

THE WAY OF NATURE: HISTORY & TRUTH IN HEIDEGGER'S LATE THOUGHT

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ABSTRACT: This paper argues that Heidegger's deconstruction of metaphysics lends itself to an environmental ethic of non-violent 'dwelling'. I trace the instrumental mode of 'being-in-the-world' to the beginning of Western metaphysics in ancient Greece. The root of the problem is the technological understanding of things as objects and truth as objectivity. Heidegger indicates a more primordial understanding of truth as 'event'. For Heidegger, the emergence of a non-instrumental way of life depends upon the extent to which the technological 'framing' of nature is clearly perceived. I suggest that while Heidegger's post-foundational ethic does indeed envision a non-instrumental relation to nature, it remains unclear how such an alternative way of life may be politically achieved.

KEYWORDS: Ancient Philosophy; Metaphysics; Nihilism; Ontology; Heidegger

The topic of this paper is the non-violent environmental ethic of 'dwelling' that arises from Heidegger's deconstruction of metaphysics. I understand metaphysics as the epochal framing of being as presence, truth as representation, and history as progress. Before tackling this topic in more detail, any engagement with Heidegger's philosophy must address his scandalous political extremism. Heidegger was not only an enthusiastic member of the National Socialist Party, but also exercised authority on behalf of the Nazi regime in his role as Rector at the University of Freiburg. In light of Heidegger's Nazi involvement, one must ask how it is possible for such a brilliant philosopher to err so grievously in his own personal life? Since the recent publication of Heidegger's so-called *Black Notebooks*, this question has been posed with increasing

regularity. These notebooks contain particularly damning anti-Semitic remarks, suggesting that Heidegger's political positions were not only nationalistic, but xenophobic as well. This political thoughtlessness is especially ironic given Heidegger's emphasis on the philosophical significance of practical daily life. If Heidegger is held to the standards of his own teaching, then at least two possible judgments emerge: 1) either Heidegger's Nazi involvement is a political error independent of his philosophical corpus, or 2) Heidegger's thinking is akin to the philosophical expression of National Socialist ideology.

In my judgment, there is a stronger case to be made for the former position. I am indebted to the lineage of scholarship that perceives the transformative potential of Heidegger's thought, including the work of Joan Stambaugh, Gail Stenstad, Daniela Vallega-Neu, Bruce Foltz, and Graham Harman. I adhere to the consensus amongst these scholars, recognizing a break, or 'turn' between the style and substance of Heidegger's early ontology and his later philosophy of 'the event'. This 'turn' is characterized in part by a shift from the force of the active will in the early writings, towards a more meditative concern with 'non-willing' in his later thought. My position is that the primacy of the will in Heidegger's *Being And Time* does in fact lend itself to the authoritarian 'triumph of will'. However, if Heidegger's later thought 'turns' from willing to 'non-willing' as I contend it does, then Heidegger's late philosophy also turns away from the problematic political themes of his early thought, such as the spiritual destiny of the German *Volk*. Rather, the focus of Heidegger's late thought is envisioning a non-instrumental way of life. I therefore argue that there are few if any similarities between Heidegger's late thought and National Socialism.

In his late thought, Heidegger attempts to cultivate a more meditative way of thinking that responds to being as occurrence, happening, or 'event'. This receptive style of thinking is perhaps closer to the sensibility of visionary mystics and poets than to the sober rationality of philosophers and scientists. Heidegger aims to overcome metaphysical thinking by abandoning the scientific method of rational inquiry that orients the ontological investigation of *Being And Time*. In order to accomplish this task, Heidegger's style of thinking undergoes a 'turn' away from the rigorous phenomenological methodology of *Being And Time*, towards a more meditative and poetic style of thinking. More specifically, 'the turn' in Heidegger's thought indicates an abandonment of the traditional metaphysical language of Western philosophy since Plato. As a result, Heidegger engages far less with the metaphysical language and existential themes of his early philosophy. Instead, the problematic to which Heidegger's late thought responds can be expressed as follows: "In the history of Western thought, from its inception, the being of beings has indeed been thought, but the truth of being as being remains unthought; not only is such truth denied as a

possible experience for thinking, but Western thought, as metaphysics, expressly though unwittingly conceals the occurrence of this refusal.”¹ While Heidegger’s early ‘fundamental ontology’ attempts to ‘de-structure’ metaphysics from within the tradition of Western philosophy, Heidegger’s late thought attempts to go *beyond* metaphysics altogether. The ‘turn’ in Heidegger’s late thought should therefore be understood as an attempt to go beyond the conventional use of language, beyond the frame of immanence, and beyond the world-historical destiny of ‘the West’. The ‘turn’ in Heidegger’s thought does not simply attempt to a ‘step back’ to the inception of ancient metaphysics in ancient Greece, but to ‘leap beyond’ the entire philosophical tradition of Western civilization as a whole. The end of Western philosophy does not, however, signify the end of thinking. On the contrary, Heidegger suggests that “with the end of philosophy, thinking is not also at its end, but in a transition to another beginning.”²

Heidegger distinguishes between two beginnings of philosophy: the ‘first beginning’ of metaphysics in ancient Greece, and a more enigmatic ‘other beginning’ which has yet to be accomplished. The first beginning amounts to a ‘step back’ to the ancient Greek origins of Western metaphysics. Heidegger: “The step back from the thinking that merely represents to the thinking that responds.”³ According to Heidegger, the ancient Greek philosophers were the first to attain insight into the ‘ontological difference’ – the difference between *what* there is, and *that* there is. In other words, the ‘ontological difference’ distinguishes between the conceptual representation of *what* there is, and the awe and wonder *that* there is. Heidegger argues that “the division into whatness and thatness does not just contain a doctrine of metaphysical thinking. It points to an event in the history of being.”⁴ For Heidegger, the distinction between ‘beings’ and ‘being’ attains its logical fulfillment in the ‘abandonment’ of beings to the violence of technological exploitation and the subsequent ‘oblivion’ of being. It is Heidegger’s contention that nihilism has been innate to Western metaphysics ever since the inception of the ‘ontological difference’ in ancient Greece. Throughout the history of ‘the West’, the simple wonder that *there is* becomes obscured by philosophical ‘concepts and categories’. The ‘step back’ is not, therefore, merely concerned with a retrieval of the principles and dogmas that characterize ancient metaphysics. Instead, the intention of the ‘step back’ is to once again perceive the

¹ Martin Heidegger, *Nietzsche vls. III-IV*, ed. David Farrell Krell, New York, NY: Harper One, 1987, 190

² Martin Heidegger, *The End Of Philosophy*, trans. Joan Stambaugh, Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press, 2003, 96

³ Martin Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. Albert Hofstadter, New York, NY: Perennial 1971, 179

⁴ Heidegger. *The End Of Philosophy*, 4

wonder *that* there is being rather than nothing. While metaphysics is concerned with the conceptual representation of objects, Heidegger's 'step back' aims to cultivate a pre-conceptual receptivity to direct experience. Heidegger: "The step back lets thinking enter into a questioning that experiences."⁵ In this sense, the 'step back' does not aim to retrieve or revive ancient philosophy. Instead, in Heidegger's words, "only when we turn thoughtfully toward what has already been thought, will be turned for use for what must still be thought."⁶ The 'step back' is therefore a preparation for the still more radical 'leap beyond' the entire Western philosophical tradition since Plato.

While it is frequently noted that many of Heidegger's early existential themes – such as anxiety, being-towards-death, guilt, and conscience – are indebted to the modern theologian and philosopher Soren Kierkegaard, it is less often noted that this is also the case with Heidegger's notion of 'the leap' in his later thought. The somewhat obscure notion of 'the leap' can be more readily understood within this context. For Kierkegaard, as for Heidegger, 'the leap' is not altogether different from the idea of religious conversion. In this sense, Heidegger presupposes that "there is a thinking more rigorous than the conceptual."⁷ The 'leap beyond' metaphysics therefore amounts to a transition from the intellectual representation of being as an object, to a 'mindfulness' of the essential occurrence of being as 'event'. The notion of the 'leap beyond' should also be understood in opposition to the steady progression of deductive and inductive logic. 'The leap' breaks free of "the restriction of thinking to the concept of thinking established by logic."⁸ 'The leap' is sudden, abrupt, and completely unexpected. Heidegger: "In contrast to a steady progress . . . the leap takes us abruptly to where everything is different, so different that it strikes us as strange. Abrupt means sheer descent or rise that mark the chasms edge."⁹ In this sense, the 'leap beyond' is akin to direct pre-conceptual insight into non-dual experience. It would therefore be mistaken to interpret 'the leap' as a movement beyond existence into some kind of otherworldly realm, such as the divine realm of Plato's forms. Instead, 'the leap' involves a 'bracketing' of abstract rationality and a renewed attention to direct experience. For Heidegger, thinking "is not about a mere modification of the concept, nor about a more original insight into the essence.

⁵ Martin Heidegger, *Basic Writings*, ed. David Farrell Krell, San Francisco: CA: Harper Collins, 1977, 246

⁶ Martin Heidegger, *Identity And Difference*, trans. Joan Stambaugh, Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2003, 41

⁷ Heidegger, *Basic Writings*, 258

⁸ Martin Heidegger, *What Is Called Thinking?* trans. Glenn Gray, New York, NY: Harper Perennial, 2004, 209

⁹ *Ibid*, 12

Instead, it is about the leap into the essential occurrence of truth.”¹⁰ Such an insight into the ‘essential occurrence’ of truth would amount to nothing less than the inception of ‘another beginning’ in the history of ‘the West’. In other words, Heidegger’s late thought amounts to: 1) a ‘step back’ to the unthought difference between being and beings, and, more significantly, 2) a ‘leap beyond’ the world-historical epoch of Western metaphysics.

Contrary to the history of philosophy since Plato, for whom truth is eternal and unchanging, Heidegger argues that the ‘truth of being’ is both temporal and historical. History grounds the ‘truth of being’. More specifically, the ‘history of being’ is the ungrounded cite of truth. Heidegger: “In its own being, truth is historical”¹¹ For Heidegger, “truth is inherently historical, not because human being elapses in the course of time, but because mankind is sent into metaphysics, and because metaphysics alone is able to ground an epoch insofar as it establishes and maintains humankind in a truth concerning beings as such and as a whole.”¹² Heidegger’s argument is actually quite simple. Metaphysics refers to neither a system of dogmas, beliefs, nor principles, but instead refers to an historical horizon of experience. Heidegger: “Metaphysics determines the history of the Western era.”¹³ Again, “Metaphysics grounds an age, in that through a specific comprehension of truth it gives to that age a basis upon which it is formed.”¹⁴ An ‘age’, ‘era’, or ‘epoch’ of history refers to the unconscious horizon of intelligibility and meaning that frames our basic experience of being. In this sense, the unfolding and culmination of Platonic metaphysics is akin to the density of ‘the West’. Heidegger claims that the ‘truth of being’ expresses itself differently throughout different historical epochs of being. Heidegger: “History arises out of the appropriating event and as such decides the essence of truth in each case and, with this decision, sustains a ‘time’ and grounds ‘epochs’ that essentially occur . . . as ages of world-history.”¹⁵ According to Heidegger, the history of the ‘first beginning’ of metaphysics constitutes the world-historical epoch in which the truth of being discloses itself as *alethia*, or ‘un-concealment’. Only in light of this original ‘clearing’ of being can any specific entity or thing emerge to presence.

¹⁰ Martin Heidegger, *Contributions To Philosophy (Of The Event)*, trans. Richard Rojcewicz and Daniela Valega-Neu, Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 2013, 267

¹¹ Heidegger, *Nietzsche: vls III & IV*, 187

¹² *Ibid*, 187

¹³ *Ibid*, 205

¹⁴ Martin Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology And Other Essays*, trans. William Lovitt, New York, NY: Harper Perennial, 1977, 115

¹⁵ Martin Heidegger, *The Event*, trans. Richard Rojcewicz, Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 2013, 11

For Heidegger, the inception of ‘another beginning’ would constitute a rupture, or break from the epoch of the ‘first beginning’. In this sense, the ‘first beginning’ constitutes the epochal frame of Western metaphysics beginning with Plato and culminating with Nietzsche. For Heidegger, “history is not merely in transition to another age within the previous time-space of metaphysics; on the contrary, time-space itself is becoming other.”¹⁶ Each unique ‘world-historical’ epoch signifies a distinct metaphysical framework that structures our basic experience of being. For this reason, ‘another beginning’ would constitute a fundamentally different way of ‘being-in-the-world’. Heidegger’s understanding of metaphysics as a ‘world-historical’ epoch of being indicates that history is not a linear development through time, but rather a series of unforeseeable breaks. A rupture of the epochal frame of Western metaphysics therefore indicates the inception of a way of ‘being-in-the-world’ that is absolutely incommensurable with the history of the ‘first beginning’.

It is worth noting that Heidegger’s account of a ‘world-historical’ epoch of being is quite different from the notion of universal history of ‘world-spirit’ that dominates modern philosophy from Kant through Hegel and culminating in Marx. A juxtaposition of Heidegger’s notion of ‘historicity’ with the dialectical notion of ‘universal history’ may clarify the former. Hegel’s phenomenology of ‘World-Spirit’ is a secularized Christian cosmology. The dialectical movement of ‘Being – Essence – Notion’ delineates of the Trinitarian account of the Incarnation, Crucifixion, and Resurrection of God. The Father is incarnated as the Son who is crucified and resurrected as the Holy Spirit of Christian fellowship. Hegel: “Spirit is the movement of Self that empties itself of itself . . .”¹⁷ Hegel argues that history is the immanent unfolding of ‘universal spirit’ in the world. The dialectical movement of history is the process of the self-emptying of ‘Spirit’; “history is a conscious self-mediating process – Spirit emptied out into Time . . .”¹⁸ For Hegel, the subject of history is history itself. Hegel therefore defines the ‘universal spirit’ of ‘world-history’ as “that Spirit whose nature is always one and the same, but which unfolds its one nature in the phenomenon of the World’s existence.”¹⁹ The subject, or ‘spirit of history’ unfolds itself as a process of self-differentiation, and returns to itself in a process of self-recognition. History is therefore the process through which ‘world-spirit’ attains the self-consciousness of its own movement and development towards ‘absolute

¹⁶ Ibid, 64

¹⁷ Hegel quoted in Jean-Luc Nancy, *Hegel: The Restlessness Of The Negative*, trans. Jason Smith & Steven Miller, Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2002, 94

¹⁸ Ibid, 105

¹⁹ G.W.F. Hegel, *The Philosophy Of History*, trans. J. Sibree, Mineola, NY: Dover, 1956, 10

knowledge'. For this reason, Hegel claims that the movement of 'universal history' is the progressive development of 'world-spirit' to ever more advanced forms of self-consciousness. Hegel: "The life of the ever present Spirit is a circle of progressive embodiments."²⁰ For Hegel, 'universal history' is therefore the history of progress, of the real becoming rational and the rational real; "Reason is the Sovereign of the World; the history of the world, therefore, presents us with a rational process."²¹ In other words, the sovereignty of reason governs the ascending trajectory of 'world-history'. The unfolding of 'world-spirit' is driven by an innate *telos* that determines the logic of historical development. As obscure as Hegel's notion of 'universal history' may at first seem, it is actually the dominant ideology of modernity. The epochal frame of modern time-consciousness perceives history as a linear sequence of events. Furthermore, history is the linear progression from the dark past towards a brighter future. Although dominant, this ideology most often remains primarily latent, and therefore unconscious. For instance, nearly all of us implicitly believe that the modern age is more advanced than previous historical eras, and that civilization will continue to advance into an ideal future. In this sense, to the extent that we are modern, we are also implicitly Hegelian.

Heidegger's criticism of 'universal history' is remarkably similar to Kierkegaard's critique of Hegel. Hegel claims that each historical epoch is overcome, transcended, or sublated by a more advanced stage of history. In this context, sublation should be understood as an overcoming that both transcends and preserves the horizons of the current historical epoch. For both Heidegger and Kierkegaard, however, history is constituted by discontinuity and rupture rather than the progressive continuity of time that stretches from the past to the present and into the future. There is no innate logic to history. History is not the history of progress. Instead, each world-historical epoch is 'incommensurable' with every other epoch of being. An epoch of 'world-history' does not progress to a higher stage through the logical development of a divine purpose, or *telos*, as it does for Hegel. Hegel's teleological notion of history is more clearly delineated when juxtaposed with Kierkegaard's notion of the 'teleological suspension' of 'universal history'. A 'teleological suspension' of history presupposes something that is higher than the universal. For Kierkegaard, that which is 'higher' is the singular individual before God. A 'teleological suspension' of history is similar to Heidegger's notion of an epochal transfiguration of being. The transfiguration of a 'world-historical' epoch of being should therefore be understood as the suspension, rupture,

²⁰ Ibid, 79

²¹ Ibid, 9

or break from the history of the ‘first beginning’ of metaphysics. It therefore follows that history is not a progressive development through time, but rather a series of unforeseeable breaks. Each historical era represents the advent of a unique way of ‘being-in-the-world’. The discontinuity of history means that the advent of another ‘world-historical’ epoch is completely unforeseeable from within epochal horizons of the Western metaphysics. A chasm therefore extends between the ‘first beginning’ of metaphysics and that which Heidegger calls ‘another beginning’. For this reason, the fundamental characteristics of the ‘other beginning’ are completely unforeseeable from within the metaphysical framework of the ‘first beginning’. It is not Heidegger’s intention to accomplish an epochal transfiguration of being, but merely to establish its necessity. At most, Heidegger hopes to prepare for inception of ‘another beginning’ by cultivating experimental modes of thought.

An essential element of Heidegger’s late thought is the contention that the ‘first beginning’ of metaphysics frames being as ‘constant presence’. Heidegger: “Being means: presencing, letting-be-present: presence.”²² Heidegger argues that “since the beginning of Western metaphysics, being has been understood in the sense of permanence of presencing, whereby permanence has ambiguously meant both fixity and persistence.”²³ In Heidegger’s words, metaphysics is the “final consequence of this determination of the sway of being as ‘the permanent’, ‘the constant’ . . .”²⁴ As early as *Being And Time*, Heidegger describes two fundamental ‘attunements’ towards being as presence: ‘present-at-hand’ and ‘ready-to-hand’. ‘Present-at-hand’ refers to the objective presence of objects to reason, while ‘ready-to-hand’ refers to the practical use of tools in daily life. While things appear ‘present-at-hand’ to the detached observation of the scientist or philosopher, things are not necessarily experienced as ‘present-at-hand’ in the context of daily life. Rather, things merely appear as objectively present when related to exclusively as objects of scientific observation and experimentation. In fact, ‘present-at-hand’ is derivative of the more primordial way of relating to things as ‘ready-to-hand’. For Heidegger, things appear as ‘ready-to-hand’ in light of the ordinary, pre-theoretical way of ‘being-in-the-world’. While metaphysics ‘frames’ beings as objectively present, attention to experience reveals things within an interdependent network of relations and a matrix of meaning arising from everyday practical use. In other words, the ‘present-at-hand’ mode of relating to things as

²² Martin Heidegger, *On Time And Being*, trans. Joan Stambaugh, Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2002, 10

²³ Heidegger, *Nietzsche vs III-IV*, 212

²⁴ Martin Heidegger, *Mindfulness*, trans. Parvis Emad and Thomas Kalary, London, UK: Continuum International Publishing, 2006, 107

objects is an abstraction of the way things actually appear to direct experience. The concept assumes primacy over that which is conceptualized. The metaphysical relation to beings as objects that are ‘present-at-hand’ abstracts from the practical ‘ready-to-hand’ way of ‘being-in-the-world’. The ‘present-at-hand’ way of relating to things as objects obscures the following fact: that the pre-theoretical relation to things as tools is more primordial than the scientific relation to things as objects.

Heidegger’s controversial insight is that technology did not emerge from out of the modern scientific revolution. Heidegger argues that technology precedes the development of science, just as the ‘ready-to-hand’ way of being in the world precedes the ‘present-at-hand’ relation to being. According to Heidegger, it would be a mistake to interpret technology as a primarily modern phenomenon. On the contrary, the technological relation to being is as ancient as metaphysics itself. Heidegger: “Technology is in its essence a destiny within the history of being and of the truth of being, a truth that lies in oblivion.”²⁵ Heidegger traces the origins of this destiny back to the inception of Western metaphysics in ancient Greece. Heidegger distinguishes between technology on the one hand, and essence of technology on the other. In light of this distinction, Heidegger suggests that “technology is not equivalent to the essence of technology.”²⁶ Furthermore, “the essence of technology is by no means anything technological.”²⁷ If technology can be understood as “the manufacture and utilization of equipment, tools, and machines, the manufactured and used things themselves, and the needs and ends they serve,” what then, is the essence of technology?²⁸ It is clear that for Heidegger the essence of technology is more than a means to an end; technology is more than a mere neutral instrument directed towards specific ends of our own choosing. Instead, Heidegger argues that “everywhere we remain unfree and chained to technology, whether we passionately affirm or deny it. But are delivered over to it in the worst possible way when we regard it as something neutral.”²⁹ Contrary to the standard interpretation of technology as a neutral tool, or the means to and a specific end, Heidegger argues that the essence of technology does not merely mediate our access to things in the world. Technology discloses the world as such; technology is ‘world-disclosing’. According to Heidegger, the essence of technology “coincides with the term completed metaphysics.”³⁰ Western metaphysics culminates

²⁵ Heidegger, *Basic Writings*, 244

²⁶ Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology*, 4

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 4

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 4

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 4

³⁰ Heidegger, *The End Of Philosophy*, 93

with the ‘abandonment’ of beings to the fate of technological ‘machination’. The completion of metaphysics is therefore akin to the nihilistic destiny of ‘the West’.

According to Heidegger, the historical unfolding of Platonic metaphysics ‘frames’ being as ‘constant presence’. In the modern era, the metaphysical determination of being as ‘presence’ discloses beings as ‘standing reserve’ for technological exploitation. Heidegger argues that “this [metaphysical] view excludes . . . that which becomes, that which comes into being and ceases to be, the un-constant.”³¹ The technological ‘framing’ of living beings as a ‘resource’ culminates with “the unconditional objectification of everything present”³² and “the absolute objectification of being as such.”³³ The total objectification of being is a logical outcome of the ‘ontological difference’ – “the sole precedence of beings (of what is objectively real) over being.”³⁴ With the distinction of the ‘truth of being’ from beings, beings become objects and truth becomes objectivity. As a result, “being everywhere abandons beings, leaving them to the claws and talons of objectification.”³⁵ The pre-conceptual, pre-objective, or pre-theoretical way of ‘being-in-the-world’ was more readily accessible to the ancient Greeks than to us moderns. The insight of the Pre-Socratics has, nevertheless, been concealed and forgotten throughout the history of Platonic metaphysics. For Heidegger, the unfolding of metaphysics is coextensive with ‘the history of being’. Heidegger: “In the beginning of its history, Being opens itself up as an emerging (physis) and un-concealment (alethia). From there it reaches the formulation of presence and permanence in the sense of enduring (ousia).”³⁶ At the inception of metaphysics in ancient Greece, being discloses itself as the radiant emergence of beings to presence. Throughout the history of philosophy, however, metaphysics becomes the systematic representation of that which can be conceptually grasped as objectively present. For Heidegger, the primordial ‘clearing’ of an epochal horizon of being is prior to the technological ‘framing’ of being as a ‘resource’. Heidegger therefore intends to ‘step back’ to the ancient experience of the emergence of beings into ‘the open’.

At the inception of Western metaphysics, ‘beings’ are distinguished from ‘being’. The question of ‘being’ subsequently recedes behind the disclosure of individual entities. As a result, the fundamental question of being is concealed and obscured. We

³¹ Heidegger, *Mindfulness*, 107

³² Heidegger, *The End Of Philosophy*, 85

³³ Heidegger, *Nietzsche* vls III-IV, 242

³⁴ Heidegger, *The End Of Philosophy*, 91

³⁵ Martin Heidegger, *The History Of Being*, trans. Jeffery Powell & William McNeil, Bloomington IN: Indiana University Press, 2016, 130

³⁶ Heidegger, *The End Of Philosophy*, 4

are no longer 'mindful' that *there is*. Henceforth, being is thought exclusively as a 'standing reserve' constantly available for extraction, production, and exploitation. It is Heidegger's contention that "the unconditional establishment of machination and the aligning of mankind to this establishment constitute the installation of the abandonment of beings by being . . ." ³⁷ The technological 'framing' of beings and the 'abandonment' of being culminates in the complete nihilism of 'machination'. The technological 'framing' of nature renders it virtually impossible to encounter this world as sacred. For instance, it is Heidegger's contention that it is now impossible to perceive a river as anything more than a natural resource. For this reason, Holderlin's hymn to the Ister is a work of art that bears witness to fundamentally different world, one that is no longer accessible to us. Similarly, the Black Forest no longer inspires mystery and fables. Instead, it is just another stock of 'standing reserve' to be exploited. Obscured by city lights, the night sky no longer inspires 'awe and wonder' before the vastness of the cosmos. We have truly become 'homeless' in this world. The technological 'framing' of nature is total. Rivers, mountains, forests, and fields become a 'natural resource' just humans are reduced to 'human capital'. Heidegger: "The irresistibility of the metaphysical essence of technology now incorporates the human being, calculated as the most important raw material." ³⁸ In other words, what is at stake is the total technological 'framing' of Earth as standing reserve for instrumental 'machination' – "the planetary imperialism of technologically organized man." ³⁹

Heidegger's criticism of the technological 'framing' and 'machination' of nature can be further clarified by looking briefly at the notion of 'instrumental reason' emerging from out of the Frankfurt School of critical theory, especially the work of Herbert Marcuse. As a student of Heidegger, Marcuse's criticism of technological rationality is deeply influenced by Heidegger's late thought. Following Heidegger, Marcuse attempts to disclose the "basic experiential framework" of the modern epoch of being. ⁴⁰ According to Marcuse, technology functions as an *a priori* – it reveals being as nothing but a resource constantly available for exploitation. ⁴¹ As *a priori*, the technological frame "predefines the form in which objects appear." ⁴² In other words, technology functions as an *a priori* category of perception in the sense that "it

³⁷ Heidegger, *The Event*, 87

³⁸ *Ibid*, 77

³⁹ Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology*, 152

⁴⁰ Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, trans. Douglas Kellner, Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1964, 164

⁴¹ *Ibid*, 152

⁴² *Ibid*, 219

predetermines the experience of nature as extractable resource.”⁴³ For Heidegger and the Frankfurt School alike, the essence of technology discloses “a specific world, [but technology] does not and cannot transcend this world.”⁴⁴ Within the metaphysical framework of technology, “being is apprehended under the aspect of manufacture and administration.”⁴⁵ The metaphysical determination of being as ‘presence’ lends itself to the perception of nature as a ‘resource’ available for total administration. For both Heidegger and Marcuse, ‘machination’ encompasses the totality of being, thereby ‘framing’ all of Earth as a resource for exploitation. Heidegger’s account of the ‘abandonment’ of beings to ‘machination’ should be understood in light of the total administration of ‘instrumental reason’. For the Frankfurt School, the domination of nature goes hand in hand with domination of man. The same is true for Heidegger as well – the technological ‘framing’ of being delimits the epochal horizon of Western metaphysics. This is similar to Marcuse’s contention that “the instrumentalization of things becomes . . . the instrumentalization of man.”⁴⁶ This is also the position of Horkheimer and Adorno, for whom “man becomes material, just as nature as a whole is material for society.”⁴⁷ Nevertheless, perhaps the differences between Heidegger and the Frankfurt School are more significant than their similarities. While the Frankfurt school diagnoses the ‘instrumentalization’ of man, the reification of consciousness, and the mutilation of sensation to the alienation of global capitalism, Heidegger is more fatalistic in his outlook. For Heidegger, the technological ‘framing’ and ‘machination’ of nature constitutes the nihilistic destiny of ‘the West’.

The innate nihilism of metaphysics need not necessarily lead to the defeatism of radical pessimism. A faint glimmer of hope remains. Heidegger directs us to Holderlin’s poetic saying: ‘Where there is danger, there grows the saving power’. For Heidegger, the ‘saving power’ is as follows: that the essence of technology is also the essence of truth. Technology discloses beings as objects, thereby revealing the truth of being as objectivity. It follows that truth is therefore the adequate representation of an object to consciousness. The instrumental exploitation of nature as a ‘standing reserve’ is the culmination of the metaphysical determination of being as ‘constant presence’. What is needed is a ‘leap beyond’ the metaphysical determination of being as presence. ‘The leap’ signifies the inception of a non-instrumental relation to nature.

⁴³ Ibid, 152

⁴⁴ Ibid, 164

⁴⁵ Max Horkheimer & Theodor Adorno, *The Dialectic of Enlightenment*, trans. John Cumming, (New York, NY: Continuum, 2002), 84

⁴⁶ Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, 159

⁴⁷ Horkheimer & Adorno, *The Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 87

The implications of Heidegger's criticism of Western metaphysics are extensive. It would seem that nothing short of an 'epochal transfiguration' can address the problem of the instrumental relation to being. What is needed, therefore, is "a new basic experience of being [that] would change human existence in its entirety."⁴⁸ The intention of Heidegger and Marcuse is identical in this respect. For both thinkers, only "a qualitatively new mode of 'seeing' and qualitatively new relations between men and nature" would signify a transfiguration of the epochal horizons of being.⁴⁹ Such a transfiguration of the technological way of 'being-in-the-world' would consist of "a fundamentally different experience of being, a fundamentally different relation between man and nature, and fundamentally different existential relations."⁵⁰ For Heidegger and Marcuse alike, salvation would require nothing less than the emergence of "a different fundamental relation to being."⁵¹

The prospect of such an 'epochal transfiguration' depends, first of all, on the extent to which the necessity of such a break from the 'history of being' is felt as an existential need. For Heidegger, the fundamental need is "to disrupt history through the leap into the overcoming of metaphysics, and thereby to raise beings as a whole out of the hinges of machination."⁵² If there is indeed reason to place hope in a 'saving power', then the 'plight' of the 'abandonment' of being to technological 'machination' must give rise to a deeply felt need for the inception of a non-instrumental way of life. Marcuse nevertheless echoes Adorno's concern – that "the need which might resist control has already been suppressed."⁵³ For Heidegger too, there is a danger that "we fail to hear the claim of being which speaks in the essence of technology."⁵⁴ Heidegger: "The spiritual decline of the Earth has progressed so far that people are in danger of losing their last spiritual strength, the strength that makes it possible to even see this decline . . . and to appraise it as such."⁵⁵ As a result, Heidegger suggests that "the lack of need is the highest and most hidden need."⁵⁶ Heidegger: "The abandonment of beings by being leaves human beings without a sense of plight [in light of] the endless self-expanding emptiness of devastation."⁵⁷ For both Heidegger and Marcuse, the

⁴⁸ Herbert Marcuse, *Eros And Civilization*, Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1974, 52

⁴⁹ Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, 165

⁵⁰ Marcuse, *Eros And Civilization*, 5

⁵¹ Heidegger, *What Is Called Thinking?* 89

⁵² Heidegger, *The History Of Being*, 22

⁵³ Horkheimer & Adorno, *The Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 121

⁵⁴ Heidegger, *Identity And Difference*, 34

⁵⁵ Heidegger, *Introduction To Metaphysics*, 40

⁵⁶ Heidegger, *The End Of Philosophy*, 102

⁵⁷ Heidegger, *The Event*, 141

technological ‘framing’ of being must give rise to the genuine need for ‘another beginning’ – the need for an entirely *other* way of life.

If, as Heidegger claims, “thinking remains bound to the tradition of the epochs of the destiny of Being,” then it therefore follows that an ‘epochal transfiguration’ of being must include a cultivation of pre-objective, non-instrumental, and post-metaphysical modes of thought.⁵⁸ This meditative style of thinking is the expression of a more ‘mindful’ and ‘thankful’ way of ‘dwelling’ upon Earth. The transition to a non-violent mode of ‘dwelling’ must nevertheless be ventured from out of the epoch of technological ‘framing’ and ‘machination’. According to Heidegger, the technological ‘framing’ of being is something resembling that which the ancient Greeks called destiny; “metaphysics is an epoch of the history of being itself.”⁵⁹ Within the ‘being-historical’ epoch of Western metaphysics, we are destined to experience the world metaphysically; that is, dualistically. A basic feature of the metaphysical frame is dualism – the duality of ‘being’ and ‘beings’. Moreover, metaphysical dualism is not merely one characteristic of metaphysics among many. Instead, Heidegger claims that the entire “style of all Western-European philosophy . . . is determined by this duality.”⁶⁰ Through an analysis of the metaphysical language of Western philosophy, Heidegger demonstrates that the most basic characteristic of metaphysics is “the duality of individual beings and Being.”⁶¹ Put simply, “the foundation of metaphysics is the duality of beings and Being.”⁶² Heidegger argues that philosophical language is unable to move beyond this dualism, and is therefore insufficient for the task of ‘inceptual thinking’. Heidegger: “In keeping with its dual nature, a being has its nature in Being, and Being persists as the Being of a being.”⁶³ As a result of the ‘ontological difference’, truth is perceived dualistically – as the ‘Being of beings’. Truth is always perceived within this dualistic framework; “We are always speaking within the duality.”⁶⁴

Metaphysically understood, truth is the adequate correspondence of the intellect to the thing, or the correct representation of the object in thought. Again, truth is “the correspondence of representing with what is present.”⁶⁵ Metaphysics therefore understands truth as correctness, or the correct correspondence of knowledge to

⁵⁸ Heidegger, *On Time And Being*, 9

⁵⁹ Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology*, 110

⁶⁰ Heidegger, *What Is Called Thinking?* 224

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 223

⁶² *Ibid.*, 224

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 221

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 227

⁶⁵ Heidegger, *On Time And Being*, 71

matter, just as untruth can be understood as incorrectness. According to this correspondence theory of truth, “the true is what is made fast and therefore permanent in representational thought.”⁶⁶ In this sense, truth is an idea. More specifically, truth is the correct adequation of the idea to the thing. Heidegger: “An idea is called correct when it conforms to its object. Such correctness in the forming of the idea has long since been equated with truth – that is, we determine the nature of truth by the conformity of the idea.”⁶⁷ In opposition to the correspondence theory of truth, and therefore the entire tradition of Western philosophy, Heidegger suggests that truth is not a cognitive representation at all. Instead, truth refers to the open clearing of *alethia*, the primordial disclosure of a phenomenal world. *Alethia* is the pre-objective, non-dual opening of the epochal horizons of a world, prior to the cognition of any specific entity that appears within that open region. The implication of Heidegger’s interpretation of truth as *alethia* is that the correspondence theory of truth is merely derivative of a more basic ‘truth of being’. Prior to the cognition of any object in the world, *there is* the primordial opening of the world itself. In order to have an intellectual representation of an object, there must already be an open ‘clearing’ in which phenomena emerge and come to presence. In Heidegger’s words, “*alethia*, unconcealment thought as opening, first grants the possibility of truth.”⁶⁸ More primordial than any notion of truth as representation, correspondence, or adequation is the notion of truth as *alethia*, or un-concealment.

Heidegger’s understanding of truth as *alethia* constitutes a fundamental difference between Heidegger’s late thought and the philosophical tradition of ‘the West’. At the inception of metaphysics in ancient Greece, truth is perceived as the open ‘clearing’ of an encompassing world. Heidegger: “Since Plato, *alethia* [has been interpreted as] the illumination in which beings as such stand, the visibility of beings as their presence.”⁶⁹ Subsequently, being is perceived as the endurance of beings as ‘constant presence’. With the culmination of metaphysics in the modern era, beings are objectified as ‘standing reserve’ and abandoned to technological ‘framing’ and ‘machination’. In this sense, the technological ‘framing’ of being is akin to the consummation of the destiny of ‘the West’. Heidegger: “Metaphysics, as the history of the truth of what is as such, would have come to pass from out of the destining of being itself. Metaphysics would be, in its essence, the history of being itself . . .”⁷⁰ Throughout the ‘history of being’,

⁶⁶ Heidegger, *Nietzsche* vls III-IV, 235

⁶⁷ Heidegger, *What Is Called Thinking?* 58

⁶⁸ Heidegger, *On Time And Being*, 69

⁶⁹ Heidegger, *Contributions To Philosophy*, 264

⁷⁰ Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology*, 110

truth, understood as *alethia*, is concealed by the technological ‘framing’ of nature as a mere resource for instrumental ‘machination’. In Heidegger’s words, the concealment of the truth of being “occurs through the collapse of the world characterized by metaphysics, and at the same time through the desolation of the Earth stemming from metaphysics.”⁷¹ The metaphysical determination of being as presence conceals the fundamental experience of truth as *alethia* – the ‘open region’ of being. Following the inception of metaphysics, truth “is no longer that which presences; it is rather that which . . . has the character of an object.”⁷² Metaphysics conceals the primordial un-concealment of truth as *alethia*, thereby abandoning all living beings to the fate of ‘objectification’. Contrary to the metaphysical determination of truth as representation, the ‘truth of being’ indicates that truth is an exposure to the pre-objective ‘happening’, ‘occurrence’, or ‘event’ of being. In Heidegger’s words “time and space *are* not; instead, they essentially occur.”⁷³ Again, “truth never *is*; instead, it essentially occurs.”⁷⁴ Once more, “being essentially occurs as event.”⁷⁵

Heidegger’s early ‘fundamental ontology’ called attention to the primordial ‘un-concealment’ of being; an ‘un-concealment’ that is itself concealed by the technological ‘framing’ of beings as objects. The intention is therefore to indicate this primordial ‘un-concealment, ‘clearing’, or ‘openness’ of being that is concealed by the metaphysical determination of truth as objectivity. Heidegger’s discovery of the primordial openness of being nevertheless takes on a different meaning in his late thought. Heidegger judges his own understanding of truth as *alethia* to be insufficient. The notion of truth as *alethia* incorrectly presupposes that if openness is truth, then untruth must therefore be characterized by the ‘concealment’, ‘withdrawal’, or ‘passage’ of being from the ‘open region’ of phenomenal manifestation. Heidegger: “*Alethia* means un-concealment . . . which already indicates that concealment itself is experienced only as what is to be cleared away, what is to be removed.”⁷⁶ What is needed, therefore, is to think “*alethia* in a Greek manner as un-concealment, and then, above and beyond the Greek, think [*alethia*] as the opening of self-concealing.”⁷⁷ Heidegger’s late thinking abandons the notion of untruth as the concealment of truth. Instead the intention is to cultivate a ‘mindfulness’ of the self-concealing ‘event’. There is a remarkable affinity between certain aspects of Heidegger’s late thought and

⁷¹ Heidegger, *The End Of Philosophy*, 86

⁷² Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology*, 150

⁷³ Heidegger, *Contributions To Philosophy*, 304

⁷⁴ *Ibid*, 271

⁷⁵ *Ibid*, 272

⁷⁶ *Ibid*, 277

⁷⁷ Heidegger, *On Time And Being*, 71

elements of ‘Eastern’ philosophy. For instance, Heidegger’s understanding of being as the ‘essential occurrence’ of the event can be further clarified when juxtaposed with the Buddhist notion of *pratityasamutpada*, or ‘dependent origination’. The term ‘dependent origination’, ‘dependent arising’, or ‘interdependent co-arising’ indicates the interdependence and impermanence of all phenomenal manifestation. The Buddhist notion of interdependence teaches that separate things do not exist. Phenomenal manifestation is undifferentiated and without distinction. The perception of separate and distinct things in the world is an effect of conceptual discernment. When discernment ceases, so too does the existence of distinct things. The Buddhist notion of impermanence teaches that nothing is permanent; phenomenal manifestation is not a state, but rather a process of continual flux. Identity does not therefore persist over time, only difference. Perceptual phenomena continually arise to presence and recede into concealment. While Western metaphysics is well suited for thinking *what* there is, it is completely incapable of thinking *that* there is. In other words, philosophy cannot account for simple miracle of *being there*. For this reason, the intention of Heidegger’s analysis of the ‘essential occurrence’ of being is to elucidate the basic experience that *there is*.

According to Heidegger, being is not an object, but a gift. The etymology of the German language indicates a relationship between being and giving. Heidegger suggests that the expression *es gibt* has two distinct meanings, the first of which is *there is*. However, the expression *es gibt* also means *it gives*. *Es gibt* therefore means both *there is* and *it gives*. In light of this etymological relationship, Heidegger ventures to suggest that “all presence has its source in grace.”⁷⁸ For this reason, Heidegger explains that “instead of saying ‘it is’, we say ‘there is’ / ‘it gives.’”⁷⁹ Heidegger expresses the same in a more fragmentary style, which is a common feature of his late philosophy; “There is, It gives Being as the un-concealing of presencing.”⁸⁰ Put simply, existence is a gift. Heidegger: “A giving which gives only its gift, but in the giving holds itself back and withdraws, such a giving we call sending. According to the meaning of giving which is to be thought in this way, Being – that which It gives – is what is sent. Each of its transformations remains destined in this manner.”⁸¹ But if being is indeed a gift, then what is that which gives? According to Heidegger, the ‘event’ reveals by concealing itself. The ‘event’ withdraws from being, and through that withdrawal, gives being.

⁷⁸ Martin Heidegger, *On The Way To Language*, trans. Peter D. Hertz, New York, NY: Harper Collins, 1971, 44

⁷⁹ Heidegger, *On Time And Being*, 5

⁸⁰ *Ibid*, 6

⁸¹ *Ibid*, 8

Heidegger: “The event: hesitant self-withholding as ripeness, fruit, bestowal.”⁸² The giving is concealed by the gift of being. Although hidden, concealed, and withdrawn, the giving of being nevertheless solicits a response. The self-concealing ‘event’ of unconcealment is thought provoking; it ‘calls for thinking’. The appropriate response to the gift of being is therefore ‘thoughtfulness’. For Heidegger, there is no difference between genuine thinking and heartfelt thanking. Just as *es gibt* can mean either *there is* or *it gives*, the German word *denken* means both thinking and thanking. Heidegger therefore suggests that the essence of thinking is thanking, or ‘thankfulness’ for the gift of being. Again, thinking is thanking; Thinking is ‘thankfulness’ and ‘wonderment’ of the miracle of being. For Heidegger, the end of philosophy does not necessarily signify the completion of nihilism, as it does for Nietzsche. Instead, for Heidegger, the closure of metaphysics signifies the opening of thought.

Heidegger’s understanding of thinking as ‘thankfulness’ for *being there* is completely foreign to the Platonic tradition of Western metaphysics. Heidegger claims that “in the beginning of Western thinking, Being is thought, but not the ‘It gives’ as such. The latter withdraws in favor of the gift that ‘It’ gives.”⁸³ The giving withdraws behind the gift. As a result, Heidegger suggests that “only what *alethia* as opening grants is experienced and thought, not what it is as such. This remains concealed . . .”⁸⁴ It should be clear that Heidegger’s experimental notion of ‘It gives’, or ‘That which gives’ does not refer to any determinate presence, but instead names “the presence of an absence.”⁸⁵ While ‘It gives’ the destiny of the epochal transfigurations of being, at the same time, “to giving as sending there belongs keeping back.”⁸⁶ The ‘epochal-sending’ of ‘the event’ withdraws behind the ‘clearing’ of being. The event ‘sends’ the epochal transfigurations of being through its own ‘withdrawal’, ‘departure’, or ‘abandonment’. The self-concealing ‘event’ therefore opens a ‘time-space’ in which being may occur. In Heidegger’s words “the opening is not the mere opening of presence, but the opening of presence concealing itself, the opening of self-concealing sheltering.”⁸⁷ Heidegger’s meditative style of thinking / thanking is not intended to overcome metaphysics from within the tradition of metaphysics itself, but instead “leads us in a certain sense away from Being, and we think the destiny that gives Being

⁸² Heidegger, *Contributions To Philosophy*, 273

⁸³ Heidegger, *On Time And Being*, 8

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 71

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 18

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 22

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 71

as a gift.”⁸⁸ In other words, the aim is to ‘turn’ away from *what is given*, and instead cultivate ‘thankfulness’ for *that which gives*. Heidegger: “To think being explicitly requires us to relinquish being as the ground of beings in favor of the giving which prevails concealed in un-concealment, that is, in favor of the It gives.”⁸⁹ Again: “Being is the event. It has no ground.”⁹⁰ While the intention of metaphysical thinking is to penetrate to the foundation or ground of being, the task of ‘being-historical’ thinking is to endure the ‘passage’ of being into the ‘oblivion’ of self-concealment.

In light of the ‘abandonment’ of nature to the ‘machination’ of the planetary technological ‘frame’, and in light of the need for a non-instrumental way of ‘dwelling’ upon Earth, Heidegger poses the following question: “Can the measure of intense suffering that surrounds the Earth awaken a transformation?”⁹¹ In other words, “Is man, as man in his true nature until now, prepared to assume domination over the whole Earth? . . . Must man, as he is, not be brought *beyond* himself in order to fulfill this task?”⁹² In this context, Heidegger’s notion of man’s ‘dominion’ over the Earth should not be understood as the ‘domination’ of nature. Instead, Heidegger is asking what it would take for man to fulfill his destiny, as stated not by philosophy, but by the Hebrew Torah and Christian Old Testament. According to the Biblical tradition, it is the destiny of humanity to assume dominion of the Earth. Heidegger interprets ‘dominion’ to indicate a responsibility for the ‘guardianship’ of the all beings. While metaphysics does indeed constitute “the epoch of the development and instillation of human mastery over the Earth,” the instrumental domination of nature is not necessarily fated to accelerative towards its nihilistic culmination – the total extinction of life on Earth.⁹³ The ‘essence’ of humanity is not innately destructive. Another destiny is still possible. For Heidegger, the authentic calling of humanity is to assume responsibility for the ‘guardianship’ of Earth. Heidegger: “Unrealized essence: to ground the guardianship of the truth of being.”⁹⁴ The realization of such ‘guardianship’ would presuppose a radical break from the nihilistic devastation of Earth unleashed by the ‘first beginning’. Nothing short of ‘another beginning’ would suffice. If humanity is to realize its authentic call to ‘guardianship’, then the very ‘essence of man’ must undergo a transfiguration. In this sense, the epochal

⁸⁸ Ibid, 10

⁸⁹ Ibid, 6

⁹⁰ Heidegger, *The History Of Being*, 116

⁹¹ Heidegger, *The End Of Philosophy*, 110

⁹² Heidegger, *Who Is Nietzsche’s Zarathustra?*, *Review Of Metaphysics*, 20:30, (1967:Mar), 415

⁹³ Martin Heidegger, *Introduction To Philosophy: Thinking & Poetizing*, trans. Phillip Jacques Braunstein, Bloomington IN: Indiana University Press, 2011, 65

⁹⁴ Heidegger, *The History Of Being*, 106

transfiguration of 'the event' involves "an essential transformation of the human."⁹⁵ Humanity must be compelled 'beyond' the epochal frame of metaphysics, and therefore 'beyond' the nihilistic destiny of the instrumental 'will to power'. If the danger lies in the instrumental relation to nature, then salvation must involve a transformation of our inherently predatory relation to life. Heidegger finds hope for such a transformation of human 'essence' in Holderlin's visionary poetry. Holderlin: "He who thinks most deeply loves that which is most alive"⁹⁶. Heidegger also finds inspiration in certain 'Eastern' ways of thought, especially Buddhism and Taoism. For instance, the *Heart Sutra* compels one to "dwell without thought-coverings."⁹⁷ Similarly, the *Tao Te Ching* compels one to "make the Earth a dwelling place."⁹⁸ In both texts, 'dwelling' arises from a direct non-dual insight into pre-objective reality. According to these religious traditions, unconditional compassion for all living beings is the mark of the full realization of human essence. The same is true for Heidegger; the mark of an attuned 'mindfulness' of being is a compassionate and contemplative way of 'dwelling' upon Earth. For Heidegger, "the fundamental character of dwelling is sparing and preserving."⁹⁹ Again, to 'dwell' upon Earth is "to cherish, protect, preserve, and care for" all beings.¹⁰⁰

Such a meditative style of 'dwelling' on Earth would be equivalent to 'non-willing'. The term 'non-willing' indicates a relation to being that is prior to the intentional act of subjective cognition. In this sense, the practice of 'non-willing' cultivates a non-instrumental relation to nature as more than just a resource available for exploitation. Moreover, 'non-willing' lends itself to a more meditative, non-violent way of 'being-in-the-world'. Heidegger argues that it would be a mistake to interpret 'non-willing' as an act of renunciation, but rather as the experience of being 'released' towards "the sought-for essence of a thinking that is not a willing."¹⁰¹ Heidegger appropriates the notion of *Gelassenheit*, or 'releasement', from the medieval German mystic Meister Eckhart. For Heidegger, the fundamental point is that "releasement is effected from somewhere else," and is therefore not a subjective intention of the autonomous will.¹⁰² Heidegger therefore argues that "authentic releasement consists in this: that man in his

⁹⁵ Ibid, 76

⁹⁶ Holderlin, https://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Friedrich_H%C3%B6lderlin, 2016

⁹⁷ *The Heart Sutra*, trans. Edward Conze, New York, NY: Vintage, 1958, 86

⁹⁸ *Tao Te Ching*, trans. Sam Hamill, Boston, MA: Shambhala, 2007, 11

⁹⁹ Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. Albert Hofstadter, New York, NY: Perennial, 1971, 147

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, 145

¹⁰¹ Martin Heidegger, *Discourse On Thinking*, trans. John M. Anderson & E. Hans Freud, New York, NY: Harper Torchbooks, 59

¹⁰² Ibid, 61

very nature belongs to [the event], i.e., he is released to it.”¹⁰³ A non-instrumental way of ‘dwelling’ on Earth cannot come about via sovereign decision. Instead, “the transformation of man becomes a necessity springing forth from being itself.”¹⁰⁴ Though regrettably obscure, Heidegger’s notion of *Gelassenheit* is quite important in my opinion. What Heidegger means by ‘releasement’ from the instrumental relation to nature can be more readily discerned when juxtaposed with the Taoist notion of *wu wei*. Indeed, this comparison is not an interpretive leap, given that Heidegger was deeply engaged in the study of Taoism in his later years. *Wu wei* translates literally as non-action, but a more faithful rendering of *wu wei* is spontaneous or effortless action. *Wu wei* refers to a way of being and acting in the world that is *not* a determination of the subjective will. The intention is not to shape the world according to the arbitrary will, but instead to align one’s will to the universal way of nature. *Wu wei* is the alignment of one’s own action with the *Tao*, the universal *Way* of nature and the cosmos. *Wu wei* can be symbolically represented as a tree that bends but does not break in the wind. Just as the tree bends in the wind, Heidegger seeks a way of being that is more receptive and responsive to nature.

In light of the nihilistic destiny of Western metaphysics, it is Heidegger’s contention that the inception of another beginning “comes to intimate only in the resonating of beings out of the plight of the abandonment by being.”¹⁰⁵ Only in light of the ‘plight’ of living beings, abandoned to the fate of technological ‘machination’, does the need for another beginning become acutely felt as an urgent need. The question is whether or not this receptivity to ‘the abandonment’ of being can actually affect the transition to a more mindful way of inhabiting the Earth. However necessary, contemplative mindfulness is simply not enough to break the technological ‘framing’ of Earth. In my judgment, Heidegger insufficiently questions how an ethic of ‘dwelling’ should attain political effect. Surely a politics rooted in Heidegger’s post-foundational philosophy of ‘the event’ would be extra-parliamentary and local in nature. Perhaps there are certain affinities between the ethic of ‘dwelling’ and the political framework of bio-regionalism. Whether or not Heidegger’s environmental ethic can be translated into a non-violent *praxis* remains to be seen.

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¹⁰³ Ibid, 82

¹⁰⁴ Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology*, 138

¹⁰⁵ Heidegger, *Contributions To Philosophy*, 304