at all—is that this difference is not futile. If humankind is a work-in-progress then it ascends only by means of the kind of work that is ultimately drawn ahead by human reflection but can never be free of physical strife. Work and thinking constitute, to recall Ricoeur, ‘the Joy of Yes in the sadness of finitude.’<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Cf. Joanna Hodge, *Heidegger and Ethics*, p. 14.

<sup>61</sup> *Fallible Man*, p. 140.

### Contributions and Future Reflections

If the predominance of necessity circulates through the discourse of usefulness and practicality, the attempt to initiate change lies in broadening this discourse. In other words, to designate and understand work as thanking means that the conventional notions, preconceptions and reflexes to how we interpret work must gradually change. Here, it becomes apparent that no plan of action or managerial science can fulfil this calling since its thinking is inevitably tied to the discourse of necessity, evident in today's general appeal to aims, targets and technical rationality that employ means for ends. In this sense, it is a philosophy of work that opens an alternative understanding of being and reality, whose effect is not a different plan or worldview but a *metanoia*. This *metanoia* cannot be forced or planned to happen in an instant but offers itself through the discourse of thinking. In short, a philosophy of work expands the horizon of possibilities only because it cultivates the ground of human dwelling upon which we reflect and have care for things. Work, in this sense, cannot change unless this ground is first appropriately cultivated so that concern for something greater than necessity can arise of its own freedom.

This suggests that the change initiated by a new philosophy of work will not primarily have its impact at superficial levels of altered practices. Such a change, to recall my comments on technological rationality, merely subject work and the worker to a means-ends scheme in which, once again, the human interiorisation of meaning is bracketed out. To the contrary, the *metanoia* involving work occurs at the level of care and ontological concern, through which a transformation in what Heidegger would call the fundamental mood [*Grundstimmungen*] of human beings is effected. This mood is a manner of interpretation, or fore-having, that guides the way in which Dasein encounters and understands the totality of Being.<sup>62</sup> Care and concern that are integral to this mood determine the manner of withholding (*epoche*) in which an interpretation of the unity of being is given locality, presence and dwelling. It is in this sense that one can see why superficial change at the level of practice alone is not sufficient to the question of our total involvement in being. One should instead speak of the appropriate response to the superabundance of the unity

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<sup>62</sup> Michael Haar, 'Attunement and Thinking', *Heidegger: A Critical Reader*, p. 159. Cf. Beaufret, *Dialogue with Heidegger*, p. 106.

of being that can transform the repetitive nature of poetic activity that is human work.

Finally, the hermeneutical structure I offer sets up a certain expectation of my project: namely, that a change in the philosophy of work should culminate in a corresponding economic shift, as perhaps best represented in the evolution of Marx's thinking. Such a shift is a significant one, and I believe an economic meditation should not be confused as being identical to a philosophy of work but complimentary to it. This complementarity is akin to what Heidegger perceived as the relation between phenomenology and theology, wherein phenomenology's pursuit of ontology forms the basis for the reinterpretation of theological themes of eschatology and anthropology.<sup>63</sup> Similarly, I believe a philosophy of work should be kept distinct from an economic theory since the latter translates the former into a working structure. In view of this qualification, I offer the following questions as indications of this translation; or in recalling Ricoeur's comments, I will attempt to offer suggestions by which the "without resistance" of *theoria* can be applied to an economic structure.

The economic transformation of a philosophy of work has considerable risks since it calls for a theoretical reification in a scheme that can be applied and used, a change that converts ideology (here no longer meant in the pejorative) into practice.

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<sup>63</sup> Cf. Joanna Hodge, 'Phenomenologies of Faith and Hope', *Journal of the British Society of Phenomenology* 37:1, (Jan 2006), pp. 42-6 and Mark A. Wrathall, 'The Revealed Word and World Disclosure: Heidegger and Pascal on the Phenomenology of Religious Faith', *Journal of the British Society of Phenomenology* 37:1, (Jan 2006), pp. 75-88. Ricoeur would disagree with my interpretation of Heidegger here, since he sees Heidegger reducing theology to a positive science without any further possibility of its recovery; *Thinking Biblically*, pp. 355-7. I believe Heidegger's argument is subtler than Ricoeur suspects, though this ambiguity may be attributable to Heidegger's hesitancy to speak on these matters more clearly. His appendix to the 'Phenomenology and Theology' lecture [*Pathmarks*, pp. 54-62] provides some clarifications, or 'pointers', by which one can see how theology is not in-itself confined to a certain mode of science. Heidegger's intention seems to be to refer to another mode of non-representational thinking that does not objectify. His oblique path lies in a conjunction between what is said and what is never said: on the one hand, Heidegger speaks of the necessity of understanding poetic language as a way of moving beyond non-objectifying thinking (e.g., p. 58); on the other hand, Heidegger never refers to the symbolic nature of scripture, upon which theological reflection is based. Perhaps Levinas saw this oblique reference in attempting to restore a rich interpretive relation between *Midrash* and the Law; see, for example, 'Revelation in the Jewish Tradition', *The Levinas Reader*, p. 194. In any case, Ricoeur develops this path in detail—albeit even if unwarily—in his "grafting of hermeneutics onto phenomenology", which in part entails interpreting religious and theological problems in view of phenomenological questions as in, for example, 'Philosophy and Religious Language', *Figuring the Sacred*, pp. 35-47. Certainly, Ricoeur makes room for this kind of allowance in reading Heidegger's understanding of metaphor and metaphysics as being pedagogical and not an 'unbounded deconstruction', as is the case with Derrida; *The Rule of Metaphor*, pp. 334-6.

But this risk is necessary since it is addressed to the expressly human aspects inherent to an economic theory. The problems of poverty, of alienation and dehumanisation in work, of self-fulfillment in vocation and so forth, these problems are not “without resistance” but indeed require a working structure to resolve them. As such, it is my hope that further reflection on what a corresponding economic system might entail will provide the grounds for future research.

In this regard, the question can be asked as to whether or not there is in economics a notion that correlates to the pre-givenness of being that I have argued is central to an understanding of human work. If economics is but the expansion of the network of relations involved in different kinds of work brought about by social complexity and growth, then the thanking nature of work should not be foreign to a science of exchange. Considering the Classical notion of the factors of production—land, labour and capital—one can see that land is the one factor that has no primary reliance upon human activity and thought. Land, in other words, is pre-given.

A further philosophical and theological project would be required to draw the relation between the pre-givenness of being and the pre-givenness of land. Recent studies of Heidegger’s ontology and the significance it has on redefining space in terms of locality and structuring bring out the latent aspect of his thinking that show how human Dasein is initially beholden to and responsible for how it renders space.<sup>64</sup> This is something that can be glimpsed when Heidegger observes,

What the word for space, *Raum*, *Rum*, designates is said by its ancient meaning. *Raum* means a place cleared or freed for settlement and lodging. A space is something that has been made room for, something that is cleared and free.<sup>65</sup>

This responsibility of freeing and clearing space for dwelling, or what I have defined as the basis of human thanking, should be seen to be consistent with Heidegger’s interpretation of causality in which, as we saw earlier, a cause (*aition*) refers to something to which another entity is indebted. Land, as the locality in which human beings dwell and disclose meaning, is that to which humans are indebted.

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<sup>64</sup> See, especially, Malpas, *Heidegger’s Topology: Being, Place, World*.

<sup>65</sup> ‘Building Dwelling Thinking’, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, p. 154.

Following this line of inquiry into economic relations, one is led to ask in what way would an economic system take this understanding of land into account? Quite simply, the idea of private ownership of land would be a primary issue. Is it possible and ontologically consistent for humans to own land, especially in cases where land is owned and rented to others? Ontologically speaking, the ownership of the ground upon which beings have their manner of being creates an unnatural manner of challenging in which the owner can take hold of the disclosure of meaning that occurs within a given location because the very space in which this disclosure occurs is privatised, or held captive. Moreover, this has an economic correlate: the ground is owned according to land enclosure and speculation wherein an owner entitles him/herself to the productivity that takes place on the land. This is epitomised in the form of the landlord taking rent from the workers who produce wealth. In opposition to the worker, the landlord does nothing to contribute to this productivity. The landlord, in other words, takes a portion of wages, not by being involved in the production process, but by virtue of owning the land upon which the labourer must live. If vocation is only possible in freedom, as I argued earlier, to what extent does landownership prohibit this freedom? This line of economic inquiry proposes to retrieve the Classic economic project which sought to understand how economic value as such arises.<sup>66</sup> In this respect, the law of rent would require re-thinking in terms of what it is, how it arises, and "to whom" might it be owed given that the land cannot be owned.

These questions, nonetheless, remain outside the scope of this study because the transition from a philosophy of work to an economics requires an interpretation of theoretical insights and principles into a praxical, working structure. But if the inertia of this kind of project at first seems too enormous, calling for a comprehension of economic law and its historical interpretations and controversies, it nonetheless indicates the depth and range to which the basic human activity of work calls to be understood. Especially given the recent environmental crises, the

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<sup>66</sup> Dupré, *Marx's Social Critique of Culture*, p. 179. *Italics in original.* Cf. Karl Polanyi, *Origins of Our Times: The Great Transformation*, p. 116, where he discusses how the French Physiocrats' insight into the economic law was one that stemmed from the appreciation of land as a factor of production ('the glorification of Physis') was overturned by Adam Smith.

question of a broadened understanding of human work makes itself evident in the desire to interpret human activity as having more to do with simple use and consumption. A narrative sense of human being is, in this respect, calling to be acknowledged as the motivation justifying human toil and struggle; and, one should no longer speak of economics by itself, but economics in relation to that which draws it forth into a greater, caring participation with nature. One might therefore use Ricoeur's phrase and speak of 'the economy of the gift'<sup>67</sup> as that which does not arrive after equal exchange but fulfils it. Gift fulfils equivalence (and exchange) because it precedes it.

Re-thinking economics would then be a matter of understanding the basis of what allows for human production in the first instance and how it can be accounted for within economic exchange. An assumption of economic theory that asserts otherwise ultimately refuses to see human dwelling united to the reflective activity that continually seeks to understand the unity of being that initially prompts our response. Such thinking also fails to see that necessity provides the initial resistance by which we open ourselves towards the very thing that might redeem our toil and the conceptual models we tend to project from the anthropology of scarcity and competition. In this way, the broadening of the domain of human work lies in re-thinking the questions that arise from superabundance and gift, and not want and an unbounded autonomy. 'If releasement towards things and openness to the mystery awaken in us', writes Heidegger, 'then we should arrive at a path that will lead to a new ground and foundation. In that ground the creativity which produces lasting works could strike new roots'.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> 'Ethical and Theological Considerations of the Golden Rule', *Figuring the Sacred*.

<sup>68</sup> Heidegger, *Discourse on Thinking*, pp. 56-7.



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