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<th>Poetry in the digital age: A Heideggerian account</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Author(s)</strong></td>
<td>Coventry, Rachel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Publication Date</strong></td>
<td>2021-06-29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Publisher</strong></td>
<td>NUI Galway</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Item record</strong></td>
<td><a href="http://hdl.handle.net/10379/16835">http://hdl.handle.net/10379/16835</a></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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Poetry in the Digital Age: A Heideggerian Account

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August 2020
## Contents

### Abstract

5

### Introduction

6

### Chapter 1: Truth

1.1 Introduction: Science as the Paradigm of Truth

1.2 The Logical Prejudice

1.3 Intentionality

1.4 Categorial Intuition

1.5 Being and Time, Truth, and Tugendhat’s Critique

1.5 (a) Authentic and Inauthentic Truth

1.5. (b) Propositions and Correspondence

1.5 (c) Tugendhat’s critique

1.5 (d) A Response to Tugendhat

1.6 Art and Truth

1.6 (a) Aesthetics

1.6 (b) Art as Thing

1.6 (c) Truth, the Role of the Artist and the role of Preservers

1.7 Conclusion

### Chapter 2: Language

2.1 Introduction: Language and Philosophy

2.2. Central Themes of Heidegger’s Philosophy of Language

2.3. Language as Showing

2.4. Showing as Saying

2.5. Design

2.6. Language as Showing

2.7. Speaking and Listening

2.8. Owning

2.9. Way Making

2.10 Language and Poetry

2.11 Conclusion
Chapter 3: Metaphor

3.1. Introduction: Philosophy and Metaphor 71
3.2. Heidegger’s Dismissal of Metaphor 73
3.3. Metaphor and Poetic Greatness 77
3.4. Heidegger’s Metaphoricity 79
3.5. Sensible/Nonsensible versus Literal/Figurative 80
3.6. Metaphor in Science and Philosophy 83
3.7. Metaphor and Contemporary Poetry 87
3.8. Conclusion 100

Chapter 4: Technology

4.1. Introduction 102
4.2. Heidegger’s account of Technology 104
4.3. Epochality 108
4.4. Old and New Technology 111
4.5. The Digital 116
4.6. Gelassenheit 124
4.7. A Saving Power 127
4.8. The Middle Voice 129
4.9. Conclusion 134

Chapter 5: Towards an Ontology of Digital Poetry

5.1. Introduction 135
5.2. Can the digital gather the fourfold? 137
5.3. The Earth of an Art Work 144
5.4. The Earth of Poetry 152
5.5. Digital Poetry 155
5.6. The Earth of Digital Poetry 157
5.7. Screen as Earth: The Poetry of Geoffrey Squires 160
5.8. The Earth of a Hyperlink Poem 164
5.9. Software and Computer Programming Languages as Earth 167
5.10. Digital Poems as World Openings 172
5.11. Conclusion 174
Chapter 6: Post-Internet Poetry and The Essence of Technology

6.1 Introduction 176
6.2 What is Post-Internet Poetry? 179
6.3 Boredom 181
6.4 Three Types of Boredom 184
6.5 The Digital Subject in Poetry 190
6.6 The Essence of Google 192
6.7 How the Sunglasses Presence 197
6.8 A Free Relationship 200
6.9 Dwelling 204
6.10 Conclusion 206

Conclusion 207

Bibliography 213
Abstract

For Heidegger, technology is the greatest danger because, it blocks the unconcealment of truth. As Heidegger equates poetry with truth, such a view of technology implies bleak consequences for poetry; in fact, it questions the possibility of great poetry in this age. To speak of technology now, means to speak of digital devices and processes. If Heidegger’s account of technology is still relevant, then it must account for the digital. This thesis argues that Heidegger’s view of technology is appropriate to the digital, understood as an intensification of technology, in which the Cartesian subject is recast as standing reserve. In this way, Heidegger’s account provides a powerful way to interrogate movements in contemporary poetry. Heidegger understands poetry and technology in terms of metaphysics. In the earlier works, he characterized metaphysics in terms of a number of binary dualism such as the subject/object dichotomy, and of particular relevance here the literal/figurative divide. In a technological age, these binaries are dissolved. This, however, does not represent an overcoming of metaphysics but, rather it heralds an age where both the modernist subjects and objects are enframed. The literal/figurative divide is also blurred in technology. Heidegger argues that aesthetic accounts cannot not explain great poetry, because they mischaracterize its Saying in terms of metaphor. However, in technology things lose their ability to metaphorically stand-in for something else; they are disclosed merely as standing reserve. Because of this, aesthetic accounts can no longer account for contemporary poetic metaphor. The post-internet poetry of Sam Riviere shows us how things presence in the age of Google, simply as orderable stock, and furthermore it discloses how Google, as enframing, is the essence of the technology. In this way, Riviere's poetry goes some way toward a poetic confrontation with technology, but ultimately, remains within trapped within the metaphysics of technology.
Introduction

This thesis concerns contemporary poetry, or poetry in the age of technology. To speak of technology now means to speak of digital devices and processes. If Heidegger's account of technology is still relevant, then it must be able to account for the digital. This thesis argues that Heidegger's view of technology is appropriate to digital technologies. Heidegger defines technology, in part, by its ability to prevent the authentic showing of poetic language. I will argue that this situation becomes more entrenched in a world increasingly dominated by digital technologies. For Heidegger, technology is the greatest danger because it prevents the unconcealment of truth. For this reason, Heidegger's view of technology implies bleak consequences for contemporary poetry, in fact, it questions the very possibility of great poetry in this age. Heidegger exalts poetry. He grants poetry the position of the highest artform, because it is language based and, for this reason, it provides the basis for all other art. Heidegger particularly engages with poetry in the later writings. He is especially concerned with the nature or essence of poetry. Heidegger is not interested in poetry simply for its own sake, but rather he is interested in what the nature of poetry tells us about the nature of reality. Poetry is language's most authentic expression, and as, for Heidegger, it is language that makes reality manifest, the poetic becomes the most authentic expression of reality. In short, Heidegger views instances of great poetry as truth. However, the ability of poetry to authentically manifest in this way is not guaranteed, but rather, it depends on how reality is in a given historical epoch. Heidegger understands history as a series of periods or epochs, each dominated by a particular understanding of being, or what it means to exist. While being is always made manifest through language, language has the potential to be authentic or inauthentic. The question for us, after Heidegger, is whether there is a possibility of great poetry in the technological age, precisely by thinking technology in its truth and not simply thinking technologically.

This thesis claims that Heidegger's pessimistic view of technology and his account of poetry allows us to interrogate and understand contemporary poetry.
in a unique and fruitful way. If Heidegger’s characterization of technology is an apt one, then the claim that it obfuscates the nature of poetry should be evident in contemporary poetry. However, as we are already under the sway of technology; as it is already prior to us, uncovering this ‘evidence’ is no simple matter. Despite this, there seems to be signs of a crisis in contemporary poetry. While this may, in some respects, always be the case, many practitioners would agree that something is amiss. In the last few years, for example, The Poetry Foundation, announced that its president and board chairman will step down following intense criticism on The Foundation’s recent statement¹ on the Black Lives Matter Movement. Moreover, many commentators such as Robin Robertson,² and the novelist Rose Tremain claim that contemporary poetry is in a “rotten state.”³ While the notion of a crisis within poetry is complex and multifaceted, this thesis will argue that Heidegger’s account of poetry and can shed light on the current situation. Heidegger’s account of poetry is rooted in concepts of truth, language, metaphor, and technology. We can understand all these in terms of ontology. Essential poetry requires that reality is graspable in an essential way, and Heidegger maintains that it is technology that makes the nature of poetry puzzling. In this way, it is Heidegger’s ontological account, rather than an account based in poetry criticism, that brings us to the heart of what ails contemporary poetry.

While this thesis argues that Heidegger's accounts of poetry and technology provides a powerful way to understand contemporary poetry, conversely it claims, that some contemporary poetry can illustrate Heidegger's warning about poetry in an age of technology. Such an analysis flows from Heidegger’s poetic notion of truth as aletheia or unconcealment. Heidegger moves from correspondence theory theories of truth towards the notion of truth as actuality. This move has garnered much critical analysis.

¹ Poetry Foundation, 2020
² Robert Robinson, 2018
³ Parmar, 2018
I will engage with the critique formulate by Ernst Tugendhat⁴ because it can be seen as representative of the criticisms against Heidegger. Central to Tugendhat’s critique is the idea that a theory of truth must be able to distinguish between truth and falsity. Without this, it fails to meet the most basic requirement for such a theory. He contends that Heidegger’s account fails in this respect. I will argue that Tugendhat’s interpretation of Heidegger’s notion of truth replaces it with a conception of truth that is more akin to a strong formulation of a correspondence theory. While there is certainly an ambiguity in Heidegger’s use of the word “truth,” this ambiguity is reflected in many philosophical accounts, and we can view it as a general philosophical problem with truth, which is made explicit, though not resolved, in Heidegger’s account. By pointing out there is no way to separate the uncovering of truth from what is uncovered, Heidegger’s account moves away from correspondence theory. In this way, Heidegger’s account seems at risk of sliding towards relativism, however, this is prevented with recourse to art. In Heidegger’s account, great art becomes the paradigm of truth, because it gives us the thing, and the manner in which it appears, and moreover, it allows us to grasp the concealment which is essential to the unconcealment of truth. In short, the work gives both the uncovering and the uncovered. We, as the audience (or preservers) of the work, recognize the truth of great art and this is not a matter of subjective opinion.

This thesis also engages with ongoing debates in Heidegger studies with respect to how to characterize technology, especially in terms of how to fit digital technologies into a Heideggerian account. In chapter 4, we see how commentators are divided on this question. Some commentators, such as Ihde,⁵ think that the current technological age can be further be subdivided into different ontological epochs. This thesis defends the position that that the digital is a continuation, and intensification of the ‘new’ technology. I will defend the Heideggerian claim that new technology is associated with science, especially physics, and that the difference between old and new technology is

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⁴ Tugendhat, 1994  
⁵ Ihde, 2010
an ontological one, but that the differences various digital technologies are ultimately superficial. In this way, the work done by theorist such as Borgmann and Dreyfus on now, mostly outdated, pre-Web 2.0 technologies are still relevant to this discussion. This is, in part, because, Heidegger’s ontologically broad use of the term technology does not distinguish between technology as a mode of unconcealment, and the devices or process that we normally associate with the term. What is pertinent here is that digital technologies, be they pre or post Web 2.0 are fundamentally enframing. In a similar way, we can argue that any difference between digital and predigital technologies, such as television, are differences of degree rather than kind. The digital is simply an intensification of the process of enframing, because it speeds up the enframing of humanity itself. Of course, Heidegger saw the enframing of humanity as an integral part of technology. This thesis argues that digital technologies provide the way in which humanity is effectively enframed.

Drawing again from the work of Borgmann’s and Dreyfus and Spinosa, I will examine what it means to confront technology and whether such a confrontation is possible. The aim here is to consider what role contemporary poetry could possibly play in such a confrontation, given the further erosion of subjectivity in the digital. Borgmann suggests that we look away from the technological and towards focal practices. This refocusing away from technology is, arguably, not possible from a Heideggerian perspective, because technology as a mode of unconcealment, is always prior to us and thus, it is how all reality is disclosed, and not just technological things themselves. Dreyfus and Spinosa suggest that we affirm technology by becoming disclosers of technology, but this option does not fully recognize the increasing power that digital technology has to enframe humanity. Heidegger tells us that we must both affirm and negate technology i.e. say ‘yes’ and ‘no’ to it. I will argue that Dreyfus and Spinosa’s account fails because it does not acknowledge what Heidegger means by affirming technology. To affirm a technological device, it must ‘thing’ or open the fourfold. Dreyfus and Spinosa’s metaphorical reading of the fourfold, especially with respect to the divinities, obstructs our ability to allow the fourfold. Wrathall on the other hand, suggests a more literal
interpretation of the fourfold. However, as we shall see in chapter 3, there is no meaningful literal/figurative divide, thus, neither reading is ideal. If a digital poem is to function as a way of developing a free relation to digital technology, then it must thing, and we cannot simply understanding this thinging as either figurative or literal. In order to thing, a digital poem must open up the fourfold. If a digital poem has the capacity to do this, then it provides us with a way to affirm digital technology, and if it cannot we must ask what is it about digital technology that prevents this world-opening. In attempted to answer this question, we investigate the how the earth function in poetry in its various modalities.

This thesis will also agree with Thiele’s reading of Heidegger on boredom, especially his contention that profound boredom, as the fundamental attunement of the technological age, involves a refusal of anxiety. The three type of boredom described by Heidegger, “becoming bored by,” “being bored with,” and profound boredom or “it is boring for one,” are continuous with one another and can all be understood in terms of things. Thiele’s reading of profound boredom as a refusal of anxiety is demonstrated in the post-internet poetry of Sam Riviere.

Chapter one interrogates Heidegger’s notion of truth, especially in terms of how it contrasts with other philosophical notions of truth, especially correspondence theory. While Heidegger accepts that correspondence theory is both dominant and inevitable, we trace Heidegger’s path away from propositional accounts of truth towards a notion of truth as un-concealment. Heidegger’s work, in this respect, flows from a critique of metalogical accounts of truth, which view truth as validity. From the start, Heidegger, understands truth not as a feature of logico-scientific proposition but rather as the actuality of a given state of affairs. He calls this the “primary being of truth” or “disclosedness.” For Heidegger, logical accounts of truth are based on an ontology of being as presence. While we understand being in this way, we are left with philosophical questions about

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6 Thiele, 1997
how to explain the relationship between an object and the perceiving subject. With recourse to Husserlian intentionality, Heidegger begins from a different starting point. He starts with thing themselves. Heidegger’ account of truth is *primordial*, in that it begins with our individual and naïve perception of this particular object. This starting point is generally ignored or forgotten by philosophers in the Western tradition but it is, however, the realm of poetry. Heidegger places the ontological significance on this starting point. In Heidegger’s account art becomes, rather than science becomes the paradigm of truth because it is art that allows us to access this primary being of truth.

In the second chapter, I consider Heidegger’s account of language. To begin with, I will contextualize Heidegger’s unique contribution in terms of the linguistic turn in twentieth century philosophy. Heidegger entreats us to accompany him on a journey towards language, while acknowledging that we can only take this journey from within language itself. As in the analysis of truth, Heidegger contends that language is not in a passive relationship with the world. Rather, language shows the world. Again, this showing contains what is shown and the showing itself. Traditional accounts of language tend to miss the manner in which language shows the world and focus on what is shown. This tendency is not accidental but rather it is an inherent feature of language. Language conceals itself in order to unconceal reality. In this way, Heidegger rejects the idea that language passively reflects a pre-existing world. In addition, language use varies in terms of the ability to disclose reality. Not all language is true. However, Heidegger does not argue that reality, itself, is a linguistic construct. Prior to the showing of language, there is “an “indication that it will let itself be shown.” However, this prior self-showing is relational or dialogical in some sense, and can be understood in terms of a demand. Both the self-showing of reality and language can show, in the first place, because reality is saturated with the categorial. So while there may be “something” prior to language; we cannot understand this as a pre-existing reality to which our language refers to because “[a]ll perception and conception is already

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7 Heidegger, 1959 p.123
Great poetry, especially the poetry of Hölderlin overcomes language’s tendency to conceal itself and brings language into the open. The most authentic or essential language is poetic language, in that it gives us both what is unconcealed and the manner in which it is unconcealed.

Such a view of language implies a radically different way to understand metaphor. Chapter 3 examines Heidegger's notion of metaphor. Metaphors are still generally understood as a figurative tropes be they scientific models or a feature of poetry. As Heidegger's account of language does not privilege any part of language, it cannot accommodate a distinction between literal and figurative language. Obviously, the philosophical implications of this are significant. However, even if, along with Heidegger, we reject the literal/figurative distinction, it can still, sometimes, make sense to talk of metaphor. Heidegger contends that we can analyse bad poetry in terms of metaphor. A bad poet stays within the metaphysical framework, whereas a great poet transcends it. Heidegger is claiming that a poem, or other text, understood in terms of metaphor, cannot an authentic example of language’s showing. There is much controversy within the literature about how to understand Heidegger’s recasting of metaphor as metaphysics, while making sense of the seeming metaphorical saturation of his own work. Heidegger’s notion of metaphor clearly has important consequences for an analysis of poetry. However, a great deal of contemporary poetry criticism still locates metaphor within the figurative and can therefore, be considered aesthetic. This chapter closes with a comparison between Heidegger’s account and aesthetic accounts, with respect to some examples of contemporary poetry.

In Chapter 4, we turn to Heidegger's account of technology. Heidegger uses the term technology in an ontologically broad way which covers technological devices and process, as well as a mode of unconcealment. Technology is, for Heidegger, the current epoch and in this way, it is an ontohistorical process.

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8Heidegger, 1959 p.123.
However, technology is unique, in that unlike previous epochs, the coming into presence, or becoming intelligible of something associated with technology is not poetic in the sense of *poiēsis*. Rather, it challenges [*Herausfordern*]. Thus, Heidegger’s account of technology is essentially pessimistic. Heidegger demarcates between old and new technology. While both are associated with Cartesian subjectivism, new technology is understood in terms of its link with science, especially physics. New technology challenges is the sense that it reveals both the subject and the object as standing reserve. The meaning-rich associations of things in the old technology are lost in a techno-scientific mode of concealment. The movement from old technology to new technology is a move from truth to the validity or correctness associated with science; a move that has drastic consequences for art. This thesis concerns with the possibility of responding to these consequences. We argue, firstly, that Heidegger’s account accommodates the advent of digital technologies secondly, that the enframent of the subject is, which Heidegger holds as inevitable, is achieved in the digital. Given this, the question becomes, can this enframed subject still respond to the dangers of technology. Different theorist have suggested different possible responses. It is clear, that despite the recasting of the subject as standing reserve, Heidegger maintains that we can confront technology, and develop a “free relation” to it. To do so, however, we cannot simply avoid the technological, we must approach it head on. He offers two interrelated ways in which we can achieve this. The first is by using meditative thinking leading to *Gelassenheit* or realeasment, with respect to technological devices. The second is the poetic, which also provides a possible way in which to confront technology. In fact, the poetic is a saving power that is already contained within the technological. In order to harness this poetic solution, we must become clear that technology is indeed a mode of unconcealment; we need “essential reflection”⁹ on this fact. Indeed, the essence of technology must be captured within art in order for its sway over us to be challenged. The chapter ends with an account of the middle voice and how it offers a possible way to bypass metaphysics.

⁹Heidegger, 1978, p.337
Chapter 5 employs these Heideggerian themes in order to move towards an account of digital poetry. The central question of this chapter is can digital poetry confront technology and lead to a free relation to it, or is it simply an expression of how the digital drives out poetic truth. In order to confront technology, a digital poem must have the capacity to open up the fourfold. If it can do this, then it provides us with a way to affirm digital technology and if it cannot we must ask what is it about digital technology that prevents this world-opening. In attempted to answer this question, we investigate how the earth functions in various poetic modalities, and then broaden this account to include digital poetry. In any epoch, the artwork is the exemplary thing. In it, we find the "sheltering agent," from which the world of the work struggles. The question becomes, how do digital technologies operate as the earth, or can a world-opening be won from the concealment of a digital earth? As language is, first and foremost, the earth of poetry, much of the discussion becomes centred on how language is disclosed in digital poetry. This disclosure is also understood in terms of the other elements of earth, such as the paper and books and ultimately digital technologies. This analysis is informed by the myriad ways that digital poetry utilizes technology. The analysis here is confined to a number of earth elements i.e. the screen, software and the computer programming languages that underpin them. These elements are investigated using case studies. In particular, the poetry of Geoffrey Squires, some of which is written especially to be viewed on a screen, and the apostrophe engine, a hyperlink poem utilizing software. A key conclusion here is that the digital poet cannot simply employ new technologies without considering the ontological consequences of doing so i.e. without asking what it would mean to overcome the concealing tendencies of these formats. At the very least, the technologies employed in digital poetry, challenge the poet to overcome the concealing tendency of these technologies. While, arguably the poems we have considered have failed in this respect, a success would certainly represent a confrontation with digital technology.

10 Heidegger, 1971 p. 41
In Chapter 6, we consider Post-Internet poetry, especially the collection *Kim Kardashian’s Marriage*\(^{11}\) by Sam Riviere. I argue that this collection can be understood, in a new way, in terms of Heidegger’s account of technology. In particular, we examine how the literal/figurative divide is affected by the digital. The things described in Riviere’s collection are not metaphors, but resources awaiting manipulation. Moreover, the subject of these poems is also enframed. The question is can this eroded subject think technology in its truth. Another way to understand the relationship between digitized subjects and objects is in terms of deep or profound boredom. I will argue that the post-internet poetry of Sam Riviere illuminates this deep boredom, while ultimately remaining trapped within it. This follows from Heidegger’s account of fundamental moods as disclosive of reality. In the technological age, profound boredom is the fundamental attunement and Riviere’s collection will be viewed in terms of this profound boredom. We will see how while the poems can be described as boring, they are boring in the sense of deep boredom. The things described in the collection are not just boring, they are also somehow engaging enough to keep our attention. However, this attention is ultimately bored. As the poems are composed of fragments of Google searches, an analysis of this collection allows us to see how Google reveals things as standing reserve or in the mood of profound boredom. In this way, Google becomes understood as inherently enframing, which is to say, it is the essence of technology. It is only Heidegger’s account of technology that allows us to understand Riviere’s collection in this way. Digital devices are continuous with and inherently tied up with how things are in the digital. In Riviere’s poems, we see how things are now unconcealed. Using the example of sunglasses, a motif within the collection, we see that things do not stand in for other things metaphorically, nor do they unconceal essence. They merely presence as standing reserve. If this is what is required for art to be great, then this collection does not deliver it. Yet, it perhaps prepare a way to a confrontation with technology.

\(^{11}\) Riviere, 2015
Chapter 1: Truth

1.1 Science as the Paradigm of Truth

Since the rise of science in the seventeenth century, we have increasingly looked to science to know the truth about the world. We tend to see science as the final arbiter in debates concerning the objects of our world. Our best scientific theories give us the most accurate description of the objects and laws that make up our world. Consider the sun; it is true that the sun is a star, it is an almost perfect spherical ball of hot plasma an with internal convective motion that generates a magnetic field via a dynamo process, and it is 150 million kilometres away from the earth. It is generally accepted that there is no reasonable way too dispute these facts. If I were to claim that the sun is a god or that it moves around the earth, I would be simply wrong with respect to the body of current scientific knowledge. Science generates truth and the philosophy of science has for the last 150 years, dominated the philosophical landscape.

Since Descartes, one of philosophy's most important tasks has been to provide philosophical underpinnings for the sciences. This task is fulfilled today by philosophers of science. While the relationship between philosophy and science is a long and complex one, it can be argued that the dominance of the philosophy of science has been eroded somewhat since the second half of the twentieth century. From some historical viewpoints, such as Logical Positivism, all philosophy becomes methodology, concerned only with the sharpening the tools used by scientist to dissect the world. More recently, the philosophy of science has been dominated by the realist/ antirealist debate, although it is obviously a caricature to characterize philosophy of science in terms of one debate, there are myriad realist and anti-realist positions referring to both the physical and the social sciences. Again arguably, scientific realism is the dominant view within the philosophy of science. Of course, scientific realism can take many forms depending on the science in question and on how realism
is understood. In order to understand the issues at hand we have to radically simplify. Papineau\(^1\) defines scientific realism as any body of knowledge that involves the conjunction of two theses:

1. An independence thesis that states judgments about the world answer for their truth to a world that is independent of our awareness of it.
2. A knowledge thesis stating that by and large we can know which of these statements are true.

Realism, thus understood, is traditionally open to various criticisms. Papineau classifies these anti-realist objections in terms of which thesis is rejected. Idealists reject the independence thesis whereas sceptics argue that we cannot know whether our statements about the world are true or not and so reject the knowledge thesis. Both these positions turn on a notion of truth, which holds that the propositions of science are either true or false or that they at least have the capacity to be true or false whether we can know this or not. Even the truth of the proposition ‘the world is independent of our knowledge of it’ is a proposition that is true or false with respect to some reality. A typical scientific realist, therefore, maintains that the object that is the sun is independent of our knowledge and that we can know that the statements above are true.

The problem for both realists and anti-realists is a philosophical one. We do not perceive the world directly. Sense data from the sun comes to us via our fallible perceptual apparatus and as every first year philosophy student knows we could be dreaming or hallucinating. Even though we feel the heat of the sun on our skin we cannot say for sure that this heat is the result of the sun. Since Descartes western philosophy has had to contend with a gap between my statements about the sun, and the sun itself, or in itself. This gap between subject and object has stubbornly remained a feature of philosophy and is reformulated by Kant. While there are comprehensive, workable theories about the sun, the ongoing debate between the realists and the anti-realists tells is that we have not conclusively answered one key question: is there actually a

\(^{1}\)Papineau, 1996, p. 2
sun ‘out there’? We cannot say the proposition ‘the world is independent of our theories’ is unambiguously true. However, most scientists do not worry too much about these philosophical questions. They carry on assuming the independent existence of the objects and laws in their theories.

Even if we, along with the scientists, set this problem aside there is another problem. It is the scientist’s job to get to the actual truth about the sun. People say many things about the sun. The sun is a god or the sun moves around the earth, or the sun coming out is a sign that everything is OK. How does the scientist sift through all these things to get to the truth of the matter? The scientist is trained in scientific method and this method is provides the way in which to separate the wheat from the chaff. Scientific methodology leads us to evidence and this evidence is basis of truth.

There is a lot that can be said about scientific methodology, its main virtue is objectivity. It provides a line of demarcation between scientific knowledge and other less rigorous forms of knowledge. At first glance, objectivity involves the notion that scientists must eliminate subjective biases or personal commitments from their investigations so they can discover real objective truths. Beyond this, methodology is generally held to be deductive or inductive, it often involves experiment or other ceteris paribus conditions where some factors are held back so that a single effect or group of effects can be measured in isolation. As a result of these special observations we get a collection of facts presented as propositions that can be presented in such a way as to give us a true picture of the sun.

1.2 The Logical Prejudice

The idea that truth is feature of propositions can be traced back to the logical accounts of truth that dominated early twentieth century philosophy. However, it must be noted that logic itself does not deal with questions concerning the nature of truth. These questions come under the rubric of ‘metalogic’ or the ‘philosophy of logic.’ However, within these disciplines, truth is often construed
as the application of the predicate ‘true’ to propositions. In such accounts
questions of truth often become questions of ‘truth statements.’ Throughout his
Doctoral dissertation and Habilitation Heidegger had already began to question
these logical accounts of truth. Indeed, in his Habilitation, he claims that
philosophy’s task must be to reach for a “breakthrough into the true actuality
and actual truth.”2 From the outset Heidegger questions the notion that truth
can be considered a feature of propositions, this idea is what Daniel Dahlstrom
describes as the ‘logical prejudice.’

The logical prejudice is a consequence of a tendency to view truth in terms of
indicative assertions. A thought can only be ‘true’ to the extent that it can be
expressed as propositions, assertions or judgments. The predicates ‘true’ and
‘false’ can only be attributed once this propositional structure is in place. Such
an account of truth seems so obvious as to be self-evident. It is connected to the
clear symmetry of true and false, and it can be connected with the world via
 correspondence. A true proposition reflects a conviction about a state of affairs
in the world, it is a proposition that has been confirmed or that can, in principle,
be confirmed. In this way, the indicative proposition becomes the primary unit
of scientific knowledge. The notion of truth that flows from this is one that is so
widely accepted by philosophers and scientist that the question becomes on
what grounds can Heidegger even begin to question it. There is a philosophical
consensus that predates Heidegger and continues after him that
overwhelmingly agrees that truth should be understood in these terms. Despite
this Heidegger tries to understand with what he calls “the primary being of
truth.”3

Dahlstrom claims that we can understand this primary being of truth with
recourse to the two Marburg Lectures of 1925/264 and Being and Time.5 In the
1925 lectures, Heidegger engages with Husserl and points out the importance
of using phenomenology to illuminate fundamental ontology. In the 1926

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2 Dahlstom 1992 p.7
3 Dahlstrom 1992 p.21
4 Heidegger 1926
5 Heidegger, 1962
lecture series on logic, he gives a critical overview of the state of contemporary logic and the philosophical accounts of truth that underpin them. He attempts to demonstrate how truth is linked to time and to show how the logical prejudice ignores time and thus leads to a forgetfulness of being.

As Dahlstrom points out, it is notable that Heidegger’s overview fails to mention Russell, Whitehead, Frege or the early Wittgenstein. It would seem that any overview of twentieth century logic that fails to mention these key figures logic is lacking. Despite this, Dahlstrom argues that Heidegger’s critique holds for all these philosophers’ accounts of truth as they all take the logical prejudice for granted. In all these logico-philosophical conceptions the question of truth becomes a question of the employment of the predicate ‘true.’ For example, Frege engages in a debate about ‘truth bearers’ or what it is that corresponds to ‘P’ in the sentence ‘P is true’. As Dahlstrom points out, both sides of the debate rely on the notion of truth being carried or borne by truth bearers and thus depend on the logical prejudice. There are also some logico-philosophical accounts seem to come close to Heidegger’s position but they do not fully shake off the logical prejudice;

even if a pragmatic theory of truth renounces the idea of timeless truths and deems any criteria for determining what is true a matter of perspective, historical contexts, interests, and so forth, this pragmatic construal of the truth remains derivative of something more basic Heidegger’s eyes. What he variously calls “the primary being of truth” or “disclosedness.”

Heidegger’s critical engagement with logic focuses on Hermann Lotze. Lotze was an important figure at this time, but is now less well-known. Despite this, Heidegger maintains that Lotze is the central figure in modern logic because he formulates the concept of validity on which much of modern logic relies. As the notion of validity requires the logical prejudice and as validity becomes the central concept for a generation of logicians, it is Lotze that gives the logical

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6 Frege 1977
7 Dahlstrom, 1992 p. 28
prejudice its ontological underpinning. Indeed, it is not just Heidegger who recognizes Lotze’s considerable influence. Lotze’s students include Frege and Carl Stumpf who supervised Husserl’s doctorate and Husserl, himself acknowledges Lotze’s influence in the *Logical Investigations* and, as we shall see, Heidegger holds that it is Lotze’s influence that prevents Husserl from seeing the consequences of the categorial intuition. Before Heidegger’s Marburg Lectures, Bruno Bauch writes, “[t]hrough Lotze the concept of validity has been conceived as the fundamental concept not only of philosophy but of all science and knowledge.”

Lotze attempts to defeat scepticism with recourse to Plato’s doctrine of ideas. He points to Plato’s claim that mental phenomena, such as the impression of a colour, can be fundamentally distinguished in terms of what is received and what is represented. He maintains that through the process of naming we transform what is received into a representation. By naming a received impression of a colour, it becomes an idea. Our ideas are not fluid or unconstrained rather they are fixed and, according to Lotze, “eternally valid, true claims.” In Lotze’s interpretation of Plato truth becomes merely a designation of an idea.

Once the difference between the received and the idea is established Lotze attempts to describe the nature of an idea. He remarks that an idea is ‘something’ and not ‘nothing.’ He notes that we can distinguish between one idea and another and this means they have some sort of reality but how does he characterize this reality? He does not want to say that the idea is the actual thing so he claims that ideas are to be understood in terms of their ‘affirmedness’ (*Bejahtheit*). An idea is not a thing it is the ‘affirmedness’ of some other actual state of affairs but as Dahlstrom points out that the word affirmedness is misleading and Lotze changes it to “validity” to convey the notion that the idea is “actually true.”

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8 Dahlstrom, 1992, p.36
9 Ibid.
Lotze distinguishes four forms of actuality or validity and maintains that these are not reducible to one another. These are: “(1) the being of things, (2) the happening of events, (3) the obtaining of relations, and (4) the validity of sentences (truths).”\textsuperscript{10} While there are many difficulties with this classification what is of particular interest to Heidegger is that Lotze restricts the being or ‘the real’ to things that are material. In this way, Lotze claims that the actuality of being can only be correctly applied to things.\textsuperscript{11} This has huge consequences for Lotze’s reading of Plato. As Dahlstrom puts it; “Lotze is of the opinion that, when Plato speaks of the eternity of the ideas and their independence from things and minds, he is not thinking of the actuality of a thing that also continues to exist in the absence of human consciousness”\textsuperscript{12} Lotze claims that “Plato wanted to teach nothing else but...the validity of truths,” In fact, the very fact that Plato views ideas as having being derived from the fact that there is no Greek word for valid. Once Platonic ideas are no longer considered as beings then Plato’s ontology fits neatly into Lotze’s.

Heidegger also points out that Lotze’s classification of actualities entails an ontological difference. If the proposition is the locus of truth, and the truth of the proposition is equated with its validity. Then for Lotze, validity entails independence and constancy of content. Therefore, the actuality of the true sentence is fundamentally different from the actuality of the thing. This is the case, even if the actuality is an instance of that truth. The actuality of the truth is not equal to the state of affairs it relates to. Knowing a truth (an actual event) is fundamentally different from the truth as it is given in the sentence and this difference is an ontological difference.

Heidegger makes three further criticisms of Lotze’s classification that flow from these ontological differences. The first is that it says nothing positive about truth as such. The truth is not determined by Lotze’s account. Lotze ascribes truth as a form of actuality, but this is not explained. The concept of validity

\textsuperscript{10} Dahlstrom 1992 p. 41
\textsuperscript{11} This represents a slip in to naturalism that is at odds with Lotze’s general anti-naturalist view.
\textsuperscript{12} Dahlstrom, 1992 p. 42
does not explain truth, it only says what is true. The second criticism relates to an ambiguity in the German term 'Wahrsein.' Dahlstrom suggests that we can understand this ambiguity in English by considering the difference between the terms ‘being true’ and ‘true being’. Heidegger suggests that Lotze’s account of truth and validity conflates these two meanings. In the sense of ‘being true’ \textit{Wahrheit} can be used to say that a sentence is true. In the second sense it says what it is for something to be true. By conflating these two senses Lotze’s account confuses saying what is true with what is the nature of truth. Heidegger claims that this is the “seductive ambiguity to which modern logic, the logic of validity, has thoroughly fallen prey.”\(^{13}\) Though Dahlstrom suggests that this criticism is targeted more at Lotze’s followers than at Lotze himself, Lotze himself, claims that seeing truth as validity is a “fundamental concept resting thoroughly on itself alone.”\(^{14}\) The difference between Lotze and Heidegger comes to rest on this point. Does the concept of truth as validity require further ontological elaboration beyond Lotze’s assertion that it is ‘affirmedness.’ For Lotze this seems to be fundamental, but for Heidegger it has not even touched on the essence of truth or ‘truth being.’

In his last criticism of Lotze’s notion of truth and his classification of actualities, Heidegger points to Lotze’s claim that the forms of actuality are indefinable. While Heidegger acknowledges that we cannot define truth or validity in the same way we define objects, he says that this does not mean that we cannot say anything substantive about the nature of truth. What is at stake here is the understanding of being that supports Lotze’s system. Heidegger claims that Lotze’s actualities are based on an ontology of presence and indeed that Lotze’s entire account is based on a Greek ontology of being as presence.

\subsection*{1.3 Intentionality}

Heidegger develops an account of truth in opposition to truth as validity or truth as judgment. This account is indebted to Husserl’s notion of intentionality

\(^{13}\) Dahlstrom 1992 p. 44
\(^{14}\) Dahlstrom 1992 p. 45 (Lotze 513)
and an understanding of this is required in order to grasp Heidegger's alternative account and its far-reaching implications. We must begin with Husserl's notion of intentionality and his concept of the categorial intuition before considering Heidegger's interpretation of these. It is Heidegger's contention that though Husserl discovers categorial intuition and develops the idea of intentionality, he fails to see their full and radical implications. For Husserl and for Heidegger, intentionality is the fundamental structure of lived experience. This can be understood by noting that every lived or 'psychic comportment' is directed towards something, remembering is a remembering of something, expecting is expectation of something and perception is perception of something. Such an approach has the advantage of seemingly bridging the Cartesian gap between 'inner' psychic events (in the subject) and real things (the objects). While perceptions can be hallucinatory or deceptive and thus their intentionality can be questioned, Heidegger contends that in these cases the content of the hallucination or deception is what the perception is directed at. Thus, Heidegger claims that a perception is not considered intentional because it involves a relationship between something physical and something psychic. In this way intentionality is not beset with the metaphysical dogmas that its critics accuse it of. Intentionality must not be understood in terms of Cartesian philosophy where inner consciousness is contrasted with the 'outer' world. Rather all perceptions are inherently intentional and this is the case whether they are real, hallucinatory or deceptive. It is the structure of directedness that is important rather that the status of what the perception is directed at. Thus, intentional accounts of perception cannot be fitted into a model of perception based on representation and judgments. I do not judge some aspect of reality; Heidegger uses the example of a chair, against my mental representation of the chair in question. I perceive the chair itself and this means there is no gap to cross between subject and object. "What makes us blind to intentionality is the presumption that what we have here is a theory of the relation between physical and psychic, whereas what is really exhibited is simply a structure of the psychic itself."16 This structure is fundamental

15 Husserl, 1964
16 Heidegger, 1992 p.35
regardless of whether we work within the frameworks of idealism or realism. Accepting this basic structure of intentionality means that we have 'avoided the danger of lapsing into construction and into a theory which goes beyond what is before us.”  

If intentionality cannot be understood in terms of ‘inner’ and ‘outer’ or in terms of ‘subject’ and ‘object,’ how are we to understand what it is that is perceived or the perceived as such? In the case of a chair, Heidegger asks, “what can I say about the chair?” He is concerned with natural, everyday perceptions. Of the chair in his example he says; “I would say that it stands in Room 24 next to the desk, and it is probably used by lecturers who prefer to sit while they lecture. It is not just any chair but a very particular one.” In these natural perceptions of everyday objects we encounter ‘environmental things.’ If I think about the chair further, I can say more about it for example that it is made of wood, or I can lift it and drop it. These statements are not just applicable to the particular chair but could be applied to any wooden chair. Now the perceived thing becomes a ‘natural thing’. The chair is both an environmental thing and a natural thing. There can be further investigations into the nature of the chair. I can say that the chair has materiality or extension or matter and form. In these cases, I am not longer talking about this particular environmental chair or to any ‘natural’ wooden chair, I am now talking about ‘thingness.’ Science and epistemology are primarily concerned with thingness and natural things; intentionality starts with the naïve perception of environmental things. It regards this naïve perception as its starting point. “What we want is precisely naiveté.” The naïve perception of the chair is the starting point to all subsequent investigation, yet this starting point is generally forgotten by philosophers.

Heidegger considers three cases of intentional perception, perceiving a thing, empty intending, and perception of a picture. We will briefly consider all three. Perceiving a thing is, according to Heidegger, “an exemplary case” of

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17 Heidegger, 1992 p.37
18 ibid 37
19 Heidegger, 1992, 39
20 Heidegger 1992 p. 37
intentional perception. “By intentionality we do not mean an objective relation which occasionally and subsequently takes place between a physical thing and a psychic process, but as the structure of a comportment as comporting to.”21 When I look at a chair I just see that chair. The perceived thing is understood just as I understand it. To say, as a philosopher might, this chair has materiality or extension is not to say something fundamental about the chair, it is, rather to say something that results from subsequent research. To say something fundamental about the chair would be to say something like “this chair is uncomfortable.” Philosophical research does not bring us closer to the fundamental nature of the chair rather it brings us further away. In fact, once I begin to talk about the chair in terms of materiality or extension, I am no longer talking this chair \textit{per se} but now I am talking about ‘thingness.’ Intentionality is concerned with the naïve perception of a particular chair.22

The key to intentionality is the perceiving rather than the perceived. Intentionality demonstrates how the perceived thing is perceived. To understand this Heidegger draws an important distinction between perception and representation. “The expression \textit{the perceived as such} now refers [not to the perceived entity in itself but] \textit{to this entity in the way and manner of its being-perceived}.”23 Being perceived belongs to intentionality. Heidegger asks what can we say about this perceivedness? He answers by saying it has bodily presence. The perceived entity is bodily there or intuitively fulfilled. When I look at the chair it is given to me bodily. Heidegger claims that “[b]odily presence is a superlative mode of the self-givenness of an entity.”24

The next case of perception discussed is envisioning or ‘empty intending’ – for example when I recall the chair later in conversation.25 In this case the conversation is left intuitively unfulfilled. In fact, Heidegger suggests that

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21 Heidegger 1992 p. 37
22 Although broadly speaking perception includes notions of materiality and extension.
23 Heidegger (1992) p. 40
24 ibid.
25 On this point Heidegger departs from Husserl. – to remember something is to intend a past object and this is fulfilled in the memory of that object. As Heidegger accounts for it here intentional consciousness would require the
intuitive representations are rare and it is this empty intending that accounts for much of our general talk. However, when I tell my friend about the uncomfortable chair in my apartment, I do not refer to a representation or an image of the chair, I still mean the chair. This conversation about the chair may be unfulfilled but when I tell my friend that my chair is uncomfortable I do not refer to an image of it.

A third type of intentional perception is perception of a picture. This clearly demonstrates the difference between perception and representation. Heidegger maintains that perceiving a picture has a completely different structure to normal perception or envisioning. This is because what is bodily given is the format of the picture, be it a photograph or a painting or a postcard. The perception of a picture is different from perceiving a thing and empty intending. The perception of a picture has a different structure to general perception. This is why, according to Heidegger, it does not make sense to view picturing as the paradigm of perception. The picture thing is different from other things in that it represents something else. Our normal perception of things does not work like this. These ‘modes of representation’ are structurally interrelated in terms of their levels of fulfillment. For example, envisioning is unfulfilled but it has the possibility of fulfillment, whereas direct perception is fulfilled.

Heidegger now draws a distinction between intentio and intendum. The intentio is the way something is intended and the intendum is the entity in the ‘how if its being perceived.’ How does this distinction differ from the representation models of perception? Heidegger points out that these terms point to a “particular interpretation of directing-itself toward.” Its purpose is to show that intentionality is only fully determined when intentio and intenum are brought together. This analysis still does not explain how the ‘being intended’ of an entity is related to that entity. To understand this we need to understand categorical intuition.

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26 Envisioning only has the possibility of fulfillment ‘up to a certain level, since envisioning is never capable of giving the matter itself in its bodily givenness,” Heidegger, 1992 p.44
27 Heidegger 1992 p.45
1.4 Categorial Intuition

This deceptively simple notion is central to Heidegger’s philosophy and his account of truth. Heidegger takes this concept from Husserl but he amends it and argues against Husserl that phenomenology is necessarily ontology. The categorial intuition shows, for Heidegger, that the being of an entity appears in the entity without being identifiable with it. Two interrelated idea are central to the concept. The first is that even our most simple perceptions are category-laden (or categorial) and secondly, the Husserlian insight that all perception is expressed.

The word ‘intuition’ here means, “*simple apprehension of what is itself bodily found.*” The ‘categorial’ refers to the idea that categories are given in apprehension. Categorial intuition is simply the idea that categories are seen in all perceptions: even the most-simple. Complex perceptions are not ‘built up’ from simple ones combined by the use of ‘inner’ categories that organize raw perceptual data into meaningful objects. For example, I can perceive a book and a laptop on my desk. The ‘and’ and the ‘on’ are not added by me but they are inherent in the perception itself. If we accept this first idea then it leads to the second idea that all our comportments are expressed. This does not mean that they are formally expressed or verbalized but that they are “expressed in a definitive articulation by an understanding that I have of them.” Perceptions are not raw data fed into the machine of a mind. Rather we ‘live’ in our perceptions, that is we have an understanding of things that is already inherent in our perceptions of them.

The three cases of intentional perception represent a sequence of interrelated levels of fulfilment. The emptily intended is fulfilled in the envisioned and the envisioned is fulfilled in direct perception. It is important to note that no matter how fully something is envisioned it cannot match fulfilled perception and even then, the bodily given only shows itself in one adumbration. “Fulfilment means

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28 Heidegger 1992 p. 47
29 ibid.
having the entity present in its intuitive content so that what is at first only emptily presumed in it demonstrates itself as grounded in the matters.”

Fulfilment is an act of identification. “The intended identifies itself in the intuited; selfsameness is experienced [erfahren].” This identification is not, however, experienced as selfsameness “Identification is for its part not already an apprehension of identity but solely as the identical.” In direct perception insight is gained or added to the envisioned. The envisioned is not validated. This insight shows the groundedness of what it is that is given in perception. This is Heidegger’s account of evidence (Evidenz). “The emptily presumed is compared to the matter itself, so that in fulfilment I obtain insight into the groundedness of the matter itself. More precisely, I obtain insight into the groundedness in the matter of what was before only presumed.”

This account of evidence as identifying fulfillment demonstrates the full extent of Heidegger’s departure from logical accounts of truth and accounts of evidence on which they rely. From a Heideggerian perspective, evidence can no longer be seen as a correspondence between a mental representation and an object. At the time Heidegger was writing, and still today, evidence is viewed as a special type of perception which is different in some way from general perception. Evidence is connected to judgment.

It is something like a sign which wells up at times in the soul and announces that the psychic process with which it is associated is true. As everyone knows, this transcendent reality cannot itself become immanent. So there must be a way in which it can be announced on the inside.

Heidegger denies there is something different or special about the perception of evidence. Furthermore, he claims, this faulty premise is central to many philosophical accounts of truth. There is no way to justify the claim that in these evidential perceptions we really see the truth and we know this. In short, for

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30 Heidegger 1992 p. 49
31 ibid.
32 ibid.
33 ibid.
34 Heidegger, 1992 p. 50
Heidegger, there isn’t a special class of perceptions that provide evidence for propositions. In logico-scientific conceptions, evidence is linked to judgment. In a similar vein, judgments are special cases of perception where the perceiver knows that what is perceived is true in a way that is not the case generally. For Heidegger, it is clear that the perception of evidence is like all fulfilled perception i.e. it is identifying fulfilment. In fact he claims that evidence is “comprehensible only if we regard the intentionally in it.”\(^{35}\)

Evidence is regional in that it picks out a particular state of affairs. “All evidence is in its sense geared to a corresponding region of subject matter.”\(^{36}\) There are different types of evidence and each of these is unique to its own subject area and cannot be applied to other subject areas, for example, mathematical evidence is only relevant in mathematics. In this way, Heidegger critiques the notion that mathematics is paradigm of evidential rigor and therefore he attaches no virtue to the mathematization of the sciences or to the idea of a hierarchy of method with mathematics at the top. In fact, Heidegger suggests that the intentional structure of evidence is the same across all perception and indeed all comportments or acts. There is “evidence of willing and wishing, of loving and hoping.”\(^{37}\)

This discussion of evidence in science has widespread ramifications. For example, in the later work, Heidegger tells us that his own philosophical writings on Hölderlin are not to be subject to the requirement of being proven true. “We do not need to prove anything here. All proof is always only a subsequent undertaking on the basis of presuppositions. Anything at all can be proved, depending only on what presuppositions are made.”\(^{38}\)

Heidegger proposes a three-fold demonstration of truth.

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\(^{35}\) Heidegger 1992, p. 50.

\(^{36}\) ibid.

\(^{37}\) Heidegger 1992, p. 51

\(^{38}\) Poetry, Language, Thought p. 220
1. Truth is “being identical of presumed and intuited.”\(^\text{39}\) This concept holds truth as something that is “experienced but not apprehended,”\(^\text{40}\) only the subject matter itself is apprehended not the identity. Thus “I do not thematically study the truth of this perception itself, but rather I live in the truth.”\(^\text{41}\) This is the concept of truth that accounts for ‘being true;’ it is the truth of the *intentum*.  

2. The second concept of truth is correlated to the *intentio* or the act of apprehending itself. It is the being identical that comes into view in this second concept. Heidegger is clarifying what he sees as the central ambiguity of Lotze's notion of truth, and all logical accounts that embody the logical prejudice, and collapse the concept of truth in to the first concept. Both of these concepts are required in order to understand truth.  

3. In the third concept of truth, Heidegger equates truth with being or “the intuited entity itself.”\(^\text{42}\) The truth is the state of affairs or “the very object that it is.”\(^\text{43}\) This third concept of truth is central to Heidegger's notion of truth, and it overcomes the ontological difference that Heidegger claims is inherent on Lotzean accounts.

For Heidegger, the first two concepts entail the third. They illuminate the link between truth and being which has been obscured since the time of the Greeks. What comes into focus is the being of the true state of affairs. The phrase ‘the desk is solid’ cannot be understood in terms of just the first or the second concept but requires all three concepts to be fully comprehended.

### 1.5 Being and Time, Truth, and Tugendhat’s Critique

Heidegger further develops his account of truth and his critique of propositional theories in Section 44 of *Being and Time*. In this section, we will examine this
development and Tugendhat’s strong critique of Heidegger’s account. As we have seen, Heidegger’s account is in opposition to the dominant philosophical account of propositional truth, namely correspondence theory. Correspondence theory, stated simply, maintains that a proposition is true when it corresponds to an actual state of affairs in the world. A proposition is either true or false with respect to some entity or state of affairs. In opposition to this, Heidegger’s account of truth is concerned with uncovering. A proposition does not merely passively correspond to some state of affairs but rather it actively points it out. In *Being and Time*, Heidegger claims that Dasein uncovers a world and then maintains or preserves what it uncovers. For the most part, Heidegger is unconcerned with distinguishing the true from the false. This Heideggerian account is subject to strong criticism from Tugendhat. Tugendhat maintains that for a concept of truth to be meaningful and indeed responsible, it must aim to distinguish between truth and falsity.

There are two main parts of Tugendhat’s argument against Heidegger. Firstly, he demonstrates that Heidegger is actually committed to what I will call a “strong formulation of truth,” namely that whatever is uncovered by Dasein *is* true in the sense of not being false. Secondly, given this, there is an ambiguity in how Heidegger uses the word ‘uncovered’. On the one hand, Heidegger is committed to identifying truth with uncovering but on the other hand, in some passages He maintains that falsity is a kind of covering. If we hold with the first claim, then we have difficulty with instances of error or falsity. If it is possible to uncover a state of affairs that is false then the truth can be false. However, as Tugendhat himself points out Heidegger’s talk of truth requires some interpretation.44 I will argue that Tugendhat interpretation of Heidegger’s notion of truth replaces it with a conception of truth that is more akin to a strong formulation of a correspondence theory. While it is clear that there is an ambiguity in Heidegger’s use of the word truth. This ambiguity is reflected in many philosophical accounts and we can view this ambiguity as a general

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44 Tugendhat, 1994 p. 228
philosophical problem with truth that is made explicit, though not resolved, in Heidegger’s account.

1.5 (a) Authentic and Inauthentic Truth

It is important to bear in mind that Heidegger’s project, *in Being and Time*, is to understand the nature of Being. He begins section 44 of the first division with a discussion of Parmenides and the notion that thinking and Being are the same. If thinking and being are the same then truth becomes the way in which thinking and Being are shown to be the same. Truth is that which manifests or makes possible this sameness of being and thought. Either being and thought are the same and what is thought makes manifest what is, or they are different, and thought remains in its own domain, in which case the question of truth does not arise (although the question of meaning does).

The first division of *Being and Time* is concerned with the meaning of Being with a capital B or Being itself, rather than the being of specific entities. Heidegger attempts to understand this question by enumerating the *existentiale* or the structures of Dasein’s Being-in-the-world. Section 44 is the final section of the first division. It is, also, the first section to deal systematically with truth. Section 44 is also notable in that it provides a summary of the rest of the first division. Heidegger starts *Being and Time* with the question of Being, and comes, in section 44, to truth.

While Heidegger’s account does not turn on the true/false distinction; he does, however, draw distinction between:

a. Truth as uncovering. Thus, Dasein is in truth because Dasein is uncovering.

b. Truth as uncoveredness in the sense of a state of affairs that is uncovered, thus the laptop in front of me is uncovered.

This distinction matches the distinction between *intenio* and *intendum* from the *History of the Concept of Time* described above. Heidegger claims that truth is
constituted by “state of mind, understanding and discourse.” Disclosing is fundamental to Dasein and because of this “the most primordial phenomena of truth is attained.” To put it crudely, Dasein discloses a world and it does so with understanding. This is nature of Dasein; we only encounter our own Dasein with the world it discloses. We disclose and we understand what is disclosed and what is disclosed is, for Heidegger, truth. We are never in pre-understanding. Again, Heidegger claims, “Dasein is in the truth.” However, he points to different modes of being in truth. Dasein can be either authentic or inauthentic. “The most primordial, and indeed the most authentic, disclosedness in which Dasein, as a potentiality-for-Being is the truth of existence.” Dasein can also be inauthentic or fallen. In this case Dasein still discloses, but it does so in a mode where truth has been disguised and closed off by idle talk, curiosity and ambiguity. There is still the understanding that is essential to disclosure and therefore truth, but this disclosure is fallen. As Heidegger puts it “Being towards the entities has not been extinguished, but it has been uprooted.” In such a case the disguised entities show themselves in the mode of semblance where the entity is not disclosed authentically by my own Dasein but it is disclosed by the ‘they’ in idle talk.

In these cases, Heidegger maintains that Dasein is in untruth. So when Dasein is fallen it is both in truth and in untruth. While this seems to be a contradiction it is important to note that ‘untruth’ in this context cannot be understood as falsity. Untruth is not the opposite of truth it is, in fact, a variety of truth. Heidegger maintains, “In its full existential-ontological meaning, the proposition that ‘Dasein is in the truth’ states equiprimordially that Dasein is in untruth.” The concept of being fallen is to be understood ontologically. In fallingness, Dasein uncovers in an inauthentic way and that Being which is uncovered is inauthentic in its uncoveredness. Heidegger describes a situation where Dasein is, for the most part, fallen and where truth in the authentic sense has to be

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45 Heidegger, 1962, p. 263
46 Heidegger, 1962 p.263
47 Heidegger, 1962, p. 263
48 Heidegger, 1962 p. 264
49 Ibid.
50 Heidegger, 1962, p. 265
‘wrested’ from the objects. For the most part, Dasein is encountering things in the mode of semblance, or as the ‘they’ see them. To see an entity in truth becomes a struggle against the way it has been communicated to us in idle talk. Truth is not a flat correspondence between Dasein and some aspect of reality, we have to work for it. Heidegger says, “It is therefore essential that Dasein should explicitly appropriate what has already been uncovered, defend it against semblance and disguise, and assure itself of its uncoveredness again and again”\textsuperscript{51}

1.5. (b) Propositions and Correspondence

Many philosophers, including Heidegger himself, have compared Heidegger’s account of truth as uncoveredness or unconcealment with correspondence theories. It is important to note that it is not Heidegger’s intention to provide an alternative to correspondence theory. Indeed, despite the many philosophical critiques that can be made against correspondence theory Heidegger takes it for granted.\textsuperscript{52} He claims that seeing truth as a correspondence is so accepted that it is considered self-evident. Despite this, his account of truth, has been interpreted in radically different ways with respect to correspondence theories. Some philosophers, including Heidegger, view truth as unconcealment as a departure from treating truth merely as a correspondence. While other philosophers, such as Wrathall, view truth as unconcealment as a basis for correspondence theory in that it provides correspondence with its conditions of possibility so, by this reading, Heidegger’s account of truth includes correspondence. Others, including Tugendhat, see truth as unconcealedness as insufficient as it cannot adequately distinguish between truth and falsity.

As we have seen, if we view truth as a correspondence between a proposition and some state of affairs, we have to ask how these two elements are connected. As we have seen above, this has been a continuing problem for philosophers and different philosophers have expressed the problem in different ways. We

\textsuperscript{51} Heidegger, 1962 p. 265
\textsuperscript{52} Ibid.
can, for example, ask how does our subjective perceptual apparatus connect with objective phenomena?

Heidegger is unconcerned with attempting to reconcile the gulf between these two elements, rather, the question of propositional truth is interesting to him because it is the “traditional conception of truth.” Heidegger neither defends nor criticizes the focus on proposition and correspondence, rather, he wants to explain why we conceive of truth in this way. Although he does maintain that the gap inherent in correspondence can never be closed.

Heidegger lays bare the “ontological foundations” of a propositional account of truth in order that “the primordial phenomena of truth become visible.” This ‘laying bare’ will, according to Heidegger, allow us to see how this traditional conception of truth derives from Dasein’s structure as Being in the world. It is important to see this because our focus on propositional accounts of truth has confused us, we are bewitched by the objects of the world and thus blind to our own uncovering of them.

Heidegger claims “the roots of the truth of assertions reach back to the disclosedness of the understanding.” Truth as agreement or correspondence is derived from a more fundamental understanding of truth as unconcealment. An assertion is about something it “communicates entities in the how of their uncoveredness.” The uncoveredness is then preserved in the assertion. The assertion or proposition then becomes something which is itself objectively present and it can be taken up and spoken again. There is still a relationship between the uncovered entity and the assertion. This relationship can be many things including correspondence. In this way, Heidegger gives us an account of correspondence and while it is not quite that Heidegger’s account gives the conditions of possibility for correspondence theories, it does entail them.

However, his account differs significantly from traditional correspondence

53 Heidegger, 1962 p. 257
54 Heidegger, 1962 p. 259
55 Heidegger, 1962 p. 275
56 Heidegger, 1962 p. 266
theories. In Heidegger’s framework, it is possible that the nature of the relationship can change. The assertion becomes “exempted from having to uncover [the entity] again.” Again, we see a more complex account of truth. The entity is present, and so is the assertion. As it is spoken again and again it does not necessarily continue to uncover the entity, although it does maintain some relationship to it. The story of the relationship between the proposition and the entity is one that is fluid and changing. While traditional accounts of correspondence can, perhaps, capture one moment of this story we cannot reduce Heidegger’s account to this one moment. The story becomes even more complex when we consider the hearsay of *Das Man* or the ‘they’. To a large extent an entities’ uncoveredness is appropriated not by my own uncovering but rather by the hearsay of the ‘they.’ When this happens “[t]hat which has been expressed as such takes over Being-towards those entities which have been uncovered in the assertion.” We see entity expressed in the assertion as ‘they’ see it. Once this process is underway the question becomes how is the uncoveredness preserved.

Dasein is uncovering or disclosing but this uncoveredness becomes a property that is present-at-hand or objectively present. This property is split because Dasein understands itself in terms of entities within the world. Thus Dasein ‘sees’ the entity but not the fact that it is what allows the entity to appear. Thus truth, in its most primordial sense, is an *exitentiale* of Dasein.

### 1.5 (c) Tugendhat’s critique

Tugendhat’s critique can be better understood if we break it in to two parts. The first part demonstrates how Heidegger has committed himself to a strong account of truth, where truth is viewed as a self-showing of the thing as it is in itself. This argument is complex and has a number of moving parts. Tugendhat begins by noting that initially Heidegger’s account of truth is based on the categorial intuition, and thus, it merely “reproduces” Husserl’s account. Husserl

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57 Heidegger, 1962 p. 266
58 Heidegger, 1962 p. 266
shows us that a single object can have different modes of givenness. We can speak of an object as it is given, and as it is ‘in itself,’ but both of these simply represent different modes of givenness. In this way, the ‘in its self’ of an object is not transcendent. Thus, when Husserl speaks of the thing as it is ‘in itself’ he is speaking about a mode of manifestation. When Heidegger speaks of the thing in itself, Tugendhat, points out that it is reasonable to conclude he means it in this Husserlian sense although Heidegger does not mention Husserl. Tugendhat maintains that it is also reasonable to ask how Heidegger can differentiate his position from Husserl’s. Tugendhat suggests that we only understand the difference by considering Heidegger’s successive reformulations of what a true assertion is in section 44.

1. Initially Heidegger claims, “the assertion is true when it so indicates or discloses the state of affairs as it is in itself.”\(^{59}\) This, Tugendhat claims, is identical to Husserl’s claim. Tugendhat holds that the ‘so-as’ in this formulation is necessary because it “describes the correspondence of the state of affairs just as it is disclosed by the assertion with precisely this state of affairs ‘as it is in itself.’”\(^{60}\)

2. Later Heidegger restates the claim without the ‘so-as’, which makes it “an assertion is true when it discloses the state of affairs as it is in itself.” In this formulation the ‘so-as’ is missing but still implied and so the claim is still identical to Husserl’s.

3. In the third formulation Heidegger drops the ‘as it is in itself’ and it becomes “[the true assertion] uncovers the state of affairs”. This strong formulation means that truth must be understood in terms of disclosdeness. This formulation moves beyond Husserl and commits Heidegger to the notion that truth is disclodedness.

Once Tugendhat establishes that Heidegger is committed to this strong account of truth, his critique then revolves around the ambiguity in Heidegger’s use of the word ‘uncover’. Tugendhat identifies two ways in which the word is used. The first is a general pointing out which can refer to pointing out in both correct

\(^{59}\) Tugendhat, 1994 p.230  
\(^{60}\) Ibid.
and incorrect cases. Heidegger also uses ‘uncover’ in a second sense where a false assertion is not an uncovering but rather a covering over. Thus Tugendhat points to both a broad and a narrow sense of ‘uncover’ in Heidegger’s account of truth. He points out that, for Heidegger, “The covering up of the false assertions does not exclude a certain uncovering.”61 Thus the false can uncover and if truth is uncovering then the false can be true. This ambiguity requires that Heidegger explain in what sense does a false assertion uncover, and in what sense does it cover up. Heidegger does not give us an explanation of this in section 44.

1.5 (d) A Response to Tugendhat

The difficulty Tugendhat has with Heidegger’s concept of truth could, on the face of it, be solved if Heidegger had split his notion of truth into two separate concepts. This split would be identical to the distinction he already draws between a and b above; truth as uncovering and truth as uncovered. By employing this distinction we could attempt to draw a line between the uncovering of Dasein and the uncoveredness of the state of affairs. The uncoveredness then could be either true or false and need not be completely tied up with the uncovering. To understand this, imagine a situation where I wake and see the stars above my head, but unbeknownst to me the ‘sky’ I am looking at is not a sky but rather a screen that has been put there to deceive me. If we break Heidegger’s account of truth apart, I could say that my uncovering is truth, perhaps in the sense that it is true for me, but the uncoveredness is false. We can imagine an account of truth where uncoveredness is ‘truth 2’ and uncovering is ‘truth 1’

If this were the case, then Tugendhat’s critique would lose its force because we could still attempt to distinguish truth from falsity in some way. However, Heidegger’s account of truth would also lose its distinctiveness and perhaps begin to collapse back into a sort of correspondence account. We cannot separate ‘truth 1’ and ‘truth 2’. We can only say, along with Heidegger, that both

61 Tugendhat, 1994 p. 232
these elements are contained in truth, we cannot separate them in a meaningful way. Thus, if I wake up under a screen that I think is the sky but I am deceived, either I stay in my deception and this is ‘the truth’ for me, or I investigate further and discover the deception, and then the truth is I was deceived, but now I know that something else is true. This is similar to the situation we find ourselves in anyway, for example in the history of science. We believe we know the truth but on further investigation we discover that we were wrong and amend our account of some entity or another. We cannot separate the uncovering from the uncoveredness. This becomes apparent in Heidegger’s discussion of Newton’s laws. He maintains that without Dasein there is no truth. He says “‘There is’ truth only in so far as Dasein is.” Truth is an existentiale of Dasein, a part of its structure. So before there was Dasein there was no truth and after Dasein is gone there will be no truth. There can be neither uncovering nor uncoveredness without Dasein. With respect to Newton, Heidegger maintains that his laws were not true before he discovered them but it does not follow from this that they were false. They were neither true nor false. The entities that are described in Newton’s laws may have been uncovered but in Newton’s laws they become true through him. The laws make the entities described in the laws accessible to Dasein. This is how truth works.

The problem Tugendhat points to in Heidegger’s philosophy merely reflects a problem with most philosophical accounts of truth. That Heidegger’s account of truth cannot deliver a correspondence with a state of affairs as it is in itself is hardly a criticism against him. His account starts from a rejection that this is the way to approach truth. For Tugendhat, such a response will not suffice; he maintains that while traditional correspondence theory “may not accomplish much...[i]t does at least furnish the minimal condition that must be met if it is to feature at all as a concept of truth.” Tugendhat holds this to be self-evident but the history of philosophy has shown that meeting this minimal condition has been a difficult if not impossible task.

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62 Heidegger, 1962 p.369
63 Tugendhat, 1994 p.229
It is also worth noting that if we cannot successfully distinguish between ‘truth 1’ and ‘truth 2’ then a Heideggerian account of correspondence cannot be considered isomorphic with a more usual understanding of correspondence. When Heidegger claims of the true proposition that it uncovers the state of affairs, he does not commit himself to a strong formulation of a correspondence theory. For this to be the case he would also need to be committed to a metaphysics of objects and subjects. Heidegger’s conception of a world is not a collection of objects but rather it is the “openness of Being.” Dasein is constituted by this disclosedness. The ‘state of affairs’ is Dasein’s disclosure of its world and nothing more.

If, as Heidegger suggests, we cannot bridge the gap between the two elements of correspondence theory, then Tugendgat’s critique cannot proceed. This is because it presupposes that an account of truth can, at least in principle, unite these two elements. Otherwise there is no way of distinguishing our knowing from what is known, such an account of truth is required to make Tugendhat’s critique work. It is, in fact, a strength of Heidegger’s account that it realizes both the impossibility of this situation, and of our insistence that we can overcome it. This insistence is not merely a philosophical position among others, but rather it is a feature of how we make sense of the world. The state of affairs that a proposition attempts to correspond to, is Dasein’s disclosing its world. Despite this, Tugendgat’s critique brings to the fore another important issue. Heidegger’s account of truth seems to slip in to relativism. If the truth disclosed to me is racist, for example, can we use Heidegger’s philosophy to justify it? Do we not have a responsibility to continue seeking a rational truth? Does Heidegger’s own political alliances not make this painfully clear? However, it can be argued, that in some respects, Heidegger’s account of truth demands more of us. His insistence that truth needs to be ‘wrested’ from the entities implies that it is our responsibility to seek the truth; to rescue it from the inauthentic truth of Das Man. Moreover, truth is not timeless or transcendental in a Platonic sense, but has to be sought continually anew. Many years after

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64 Heidegger, 1967 p. 267
Being and Time, in a discussion of poetry from the 1955/1956 lecture series, Heidegger writes “A constantly renewed, that is more original appropriation is needed in order for mortals to have a true beholding of something.”65 In this way we are brought to the relationship between truth and art.

1.6 Art and Truth

The account that views truth is a property of propositions, which, correspond faithfully to a worldly state of affairs, is based on an ontology of subjects and distinct objects. As we have seen, an ontological framework based on subjects and objects leads to the philosophical question of how to bridge the gap. While this gap is a philosophical problem, it also does important philosophical work by demarcating the subjective from the objective. It is the gap that allows us to claim that our statements refer to a world that is separate to us. As Tugendhat points out it gives us the possibility of an objective truth that we can employ to settle debates. The facts about the sun; that it is a star, and an almost perfect spherical ball of hot plasma with internal convective motion, and that generates a magnetic field via a dynamo process, are not subjective. They are true of the sun. Do Heidegger’s criticisms really challenge these facts? As we have seen, Heidegger maintains that our perceptions are laden with categories, and that they are expressed. He also states that scientific evidence is not a special form of perception. Thus, for Heidegger the proposition “the sun is an almost perfect spherical ball of hot plasma” is not a privileged statement. It is an intentional statement that expresses a perception of the sun. As I write it, it is unfulfilled for me. It has nothing to do with my perception of the sun. By the very fact of its objectivity it is not grounded in my experience. It forgets that the sun is something I experience. However, these scientific perceptions are not a correspondence they are an expression of something that could have been expressed in another way. The categorical ladenness of the intentum suggests that no perception is privileged.

65 Heidegger, 1996 p. 46
According to Heidegger, the scientist does not come to the sun as a blank sensory receptor but rather brings something unfulfilled that is fulfilled in the scientific perception. Truth is the “being identical of presumed and intuited.”66 Science is no longer a paradigm of truth. It does not capture this “primary being of truth.”67 If we follow Heidegger we cannot accept an ontology of truth based on Lotzean ‘affirmedness’ but rather as an identity of the presumed and the intuited.

Heidegger, while not dismissing the importance of scientific research comes to see truth in terms of art. In the 1930’s he further develops his account of truth in terms of the Greek term of unconcealment or ‘Alethia.’ In The Origin of The Work of Art,68 Heidegger sets out investigates the nature or the essence of art. In this way his critical focus is centred not so much on logic and science but on aesthetic accounts of art, which he contends bring metaphysics to the realm of art.

1.6 (a) Aesthetics

Heidegger’s work on art can be considered anti-aesthetic. Heidegger claims that the term ‘aesthetics’ is not merely a label for the philosophy of art, but rather represents the application of enlightenment thinking to the realm of art. In particular, aesthetic accounts remove from art the truth-disclosing properties that the Greeks associated with it, and relegate it to the realm of mere “experience.” The job of art becomes merely to provide a pleasurable experience. In this way, as Young points out, art understood as aesthetics is decontextualized from our everyday concerns. “We attend to the object of perception in and for itself, abstract, that is, from every relation it may have to our intellectual and practical interests.”69 It becomes “disinterested” in the Kantian sense. Crucially, Heidegger maintains that such an identification of art with experience is, for Heidegger, catastrophic for our understanding of art. We

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66 Heidegger 1992, p 51
67 Dahstrom 1994 p21
68 Heidegger, 1978
69 Young 2001 9
are told at the end of the Origin, “[y]et perhaps experience is the element in which art dies.”

1.6 (b) Art as Thing

The essay begins by pointing out that though the artist is the origin of the work, the work is also the origin of the artist. Thus, art is prior to both the artist and the artwork. Heidegger attempts to find the essence of art in the work itself. In order to do this, he points towards the work's status as a thing and he considers three philosophical conceptions of 'thingness', namely the thing as a bearer of traits, as a gestalt or as matter and form. Heidegger maintains that form and matter is the dominant things concept, and that it derives from a historical tendency to view objects in terms of equipment. He maintains that to understand the thingly character of the artwork we must first begin with the equipmental character of equipment. Heidegger connects the equipmental character of equipment with usefulness; we only encounter the character of equipment in its use. In order to illustrate this equipmental character of equipment, Heidegger suggests an example of a pair of shoes, to bring these to mind he suggests we consider van Gogh’s painting of a pair of work shoes. In an account of the painting, which some commentators such as Young suggest is “largely irrelevant” to the overall thrust of the essay, Heidegger shows how the painting discloses to us the shoes, and the life of the peasant woman who wears them as she toils in the field. Shapiro, however, famously challenges Heidegger’s account of the peasant woman’s life by pointing to the fact that the shoes belonged to van Gogh himself. But for Heidegger the poetic description of the peasant woman serves to illustrate the idea that equipment, shoes in this case, become entirely lost in their use. In the language of Being and Time, the shoes are ready-to-hand as the woman works, yet it is precisely the shoes that enable her work. Equipment links the worker to their world, but in this process the tools slip entirely from the workers attention. The tool only comes back into

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70 Heidegger, 1971, p. 79
71 Young, 2001, 
72 Young, 2001 p. 22
73 Shapiro 1994
view when it breaks or wears away. When this happens the tool becomes 'mere stuff.'

In both of these cases, while the shoes are in use or when they are broken the worker is not aware of the being of the shoes. It is only the account of van Gogh's painting that brings the shoes into awareness. "The artwork lets us know what the shoes are in truth." 74 In this way, Heidegger firmly links truth and art. He claims that "the essence of art would then be this: The truth of beings setting itself to work." 75 The conceit of the essay is that it reverses its own strategy, the thingly character of a work does not reveal the something about the work, it is art that reveals something about the truth of things. Art discloses truth; this is its essence. Such an understanding of the work cannot be accommodated by the philosophical conceptions of the thing described. In fact, Heidegger maintains that we cannot understand the artwork at all if we focus on its thingly character:

As soon as we look for such a thingly substructure in the work, we have unwittingly taken the work as equipment, to which we then also ascribe a superstructure supposed to contain its artistic quality. But the work is not a piece of equipment that is fitted out in addition with an aesthetic value that adheres to it. 76

Again, Heidegger calls into question the basic presuppositions of aesthetic theory. He claims that we cannot understand how art discloses truth in terms of the metaphysics of subjects and object. In fact, from this metaphysical viewpoint arts truth disclosing function is blocked.

Given this, we need a different notion of truth, one more akin to the pre-Socratic understandings of art. To this end, Heidegger develops a distinction between 'world' and 'earth' and introduces them with the example of a Greek temple. The temple, standing majestically on the rocky cliff, allows those who build it,

74 Heidegger, 1978 p. 162
75 Ibid.
76 Heidegger, 1978 pp. 165-166
appreciated it, and worshipped in it to apprehend the landscape in which it is set.

Standing there, the building holds its ground against the storm raging above it and so make the storm manifest in its violence. The luster and the gleam of the stone, though itself apparently glowing only by the grace of the sun, yet first brings to radiance the light of day, the breadth of the sky, the darkness of the night. The temple's firm grounding makes visible the invisible space of air.\textsuperscript{77}

The temple has the ability to bring a \textit{world} into view. At the same time the temple bring the ‘earth’ into view. The earth is that from which the world emerges; “Earth is that whence the arising brings back and shelters everything that arises.”\textsuperscript{78}

Great art opens up a world, but this world opening is not simply a brute fact, it is the locus of a struggle between the world and the earth. Earth and world are inseparable. The earth can be understood as a tendency towards concealment that also relies on world openings. As we can see, this represents a dramatically different view of truth to correspondence theory.

\textbf{1.6 (c) Truth, the Role of the Artist and the role of Preservers}

In the final section of the essay, Heidegger discusses the role of the artist. He maintains that the work is self-sufficient in the sense that once created it no longer requires its connection to the artist. It is not the reputation of the artist that makes a work great. However, the work’s character as work depends on the fact of its creation by an artist and this can only be understood with respect to the creative process. There can be no question of discovering what the origin of the work of art is without reference to this. To this end, Heidegger again contrasts art with equipment. Equipment, like art, is constructed and it is useful to ask what the difference is between making art and making equipment. This

\textsuperscript{77} Heidegger, 1996 p. 169
\textsuperscript{78} Ibid.
difference is not immediately obvious for, both endeavours require craftsmanship, for example. Thus, while Heidegger points out the similarities in process between the making of equipment and the making of art, the process of making art is ultimately very different:

[T]o create is to let something emerge as a thing that had been brought forth. The work’s becoming a work is a way in which truth becomes and happens. It all rests in the essence of truth. But what is truth, that it has to happen in such a thing as something created.\(^{79}\)

In Heidegger’s picture the artist opens an area of the earth and this opening instigates a strife that is truth. Heidegger defines truth as un-truth in the sense that it comes from the not-yet-revealed, or the un-uncovered, or concealment. Heidegger uses this reference to ‘double constraint’ to indicate that concealedness involves a double restraint or refusal. Truth occurs at the opposition of the lighting and double concealing. These two elements move apart in primal strife. The artist ‘wins’ the open area. This open area is strife. The being unconcealed in truth is not simply revealed, but it reveals itself, withholds itself and withdraws itself. Strife moves lighting and concealing apart. In between them is the open region that the artist wins. The openness of the open region is truth. It is “this openness, only if and as long as it establishes itself within its open region. Hence there must always be some being in this open region.”\(^{80}\) The artist does not create the truth; she facilitates the winning of an open region. This open region must coincide with a being and the work is this being. Thus creation is not creation in the sense of building something but rather it is a ‘bringing forth.’

The idea of ‘strife’ and of the ‘open’ in this respect, is related to the idea of “Spielraum.” Heidegger explains this notion in Being and Time in section 70.\(^{81}\) It is a part of the “existential-analytical inquiry as to the temporal conditions of

\(^{79}\) Heidegger, 1978 p.180
\(^{80}\) Heidegger, 1978 p.181
\(^{81}\) Heidegger, 1962, p. 418
the spatiality that is characteristic of Dasein.”

*Spielraum* is translated variously as “leeway,” “free space,” and “freeplay.” The sense of play is also clearly at work in the term. Dasein is not does not occupy space, in the sense that it is understood by physics; Dasein is not an object located at particular coordinates of longitude and latitude. “Dasein takes in space; this is to be understood literally...In existing it has already made room for its own leeway [*Spielraum*].”

This leeway is the room Dasein makes for itself and this space or “region” is tied up, inexorably, with Dasein’s concerns or involvements. Our scientific and philosophical notions of space, all flow from the “ecstatical temporality of the spatiality that is characteristic of Dasein.” In particular, the idea that we can conceive of space as separate to time depends on Spielraum, as the room that Dasein makes for itself. In terms of the work, the idea of Spielraum is important because it is linked, as Heidegger goes on to say in the *Origin of the Work of Art*, to the idea that “in some manner, the essence of unconcealment belongs to being itself... then it is being, which in virtue of its essence, allows the freeplay of openness (the clearing of the “there”). The work generates the space the space in which it has meaning.

Heidegger maintains that createdness consist in two essential determinations. The first is that “Truth establishes itself in the work.” Here we can see how radical Heidegger’s position is. Traditionally, we view the artist as fully responsible for the creation of the work. We see the work as a reflection of the artist’s view, as an expression of the artist’s attitudes or feelings about the world. This may be the case from the artist’s perspective, but this does not make the work great. Heidegger claims that in great art truth is established. But what sort of a truth is this? If it is obviously not a subjective created truth then its status of truth must come from a source other than artist. Does the audience convey truth on to the work? Does the audience recognise the truth in a work? Is this what makes the work great? The answer to all these questions is no. They

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82 Ibid.
83 Heidegger, 1962 p. 420
84 Heidegger 1962, p. 421
85 Heidegger, 2002, p. 36
86 Ibid.
result from the faulty way of looking at things described above. Truth is not simply added to the work by either the artist or the viewer.

The truth is a world opening up in continuing strife. It is the shared world of both the artist and the audience. The work wins the unity of the world and earth. The world and the earth won are the world and earth of a given historical community. “As a world opens itself, it submits to the decisions of a historical humanity the questions of victory and defeat, blessing and curse, mastery and slavery. The dawning world brings out what is as yet undecided and measureless, and thus discloses the hidden necessity of measure and decisiveness.”

While the artist may no longer be seen as the sole author of a work’s significance, the status of the work is raised far above its general position in aesthetic theory. Contextualists, for example, claim that the social and historical context of a work supplies its meaning. Heidegger rejects this and claims that the art creates the context within which it has meaning. The work creates the space in which certain themes become relevant and others become irrelevant. It is not simply that a work instigates a new fashion where old concerns or themes fall out of favour. Art creates a world that decides what is literally seen and understood by a community. The strife that is created by the work is strife between world and earth. This strife opens up a region and while, as we have seen, this is no simple case of a clear region of two opponents (both world and earth define each other and contain each other). We can argue that in the case of new world emerging some beings are revealed as world, some beings are swallowed up in to earth.

The second essential determination of createdness is concerned with production. In the case of both art and equipment something is produced. Indeed, this is true of everything, as Heidegger points out, but in the case of art, createdness stands out. The createdness of a work is a living feature. It does not

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87 Heidegger, 1978 p.181
withdraw into usefulness but remains a part of its being. This createdness does not point us to the artist. It is not the signature that makes a work great. In fact, the more successful the work is the more “cleanly it seems to cut ties to human beings.”

Heidegger acknowledges that the work needs a creator but he highlights the role of the ‘preserver.’ The work is preserved by those who are party to the displacement it instigates. “To submit to this displacement means to transform our accustomed ties to world and to earth and henceforth to restrain all usual doing and prizing, knowing and looking, in order to stay within the truth that is happening in the work.”

The notion of preservation in *The Origin*, is complex. It does not mean that the work relies on an interplay between the artist and its audience for its status as a work. Such an idea fails to acknowledge that the work functions as a “displacement” and it is this displacement that the preservers preserve. “To submit to this displacement means to transform our accustomed ties to world and earth and henceforth to restrain all the usual doing and prizing, knowing and looking, in order to stay within the truth that is happening in the work.”

Heidegger’s notion of preservation goes beyond the idea that the work needs to be witnessed to include the idea that the truth that happens in the work relies on this preservation. A work “always remains tied to the preservers” even when “it is still only waiting for them.” The truth of the work, its ability to reconfigure world and earth for a historical people, relies on its preservers.

The fact of the works createdness is not fully realized until the work is viewed and it is only realized in great works. Thus, we have the counterintuitive idea that the artist is not fully responsible for the works status as a created work. This idea is less counterintuitive, though, when we remember that Heidegger is not talking about creation in the sense of making the work, he is talking about the notion that the works createdness stays alive in the work. Equipment is

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88 Heidegger, 1978 p.183
89 Ibid.
90 Heidegger, 1978, 191
91 Heideggger, 1978, 192
created, but its createdness is swallowed up by usefulness; not only does its createdness slip from our view but its being disappears entirely. A less than great artwork can similarly disappear from our view; certainly its createdness is not an issue for us. The fact that something is created is only apparent to us when we are in some sense surprised by it.

1.7 Conclusion

Heidegger critiques the idea that truth is a feature of logico-scientific proposition and rather sees it as the actuality of a given state of affairs or “disclosedness.” For Heidegger, logical or scientific accounts of truth are based on an ontology of being as presence. While we understand truth in this way, we are left with philosophical questions about how to explain the relationship between an object and the perceiving subject. With recourse to Husserlian intentionality, Heidegger begins from a different starting point. He starts with the things themselves. Heidegger’s account of truth is primordial in that it begins with our individual, and naïve perception of this particular object. In this way, Heidegger appears to shift the philosophical emphasis from linguistic propositions to the actuality of states of affairs. As this thesis is concerned with poetry, we must ask how we are to understand the role of language, especially poetic language, in this picture, given this turn from propositions to actuality. In the next chapter, we turn our attention to Heidegger’s account of language.
Chapter 2: Language

2.1 Language and Philosophy

An understanding of poetry requires an understanding of language. Language has long been of interest to philosophers, but this interest became particularly focused throughout the twentieth century. Anglo-American philosophers, in particular, started to see long-standing philosophical problems as simple problems of language. As we will see, Heidegger’s account of language lies outside this linguistic turn in twentieth century philosophy. Heidegger, for his part, attempts to rethink language, and to free it from its metaphysical limitations. In contrast to analytic philosophy, Heidegger argues that a true understanding of language requires poetry, and it is our long held metaphysical biases that blind us to this point.

As the twentieth century progressed language becomes one of the most important philosophical topics. This relatively recent development is, in part, a response to the dominance of science within philosophy since the time of Newton, or even Galileo. Philosophy, as we saw in the previous chapter, became the handmaiden of science, its main task became simply to buttress scientific methodology or to provide ‘underpinnings’. Scientific methodology is based on a mechanical model of nature where universal physical laws can be captured in mathematical models. Human experience was displaced as the starting point for gaining knowledge about the world. Rather, scientific knowledge becomes a question of isolating statements, or logically precise propositions that are cleansed of the ambiguity of natural languages. This thinking reached its apex, in the twentieth century with the Vienna Circle, and the attempt to create an ideal language that would not only service science, but also rid philosophy of many of its enduring problems, which are, by this time, characterized as problems of language use or misuse. For example, Russell’s Logical Atomism contains both a methodology and a metaphysical framework. The world is viewed as composed of simple discrete entities or atoms that are somehow
combined to form complex states of affairs. By linking each atom to a word, a logically ideal language can be formed. Such a language will dissolve the problems of metaphysics, as it is traditionally construed. These problems are seen as a result of messy natural languages, laden with metaphors and other ambiguities. It is these linguistic ambiguities that lead philosophy into error. Famously, the logical atomist and logical positivist projects ended in failure for a number of reasons not least of which is inability to rid language of its metaphorical content.¹

In the face of this failure, twentieth century philosophy turns back to an analysis of ‘natural’ languages. This movement can be witnessed succinctly in terms of Wittgenstein’s two seminal works the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* and *The Philosophical Investigations*. The desire to map the world with an unambiguous point-to-point language gives way to the idea that meanings can only be understood in terms of the language game in which they are used.

### 2.2. Central Themes of Heidegger’s Philosophy of Language

While Heidegger is writing outside this historico-philosophical story, he also moves increasingly towards language in his later work. After *Being and Time* there is a shift in Heidegger's thinking that is known as the “Turn” or *die Kehre* as Heidegger himself calls it. This turn can be seen as a “turn around,” and it happens sometime between 1930 and 1933. Although there is much debate among Heideggerian scholars as to when the turn actually happens and what it means. What is clear is that by the time Heidegger is writing the *The Origin of the Work of Art* (1935-6) he is doing something quite different from *Being and Time*. This turn in Heidegger's thinking is associated with language in two important ways. First of all, Heidegger’s philosophy becomes profoundly concerned with language and, second his own language use changes. The writing of the Later Heidegger is famously difficult. His language becomes

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¹ Soames 2010
poetic and complex, and is often described as ‘elliptical.’ As we have seen in the first chapter, Heidegger holds that art is truth and poetry is paradigmatic of art precisely because it is language based. It is little wonder then that Heidegger’s own style should tend towards the poetic.

Heidegger discusses language in a number of texts. We will begin by considering, The Way to Language, In this essay, Heidegger employs a novel approach. In order to understand language, he tells us, we must take a journey towards it. This journey is intended to culminate in some sort of experience with language. The essay itself serves as road map leading to this experience. The journey begins by acknowledging the difficulties inherent in understanding language. While these difficulties are generally acknowledged by philosophers, and other language theorists yet, they are often sidestepped quickly in the rush to explain language by recourse to something else. The difficulties inherent in explaining language cannot be dismissed so easily, and it is Heidegger's intention to fully acknowledge them. Rather than rush to a solution, he wonders whether these difficulties can be surmounted at all. Central to these problems is banal fact, that in order to understand language we have to use language. Heidegger tells us that we need to face these facts head on. We cannot simply trying to find a way to sidesteps these difficulties. We need to face them squarely, and then find a way to experience language in terms of them. Of course, the idea of a journey towards language is metaphorical from the start, but as we will see in the next chapter, Heidegger would disagree with the assertion that this is a metaphorical move towards language. Notwithstanding, the status of the metaphorical language, Heidegger asks us how can we find a way towards language, if we are already squarely located within it? We already possess language, yet the ability to use language is not simply, one human ability among others. It is this ability, according to Heidegger, that makes us human: It is the “foundation of the human being.” We do not begin at a distance from language, rather we are always already within language. Heidegger asks;

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2 Heidegger, 1959
3 Heidegger, 1959 p.112
“But are we at that point?” Are we too caught up in language? Is it possible to understand the nature of language from where we are, immersed in language?

Heidegger wants to understand language not as something ready-to-hand but rather language as language. The essay uses a number of what Heidegger calls “guidelines,” designed to bring us to an understanding. The initial formulation of the guideline is “to speak about speech qua speech.” Heidegger points out that words relating to speech occur three times within the guideline and yet they mean different things each time, but they are also the Same (das Selbe). The motif of sameness is a recurring theme in the middle and later periods of Heidegger’s writing. It is generally capitalized, in English translations, in order to capture Heidegger’s distinctive, sometimes counterintuitive, usage. For example, Heidegger claims that metalinguistics and rocket technology are the Same and that technology and science are the Same. Clearly, he is not using either or both terms an ordinary, everyday sense. In this particular context, Sameness, Heidegger contends is the “distinctive property of language.” We can understand it in terms of ‘oneness.’ The guideline points us to a ‘web of relations’ that we are a part of. We cannot simply acknowledge the web and carry on regardless. We have to ‘loosen’ it. Heidegger says, “[p]erhaps there is a bond running through the web which, in a way remains strange, unbinds and delivers language into its own. The point is to experience the unbinding bond within the web of language.” Heidegger is talking about the possibility of a new understanding of language, one which he claims perhaps unfairly, has been missed by all other theorist of language. This understanding seems inherently metaphorical.

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4 Ibid.
5 White, 1980
6 I will further elaborate on this in Chapter 5.
7 White, 1980
8 Heidegger, 1959 p.113
2.3. Language as Showing

Heidegger characterizes language first as speaking, or as articulated sound, though as Nowell Smith\(^9\) emphasizes, Heidegger’s account also includes all non-verbal articulations. His starting point is the human body, and the organs of speech. Though this may seem like a departure from many philosophies of language, the connection between language and speech organs is one that is evident in words and phrases such “mother tongue” or “lingo.” Heidegger notes that Aristotle begins his account at a similar point. Quoting his own translation of Aristotle from ‘On Interpretation’:

Now, what (takes place) in the making of vocal sounds is a show of what there is in the soul in the way of passions, and what is written is a show of the vocal sounds. And just as writing is not the same among all (men), so also the vocal sounds are not the same. On the other hand, those things of which these (sounds and writings) are a show in the first place, are among all (men) the same passions of the soul, and the matters of which these (the passions) give likening representations are also the same.\(^{10}\)

Heidegger’s translation links semia (that which shows), symbola (that which holds to each other), and homoiomata (that which likens) in terms of showing. Language is essentially concerned with showing in the sense of aletheia. “In various ways, disclosing or disguising, Showing makes something come to light, lets what has come to light be perceived, and lets the perception be examined.”\(^{11}\) It is Heidegger’s contention that the link between the showing, and what it is that is shown is not fully acknowledged or developed by the Greeks, and then lost altogether in subsequent philosophy of language. Instead, theories of language become focused on explaining the relationship between signs and signifiers. This is still the basis of modern semiotics. If we accept Heidegger’s account, then this shift away from notion of language as showing, radically

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\(^9\) Nowell Smith, 2013
\(^{10}\) Heidegger, 1959 p.113
\(^{11}\) Ibid.
changes the way language is understood and it has far reaching ontological implications.

2.4. Showing as Saying

Though Heidegger begins with the act of speaking, he quickly distinguishes speaking from Saying. As we have seen, speaking is a vocalization, and a human activity, but we cannot understand it simple in terms of these. Rather, Heidegger notices that we can only talk about these characteristics insofar as they make an appearance, because something has been said. Saying, unlike speaking, means to show. He says,

to speak to one another means: to say something, show something to one another, and to entrust one another mutually to what is shown. To speak with one another means: to tell of something jointly, to show to one another what that which is claimed in the speaking says in the speaking, and what it, of itself, brings to light. What is unspoken is not merely something that lacks voice, it is what remains unsaid, what is not yet shown, what has not yet reached appearance. That which must remain wholly unspoken is held back in the unsaid, abides in concealment as unshowable, is mystery. That which is spoken to us speaks as dictum in the sense of something imparted, something whose speaking does not even require to be sounded.\(^\text{12}\)

In different ways, the spoken comes from the unspoken; what is shown comes from unconcealment. This alethic showing unifies the different aspects of language. It is the ‘peculiar characteristic’ by which we must first understand language. Echoing the passage in *Being and Time* where Heidegger discusses idle talk, curiosity and ambiguity, language is related to truth, and the different modes of being “in truth.” Even in idle talk, there is still the understanding that is essential to disclosure and therefore truth, but this disclosure is fallen. As Heidegger puts it “Being towards the entities has not been extinguished, but it has been uprooted.”\(^\text{13}\) In such a case, the disguised entities show themselves in

\(^{12}\) Heidegger, 1959 p.113

\(^{13}\) Heidegger, 1963 p. 211
the mode of semblance where the entity is not disclosed authentically by my own Dasein but it is disclosed by the ‘they’ in idle talk.

The fact that Saying comes from the unspoken leads to the mistaken belief that language is somehow separate from its speakers and their concerns. This mistake leads to the objectification of language. Heidegger is emphatic; the spoken is what allows speakers to attend to their concerns. In this way, we cannot separate language from its purpose, which is to say.

2.5. Design

As we have seen, Heidegger’s account is not only concerned with leading us to an experience with language, he also shows us how we continually fall into error. We don’t just miss the point we have an inbuilt tendency to miss the point, and this understanding is an essential part of getting to grips with language. There is something about language that conceals itself and thwarts our efforts to bring it to light. Missing the point, here, means failing to, “see directly the unifying unity of the being of language.”\(^{14}\) In fact, there is no name for this unifying unity because we continually miss it. “The traditional names for what we have in mind under the rubric “language” indicate this unity always only in terms of one or another of the aspects which the being of language has to offer.”\(^{15}\) Heidegger calls this unity “design,” linking it to the idea of the ‘sign’ in design or to “secare,” to cut. “To design is to cut a trace.”\(^{16}\) This is not our usual understanding of the word sign, but rather it is derived from his account of its etymology. According to Heidegger, we make a sign when we cut a furrow in the soil to “open it to seed and growth.”\(^{17}\) The thing that unifies the parts of language, so that we can understand language, as language is design. Design is that which opens up a furrow. “The design is the drawing of the being of language, the structure of a show in which are joined the speakers and their

\(^{14}\) Heidegger, 1959 p.121  
\(^{15}\) Ibid.  
\(^{16}\) Ibid.  
\(^{17}\) Ibid.
speaking.”\textsuperscript{18} The nature of language is, then, associated with its ability to cut its own furrow into whatever soil is the concern of the speaker.

\textbf{2.6. Language as Showing}

The essential being of language is Saying as showing.\textsuperscript{19} So the design of language is to be thought of in terms Saying as showing, but not in terms of signs in the traditional sense. Language in its essence is not a system of signs. Saying as showing comes before signs and it is this, that is essential here. As Heidegger puts it “all signs arise from a showing within whose realm and for whose purpose they can be signs.”\textsuperscript{20} So to see language as a system of signs is to overlook the fact that this showing must happen first. Building a system of signs can only happen once language is already established, as that which shows.

It is important to note that this does not mean that showing is an “exclusively, or even decisively, the property of human activity.”\textsuperscript{21} This is a complex idea, but we can understand it in this way. Language is Saying as showing, but not all showing is saying. What shows itself is always “self-shown appearance.” “Self-showing appearance is the mark of the presence and absence of everything that is present, of every kind and rank.”\textsuperscript{22} Even when Saying brings showing, there is something that precedes this showing. This is an “indication that it will let itself be shown.”\textsuperscript{23} How are we to understand this “indication?” At first sight, we could see it as simply as a disclaimer against the idea that the world is a linguistic construct; it points to Heidegger’s unique ontology. We are always in relation with entities in the world. Sometimes this relation is expressed in terms of the saying of language, but not always. Sometimes entities demand from us in another way. They show \textit{themselves}. Like language this self-showing is relational or dialogical in some sense.

\textsuperscript{18} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{19} Heidegger, 1959 p.123
\textsuperscript{20} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{21} Heidegger, 1959 p.123
\textsuperscript{22} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{23} Ibid.
2.7. Speaking and Listening

Heidegger tells us that we only speak by way of language. While this seems obvious and trivial, it shows us that language is prior to speaking, and because of this speaking is, first and foremost, a listening to language. Again, this points to a complex ontological picture. When we speak, we are first and foremost, listening to the language. This listening is prior all other listening. Before any particular linguistic act, we first hear the language speaking. Because language is showing, it defines the parameters of what can be spoken; it shows what can be spoken, in this way, it shows us the world. “Language speaks in that it, as showing, reaching into all regions of presences, summons from them whatever is present to appear and to fade.”24 When we listen to language, “we let it say its Saying to us.” 25 “All perception and conception is already contained”26 in this saying of language. The full implications of Heidegger’s account become clear: His position goes far beyond the idea that, when we speak, we are merely drawing on a pool of accepted linguistic practices. A language is not simply a collection of words, and associated grammatical rules. It is also the categorial saturation of all perception and conception. It is this that allows Heidegger to maintain that language, itself, shows.

In this way, Heidegger maintains that showing comes before perception. We, as a group of language users belong within the language, and for this reason, we hear the Saying of that language. “Saying grants the hearing, and thus the speaking, of language solely to those who belong within it:”27 This is the essence of language. How are we to understand the relationship between our Saying and the Saying of language, or rather how are we to understand what separates them? Rather enigmatically, Heidegger asks of the Saying of language, “[i]s it separated from our speaking, something to which we must first build a bridge? Or is Saying the stream of stillness which in forming them joins its own two

25 Ibid.
26 Ibid.
banks—the Saying and our Saying after it?” Heidegger’s point here is that while language “remains unmistakably bound up with human speaking,” it is not exhausted in this. Heidegger presents a two-part picture of language, our speaking, the language, and some sort of bond between them. Again, this seems metaphorical, but Heidegger is attempting to understand this bond between the elements of language in a new way. This elegant move accounts for the fact that though language is only manifest in speaking it is also prior to speaking. In some ways, it seems to have more control over us, in that our ability to express anything is limited by it. “Language needs human speaking, and yet it is not merely of the making or at the command of our speech activity.”

Given this Heidegger asks again on what does the being of language rest?

### 2.8. Owning

The contention that language is Saying as showing does not provide us with the necessary experience with language. We still are not on the way to language, though we are told that; “the way to speaking is present within language itself.” We are looking for something that is concealed from us; something that accounts for the difficulty philosophers have with when they attempt to conceptualize language. This “peculiarity,” “conceals itself in the way in which Saying allows those who listen to it to reach language.” This concealment is associated with our belonging to language. It is this belonging that “contains the actual presence of the way to language.”

“*The moving force in Showing of Saying is Owning.*” Owning, Heidegger tells us, is what brings everything that is present and absent in to their own; “from where they show themselves.”

We can understand Showing in terms of “Appropriation.” Appropriation “yields the opening of the clearing in which

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28 Heidegger, 1959 p.124-125
29 Heidegger, 1959 p.125
30 Heidegger, 1959 p.125
31 Heidegger, 1959 p.126
32 Ibid.
33 Heidegger, 1959 p.127
34 Ibid.
present beings can persist and from which absent beings can depart, while keeping their persistence in the withdrawal.”  

Again, we are brought before the Heidegger’s ontology of concealment and unconcealment. What is appropriated is Shown by Saying. Appropriation is, “the giving yield whose giving reach alone is what gives us such things as a “there is,” a “there is of which even Being itself stands in need to come into its own as presence.” There is something paradoxical about this view of Appropriation as a giving. What does this Appropriation give us? It gives us a “there is.” or the ‘es gibt.’ The Appropriation that motivates Showing gives us the ‘there is’ by which everything else is given to us; it clears an opening. Language clears the opening in which beings are. This is how we are to understand language. “Appropriation assembles the design of Saying and unfolds it into the structure of manifold Showing. It is the most inconspicuous of inconspicuous phenomena” It’s so inconspicuous, that we continually miss it. Language clears the opening in which beings appear, but in this clearing, language conceals its own role in this function, so that we cannot apprehend it in this respect.

However, as Heidegger points out, there are some verses in Goethe’s poetry that seem to capture the idea by using the word “own” in a meaning that it close to “showing itself.” It is the poet, rather than the philosopher, who catches the truth of language so we see that the poet is able to see beyond the concealment of language. In fact, Heidegger’s philosophical awareness, depends on poetic ability to see beyond the philosopher’s tendency to miss the point.

“Appropriation grants to mortals their abode within their nature, so that they may be capable of being those who speak.” Appropriation is what allows us to be human; it is what lets us speak. “Because showing of Saying is appropriating, therefore the ability to listen to Saying-our belonging to it- also lies in

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36 Ibid.
37 Heidegger, 1959 p.128
38 Heidegger, 1959 p.128
Appropriation.” We have seen that Saying is showing, and that this is appropriating. We have also seen how speaking is a listening to the language we belong to. It follows that listening is also an appropriation. This idea changes our understanding of our relationship to language. When we speak we are always answering language. Appropriation is linked intimately to human nature. It makes mortals appropriate for what is encountered in Saying. “Appropriation, needing and using man’s appropriation, allows Saying to reach speech.” The structure of Saying is appropriative, appropriation uses man’s appropriation to let Saying be spoken. Heidegger says, “They way to language belongs to Saying determined by Appropriation. Within this way, which belongs to the reality of language, the peculiar property of language is concealed. The way is appropriating.”

2.9. Way Making

The Swabian dialect contains the word “wëgen” a verb meaning to clear a way or a path, as one clears a way through the snow. To get to the nature of language, we do not travel along a pre-existing path; we have to clear a way. As we accompany Heidegger on his way to language, we have been following the path, he has cleared before us. He says, “way-making...means to bring the way...forth first of all and thus to be the way.” Appropriation appropriates man to its own usage” this is how language works it makes paths that are appropriate to the their usage. Showing as appropriation thus transpires and Appropriation is the way making for Saying to come into language.”

The way is made by Showing as Appropriation. We began by thinking that there could be a progression of our thinking that would lead us to a destination. Now everything has changed. The path is being cleared as we walk along it.

39 Heidegger, 1959 p.129
40 Ibid.
41 Ibid.
42 Heidegger, 1959 p.130
“Language, thus delivered into its own freedom, can be concerned solely with itself.” The bond that binds the elements of language is concerned with freedom. What sort of thing does this make language? Does it make it something that is concerned only with itself? No, “language does not insist upon itself alone in the sense of a purely self-seeking, all oblivious self-admiration. As Saying, the nature of language is appropriating showing which disregards precisely itself, in order to free that which is shown, to authentic appearance.” Language disregards itself in order to free what is shown. Language is free, but its freedom is a freedom to authentically show what is shown: To do this is must disregard itself. This is why it is difficult for language to show itself or to be understood.

Language, which speaks by saying, is concerned that our speaking, in listening to the unspoken, corresponds to what is said. Thus silence, too, which is often regarded as the source of speaking, is itself already a corresponding. Silence corresponds to the soundless tolling of the stillness of appropriating-showing Saying. As Showing, Saying, which consists in the Appropriation, is the most proper mode of Appropriating. Appropriating is by way of saying. Accordingly, language always speaks according to the mode in which the appropriation as such reveals or withdraws.

2.10 Language and Poetry

Given this account of language, how are we to understand the essence of poetry and how it relates to language? Heidegger gives language a rich and active role in human affairs; it is language that distinguishes humans from animals. Man is that which can attest to his own existence, and it is only language makes this possible. However, language is also “the most dangerous of goods,” and this is because it is that which “first creates the possibility of danger.” We come to

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43 Heidegger, 1959 p.131
44 Ibid.
45 Heidegger, 1959 p.131
46 Heidegger, 1972 p. 55
47 Ibid.
understand the importance of language, in Heidegger’s picture, when we read, “it is only by virtue of language that man is exposed to something manifest.”

Language manifests beings, and then preserves them, particularly “in the linguistic work.” The linguistic work has a particular role in this making manifest of beings. Such a view is obviously contrary to aesthetic accounts of poetry.

As we have seen for Heidegger, language is a complex phenomenon. Language does not manifest beings in a uniform way. Language can be authentic or inauthentic; it can be essential or inessential. In Being in Time, Heidegger distinguishes between hearsay, idle talk, curiosity and ambiguity. These categories demonstrate different ways that language is related to truth or different modes of being in truth. In later work, Heidegger’s focus is on poetry. Great poetry, especially the poetry of Hölderlin is viewed as the most essential use of language. It is possible, therefore, to roughly sketch a hierarchy of language use within Heidegger’s account, where Hölderlin’s, poetry occupies a very high position because of its essential use of language. Heidegger uses a sequence of fragments, from Hölderlin, to show the relationship between poetry, language, and truth. Great poetry un conceals essential truth, Heidegger’s philosophical explanation must begin with poetry in order to gain access to this truth.

However, while Hölderlin is the highest source of truth for “mortal s,” Hölderlin is himself listening to something higher. Quoting one fragment, Heidegger claims that “the first-fruits and not for mortals...they belong to the Gods.” This first fruit of language is the most pure or essential unconcealment of being; it is beyond human. We can, perhaps, understand it in term of the categorial saturation of reality, or in terms of the unspoken from which the spoken

48 Heidegger, 1972 p. 55
49 ibid.
50 ibid.
51 It is worth noting here that ‘the Gods’ cannot be understood from within metaphysics. Later on in the essay, we are told that the appearance of the Gods is not a consequence of language but rather is simultaneous with it. The Gods in this picture are not metaphysical entities prior to language.
emerges. What is clear is that is difficult to describe this pure unconcealment in unmetaphorical terms. However, it is related to the manner in which things are unconcealed and thus to Being. Below this, in our hierarchy, there is Hölderlin. Hölderlin is the poet’s poet because his poetry concerns poetry itself. For this reason, it is the most essential language use available to ‘we moderns’. Poetry that concerns poetry deals, again with the unconcealment of Being, rather than just of particular beings; it concerns the unconcealment of language itself. We are told that “[w]hat supports and dominates beings as a whole must come into the open.”\textsuperscript{52} The more essential the language, the more it resists the inherent tendency to conceal the unconcealment itself. “The poet names the gods and names all things with respect to what they are.”\textsuperscript{53} It is clear, that this account is far removed from any account of language, which links words to a pre-existing, pre-known, or pre-manifested reality. It is the essential word of the poet that “first nominates the beings as what they are.”\textsuperscript{54} Things become known as beings; it in this naming that they become manifest. Language is inherently creative, but creative, in this context, goes far beyond what we usually mean by the term, it is the ‘how reality is manifested’ that is created. “[T]he essence of things can never be calculated and derived from what is present at hand, they must be freely created, posited, and bestowed. Such a free bestowal is a founding.”\textsuperscript{55} Poetry founds the manifestness of beings, but does not simple conjure up beings but rather it responds to the pure unconcealment that Hölderlin calls the “first fruit.”

Below the level of great poetry are progressively less essential uses of language, at these levels, the manner of language’s unconcealment is concealed so that it just the subject matter that is shown in some relation to truth. Below this is the realm of the common and deception, where the things themselves are concealed or shown as in the mode of hearsay. Somewhere in the middle of this scale is the sort of language used in this thesis. This language serves as an adequate vehicle of meaning. It communicates in such a way that the ideas presented

\textsuperscript{52} Heidegger, 1972 p. 58
\textsuperscript{53} Heidegger, 1972, p. 59
\textsuperscript{54} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{55} Ibid.
here are allowed to come forward. This coming forward is facilitated by the very withdrawal of language. In this way, this language is not essential, because it does not bring language itself into the open but neither is it completely inessential, to the point that it deceives or brings non-beings into the open.

However, it is not always clear to us whether a given piece of language is essential or not. At every level of the hierarchy there is the possibility of being deceived. “The pure and the common are both equally something said. The word as word never offers any immediate guarantee as to whether it is an essential word or a deception.” However, because the most essential use of language is poetic, we read the nature of language from poetry and not the other way around. Despite this, we must acknowledge that even poetic language contains within it the tendency to deceive that is inherent to the structure of language. As in the account of truth, in the previous chapter, there is no sure or final way to arbitrate between truth and falsity. Language can both reveal and reveal in mode of deception, but there is nothing accessible to us ‘beyond’ language that allows us to check or measure in the sense of a correspondence with an already manifest reality.

Heidegger relates language to metaphysics. He wants to show how great poetry uses language without falling into the objectifying tendencies that he claims are inherent within metaphysics. Heidegger’s interest in poetry is primarily philosophical i.e. he is concerned with how poetry discloses something essential about human reality rather than poetry criticism per se. As we have seen, the turn in Heidegger’s thought is a turn towards language, especially poetic language. Commentators differ about how to characterize the turn. Some, such as Richardson, see it as demarcating two entirely different projects, while others, such as Sheehan, see a continuation and development between the earlier and later works. Notwithstanding these different approaches, it is clear, in the later work, Heidegger abandons the methodological approach of Being

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56 Heidegger, 1972 p. 55
57 Heidegger, 1972, p. 60
58 Richardson, 1967
59 Sheehan, 2014
and Time with its focus on formal indication, and moves towards poetry. While a methodological comparison between the early and later Heidegger is beyond what we can accomplish here, it is worth noting that as Dan Dahlstrom points out, “the obvious similarities between Heidegger’s characterization of philosophical concepts as “formal indications” and the nature of certain artistic compositions. Much as in a script or a score-in contrast to a sketch- something is expressed or formulated but in such a way that what it is can only be realized by being performed.” Moreover, as Babette Babich notes, “in his closing reflections in Introduction to Metaphysics where he tells us that Being and Time is no book but much rather a task to be fulfilled.” Babich also views this as evidence of continuity between the early and later Heidegger.

The formal indications of Being and Time, represent a methodological attempt to overcome the objectifying tendencies of science, where ‘science’ is broadly construed as a body of knowledge, which explains some aspect of reality in terms of theoretical assertions. Dahlstrom maintains, “[s]uch assertions are central to the way that a science entertains and investigates its objects. It does not matter whether the science be mathematics or theology, physics or psychology, or whether it be theoretical or practical.” Formal indications differ from the theoretical assertions of traditional sciences in two main ways. Firstly, they are provisional in that they point towards an understanding that has to carried out by the reader herself. “Thus, Sein und Zeit is not the depiction of some fact (Sachverhalt), but rather an indication of a way of approaching what "to be" means.” Secondly, they “invert the normal perspective and way of posing questions, namely, away from particular beings toward the generally unspoken and unexamined horizon within which they are respectively encountered and have the manner of being that they do.” In this way, formal indications are concerned with what is formally indicated and the manner in which it comes to be and, in this way, they resist the objectifying tendency or

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60 Dahlstrom, 1994 p. 790
61 Babich, 2003 p.163
62 Dahlstrom, 1994 p. 778
63 Dahlstrom, 1994 p. 782
64 Dahlstrom, 1994 p. 786
scientific language particularly and language generally. “[W]hat is "formally indicated or signalled" is not given as something already complete and understandable through comparison, contrast, and classification; instead, what is "formally indicated" is understandable only insofar as the philosopher performs or carries out some activity himself."65

One way to understand the difference between the methodology of formal indications in Being and Time and the use of poetic language in the later work is to see the later works as a direct performance of the matter under consideration, rather than as a 'score' to be performed by the reader. If we accept this, then the difference between the earlier and the later works is that the earlier works are a score, whereas the later works are a performance. In The Way to Language, we actually accompany Heidegger on path towards our destination, which is language. To understand language, we must have an experience with it, and Heidegger guides us towards this experience by providing a sequence of ‘guidewords.’ If this journey is successful, we reach the destination, along with Heidegger.

Working backward, the shift from formal indications to poetic language can be viewed in metaphorical terms, that allow us to see clearly what is unique about poetry as an art form. The poem allows the reader or listener to directly inhabit the subject matter of the poem. A poem is not a description of an experience or something ready-to-hand, but rather it is the experience. We could argue that what is unique is poetry’s immediacy. I, the reader or listener, am brought along on an experience. Though it is not my experience, the poem allows me direct access to the experience of the poet.

The role of the reader, in this account, is crucial. As we saw in Chapter 1, great art is preserved. In this way, great poetry is a founding that is preserved. But because being and the essence of things can never be calculated and derived from what is present and hand, they must be freely created, posited, and bestowed. Such a free bestowal is a founding. A significant consequence of this

65 Dahlstrom, 1994 p. 784
is that Heidegger’s account is not set in stone. As we will see, in the last three chapters, poetry’s founding ability are subject to the metaphysical tendencies of the time. In our time, this is the influence of technology. Heidegger shows that the manner in which language and truth are related plays a role in determining metaphysics. For example, in the Contributions we are told “all essential titles have become impossible on account of the exhaustion of every basic word and the destruction of the genuine relation to words.”

2.11 Conclusion

For now, we can note that, for the later Heidegger, language, especially poetic language is granted an importance that is denied in any account, which views language as a system of signs and signifiers. At the heart of Heidegger’s account is the idea that freedom is the basis of language. Language disregards itself in order to free what is shown. In this disregard of itself, language can show in many ways. It has the freedom to be inauthentic or inessential. Thus, language can operate, as it is held to operate in conventional accounts of language with their metaphysical presuppositions: It can operate as if it were based on a system of signs and signifiers. If we understand language as something that is in correspondence with a pre-manifest reality; then language can operate inauthentically in this way. This notion chimes with Heidegger’s critique of scientific evidence in the previous chapter. Heidegger maintains that there can be no privileged perception to which our scientific propositions refer to i.e. there is no substantial difference between the proposition being tested and the proposition that it is tested against. However, science proceeds, precisely, by holding that there is a difference. In the same way, philosophers of language can maintain that language refers to a pre-manifest reality, and given the freedom of language, language can be that which does exactly this. However, if we are to take Heidegger seriously, then we must accept that this prior reality can only become manifest through language. In this way, metaphysics “decides” how language is understood, and language decides how metaphysics is understood.

66 Heidegger, 2012 p. 5
If we understand language, as a collection of signs that relate to a pre-existing reality then, poetry is not linked to the essence of language, and it becomes at best trivial and at worst a distortion of language. Another way to examines this territory is to consider the metaphorical, which is what we will do in the next chapter.
Chapter 3. Metaphor

3.1. Introduction: Philosophy and Metaphor

As we have seen in the previous chapter, Heidegger holds, that an understanding of language presupposes an understanding of poetry. This is because poetry, at least when it is great, is the most authentic language use. This Heideggerian view can be contrasted with aesthetic views, which tend to view poetry as a sort of deviation of everyday language. Poetry is language that is made more beautiful by use of metaphor and other tropes. The critical force of Heidegger’s account of language is clearly demonstrated in his understanding of metaphor. Rather than viewing metaphor as a decorative flourish to everyday language, Heidegger sees it as the line that demarcates the literal and the figurative, and therefore, the very engine of metaphysics. In this way, Heidegger’s account stand in stark opposition to some contemporaneous account of metaphor, which viewed metaphor as entirely dispensable. Indeed, as we have seen, in the early twentieth century, the logical atomists attempted to create a pure, literal language by ridding natural languages of metaphor. However, the failure of this project, has meant that analytic philosophy has had little choice but to make peace with metaphor. Max Black’s seminal 1969 article *Metaphor* is one expression of this peace. Black replaces the dominant substitution and comparison views with an interactive view.

Both the substitution and the comparison view are consistent with the positivist view, which privileges literal language. The substitution view holds that a metaphorical expression is used as a substitute for some literal term. The meaning of the expression can be grasped by switching back the metaphorical term for the literal one. As Black points out, the substitution view regards the metaphor as a sort of puzzle, which is solved once the literal meaning is grasped.\(^1\) From the substitution view, the metaphor is used for one of two

\(^1\) Black, 1955 p. 280
reasons. The first is stylistic and the second is catachresis where a metaphorical term is introduced to make up for a gap in language.

The comparison view, generally traced back to Aristotle, can be seen as a special case of the substitution view. It also holds that a literal term is swapped for a metaphorical one, but this view attempts to give an account of how the two terms are related. In this way it provides a sort of rule for understanding metaphor. The two terms are linked to each other in that they are similar or analogous to each other. When we read ‘Richard is a lion,’ we take it to mean that Richard is a lion (in that he is brave), the bracketed words are implied, but not stated by the metaphor. In this way, the comparison view can be seen as providing a way to solve the metaphorical puzzle. In both these views, the metaphor is essentially dispensable because a literal translation can always be found except, perhaps, in cases of catachresis. Black’s interactive view holds that metaphors are not ‘props for feeble minds,’ they cannot be paraphrased away and, in the case of strong metaphors, they are indispensable. Black, however, concedes something to the mystery of metaphor. He holds that we cannot say in advance what the effect of the metaphor will be; we cannot predict or control interaction of the two domains. However, the literal/figurative distinction that underlies metaphor is still accepted. So, while, metaphor enjoys a philosophical revival, it stays located squarely in the realm of the figurative. For example, philosophers of science may accept that scientific models are metaphoric, but they tend to confine this metaphoricity to the realm of discovery: metaphorical models begin as imaginary devices, but once tested they advance towards ontological commitment. Outside of the realm of science, we can think of this in terms of ‘dead’ and ‘live’ metaphors. Once a metaphor ‘dies’ it becomes somehow literal, thus maintaining the literal/figurative distinction, albeit in a more ambiguous way. However, if live metaphors can die and become literal, and metaphoric models can advance towards ontological commitment the literal/figurative distinction does seem problematic. The severity of this problem varies according to the theorist considered. We are left

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2 Black, 1955 p. 283
with a situation where, even in analytic philosophy, the conceptual foundations of metaphor are continually challenged yet the concept of metaphor remains meaningful.

The link between metaphor and poetry is obvious, and their fortunes have been linked throughout the history of western philosophy. They have fallen in out of favour together. When the philosophical wind turns against poetry it tends, also, to turn against metaphor. While Heidegger's writing on language is extensive, his entire output on metaphor amounts to little more than a few paragraphs. However, these paragraphs are the focus of considerable attention because what is at stake is the literal/figurative distinction, which is a central tenant of many accounts of language. Heidegger's casual dismissal of metaphor as metaphysics is a strong critique of the division between literal and figurative language. If Heidegger's critique holds, poetry loses much of the metaphysical baggage it has picked up along the way. If there are no grounds to privilege literal language, then we cannot dismiss poetry as merely a decorative use of language. What is more, Heidegger's dismissal of metaphor is not a complete abandonment of the term. He acknowledges that even if we argue against the literal/figurative distinction, it can still make sense to talk of metaphor. It is his contention, that we can analyse bad poetry in terms of metaphor. A bad poet stays within the metaphysical framework, a great poet transcends it. Heidegger acknowledges that, for the most part, poetry is trapped within a metaphysical prison, which prevents the Saying of truth. Thus, there is a criterion of poetry greatness implicit in Heidegger's account of metaphor.

### 3.2 Heidegger's Dismissal of Metaphor

Heidegger's most comprehensive treatment of metaphor is found in lecture 8 of the 1955-56 lecture series, translated into English as the Principle of Reason. Heidegger restates the

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3 Heidegger, 1996
principle in terms of why questions and explanations. A ‘why’ poses a question and a ‘because’ delivers a reason or a ground. The principle of reason is, for Heidegger, the fundamental principle so this ‘why/because’ structure shows us something fundamental about the nature of human cognition. Despite the philosophical import of this discussion, Heidegger immediately points to a poetic example, from Angelus Silesius, that seems to contradict this cognitive architecture. The very fact that Heidegger sees a line of poetry as counter example to Leibniz’s “Principle of Sufficient Reason” already smacks of the metaphorical. The discussion advances until Heidegger comes to the point that “thinking is a listening that brings something into view.”4 Although, this is by no means the first metaphor in the text, it is this one that Heidegger comments on in terms of its metaphorical status.

Yet we are quick on the draw in explaining that thinking can be called a hearing and seeing only in a figurative sense. No doubt. What one listens to and brings into view in thinking cannot be heard with our ears nor seen with our eyes. It is not perceivable by our sense organs. If we take thinking to be a sort of hearing and seeing, then sensible hearing and seeing is taken up and over into the realm of nonsensible perception, that is, of thinking. In Greek such transposing is called μεταφέρειν. The language of the scholar’s names such a carrying over “metaphor.” So, thinking may be called a hearing and a listening, a viewing and a bringing into view only in a metaphorical, figurative sense. Who says, “may” here? Those who assert that hearing with the ears and seeing with the eyes is genuine hearing and seeing.5

Heidegger’s denial of metaphor is disarmingly simple. To consider the phrase “thinking as a hearing” as a metaphor is to ignore the fact that hearing is not simply a function of the ear. “Of course, we hear through the ear, but not with the ear.”6 As Heidegger points out, even a deaf person can hear. It is not our ears that hear the “the titmouse or the lark.”7 Similarly, it is not the eyes that see “Apollo in the statue of a young man.”8 This seemingly innocuous little passage

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4 Heidegger, 1996 p. 47
5 Ibid.
6 Ibid.
7 Ibid.
8 Heidegger, 1996 p. 48
amounts to a powerful attempt to overturn one of the central tenets of Western philosophy. Heidegger’s discussion of the ‘thinking metaphor’ attempts to illustrate the artificiality of any literal/figurative distinction.

The ‘thinking metaphor’ demonstrates the artificiality of splitting language into sensuous or non-sensuous realms. However, it is not this structural feature of metaphor that Heidegger concentrates on initially. Metaphor is also characterized in terms of the similarity or “likeness” between the two realms joined in the metaphor. “There was a thought familiar to the old Greek thinkers, a thought that one all too crudely portrays thus: like is only known through like. What is meant here is that what speaks to us only becomes perceivable through our response.”9 Thus, we can isolate two feature of metaphor that are salient to Heidegger’s account: First, that a metaphor involves a transposing between two categories of language and second, that it involves structural similarity. This structural similarity becomes known through our response to it. Again, Heidegger uses a line of poetry to illustrate his point, Goethe’s this time.

Were not the eye a thing of sun,
How could we even glimpse the light?10

Heidegger hints towards another understanding of metaphor that is obfuscated for us by the need to prioritize one part of language over another. “It seems,” we are told, “that up till today we have not yet sufficiently pondered what the sunliness of the eye consists of”11 But given the seeming metaphorical saturation of Heidegger’s own text and his complete rejection of the sensible/nonsensible distinction, we see that Heidegger intends to make up for this deficit. Heidegger’s rejection of metaphor is a rejection of the distinction between the sensible and the non-sensible, but also the way in which we understand or characterize metaphors. In the normal understanding, it is precisely instances of metaphor that demarcate the boundaries between the

9 Heidegger, 1996 p. 48
10 Heidegger, 1996 p. 48
11 Heidegger, 1996 p. 48
sensible and the nonsensible or the literal and the figurative. It is the very act of categorizing a statement as a metaphor that allows us to decide what is figurative, and therefore what is literal. This notion, and thus the importance of being able to classify some statements as metaphorical is central to metaphysics.

The idea of “transposing” and of metaphor is based upon the distinguishing, if not the complete separation, of the sensible and the nonsensible as two realms that subsist on their own. The setting up of this partition between the sensible and the nonsensible, between the physical and nonphysical is the basic trait of what is called metaphysics and which normatively determines Western thinking. Metaphysics loses the rank of the normative mode of thinking when one gains the insight that the above-mentioned partitioning of the sensible and the nonsensible is insufficient.12

According to Heidegger, without the sensible/nonsensible distinction, the statement ‘thinking is a listening’ is just as true as the statement ‘thinking is the activity of using your mind to consider something’ which is how thinking is defined in the Cambridge Dictionary.

The fear, for many philosophers, is that without some way of distinguishing between these statements we cannot defend rationality from poetry, or nonsense. Heidegger is telling us that there is nothing qualitatively different between listening and thinking. If we see listening as sensible mode that allows us to hear and then, view thinking as a separate faculty that does not have direct access to the sensible world, we are simply wrong. We do not hear with our ears or see with our eyes. “We hear, not the ear”13

For Heidegger, his discussion of ‘thinking metaphor’ is enough to challenge an entire history of metaphysics, but of course, the question of thinking is one that is contested within this tradition. While it is reasonable to claim that thinking is a hearing what can we say about more obviously poetic incidences of

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12 Heidegger, 1996 p. 48
13 Heidegger, 1996 p. 47
metaphor? Language is “the flower of the mouth”\textsuperscript{14} Heidegger tells us, quoting Hölderlin’s \textit{Germania} in the \textit{Nature of Language}. Again, Heidegger claims we cannot write this off as metaphor; again, he tells us that to do so would be to stay bogged down in metaphysics. If language, especially poetic language, speaks being, then there can be no important distinction between literal and figurative language. To say that ‘language is the flower of the mouth’ is superior, in terms of truth disclosure, to a scientific definitions of language, is to agree, with Heidegger, that the scientific definition objectifies language; rendering it as something present-at-hand, whereas Hölderlin’s poetic utterance speaks the being of language, as it is prior to our attempts to objectify it. Theoretical or scientific propositions relating to language have already removed us from our direct or initial experience of the topic under consideration. Language, in the first instance, is not an object to a subject; it is not something ready-to-hand. To say something true about language, i.e. to speak its being, means we must get beyond the distinctions of metaphysics. Metaphysics conceals language, but Hölderlin’s poetic phrase allows us to approach something about the being or the essence of language.

Without the distinctions of metaphysics, we perhaps, lose the sense of metaphorical term, in this case, ‘flower.’ Hölderlin’s poetic clause may be true in an alethic sense but to see this clause as equal or even superior to the statements of science might erode the sense of what a flower is. In this way, a flower becomes anything that blooms. However, language tends to operate like this anyway, both in poetry and in everyday language. For example, it makes perfect sense to say, of a pregnant woman, for example, “she was blooming.”

\subsection*{3.3 Metaphor and Poetic Greatness}

When Hölderlin calls language the flower of the mouth, he is using the term flower in a non-metaphoric way. If we agree with Heidegger that there is no transposing, how is that we still recognize the phrase as a metaphor? Even in

\textsuperscript{14} Heidegger, 1959 p. 99
the face of a complete dissolution of the sensible/non-sensible divide, we still recognize ‘flower of the mouth’ as an incidence of metaphor. Heidegger gives us one way to make sense of this situation. In the work of Hölderlin, the idea that language is the flower of the mouth is not metaphorical, because there is no linguistic boundary for him to cross. The phrase, “words, like flowers” is not metaphorical but rather “the word is given back into the keeping of the source of its being.”15 When we read such a phrase, we are called upon to hear authentically. The phrase speaks the being of language. What is required to understand it is the “gentle force of the singular and innocent capacity to hear.”16 Furthermore the phrase is not a “creative transformation” that, as Gottfried Benn suggests, “is not a primary statement.”17 However, we can still recognize the distinction between primary and secondary statements in the works of lesser poets. While it is inappropriate to talk about metaphor in relation to Hölderlin’s poetry, it is valid tool in the analysis of lesser poetry. A lesser poet does not speak being, i.e. she does not use essential language, but rather remains within a linguistic framework that in imposed on her. Thus, Heidegger is proposing a two-tier account of metaphor where good poetry transcends the ultimately, arbitrary divisions of language and bad poetry is trapped within them.

In this way, the question of poetic greatness becomes an ontological one. A great poet is not constrained by, or does not recognize, received metaphysical categories, which would prevent the speaking of Being. When Hölderlin describes language as a flower, he is unconcealing something of the essence of language. This cannot happen from within metaphysics because as we have seen, metaphysics makes the nature of language difficult to grasp at best, and at worst, as something ready-to-hand. However, lesser poets operate within this metaphysical framework, and it is appropriate to recognize instances of metaphors within their work because their work operates within the parameters set by the metaphysics of the time.

15 Heidegger, 1972, p. 100
16 Heidegger, 1972, p. 101
17 Heidegger, 1972, p. 100
3.4 Heidegger’s Metaphoricity

As we have seen, even if we agree with Heidegger that language cannot be divided up into categories of primary and secondary meaning, we still recognize incidences of metaphor. Indeed, much of the secondary literature revolves around how the question of how to categorize Heidegger’s own ‘metaphors’ given his rejection of the concept. There is an obvious tension between the fact that much Heidegger’s work, especially the later work, is so seemingly metaphorical, and his almost desultory dismissal of the concept. Derrida, for example, has suggested, “the metaphorical power of the Heideggerian text is richer, more determinant than his thesis on metaphor.” What are we to say about Heidegger’s metaphors, now that the concept has been so thoroughly rejected as metaphysical? Derrida continues to speak about the ‘metaphoricity’ of Heidegger’s work and other theorists, such as Greisch, Ricoeur and Casenave all have attempted to maintain a non-metaphysical concept of metaphor. These attempts all share an assumption that Heidegger’s text is, in fact, metaphorical. But for Heidegger, the problem is not the use of metaphors in a poem or a philosophical text, but rather the characterization of them as metaphors. It is this characterization that prevents us from hearing the text’s saying. Heidegger is particularly concerned with our theoretical treatment of metaphors. However, the fact that most theorists continue to discuss the metaphorical nature of Heidegger’s work, is either because they still need a label for the instances of the trope or, because they reject the notion that Heidegger has discovered a language that ‘speaks being’ in a way that is beyond the scope of metaphysical language. Stellardi, for example claims, “Heidegger’s text is overrun by metaphor. It does not control it: Expelled, metaphor comes back, uninvited, all the time, which would explain the occasional reaction, at times almost violent, of the author and master.” It is perhaps the case that Heidegger fails to overcome metaphysics, but this does not mean that the

18 Nowell Smith 2013, 103
19 Greiche, 1987
20 Ricoeur, 1977
21 Casenave, 1982
22 Nowell Smith 2013, 105
attempt is wrong headed, only that it is difficult or perhaps impossible. But
despite all this, it still makes sense to speak of metaphors, even if we accept
Heidegger’s critique of metaphysics and his insistence that we understand
metaphor (and metaphysics) in terms of a sensible/nonsensible divide, rather
than in terms of the more accepted literal/figurative divide. In the next section
we shall ask how this insistence on the sensible impacts on Heidegger’s account
of metaphor.

3.5 Sensible/Nonsensible versus Literal/Figurative

The analysis of metaphor involves the transposing of something between two
realms that are, in principal, separable. Heidegger says:

The idea of “transposing” and of metaphor is based upon the distinguishing, if
not the complete separation, of the sensible and the nonsensible, between the
physical and nonphysical is a basic trait of what is called metaphysics.23

Heidegger is clear, the distinction here, is one between the physical and the
nonphysical. However, one possible line of argument against Heidegger’s
account of metaphor rests on his insistence of the sensible/nonsensible divide
rather than the more usual literal/figurative divide. Arguably, these distinctions
are not isomorphic and it is worth investigating the effects of their difference on
Heidegger’s account. If it is the case that the sensible/nonsensible distinction
can be viewed as particularly rigid version of the literal/figurative divides we
can ask what effect this has on Heidegger’s account of metaphor, especially in
the face of contemporary accounts. As we have seen, for theorists, such as Black,
metaphors are not simply decorative flourishes that can be paraphrased away.
Black’s account opened the door for a revival of interest in metaphor in modern
philosophy, and the philosophy of science. He was one of the first theorists to
clearly acknowledge the metaphorical nature of scientific models.24 Since then,

23 Heidegger, 1996 p. 48
24 Black, 2019
the metaphorical nature of science has been commented on by Stahl\textsuperscript{25} and Jones,\textsuperscript{26} in the case of physics, and by Mirowski\textsuperscript{27} and McCloskey,\textsuperscript{28} in the case of economics. These accounts are all based on a literal/figurative distinction with some theorists, such as McCloskey, situating all science within the realm of the figurative. What becomes clear in these accounts, is that the literal/figurative divide cannot be understood strictly in terms of the sensible, as Heidegger insists. For theorists, like Black, the metaphoric contribution to science is confined to the logic of discovery, metaphorical models advance towards ontological commitment when they are tested, once a model is successfully brought before the bar of experience it is no longer a figurative creation, it becomes a part of our understanding of reality. It, in effect, becomes literal but it is, perhaps, more problematic to say the nonsensuous becomes sensuous. In this way the sensuous/nonsensuous is a particularly strong characterization of the literal/figurative divide, one that few analytic philosophers would now want or hope to maintain.

Furthermore, even if we fully accept the impossibility of demarcating between the sensuous and the nonsensuous, we can still recognize metaphors in terms of novelty. A distinction between conventional and non-conventional language use is enough to provide us with a divide, over which the metaphor transposes. If we accept this, Heidegger's critique of metaphor becomes little more than the demand that great poetry uses original language. In fact, it is difficult to imagine a situation where we cannot recognize a metaphor as an instance of novel language. Nowell Smith\textsuperscript{29} suggests that Heidegger himself uses the term “literal” in this way, in the in \textit{The Letter on Humanism}, when he suggests that, “bringing to language” within the phrase, “thinking in its saying merely brings the unspoken word of being to language,”\textsuperscript{30} should be taken literally. Nowell-Smith maintains that, rather than seeing this in terms of a slip into the metaphysics

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\textsuperscript{25} Stahl, 1987  
\textsuperscript{26} Jones 1982  
\textsuperscript{27} Mirowski 1989  
\textsuperscript{28} McCloskey 1985  
\textsuperscript{29} Novell Smith, 2013 p. 106  
\textsuperscript{30} Novell Smith, 2013 p. 106
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that Heidegger is trying to avoid, we should see this use of 'literal' as referring
to “a system of conventional signs,” rather than “a movement from originary
openness to speech.” If we view the literal/figurative distinction in terms of
conventional/unconventional language, as Nowell Smith claims Heidegger does
in this instance, does his critique of metaphor still work?

If we maintain that a metaphor is simply a transposing between two linguistic
categories, we have all we need to recognize an instance of metaphor.
Heidegger’s strong contention that these categories are essentially
metaphysical, perhaps, makes a claim beyond what is necessary. While, it may
be the case that that Heidegger’s categories explain some metaphors, there
remains the possibility of transposing between other linguistic categories.
However, as we saw in the account of evidence in Chapter 1, Heidegger denies
that that any segment of language can be privileged or considered more or less
rational.

What is at stake here is the openness of language and thinking. Heidegger is
certainly against a rigidity of thinking. Staying within some sort of
literal/figurative framework means that thinking becomes stifled, preventing it
from really getting to the matter under consideration. Poetry understood in
terms of any categorization of language, is never going to be anything more than
banal because it is prevented from its Saying. In this way, a metaphysical
reading of a great poem can prevent its truth disclosure. A metaphysical reading
of a great poem prevents its saying from being heard. As we know from Chapter
1, art happens in the relationship between the work itself and its preservers. It
is impossible therefore, from a Heideggerian perspective, to understand the
greatness of any work of art in isolation from its preservers. Greatness is found
in the relationship between the work and its preservers. This greatness can be
lost in a number of ways. A poet can write from within the received
metaphysics, and such work does not have any potential to be great, but
greatness is also something that an audience must be capable of preserving. As
we have seen, the problem with a metaphysical reading is that it considers the
figurative as less than rational. In this way, the saying of the poem is blocked.
The poem may or may not have the potential to unconceal truth, but if truth is there, then this potential is thwarted by a metaphysical reading, which understands the poem in terms of metaphor. This may or may not be a feature of the text itself, but even a potentially great text can be destroyed in the reading or interpretation. Nowell Smith points out that,

Anaximander’s saying, Theophrastus complains, has transgressed the boundary between the conceptual boundaries of two mutually incommensurate realms,...However, Heidegger counters, the boundary that Anaximander has transgressed was set up by Theophrastus himself: the saying itself admits of no such boundary, and thus “no possibility of boundary transgression, no possibility of the illegitimate transfer of representation from one area to another.”

In this passage, the responsibility for the distinction is put squarely on to the reader. The saying itself may have the potential to “speak being” perfectly well. If I say X is a metaphor what I mean is that X expresses something in a strange way but it is I who confers this strangeness on to the text, and thus I decide what is strange. This brings us back to the passage in *The Principle of Reason* where Heidegger asks, “Who says, “may” here? Those who assert that hearing with the ears and seeing with the eyes is genuine hearing and seeing.” The ‘claim thinking is hearing’ is entirely legible and only becomes metaphoric with recourse to a linguistic convention. While the traditional philosophical problem associated with metaphors would appear to be that they blur a line between sense and nonsense what is really at stake is convention, and the ‘who’ that defends it.

### 3.6. Metaphor in Science and Philosophy

Given Heidegger’s account, we can understand the difference between great and not great poetry in terms of metaphor. Great poems, such as those of

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31 Heidegger, 1975 p. 249
32 Heidegger, 1996 p. 47
Hölderlin’s, cannot be understood in terms of metaphor. Whereas it is appropriate to understand lesser works in this way. The separation of language that is necessary to the concept of metaphor, is retained in the majority of poetry. Such a view of poetic metaphor seems to map on to a Kuhnian account of science. Thomas Kuhn’s contribution to the philosophy of science was to disrupt the positivist idea that science progressed by the accrual of new pieces of knowledge, which were added to an existing store. This progression was thought, ultimately, to bring science closer and closer to the truth or to a “final science”. However, Kuhn recognized that rather than this linear progression, the history of scientific development consists of stable periods of what he termed “normal science,” punctuated with periods of “extraordinary” or “revolutionary” science. Kuhn characterizes normal science in terms of problem solving, whereas periods of revolutionary science involve an entire restructuring of the scientific field in question. As a result of this, a problem, which was relevant in one period may no longer be relevant in another. A revolution marks a qualitative break in the theoretical understanding of specific body of scientific knowledge. Revolutions can be brought about by a failure in the problem-solving activity of normal science, leading to a questioning of the entire theoretical paradigm. Kuhn highlights how a given scientific community relies on shared theoretical constructs and practices, and how these can undergo transformations.

Like the great poet, the revolutionary scientist disregards the conventions of normal science, and uses a metaphoric process to redescribe the scientific field in question. Once this revolution is accomplished, the paradigm changes entirely and research question appropriate to the previous paradigm lose their relevance. Does this Kuhnian picture of scientific revolution, with its relativistic worries mirror Heidegger’s account of poetic metaphor? If not, what does Heidegger’s account of metaphor offer us beyond this? As we saw above, metaphorical models only move towards ontological commitment after testing. In periods of Kuhnian revolutionary science this is reversed. Now the

33 Kuhn, 1970
34 Kuhn, 1970, p 10
ontological commitment comes first, and this is where relativism seeps into this picture. If our successful models are reflections of a pre-existing reality, then it becomes difficult to explain what happens in periods of revolutionary science. In Heidegger’s account no linguistic entity, be it a scientific model, or a poem, reflects a pre-existing reality. As we saw in the previous chapter, language plays an active role in the disclosure of reality. Language makes reality manifest. Great poetry uses language to make being manifest. This manifesting is not merely a construction of the poet, but a response to something beyond her; something that will become manifest in the poem. As we saw above, in *The Way to Language*, Heidegger says the showing of language is not “exclusively, or even decisively, the property of human activity.”35 Showing is also “self-showing appearance.”36 This self-showing appearance acts as a limit to metaphoric redescription in Heidegger’s account. Speaking being is constrained by being itself. We preserve great poetry, because we recognize its truth. This explains why we readily understand some poetic metaphor, even if when it does violence to our linguistic conventions, but that the potential for this metaphoric redescription is not limitless.

The episode of revolutionary science, however, unlike the great poem, is an extraordinary event. Periods of normal science are punctuated by revolutions but this is not the case with poetry. Great poetry must always challenge the conventional metaphysics. There need for a period of normal poetry, from which great poetry emerges or interrupts. Linguistic conventions do not need to settle before they are upset. The poet’s relationship to language seems to require a constant renewal, “a constantly renewed, that is more and more original appropriation is needed in order for mortals to have a true beholding of something.”37 However, as we have seen, even cases of potentially great poetry can be misread; the greatness can also be lost with the reader. For Heidegger, the poem’s aim is to break through banal images, that act as place-holders for chunks of conventional semantic meaning. When we view the poem in terms of

35 Heidegger, 1971, p 123
36 Heidegger, 1971, p 123
37 Heidegger, 1996 p 46
metaphors, we prevent this breaking through. We tame the poets thinking when we view the poem in terms of metaphor.

Related to this is the philosophical idea that, the big philosophical problem with metaphor is a problem of subjectivity. This problem can be understood by asking, how can a subjective metaphor acquire objectivity, given it subjective basis or how can a metaphor create new, yet appropriate meaning. Heidegger’s account has been employed in this respect, for example by Cazeaux. Cazeaux points out, both Ricoeur and Hausman draw upon Kantian ontology, in different ways, to solve the puzzle of new meaning. A Kantian solution relies on the schema with all its inherent difficulties. Cazeaux attempts to buttress the Kantian schema with recourse to Heidegger. “The basic move which Heidegger makes to salvage Kant’s notion of a schema is to emphasize the significance of time in the Critique.” 38 In this way, the transcendental object, which is necessary for the unity of consciousness is considered as a ‘temporal action’ which is what constitutes objectivity. While we can perhaps question Heidegger’s dismissal of metaphor in terms of its grounding in a sensuous/nonsensuous distinction, its basis in terms of the alethic truth is harder to question. As we have seen, Cazeaux uses Heidegger’s account to plug a hole in Kant’s account. The question of how new meaning is created through a metaphor can be understood within a framework of concealment and unconcealment. Metaphoric redescription involves the both unconcealment and concealment, whether this be in the realm of science or art. The metaphor can create new meaning because it conceals prior meanings.

What is important for our purposes here is that language, for Heidegger, is to be understood in the way-making movement of appropriation, rather than in terms of signified and signifier. Language is Saying as showing it, “yields the opening of the clearing in which present beings can persist and from which absent beings can depart, while keeping their persistence in the withdrawal.” 39 Way making cuts a way through the earth of concealment. There is no

38 Cazeauz, 1995, p. 352
39 Heidegger, 1971 p.127
privileging of any category of language simply because there is no way to cut up language like this. The mystery that is often associated with metaphor results from the imposition of a metaphysics of presence on to language.

3.7 Metaphor and Contemporary Poetry

Despite Heidegger’s substantial influence, contemporary poetry criticism is still dominated by what we will characterize as an aesthetic approach. This dominance of this approach becomes clear in terms of metaphor, which is still understood as figurative, almost without exception. In the rest of this thesis, I will argue that Heidegger’s rich accounts of poetry and language, make sense of contemporary poetic movements in ways that aesthetic accounts cannot. For our purposes, it will be sufficient to say that an aesthetic view of poetry criticism is any view which includes the idea that metaphors are a figurative trope. In this section, I will give a recent example of poetry criticism, which demonstrates this aesthetic view. Despite the dominance of aesthetics, in this respect, contemporary poetry can be characterized in terms of its novel and perhaps extreme use of metaphorical language. With recourse to a number of examples, I will sketch an account of metaphor within contemporary poetry. It is worth noting, however, that while Heidegger’s account of poetic metaphor implies a criterion for poetry, I do not claim that we can use this to assess contemporary poems in terms of its greatness or otherwise. However, it does give us a new way to understand contemporary poetic metaphor.

Rebecca Watts’ recent and controversial article in PN Review40 ostensibly redraws the line between art and populism for the internet generation. This article is poetry criticism, written for a non-academic audience and it is perhaps unfair to subject it to philosophical scrutiny. However, it does serve to highlight how, the account of language promoted in the article, and the one it critiques, both depend on the literal/figurative distinction. I will show how Heidegger’s view of language and metaphor provides a more illuminating way to view the language of the poets under consideration. Watts, a poet herself, critiques the

40 Watts 2018
rise of what she terms “noble amateurs,” which are described as “a cohort of young female poets who are currently being lauded by the poetic establishment for their ‘honesty’ and ‘accessibility.’” She is referring to poets such as Canadian Rupi Kaur, whose sales figures far exceed those of more traditional poets. However, the article’s main focus is two UK poets; Kate Tempest and, specifically, Hollie McNish. In fact, the article was initially commissioned as a review of collection by McNish.

Watts’ critical characterization of the noble amateur is three-pronged. First, she notes that poets such Kaur build their reputations on social media platforms, notably Instagram, before going on to substantial book sales. McNish and Tempest emerged from the Spoken Word scene in the UK, and both made substantial use of YouTube Channels to promote their work. Watts points her finger squarely at the internet and social media with their “deleterious effect on our attention spans and cognitive abilities.”

Poetry, according to Watts, has not escaped this widespread dumbing down. In the hands of the noble amateur poetry, she argues, has become nothing other than “short-form communication,” designed for the age soundbites and Twitter. As with every other art form, in the contemporary world, poetry is now just another consumer product. Watts’ second and perhaps most damning complaint concerns how both Tempest and McNish have been welcomed unreservedly into the poetry establishment in the UK. Both are published by Picador and both have received the Ted Hughes Award for New Work in Poetry.

Finally, and most pertinent here, Watts, critiques the noble amateur in terms of language use. She is not being unfair when says the noble amateur’s use of language is simplistic and clichéd. She quotes poet Don Paterson, who edits both Tempest and McNish, speaking about the appeal of McNish in terms of the ‘direct connection with an audience’ and the ‘disarming honesty of the work.” Watts asks, “When did honesty become a requirement – let alone the main requirement – of poetry?”

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41 Watts, 2018
42 Watts, 2018
image and Watts’ describes it as merely an “assemblage of words.” It uses everyday language without artifice, and thus it communicates clearly with its audience. Watts’ claims that it is not the work of a poet but rather that of a personality.

It is not my intention to defend McNish from Watts’ fairly vitriolic attack, but I do want to make explicit the account of language that Watts’ is working with. Watts’ critique of McNish implies a particular characterization of poetic language. She sets up a distinction between poets who prioritize honesty and immediacy and others who prioritize craft. The noble amateur achieves honesty with non-poetic language. For example, she hardly uses metaphor, but when she does, she immediately falls into cliche. Traditional poets, however, augment non-poetic language, with the use of metaphor and other poetic tropes. For the sake of contrast, I will use another English poet, Michael Symmons Roberts, as an unequivocal example of a poet concerned with craft. It is pertinent to the discussion to mention that Symmon’s Robert’s in a recent interview described his first book as “too earnest,” adding to the idea that honesty and craft are distinct. Given this, we end up with an implicit distinction between honesty and immediacy on one hand and craft on the other. While on the face of it, this seems like an apt distinction, it implies an aesthetic understanding of both language generally and poetic language specifically.

So that we can see the difference, here are examples of how both poets use metaphor. First a poem by McNish. It is worth noting here, that McNish is a spoken word poet and the performative aspect is a central to her poetry. Symmons Roberts, on the other hand, is undoubtedly, what is sometimes referred to as a poet the page. His work is not performance driven. Thus, it is important to bear in mind that we are not comparing like with like.
Cocoon\(^{43}\)

This is as close as I’ll ever be to a butterfly
raincoat zipped up to my chin
for the half hour bike ride
to work

Hair bunned
at the back
to fit in the hood
helmet clipped tightly
~ I am waterproof

Now pace reaches peak
the streets are attacked
Cold frosts the trees
but the sweat coats my back

until one minute left
I let myself go
cycling slow
as I unbutton clothes
jacket unzipped
helmet unclipped
from beneath
hood stripped from my forehead
hairband released

Hair ruffled with hands
to be free in the wind
body to elements
cool down my skin

At that moment
I open
and peel myself free

I feel as close to
a new butterfly
as I’ll ever be

For the sake of contrast, a Symmons Robert’s poem,

\(^{43}\) McNish 2015
Love Song On A Loop

So help me, I feel it true enough,
but there is nothing,
not one thing I could say
that would hold its value in these times

If I told you I love you,
Then tomorrow a cache of new
ballads of truer love may come to light
and devalue its currency,

or prove that it was nothing more
than traps set by your DNA,
a legacy as dry as all the ash, hair, dust
that gathers under floorboards.

And so this song undoes itself,
unwinding into gibberish.
Nonetheless it started
true enough, I feel it, so help me.44

As we can see, these poems use metaphor is very different ways. The
cocon/butterfly metaphor in the McNish poem is familiar to the point of cliché.
It does not tell us anything new. In fact, it is such a tired metaphor that we could
argue that it is dead, and that it may not even function as a metaphor. If there is
anything different about this use of the butterfly metaphor, it is that rather than
being associated with some personal transformation, it is simply being used to
describe the action of loosening clothes while cycling. However, it certainly
remains squarely within a convention which, uses the image of the butterfly
emerging from its cocoon to stand in for some sort of human transformation.

In the second poem there are a number of metaphors, for example, words have
their currency “devalued,” the song “unwinds into gibberish.” Arguably, these
are fresh uses of language, which shows things in new light. While they may not
make Heidegger’s criteria of greatness, they are unexpected, and yet true. We
grasp what Roberts means when he says that a song unwinds into gibberish.

44 Symonns Roberts, 2017
For Watts’ the difference between the two poems is that one uses metaphor in a clichéd way, whereas the other uses it in a skilled way. While this may seem like the right characterization, it does not seem right to say the first poem is more honest or immediate than the second poem.

To understand this, it is worth asking what immediacy means in this context. It seems fair to suggest that Watt’s uses the term to mean something like ‘immediately graspable,’ i.e. she uses the term to mean something akin to ‘easily comprehensible.’ This implies that poetry is a use of language, which is less than immediately graspable. In this way, Watt’s use of “immediate” can be viewed an aesthetic use of the term. The McNish poem is considered more immediate because of its reliance on everyday language. Thus, everyday language is considered more basic, in some sense, than poetic language. Poetic language is, therefore, seen to originated in everyday language. Aesthetic accounts understand the poem as a distortion of common or everyday language; everyday language, which is distorted in order to make it more beautiful or to fit it in to a form of some sort or another. From an aesthetic viewpoint, a poem is a piece of natural language, which is augmented or to which aesthetic qualities are attached. Because everyday language already serves perfectly well as a vehicle of meaning, the process of making it into poetry, in some cases at least, impacts negatively on this ability to convey adequately meaning.

Such a view can be clearly contrasted with Heidegger’s view. For Heidegger, poetic language does not originate in everyday language, in fact the opposite is true. Poetic language, when it is great, is a founding, and thus everyday language derives from it, rather than the other way around. As language moves down the scale, from its most essential use in the words of a great poem, towards deception, the tendency to objectify becomes more pronounced, and language itself recedes from view. Rather than unconcealing truth, it represents the world as something present-at-hand. Below the level of the poetic, there is the tendency of language is to objectify things and conceal itself. However, it is worth bearing in mind that this analysis does not preclude the possibility of a great poem, which utilizes every day or simple language, or indeed poetic
language that deceives. At every level of the scale language has the possibility of being authentic or inauthentic. However, to be great art, a poem must unconceal truth, and because truth requires “a constantly renewed, that is more original appropriation,” then the process of writing poetry is an undeniably ‘metaphoric’ process. To achieve a more original appropriation, the poet must work at the level of essence. From an aesthetic perspective, the essential is always seems metaphoric. This is because the essential inevitably redescribes reality, or disrupts metaphysics as it is understood in the distinction between the literal and figurative language.

Thus, the McNish poem is only honest and immediate in the sense that it is an unambiguous description, in the first person, of an event, which probably took place. If it is true, it is true in the simple sense of correspondence. Thus, it is true in the literal sense; the event described is simply a testimony of an actual occurrence. Even the use of the metaphor, if we consider it dead, barely interrupts the literal meaning of the poem. If poetic immediacy simply means a literal description of an actual event, then this poem is certainly immediate. However, from a Heideggerian perspective, the language of this poem is trapped entirely within metaphysics. Moreover, because of its banal content, it is an inessential use of language. Because of its use of normal, everyday language, it is in fact, simply on the same level as everyday language. If we agree with Heidegger that poetic language is more essential than everyday language, we must concede that McNish’s language discloses reality, simply as everyday language does. In addition, if we view immediacy in terms of essentiality, then we have to concede that it is actually the Symmon Robert’s that is more immediate. We can also maintain that is more honest because it resonates with something closer to us; something less articulated than the content of the McNish poem. The second poem says something for the first time. To be fair, Watts does not explicitly preclude the possibility of honesty and craft within the same poem, but her characterization implies that honesty and immediacy are perfectly achievable with everyday language, and that the poet must take this

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45 Heidegger, 1996 p. 46
raw material and craft it to make poetry. Given our examples this seems wrong. The second poem cannot simply be seen as everyday language to which something additional has been added.

Watts acknowledges that the effect of the McNish poem,

is limited to recognition, which merely reinforces the reader or audience's sense of selfhood. As McNish and her critics agree, her fans are drawn to the poems by the themes – sex, relationships and perceived social inequalities – as well as by McNish's 'unpretentious' presentation, where unpretentious means abundant in expletives and unintimidating to anyone who considers ignorance a virtue.46

The immediacy Watt's ascribes to McNish's poem is simply recognition. This recognition is not of something new, but rather it is recognition of the already known, the already agreed upon. McNish mirrors the concerns of her public, and they, in turn, are gratified to see them aired in the public realm. In this way, the McNish poem must be seen as representation.

A better poem allows the reader or listener to directly inhabit the subject matter of the poem. A poem is not a description of an experience, or something ready-to-hand, but rather it is the experience. We could argue that what is unique is, in fact, poetry's immediacy. I, the reader or listener, am brought along on an experience. Though it is not my experience, the poem allows me direct access to the experience of the poet. So, to use a vivid example, consider Louis MacNeice's "Snow."

Snow

The room was suddenly rich and the great-bay window Spawning snow and pink roses against it Soundlessly collateral and incompatible: World is suddener than we fancy it.

46 Watts 2018
World is crazier and more of it that we think,
Incorrigibly plural. I peel and portion
A tangerine and spit the pips and feel
The drunkenness of things being various

And the fire flames with a bubbling sound for world
Is more spiteful and gay that one supposes--
On the tongue on the eyes on the ears in the palms of one's hands—
There is more than glass between the snow and the huge roses.47

In this poem, the language departs entirely from everyday language, and yet we see the shared experience of poet and reader. We garner something of the essence of language as showing. This poem, it is fair to say, represents a more authentic showing that McNish poem. It is not in the "fallen" mode of semblance. The language of the poem does not objectify the experience. Rather the reader is brought along with the poet. In a way that is analogous with Heidegger's way to language, the language in this poem does not follow a pre-existing path but rather it makes its own way. Watt’s implicit account of language, while it can be used to separate the McNish poems, and the Symmons Robert’s poem, cannot fully account for the quality of the McNeice poem. We cannot view the McNeice poem as everyday language, which has been augmented by the skilful use of metaphor. Instead, it makes more sense to see it in terms of essential language. Despite this, we can still recognize, and isolate instances of both figurative and literal language within the poem. However, just as Heidegger's way to language is, on first reading, an undoubtedly metaphorical journey, this path-making necessarily transcends any literal/figurative distinction. The way to language is signposted by a series of seemingly metaphorical terms (design, language as showing, owning, (or appropriation) etc.) but these cannot be metaphorical in the sense we commonly understand the term. Because, as Heidegger points out, the concept of metaphor only makes sense in face of a distinction or separation from the sensible and the non-sensible. Any such distinction implies a given or set path for language. Language, as a set of signs which signify, is a path or a set of paths linked to the sensible. We may deviate into the figurative from time to time, but

47 MacNiece, 1967
to make any sense of this we must get back on the ‘real’ path. In this way we can subject the McNeice poem to an aesthetic analysis, but to do so prevents the poems showing, in fact the poem becomes irrational. A Heideggerian analysis gets at what is happening in the poem in a way that an aesthetic account simply cannot.

In contemporary poetry, however, metaphor often seems to run wild to the extent that its literal and figurative elements cannot be isolated. In cases like these it does not make sense in terms of a sensible/nonsensible distinction. Consider this poem by Ted Hughes.48

Crow’s Undersong

She cannot come all the way
She comes as far as water no further

She comes with the birth push
Into eyelashes into nipples the fingertips
She comes as far as blood and to the tips of hair
She comes to the fringe of voice
She stays
Even after life even among the bones

She comes singing she cannot manage an instrument
She comes too cold afraid of clothes
And too slow with eyes wincing frightened
When she looks into wheels

She comes sluttish she cannot keep house
She can just keep clean
She cannot count she cannot last

She comes dumb she cannot manage words
She brings petals in their nectar fruits in their plush
She brings a cloak of feathers an animal rainbow
She brings her favourite furs and these are her speeches

She has come amorous it is all she has come for

48 Hughes 1972
If there had been no hope she would not have come
And there would have been no crying in the city
(There would have been no city)

We can claim it does not make sense to consider this poem metaphorical. It would be an impossible task to reverse the transposing from one realm to another. This poem cannot be viewed in terms of a literal/figurative distinction. For those who would defend the distinction, the poem can only be seen as nonsense. Yet the poem undoubtedly says something, something that could not have been expressed in more literal language. The use of metaphor in the Hughes' poem prepares us for a trend in contemporary poetry, where, it becomes entirely impossible to untangle the metaphoric content of the work. To illustrate this, here is a poem, by John Shoptaw, which featured in the January 2019 edition of Poetry Magazine.

Near-Earth Object
Unlike the monarch, though the asteroid also slipped quietly from its colony on its annular migration between Jupiter and Mars, enticed maybe by our planetary pollen as the monarch by my neighbor's slender-leaved milkweed. Unlike it even when the fragrant Cretaceous atmosphere meteorized the airborne rock, flaring it into what might have looked to the horrid triceratops like a monarch ovipositing (had the butterfly begun before the period broke off). Not much like the monarch I met when I rushed out the door for the 79, though the sulphurous dust from the meteoric impact
off the Yucatán took flight
for all corners of the heavens
much the way the next
generation of monarchs
took wing from the milkweed
for their annual migration
to the west of the Yucatán,
and their unburdened mother
took her final flit
up my flagstone walkway,
froze and, hurtling
downward, impacted
my stunned peninsular
left foot. Less like
the monarch for all this,
the globe-clogging asteroid,
than like me, one of my kind,
bolting for the bus.

How are we to understand this poem in terms of metaphor? Arguably, an
aesthetic account based on a literal/figurative cannot adequately account for
this poem. While it would seem reasonable to say this poem is metaphorical, it
would be hard to define these metaphors in terms of separate linguistic
categories. It is certainly difficult, if not impossible, to identify the metaphors in
this poem from a comparison view of metaphor, because it is hard to unpick
this poem and say where exactly one thing stands in for another. The poem, for
example, uses the motif or image of a butterfly, but it cannot be considered
metaphorical in the sense that the metaphor is a puzzle which is solved when
it’s meaning is understood in literal terms.

In fact, it could be argued that this poem results from a deliberate dissolution of
literal/figurative divide. In the face of this dissolution, the poem can be seen as
simply incomprehensible. This is the position taken by commentators. For
example, the poet, Robin Robertson claims, “[t]he world of poetry is small and
currently polarized: it is often either simplistic or incomprehensible.”49 He goes
on to say, “I find myself in the middle, vaguely appalled. I’m allergic to “light
verse,” because it seems a betrayal of the purpose of poetry. Equally, poetry that

49 Robertson, 2018
sets out to be deliberately opaque is betraying the purpose of language.”
Without the ability to divide language into the literal and the figurative, poems like the one above, can be considered at best a pretty nonsense and at worst, a betrayal of the language.

As we have seen, for Heidegger, great poetry is not subject to metaphysics, and thus it cannot be understood in terms of figurative tropes. It is a necessary requirement of great poetry to transcends the literal/figurative divide. However, it is not sufficient condition for greatness. For Heidegger, as we have seen, great poetry speaks Being. The examples of art used, by Heidegger, in *The Origin*, are epoch defining. By this criterion, *Near Earth Object* is probably not a great work, but what is the value of this work, given these Heideggerian considerations? Poetry of this sort is now common and, it would seem reasonable to claim that the betrayal of language that we see here is actually a betrayal of the linguistic categories of metaphysics. Yet, arguably, this betrayal does not necessarily lead us to a speaking of Being.

While there are notable examples of poetry in this style, for example, Wallace Stevens’ *The Idea of Order at Key West.* There is also certainly poetry, of this type, that transcends metaphysics, in terms of the literal/figurative divide, but does not speak Being. This is a relatively contemporary trend, and it is interesting to ask what it says about language. From an extreme positivist viewpoint, such poetry can be considered as nothing more than nonsense and while such viewpoints are no longer in currency, it is still possible to speak of a betrayal of language. The literal/figurative distinction is as central to metaphysics as the subject/object distinction, as we will see if the chapters that follow, an overcoming of these distinctions is an overcoming of metaphysics, from a Heideggerian perspective. But there is the also possibility of the dissolution of these metaphysical dichotomies, which is not an overcoming of metaphysics but, rather, the sign of a new metaphysics where both the subject and the literal become eroded. In the chapters that follow, we will consider how

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50 Stephens, 1990
technology allows these metaphysical binaries to be eroded without being overcome.

3.8 Conclusion

Heidegger’s account of language implies a radically different understanding of metaphor. While the failure of the logical atomists to create a language free of metaphor, forced philosophers to accept the inherently metaphorical nature of language, metaphors are still, generally, understood as a figurative tropes. Heidegger, however, does not privilege any part of language, be it the literal or the sensuous. Thus, his account represents a challenge to many contemporary accounts of language. It also challenge contemporary aesthetic accounts of poetry. What is at stake, for Heidegger, is the literal/figurative distinction itself. Obviously, the philosophical implications of this are significant. As we can see from Heidegger’s own language use, it is what we generally understand as metaphoric, is precisely that which can challenge metaphysics. A great poem, like those of Hölderlin, discloses reality, or speaks Being. In order to grasp reality, in this way, we need a constantly fresh appropriation of it. A great poem discloses reality in this authentic way. A poem which fails to do this, operates within the received metaphysics, and can only objectify reality. Moreover, the great poem cannot be fully understood in terms of an aesthetic account of language, because such an account deems this disclosure to be metaphoric i.e., as a deviation from literal language. From the perspective of the reader or critic, what is required to understand Hölderlin’s speaking of Being is “the gentle force of the singular and innocent capacity to hear.”¹ The poem can fail either because the poet is trapped within metaphysics, or because its readers do not have possess the innocent capacity to hear.

It is possible to view some contemporary poetry in terms of an erosion of the literal/figurative divide. As we have seen, there is a trend within contemporary poetry that cannot be understood with respect to either distinct linguistic

¹Heidegger, 1972 p.101
categories, or in terms of a transposing between these categories. In fact, it would be impossible to ‘solve’ the metaphorical puzzles of a poem, such as *Near Earth Object*, by replacing metaphoric terms with literal ones. While it seems right to view this poem as metaphoric, an aesthetic view cannot adequately account for it. Leaving aside the question of greatness, we can see this poem, more fruitfully, as an attempt, to transcend linguistic categories, and as an attempt to speak Being. However, a dissolution of the literal/figurative divide does not necessarily represent a transcending of these categories. It is possible to dissolve these categories and not speak being. In fact, it is not unfair to describe a great deal of contemporary poetry in this way. How are we to understand this tendency in contemporary poetry? As we shall see in the following chapters, technology can be viewed as an intensification of metaphysics, which erodes the binaries Heidegger associates with metaphysics without transcending them.
Chapter 4 Technology

4.1 Introduction

Heidegger’s account of technology comes in the later period of his writings, after the *Origin*, and thus it has to be considered in its own terms. The critique of metaphysics that concerns Heidegger in the earlier works, no longer entirely holds in the later works because technology, as Heidegger understands it, is a new understanding of being, requiring a new approach. Both language and art are fundamentally altered in an age of technology. As we have seen, language and art are understood, by Heidegger, in terms of truth disclosure. Technology is that, which threatens the very unconcealment of language and art. This thesis aims to apply Heidegger's ontological analysis of truth, language, and poetry to contemporary poetic movements. In order to do this, we must understand technology from within this Heideggerian framework. Heidegger uses the term “technology” in an ontologically broad way. His his account goes beyond a description of the development of technological devices and views technology as the historical epoch in which we now live. Like language, technology is prior to us and it holds sway over us. Ultimately, it is a way in which things are revealed to us and thus, it is related to the truth disclosing capabilities of language, including poetic language. As we will see, for Heidegger, technology negatively influences the possibility of poetic truth. This thesis is particularly concerned with digital technology, and one question that arises immediately is whether Heidegger’s account is still relevant, given that he died in the 1970’s, just as digital technology began to come into its own. Despite this, his account still provides an appropriate framework by which to understand the digital age. Be this as it may, Heidegger’s influence on contemporary philosophy of technology is undeniable.

Notwithstanding this influence, there is much debate, within the literature, on how to characterize and understand Heidegger's contribution. Some theorists,
Gunter Anders, for example, describe Heidegger’s account as a technological determinism, where technology is understood as a historical force which both opens up, and limits the range of possibilities for a historical people. In general terms, determinism can be contrasted with technological neutrality, the notion that technology is merely instrumental exerting little or no substantive influence on mankind. Given the relatively sudden ubiquity of handheld devices and internet technologies, it becomes more and more difficult to play down the influence of technology in practically every aspects of our lives. This influence can be couched both in positive and negative terms. Negatively, there is a growing literature on addiction to various internet applications including online role-playing games, online gambling, or online pornography. For example, in 2013, Internet Gaming Disorder was classified as a particular problem in need of further study in the revised Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders. The benefits of internet technology are myriad, and there is clearly no way back to a pre-internet society. Heidegger, writing before the onset of the digital, implored us to develop a “free relation” to technology and this entreaty is, perhaps, more urgent now that it was at the time of his death.

For Heidegger, technology is a mode of unconcealment in that it is the way, in which we understand being in the present age. Central to his account is the concept of Gestell, variously translated as “enframing” or “positionality.” For Heidegger, as we shall see, Gestell is the essence of technology. In this chapter, I will investigate the claim that Heidegger’s account of technology as “enframing” can be viewed as a deterministic view. Central to any such investigation is an understanding of Heidegger’s epochal view of history, where an epoch is a historical period which is characterized in terms of the dominant understanding of being. Technology is, then, the current understanding of being. Heidegger characterizes this epoch in a primarily negative way. Technology is the epoch where being, including the human being, is understood, at the ontological level, merely as orderable stock or “standing reserve.”

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1 Anders, 1987  
2 Young 2017 228
Heidegger is not the only theorist to point to the dangers associated with technology. Different commentators, often taking Heidegger as a starting point, characterize technology in various ways, and prescribes different possible responses. In some accounts, such as Anders,\(^3\) the outlook is bleak, perhaps even beyond remedy, in others, such as Borgmann’s,\(^4\) there are differing possibilities open to retrieve a more meaningful connection to human life. Heidegger, himself, asks us to develop a “free relation”\(^5\) to technology. By understanding technology, in its essence, we can ameliorate the negative consequences of technology. In a seemingly paradoxical move, Heidegger tells us to say both ‘yes’ and ‘no’ to technology. He suggests that we take up a comportment of releasement or Gelassenheit towards it. In this way, we respond to technology, not with the action of turning away and focusing on something else, as Borgmann suggests we do, nor do we passively accept our fate, but rather, we let this free relation to technology emerge. This is a difficult position to grasp for us “moderns” who are accustomed to understanding things in terms of binary oppositions such as subject and object, form and matter, and activity and passivity. In this way, Heidegger’s view can be characterized as middle-voiced. I will consider Scott’s\(^6\) account the middle voice, in order to illuminate Heidegger’s view in this respect. Scott shows us how art can be a middle-voiced enterprise, and as Heidegger also tells us that art, especially poetry, is the realm where we find the essences of things, I will end this chapter by asking whether we can see the essence of technology in contemporary poetic movements.

### 4.2 Heidegger’s Account of Technology

Heidegger’s ontologically broad use of the term technology includes the way in which things become intelligible to us. In order to redefine the term, Heidegger

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\(^3\) Anders, 1987  
\(^4\) Borgmann, 1992  
\(^5\) Heidegger, 1978, p. 311  
\(^6\) Scott, 1987
distinguishes between technology, and the technological. While the technological refers to the instruments and processes we normally associate with the term, technology is defined as the manner in which being is revealed. We are told, “the essence of technology is by no means anything technological.”

Moreover, to understand technology as simply the technological is to commit a grave error. Heidegger acknowledges that viewing technology in terms of human activity or as a means to end may be a correct characterization, but such understandings prevents us from recognizing the ultimately corrosive role of technology on humanity. Again, we are pointed to the difference between correctness and truth. A correct characterization may be valid, but it does not capture the essence of technology. We are told that truth is essential; in order to achieve a “free relationship,” i.e. to grasp technology in its essence, we must go beyond the correct to the true. However, technology is dangerous for Heidegger precisely because it blocks off truth, in this sense of essence. Achieving a free relationship to technology is not a simple task. It is made more difficult because we are already caught up in a technological mode i.e. technology is already the way in which things come into presence for us and therefore it is concealed from us.

Technology is unique in that, unlike other the modes of unconcealment, described by Heidegger, the coming into presence, or becoming intelligible of something is not poetic in the sense of poiēsis. The word technology derives from technē, which refers not only to the skills and work of craftsmen but also to the poetic bringing forth of the arts and therefore of poiēsis. “The possibility of all productive manufacturing lies in revealing.” The craftsman creating a chalice, “reveals what is to be brought forth.” Technology is a realm where revealing and concealment take place, and it is therefore the realm of truth in this sense of aletheia. Heidegger’s point is that the revealing associated with modern technology is fundamentally different from other all other modes of

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7 Heidegger, 1993, 311
8 Heidegger, 1993, 318
9 Heidegger, 1993, 319
revealing because it challenges [Herausfordern] rather than reveals, and for this reason, Heidegger tells us, it cannot be considered a part of poiēsis.\textsuperscript{10}

Heidegger defines poiēsis as a bringing forth. While Enframing is a mode of revealing, its challenging character means that it cannot be considered part of \textit{poiēsis}. Technology, then, is a corrupted mode of unconcealment that reveals without bringing forth. Again, this can be understood in terms of truth. Enframing derives from a way of representation associated with modern science, especially physics. In physics, Heidegger tells us; “nature presents itself as a calculable complex of the effects of forces.”\textsuperscript{11} As such it “can indeed permit correct determinations; but precisely through these successes the danger may remain that in the midst of all that is correct the true will withdraw.”\textsuperscript{12} Because enframing reveals without bringing forth, it cannot reveal truth. It is this that makes enframing the supreme danger.

We can roughly identify a number of types of argument against Heidegger’s account and its application to contemporary technological applications. First of all, it can be denied that technology is a mode of unconcealment. Richard Rorty, for example, defends a traditional, liberal view of technology as a collection of neutral tools, which may exert some influence in human affairs for good or for ill, but rejects the idea that technology is an ontohistorical process, such a position can be termed the instrumental view.\textsuperscript{13}

From a different perspective, Zuboff\textsuperscript{14} in her recent account of what she terms “surveillance capitalism,” maintains that technological inevitability does not exist.\textsuperscript{15} Her account relies a distinction between surveillance capitalism and digital technology, and this distinction depends on a largely instrumentalist

\textsuperscript{10} \textit{Poiēsis} was originally the mode of the being of nature which is reflected in human making—see Heidegger: “On the essence ond concept of phusis in Aristotle’s Physics B, I”, Heidegger, 1967.
\textsuperscript{11} Heidegger, 1978 p. 331
\textsuperscript{12} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{13} Rae, 2012 p. 311
\textsuperscript{14} Zuboff, 2019
\textsuperscript{15} Zuboff, 2019 p. 15
view of technology. She defends the idea that technology is subordinate to economics and, therefore, claims that technologies are always economic means and not ends in themselves. For Zuboff then, technology is simply an “expression of the economic objective.” Her account of the development of targeted advertising at Google, for example, is couched in terms of a basically Marxist critique. She describes how searches generated excess data about Google's users, and how this data existed before the decision was made to use it in targeted advertising. She states,

That surveillance capitalism is a logic in action and not a technology is a vital point because surveillance capitalists want us to think that their practices are inevitable expressions of the technologies they employ. For example, in 2009 the public first became aware that Google maintains our search histories indefinitely: data that are available as raw-material supplies are also available to intelligence and law-enforcement agencies.

Zuboff holds that because what she terms “the behavioural surplus,” existed before economic pressures forced the onset of surveillance capitalism, that it is capitalism that drove the technological harvesting of data. “In truth, search engines do not retain, but surveillance capitalism does.” However, from the viewpoint of technological determinism, the fact that a technological capacity exists means that it will inevitably be used because technology generates social change. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to give a full account of the relationship between technology and capital. For my purpose here, it is enough to say that, from a Heideggerian perspective, Zuboff does not account for the fact that it is through Google a world is opened up, in which surveillance capitalism becomes possible. In other words, the “instrument” is not formed as

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16 Zuboff is committed to technological neutrality because a determinist view “makes surveillance capitalism’s practices appear to be inevitable, when actually they are meticulously calculated (p. 15)
17 Zuboff, 2019 p.16
18 We will look more closely at Google Ads in Section 6.6
19 Zuboff, 2019 p.15
20 Ibid.
21 Zuboff 2019
means to an end, but rather the end (surveillance) is first made possible and as such socially and politically relevant through the technology.

Even if we accept that technology does represent some sort of ontohistorical process we need not agree with Heidegger’s characterization of it. Some commentators, such as Gunter Anders, argue that Heidegger’s account of technology does not go far enough by arguing, for example, that democracy becomes impossible in a technological age. Given this, we can arrange responses to Heidegger’s critique of technology along a continuum with a strong technological determinism on one end and instrumentalism on the other. Heidegger himself is not at the furthermost extent of the determinist end of this continuum, because his account does offer the possibility of Gellassenheit or the idea of the correct use of technology.

The question becomes in what sense is Heidegger’s account determining? Technology determines not in the sense of depriving us of our free will but rather it decides how we understand being. In an age of enframing, things become standing reserve, and this calibrates our response to them. In a technological age, we understand everything as subject to our manipulation. In order to comprehend the technological epoch, we must first understand Heidegger’s account of the history of being.

4.3 Epochality

From the 1930’s onwards Heidegger began to isolate different historical periods in terms of the understandings or ‘truths’ of being that held sway. This historical approach leads to his attempt to provide philosophy with a new beginning in the Contributions, where Heidegger announces the transition from metaphysics to the thinking of beyng. To understand this, we need first understand Heidegger’s account of history. He tells us, “[t]his being [Sein] – historically – is never the same in every era. It now stands on the verge of an

22 Anders, 1978
essential transformation, inasmuch as it is given the task of grounding that
domain of decision, that nexus of the event.”

In this quote, Heidegger is attempting to think a transition between the first
beginning of Western philosophy, a beginning in wonder, and a new beginning
concerned with beyng rather than beings. Essential to this endeavour is the
requirement to think of history not as a “the object and the sphere of a
spectating but as that which first awakens and brings about thoughtful
questioning.” What is at stake is how beyng occurs, to approach this we
must first recognize that the current “worldview” as what it is: simply the
current understanding of beings. For Heidegger therefore, history is understood
as a sequence of worldviews each characterized by a different understanding of
being. In each of these epochs, the question of Being itself is concealed. The
transition into the thinking of beyng requires that we move from the level of
beings to the level of beyng and to do so requires a “penetration into something
well guarded.”

In this way, Heidegger turns from an analysis of history (Geschichte) to
historicality or historiography. In each epoch, it is precisely the understanding
of being at sway that is “well-guarded” or concealed. Thus, each epoch is built
on a concealed understanding of being. Historiography is, then, concerned with
what Wrathall calls the “background understanding that shapes and constitutes
foreground activities.” But such an understanding is so far in the background
that it is not questioned, and it appears as self-evident or necessary. However,
the foreground of historical events is determined by this concealed background
understanding. Historiography is an account of this sequence of background
understandings, each of which generates its own epoch. These understandings
do not determine in the sense that they are hidden forces that decide the
outcome of historical events. They do not determine the outcome of, for

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23 Heidegger, 2012 p.24
24 Heidegger, 2012 p.7
25 Heidegger, 2012 p. 8
26 Ibid.
27 Wrathall, 2011 p.181
example, the Battle of Waterloo, but they provide the context in which the Battle of Waterloo makes sense to those from that epoch. Specifically, these understandings allow things to come to presence in different ways according to the epoch in question. In each epoch, the background understanding that defines it, recedes so that its mode of bringing things to presence is concealed.

This onto-historical picture is not without ambiguity and there is scope for differing interpretations. What is clear, however, is that some account of being holds steady for a time, and within that time it allows beings to be first understood and thus, it grounds all practices. Different commentators characterize epochs in different ways. Dreyfus conceptualizes it in terms of skills for coping with things. Thompson terms it “ontological epochality or epochality” or as “constellations of intelligibility.” Different commentators give different estimates of how many distinct epochs and sub-epochs are discussed by Heidegger, and they also characterize them in different ways. Dreyfus discusses three distinct epochs in terms of being as physis (springing forth on its own), being as poeisis (things that are brought forth), as created beings and finally, the technological understanding of being. Thomson characterized the epochs in terms of the “pre-Socratic, Platonic, medieval, modern and late modern.” In the Origin, Heidegger comes to see that it is great art that founds an epoch and that different epochs are exemplified by the works Heidegger uses as examples in the essay. For example, his choice of van Gogh’s painting, as Babette Babich points out is as “an illustration not of painting but of the kind of thing that the artwork is qua manufactured or poietic thing.”

An important implication of such a view is that philosophy can never be considered ahistorical. As Wrathall shows in his description of the famous spat between Heidegger and Carnap, the twentieth century attempt by analytic philosophers to eliminate metaphysics only increased their entrenchment in a
metaphysical understanding, to which they are blind. In fact, Heidegger believes, the desire to eliminate metaphysics, in the way Carnap proposes, is itself a sign of the “technological” understanding of being. The analytic attempt to eliminate metaphysics, he writes, might be more appropriately be called the “passing of metaphysics,” where “passing” means the simultaneous departing of metaphysics (i.e., it’s apparent perishing, and hence being remembered only as something past), even while the technological understanding of being “takes possession of its absolute domination over what is.”

As we have seen, central to metaphysics are a number of seemingly self-evident binary distinctions, most important of which is the Cartesian split between subjects and objects. In What Are Poets For, Heidegger says, “[e]ven this, that man becomes subject and the word object, is a consequence of technology’s nature establishing itself and not the other way around.” A consequence of a scientific worldview is that the domain of philosophy shrinks as the domain of science expands. At best, the philosopher is left with questions of normativity and aesthetics. Because the metaphysics associated with science is viewed as self-evident. However, as Heidegger explains in ‘The Origin of the Work of Art,’ it is precisely the subject/object dichotomy that makes art confusing. In the first instance, technology is determining insomuch as it makes subject's and object out of everything.

4.4 Old and New Technology

Some of the ambiguity in Heidegger’s account derives, in part, from the fact that he appears to use the term ‘epoch’ in different ways in different places. Ma and van Brakel contend he employs it, “sometimes more on the ontological, sometimes more on the ontic side.” This has caused some commentators, such as Ihde, to think that the current technological age can be further be subdivided into different ontological epochs. Notwithstanding these debates,

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34 Wrathall, 2011, p. 179
35 Heidegger, 1975, p. 110
36 Ma & van Brakel, 2014 p. 15
37 Ihde, 2010
the move from old to new technology, a move related to science, is one that is clearly delineated by Heidegger.

Despite this, some commentators have critically interrogated this distinction. Some of these criticisms constellate around the relationship between science and technology. In some passages, it seems that Heidegger suggests that science, particularly physics, is the basis of the new technology and other passage, he suggest that science and technology are the same (das Selbe).\textsuperscript{38} The question of the relationship between science and technology was one that concerned Heidegger right until the end of his life. In a 1976 letter, he claims that reflection upon this relation could help prepare a transformation of man’s dwelling in this world.\textsuperscript{39} The distinction between old and new technology is central to Heidegger’s view of technology as enframing. He characterizes the difference between the two in terms of the challenging nature of modern technology. While some philosophers, such as Riis,\textsuperscript{40} suggest that Heidegger’s demarcation line is overstated because it is easy to find examples of old technologies that challenge nature, be it in the form of land or humanity, slavery for example, is certainly challenging to the humanity of the slave. Heidegger tells us that the challenging of modern technology is “a challenging, which puts to nature the unreasonable demand that it supplies more energy that can be extracted and stored as such.”\textsuperscript{41} In this quote, we see two elements, the unreasonable demand or challenging of nature and the extraction and subsequent storage of energy. The upshot of focusing on these two elements is that nature enframed becomes nothing more than stored energy standing by to be ordered at will.

This challenging of new technology is linked with science, especially the “exact” science of physics. Heidegger seems to reverse the traditional or common sense view that science fosters modern technology, by claiming that, in fact, technology proceeds science. This somewhat surprising claim is understood in

\textsuperscript{38} Ma & van Brakel, 2014
\textsuperscript{39} Forman, 2007
\textsuperscript{40} Riis 2011
\textsuperscript{41} Heidegger, 1978 p.320
different ways by different commentators. For example, by Rae\textsuperscript{42} defends Heidegger by enumerating three ways in which Heidegger uses the term ‘technology,’ first, as a collection of machines and devices, second, as the “work processes”\textsuperscript{43} that create these devices and third as a mode of unconcealment or a way of disclosing being. Rae argues that Heidegger’s claim that technology comes before science, refers only to technology in this third sense. However, while it is clear that the modern devices that we commonly associate with technology flow from developments in science it is just as true that developments in physics rely on technology, and therefore, Heidegger’s use of one term for all three senses is not incidental. Rather, Heidegger uses the term technology, as he uses so other terms in an ontologically broad sense. As Wrathall points out, “Heidegger sees words in their familiar or everyday sense as an ontic, and thus derivative (abgeleitet) use which are properly understood in their authentic ontological sense.”\textsuperscript{44} This ontological sense cannot be fully exhausted by giving a taxonomy of the senses in which are brought under the term in its ontological sense, otherwise Heidegger would distinguish between the senses of terms himself. As Wrathall also points out, “he typically alerts the reader when...he is using the word in the usual sense” (im gewöhnlichen Sinne, im üblichen Sinne) or in the contemporary sense (im heutigen Sinne).”\textsuperscript{45}

We can further illuminate this point by noting that methodologically, the advances in physics rely on what some commentators, within philosophy of science such as Nancy Cartwright,\textsuperscript{46} term experimental closures. Experimental closures rely on a technological intervention. For example, the effects of gravity are isolated in a vacuum. Early examples include, Otto von Guericke’s Magdeburg Hemisphere experiments, which took place in 1671. The results obtained in the closed system of a laboratory cannot be replicated in open systems or the world at large. The experiment brackets off the subject under investigation; abstracting it from the world in which it is generally manifest.

\textsuperscript{42} Rae 2012 p.315
\textsuperscript{43} Rae 2012 p. 314
\textsuperscript{44} Wrathall, 2011 p. 2
\textsuperscript{45} Wrathall, 2011 p.2
\textsuperscript{46} Cartwright
Where a physical closure cannot be achieved, for example, in some social sciences, mathematics is employed to isolate one aspect of a phenomenon. It is the ontological claim of physics that the laws of the natural world is should be understood in terms of these mathematical or experimental closures. As physics was traditionally considered to provide the methodological standard for all other sciences including the social sciences, then this process of technologically facilitating closures becomes a way of demarcating science from other inquiries. Part of science’s remit is to decide what is properly considered science and yet the laws of physics require mathematical or experimental closures. The laws of physics are *ceteris paribus* laws; they depend on technological intervention to hold off countervailing factors. Thus, science, in a purely ontic sense, both requires and fosters further technological innovation. For this reason, science and technology develop in tandem and are inexorably linked with one other. It is not necessary, therefore, to claim that technology is prior to science only in the ontological sense.

The challenging aspect of new technology is linked with a cutting away of prior meaning rather than just brute force required to, say, deforest a swath of land or to use slaves to build a monument. To use Heidegger’s example, the dammed-up Rhine is not simply physically thwarted; its previous significance is cut away, it becomes isolated from its context, and re-presented as only a means of generating electricity. In this challenging, it loses the truth unveiled in Hölderlin’s poem. It becomes an exploitable resource, which is understood in terms of the force of water per cubic-meter, and its potential to generate power. In this way, enframing does not simply strip away prior meaning, but it replaces it with the idea that that everything in nature is stored energy or a potential resource to be used as required. Like the airliner standing by on a runway, everything is reduced to standing reserve. Science and technology cut away poietic meaning, or truth, and view phenomena merely as stored potential. Thus, a river which is not used in the generation of electricity is, nonetheless, no longer a river in any traditional sense. It is now a potential power source or, perhaps, a resource to be exploited by the tourism or the fishing industry. The natural world is, thus, recast as an interlocking sequence of laws and objects,
each element of which can be isolated and used, by employing some technological intervention. It is this that demarcates new technology from old technology.

While the revealing associated with enframing reveals things as something, namely as standing reserve, we cannot consider this revealing in terms of truth. The challenging of enframing means that “truth us driven out.” In the Origin, van Gogh's painting is chosen because it lets us know what the shoes are “in truth.” The painting is used to demonstrate the contrast with our usual circumspect engagement with tools. The peasant’s shoes are technology in the old sense. The relationship between old technology and truth is precisely what is illuminated with this example. In the account of the painting, we see that truth is a rare or uncommon occurrence, like authenticity in Being and Time, it is not usual, or even common for humans. For the most part, we are circumspect and are only pushed out of circumspection when a tool breaks, but in its broken state, the tool’s essence is still concealed. Truth only happens in a great art, when, for example, the peasant's shoes are shown in their ecstatic meaning as that which enables the peasant’s work. Enframing drives out this possibility of great art, because it reduces the way in which a thing can be unconcealed to one possibility; that of stored potential.

The movement from the old technology to the new technology is a move from truth to the validity, or the correctness associated with science. While something can be correct in the sense that a scientific fact is correct, there is no longer a way for the truth to be brought forth. As we can see the relationship between Enframing and truth is complex. Heidegger tells us “Enframing blocks the shining-forth and holding sway of truth.”47 In this way, enframing is not just one mode of unconcealment that coexists with others, enframing actually prevents other modes, such as art, from unconcealing. “Enframing threatens man with the possibility that it could be denied to him to enter into a more original revealing and hence to experience the call of a more primal truth.”48

47 Heidegger, 1978 p.333
48 Heidegger, 1978 p.333
short, while art and Enframing are both unconcealment, their relationships to truth differ greatly. What is concealed in the unconcealment of technology is the very possibility of truth. “Enframing conceals that revealing which, in the sense of poiēsis, lets what presences come forth into appearance.”49 In this way, we cannot view enframing as simply a choice about how to view the world. It is “no mere human doing.”50 Like language it is prior to us. We are already trapped within it and we can take up a relationship with it “only subsequently.”51 With respect to poetry, the consequences of such a view are obviously drastic. If art is truth and enframing drives out truth, replacing it with correctness, then art is driven out. Where the true becomes the correct, art becomes mysterious and aesthetic accounts are proffered as a way of understanding art, but these are doomed to failure. To sum up, Heidegger’s account understands technology as determining to the extent that things become standing reserve. He is clear that this mode of unconcealment prevents any other possibility of truth. The Rhine enframed is only standing reserve. It has lost the poetic significance assigned to it by Hölderlin. It can be argued that Heidegger’s account goes too far and that it does not go far enough. We will leave this aside for the time being and consider how apt Heidegger’s account is of the digital age.

4.5 The Digital

The question of whether Heidegger’s account is appropriate to the digital age is not a simple one. There are a number of factors to consider. Heidegger’s own engagement with technology obviously does not extend to the technological advancements we associate with personal computing. It culminates with a metaphysical account of the atomic. This account is ontological, in that, as Mitchell points out, “his worry is not so much over atomic destruction as the pervading threat on the nature of being, that this threat has already set into play.”52 Moreover, Heidegger’s account of technology is developed throughout his later writings from the 1930’s onward. It is important to note that in this

49 Heidegger, 1978 p.332
50 Heidegger, 1978 p.324
51 Heidegger, 1978 p.329
52 Mitchell, 2015 p. 25
work, Heidegger moves beyond the understanding of metaphysics of subjectivity. In a technological age, the object of metaphysics becomes enframed, and thus the Cartesian dichotomy is no longer an apt way to understand the technological thing, although this is an inevitable result of metaphysics. In a technological age, the thing ceases to be an object for a subject, and instead becomes standing reserve. Indeed, Heidegger’s focus on simple, everyday things in the later writing is developed in tandem with his account of technology as enframing. While the thing is ontologically understood in terms of its ‘thinging,’ a piece of standing reserve is understood, precisely in terms of its inability to thing, in the sense of opening up the fourfold. In this way, the critique of metaphysics is substantially revised in this later account of technology. Both the subject and the object become standing reserve in the age of technology and, in this way, the ontological gap between them is eroded or collapsed. As we will see, arguably, the digital is a realm where this enframement of the subject becomes obvious.

Originally, the term ‘digital’ refers primarily to data expressed by values of a physical quantity, typically numerically. It has come to be primarily associated with binary digits, and now refers to the practice of using or storing data or information in the form of signals and thus the use of computer technology. The digital age has its beginnings in the 1970s and is primarily associated with the introduction of personal computing, providing the ability to transfer large amounts of information freely and quickly via the internet. The onset of the digital age has had undeniable and profound consequences for all aspects of society. Economically, it marks the shift from post-industrial revolution industry to an information-based economy. The term ‘digital age’ like the technology it describes continues to develop and change and this makes characterization of the term a complex matter.

Of particular concern to this thesis is the rise of Web 2.0. software in around 2004/5. Often heralded as the ‘second stage’ of the development of the internet is characterized by the move from static HTML web pages to user generated, interactive content. Web 2.0. is a descriptive term, initially used in a conference
brainstorming session by industry experts in the wake of the 2001 dotcom bubble. Web 2.0 allows for a non-hierarchical collaboration, in that users can share information online, irrespective of technical knowledge. This collaboration is primarily associated with social media, but also blogging and other Web based communities. Web 2.0 is generally associated with the exponential growth of social media and a more participatory online culture especially in terms of social media. It is undeniable that every type of social relationship is affected by the rise of social networking yet philosophical responses, particularly ethical responses, tend to lag behind the speed at which the technology evolves.

Given these considerations, how are we to understand the digital age with respect to Heidegger’s analysis of technology? Some commentators, such as Ihde,54 claim that developments of the digital or information technology are revolutionary and have moved us beyond the epoch of enframing and into a new epoch of technoscience and quantum physics while others such as Ma and van Brakel55 argue against this, claiming that Heidegger speaks powerfully to contemporary technological advancement. In this section, I will defend the view that Heidegger’s account of technology is appropriate to the digital age, and that in fact, the digital represents an intensification of the metaphysics of technology.

Capurro is one theorist who uses a Heideggerian framework, in order to ground information ethics. He describes the intensification of metaphysics as digital ontology or the move towards the ability to understand things only “as far as we are able to digitize them,”56 where all possible phenomena can be recast as digital information. This movement towards digital ontology is made inevitable by certain developments in western metaphysics such as,

53 O’Reilly, 2009
54 Ihde, 2010
55 Ma & van Brakel, 2014
56 Capurro 2006, p. 179
the procedure of separation (chorzein) or abstracting points and number from "natural beings" (phsei onta) as analysed by Aristotole in his "Physics" and largely discussed by Heidegger in his "Sophists" lectures.\textsuperscript{57}

Thus, the isolating and representational tendency of technology is expressed more emphatically in the digital. According to Capurro, the intensification of metaphysics into digitalization can be understood as a further consequence of man’s forgetting temporality in the face of three-dimensional presence or “standing presence-at-hand,”\textsuperscript{58}

If the digital casting of Being by holding only to the one-dimensional sense of presence forgets the question of Being in its full three dimensionality it “changes over” into digital metaphysics.\textsuperscript{59}

In this way, Capurro argues for an ontological interpretation of the digital based on Heidegger’s account.

Both Dreyfus\textsuperscript{60} and Borgmann\textsuperscript{61} offered early responses to digital technology in terms of social networking. Their accounts primarily focused on pre-Web 2.0 social networking platforms which were dominated by chat rooms, newsgroups, online gaming and email. Borgmann, for example, considers the ethical and social consequences of social networking in terms of his concept of hyperreality. His critique focuses on how social networks may replace real-world social interactions but as these interactions are between stylized versions of the users, often involving mock identities, something essential of real-world social interactions is lost. Eventually, Borgmann predicted the “disconnected glamour” of these online personas would divert us from the realities of everyday life. Moreover, this “glamour of virtuality” is itself lacking for a number of reasons including the fact that the presence of network users is corrupted in that no one is “commandingly present” for a number of reasons

\textsuperscript{57} Capurro 2006, p. 178
\textsuperscript{58} Capurro 2006, p. 178
\textsuperscript{59} Capurro, 2006, p. 178
\textsuperscript{60} Dreyfus, 2001
\textsuperscript{61} Borgmann, 1992
including the fact that they can be deleted or blocked at will. As we have already noted, these accounts are critiqued by Feenberg\footnote{Feenberg, 1999} and Verbeek\footnote{Verbeek, 2005} among others precisely in terms of their appeal to what is understood as Heidegger’s technological determination, which they claim prevents Borgmann from recognizing the specific implications of individual technologies. Some of these criticisms have been seemingly vindicated by history because certain features Borgmann associates with hyperreality have not persisted in the wake of Web 2.0. For example, the anonymity and identity play of online chatrooms and MUDs (multi-user dungeons) gave way to social media sites, such as Facebook, where real identities are used. Moreover, Borgmann’s view that social networks lead to “immobile attachment” to online reality failed to predict current networking applications that encourage users to seek out and join friends at concerts and events, not to mention the capacity for political mobilization.

However, these types of arguments against technological determinism generally fail to recognise the work Heidegger’s ontologically broad use of the term technology does. Given this, it is more useful to view Heidegger’s account as ‘destining’ rather than determining. Once we agree that Heidegger’s account of technology is appropriate to the digital, then changes and developments in web-based specific technologies are, as we have seen relevant only, if they represent essential, epochal-defining differences. For Heidegger, the essence of new technology is enframing. Arguably, the differences between chatrooms and social media platforms are superficial and, in all its iterations, the internet can be considered an enframing technology. In other words, to defend the thesis that the digital is simply a continuation, or an intensification, of technology in Heidegger’s sense, one must argue that the differences between various pre and post Web 2.0 digital technologies are not substantive because they a share a basic ontological feature. This is true of all digital technologies and some technologies that predate the digital era i.e. in essence, television is the same as Facebook.
Thus, while users in pre-Web 2.0 chatrooms may have used aliases whereas Facebook uses real identities, it can be argued that real identities now function as empty aliases i.e. that personal identity is enframed as social media becomes ubiquitous. Arguably, it is only online identity that matters now. Leighton Evans⁶⁴ argues people in social networks are transformed into resources and, as such, they become standing reserve. Such a claim is not difficult to defend in the face of online dating sites, where the concept of swiping left or right has becomes a criterion for assessing someone's value. Moreover, as Babich⁶⁵ points out, for commentator’s such as Anders, Adorno, Horkeimer and Postman argue that there is no possibility of democracy where there is television, let alone the internet. Or indeed, as Jean Baudrillard⁶⁶ argues actual communication becomes impossible in an age of mass media because there is no longer a possibility of a real response. In addition, option for political mobilization afforded by social media has failed to materialize as a widespread force. However, the manipulation of elections using the same tools is well documented and probably widespread. However, disconcerting the reality of electoral manipulation is some commentators claim it is irrelevant because we are already too distracted to be politically motivated at all. For example, as Babich argues our dependence on technology leaves us politically impotent. From a Heideggerian perspective, it is not the potential uses of any particular technology that is the problem, but rather the way in which reality is now understood as something to be manipulated or exploited. Electoral manipulation is possible because the electorate are now revealed as standing reserve. The technology that enables this manipulation follow naturally. In this way, we can argue that any difference between digital and predigital technologies are differences of degree rather than kind, and that the digital is simply an intensification of the process of enframing, because it effectively enframes humanity itself. Of course, writing before the digital age, Heidegger saw the enframing of humanity as an integral part of technology.

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⁶⁴ Evans, 2010 p. 219
⁶⁵ Babich, 2018 p.1113
⁶⁶ Babich, 2018 p. 1113
As soon as what is unconcealed no longer concerns man even as an object, but exclusively as standing-reserve, and man in the midst of objectlessness is nothing but the orderer of the standing-reserve, then he comes to the very brink of a precipitous fall; that is he comes to the point where he himself will have to be taken as standing-reserve.

The danger associated with enframing is two-fold. First, the human being becomes standing reserve. Secondly, she begins to see everything else as a human construct, and thus only ever encounters herself. In all of this, humankind loses the connection with its deeper essence and every other possibility is driven out. In this Heidegger uncannily predicts the way in which web-based technologies continually reflect us back to ourselves, for example, in direct response advertising where increasingly widespread harvesting of seemingly innocuous data is processed in order to build models of an individual consumers so that they can be effectively targeted for advertising. The digital is the realm where everything about us including our emotional responses becomes data and therefore quantifiable. The internet is the tool that facilitates this transformation and converts us into resources, standing by for commercial or political interests to exploit.

In this way, the digital, expressed as the internet is the arena where modernist subject becomes something else. While, arguably, this could be viewed as a positive development from a Heideggerian perspective, it is not. Heidegger views the Cartesian subject/object dualism as central to metaphysics. Subjectivity is, perhaps, the paradigmatic feature of our entrenchment in metaphysics. As we saw, in Chapter 1, it is precisely this subjectivity that obscures the essence of art and prevents its authentic showing. Given this, wouldn’t Heidegger applaud something that could interrupt this metaphysical picture? No. In the digital, the subject is transformed into standing reserve. It is less than a subject, because it merely stands by in order to be exploited. Thus, while the Cartesian subject may lose its pivotal position it does so by becoming enframed, and therefore, just standing reserve in the midst of standing reserve.

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67 Heidegger, 1978 p 332
The transformation of the subject to standing reserve represents a change in the metaphysical landscape, whereby the modernist subject is reduced to mere stock, which only differs from other modes of standing reserve in that it can order them, but despite this, it is also, itself, always orderable.

It is not difficult to justify a characterization of the digital as the realm where this transformation is completely accomplished. The digital age is the time when the human being of modern subjectivity becomes a complex of consumer desires that standby to be exploited by various interests. Dreyfus and Spinosa point out,

in his final analysis of technology, Heidegger was critical of those, who still caught in the subject/object picture, thought that technology was dangerous because it embodied instrumental reason.68

Heidegger claims that the new technology becomes, “something completely different and new.”69 The change between the new and the old technology is inexorably connected with the enframing of the subject. The internet is the technology that completes this transformation. Leaving us with the question of whether this enframed subject even has the ability to formulate a response to the danger posed by technology. Different commentators approach this question in different ways. Dreyfus and Spinosa70 agree that unless we accept that subjectivity is compromised by technology, we cannot formulate a response to it. Borgmann entreats us to look away from the technological and focus instead on the “focal,” which are non-technological or traditional events such as the ritual of a family meal. But, as we will see, such action becomes less possible in the digital age where information replaces objects and the subject itself is diminished. According to Dreyfus and Spinosa, the difference between Heidegger and Borgmann lies in how we understand the technological subject. For Borgmann, even though the status of the subject is demoted from the

68 Dreyfus and Spinosa, 1997 p. 161
69 Heidegger, 1978 p. 320
70 Dreyfus and Spinosa, 1997 p. 162
“modernist subject” with its “long-term identities and commitments” to merely a collection of arbitrary desires. For Heidegger, as we have seen, the subject in the technological age does even meet the minimal criteria and instead becomes standing reserve.

4.6. Gelassenheit

If we accept that the subject is enframed by the digital then we cannot simply look away, we cannot just avoid technology, as Borgmann suggests we can. More seriously, as we have seen, we can ask whether there remains the possibility of forming a response to the digital. Heidegger describes two, interrelated ways in which to confront technology. Firstly, he invokes the possibility of Gelassenheit leading to a free relation with technology, and secondly he discusses the possibility of a poetic confrontation with technology. The poetic approach is more pertinent to the current thesis, but we will first consider the possibility of Gelassenheit. The question remains, however, does Heidegger’s insistence that technology can be confronted, conflict with his own characterization of technology as a mode of unconcealment prior to the human being? Once the human being is transformed into mere standing reserve, can it hope to confront that which initially enframed it. Can we respond to technology once we have been so profoundly altered by it? Moreover, do the continuing developments, that we term the digital, further challenge the possibility of a confrontation in a way in which Heidegger could not have fully envisioned. It is fair to ask whether Heidegger’s solutions represented a capitulation on his part, and whether this capitulation is now a more serious matter than it was at the time he was writing. Heidegger’s proposed solutions must be considered in terms of these considerations.

Despite this, in the Discourse on Thinking, we are told what is required is for meditative thinking to “awaken.” This awakening will ultimately allow for the possibility of using technical devices without falling into bondage.

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71 Dreyfus and Spinosa 1997 162
72 Heidegger 1966
We can use technical devices as they ought to be used, and also let them alone as something which does not affect our inner and real core. We can affirm the unavoidable use of technical devices, and also deny them the right to dominate us, and so to warp, confuse, and lay waste our nature.\(^{73}\)

In this way, Heidegger views meditative thinking as a way to think past the unconcealment associated with technology. However, in the digital age, this call to let technology alone must be seen in reference to devices, such as smartphones, laptops, and tablets that we keep with us at almost all times. His call to leave or let (lassen) them be is obviously pertinent. This is an age where letting devices alone becomes more and more difficult yet Heidegger tells us we must say both ‘yes’ and ‘no’\(^{74}\) to technological devices and that meditative thinking is one way to achieve this. However, we must ask is such a comportment towards technology still possible. If the digital subject has been reduced to an arbitrary collection of desires, how is it possible to prevent technology from dominating us or laying waste to our nature? Can we say either yes or no to technology when our devices continually command more of our attention in a way that Heidegger could not have predicted? We spend more and more time engaging with devices for a whole array of reasons, but whatever the reasons, we call this time “screen time.” There has been a lot of research on levels of screen time, especially among children. For example, the “Growing up in Ireland”\(^{75}\) charts the adverse effects of screen time on educational attainment. By the time these children become adults, will the potential for meditative thinking leading to *Gelassenheit* be a possibility. If not, *Gelassenheit* cannot represent an effective way to confront technology.

Despite the particular traits of digital technology, if we understand it within a Heideggerian framework, we must see it as mode of unconcealment which is always prior to us. While we are under its sway, things will show up for us as standing reserve i.e. things will be technological. Thus, an approach to

\(^{73}\) Heidegger, 1966 p.54
\(^{74}\) Heidegger, 1966 p. 54
\(^{75}\) Growing up in Ireland Report, 2019
technology based simply on limiting screen time is ultimately impotent. However, if technology reduces people’s capacity to open up meaningful engagements with each other and with things, it is reasonable to ask whether meditative thinking is still a possibility. If it is still a possibility, will it remain so for future generations? Without the possibility of meditative thinking, we cannot take up a comportment of releasement towards devices. But what exactly is meditative thinking? Heidegger contrasts it with calculative thinking. The difference between the two can be understood in terms of what is possible for each. Calculative thinking is not limited to numerical calculation but it does limit itself to “conditions that are given.”76 This means that all the options are known and set out before the calculation takes place. Because all the conditions, or premises are known from the outset, the result of the calculation is definite and predictable. Heidegger does not argue with the practical applications of such thinking but he points to its ungroundedness.

Calculative thinking computes. It computes ever new more promising and at the same time more economical possibilities. Calculative thinking races from one prospect to the next. Calculative thinking never stops, never collects itself. Calculative thinking is not meditative thinking, not thinking which contemplates the meaning which reign in everything that is.77

Calculative thinking is closed in that it is the manipulation of set of pre-existing variables, whereas meditative thinking is open because it is concerned with meanings and significations not previously set or understood. In a way that is reminiscent of the account of metaphor in the previous chapter, meditative thinking is based on previously unrecognized similarities, which link the terms of metaphoric statements. If it is possible to approach our current devices meditatively in order to release them, we do this by claiming back an “openness to the mystery.” Calculative thinking is closed and ungrounded, whereas meditative thinking is open and yet grounded. While, in the Discourse on Thinking, Heidegger grounds meditative thinking in the soil of the Swabian

76 Heidegger, 1996, p.46
77 Ibid.
homeland, it can be also seen as grounded in things such as the jug which opens up the fourfold in the essay on things. However, the point is not to return to ‘old’ objects such as the earthenware jug but precisely to approach our internet enabled devices meditatively. Given that these devices can be seen expressions of calculative thinking, the question is can we take up a meditative relationship towards them. Whether or not such a relationship is indeed possible, it is clear that we cannot return to the world of the earthenware jug. What is at stake here is not a way to return to the old world, or the old technology but rather a new “possibility of dwelling in the world in a totally different way,”\textsuperscript{78} where we can use technology without “being imperilled by it.”\textsuperscript{79}

### 4.7 A Saving Power

In the \textit{Question Concerning Technology}, we are pointing towards a saving power that is poetic in nature. Heidegger quotes Hölderlin, who tells us,

> But where the danger is, grows the saving power also.

While we know the unconcealment associated with Enframing is not just a point of view or a way of looking at the world that can be easily changed because man “merely responds to the call of unconcealment, even when he contradicts it.”\textsuperscript{80} However, we are told that though Enframing is the extreme danger, it cannot “exhaust itself solely in blocking all lighting-up of every revealing, all appearing of truth,”\textsuperscript{81} While Enframing drives out truth it cannot drive it out completely. The danger of technology is not total, within the essence of technology there is the seed its own undoing. While Enframing renders objects objectless, if we look deeply into the essence of technology, we can find this ‘saving power.’ But to do this is not a simple task. It requires preparation and a consideration of exactly what makes Enframing the essence of technology. As we have seen, it is

\textsuperscript{78} Heidegger, 1966 p.55
\textsuperscript{79} Heidegger, 1966 p.55
\textsuperscript{80} Heidegger, 1978, p.324
\textsuperscript{81} Heidegger, 1978, p.334
not essence in the sense of a universal category under which examples of technology, such as computers and sawmills, fall. In the *Question Concerning Technology*, Heidegger, links essence with destining and destining is linked to the way that Being is unconcealed in a given epoch. Just as the essence of the peasant's shoes reveals the life of the peasant and her connection with the land, destining more generally understood, is inherently linked to what it means to be human and thus to receive being. The peasant's life makes sense to her in terms of a network of significance, her world, of which the shoes are a part. Moreover, destining must be understood in terms of two elements, language and historicity. As we know, the danger of technology is not the consequence of using technological devices but rather it has to be understood in terms of language and historicity. Consequently, the saving power must also be understood in terms of these elements.

In short, Heidegger is telling us that the essence of technology is its ability to unconceal being in this epoch. To harness the saving power Heidegger extolls us to "look with yet clearer eyes into the danger."\(^8^2\) The challenging of Enframing blocks the granting of *poiēsis* but it cannot block it altogether,

> the saving power lets man see and enter into the highest dignity of his essence.  
> The dignity lies in keeping watch over the unconcealment-and with it, from the first, the concealment- of all essential unfolding on this earth.\(^8^3\)

The saving power comes from keeping watch over the unconcealment. What is required is,

> essential reflection upon technology and decisive confrontation with it [this] must happen in a realm that is, on the one hand, akin to the essence of technology and, on the other, fundamentally different from it... Such a realm is art.\(^8^4\)

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\(^8^2\) Heidegger, 1978, p.334  
\(^8^3\) Heidegger, 1978, p.337  
\(^8^4\) Ibid.
In this way, there is a sort of reciprocity between art and Enframing, just as Enframing makes it difficult to account for art, because it drives out truth, an understanding of the essence of technology must happen within the realm of art. The essence of technology must be captured in art. While technology drives out art as truth, it cannot drive it out altogether. There is truth of technology even though this truth is related to the technology’s concealment of truth. We must understand this truth in order to protect ourselves from its danger. For Heidegger, the possibility of art is seriously threatened by danger of technology, it is driven out by calculative thinking but it still remains because calculative thinking cannot completely exhaust thinking. From a Heideggerian perspective, the role of art in this age, is to bring the essence of technology into view.

4.8 The Middle Voice

No matter how we approach the dangers of technology, it is clear that the issue cannot be understood from within the existing metaphysical framework. This is simply because, for Heidegger, technology is metaphysics. While the new technology, particularly the digital, may mark a departure from the metaphysics of subjectivity, it is still a progression of this prior metaphysics. The digital, from this view is simply the current manifestation of metaphysics. For this reason, we cannot think past the danger of technology, from within the metaphysical view, which engendered it in the first place. In order to deal with the problems associated with technology, we have to address the full scope of what is covered by Heidegger’s ontologically broad use of the term. As we have seen, the danger of technology is not that our children spend too much time in front of screens, but rather, it is a consequence of the technological understanding of being, which will ultimately change what our children are. From within the metaphysical view, we cannot take action in the form of policies that limit, for example, screen time. We cannot simply look away and focus on something else and expect to resolve the danger. First, we have to understand the truth of technology as the current epoch. Some commentators suggest that the middle voice may provide a way to get beyond the metaphysics
of technology. Scott, for example, heralds the middle voice as a step towards the end of metaphysics. Theorists, such as Scott, follow Heidegger by acknowledging that this epoch is characterized in terms of a number of binary dualities such as; subjects and objects, form and matter, activity and passivity. Along with Heidegger, they hold that, from within this framework, we can only strengthen the hold that this metaphysics has over us. In order to release ourselves from the grip of metaphysics, we need to find ways to transcend these metaphysical dualities. The middle voice offers a possible way of overcoming the active/passive distinction. It does this by offering third option between action and non-action. In this way, it provides us with a potential way to undermine the conceptual machinery of metaphysics. While, it can be argued that such an account fails to fully recognize the distinction drawn by the later Heidegger between the old and the new technology, where some of these distinctions are collapsed. The middle voice still has value for the current discussion, because collapse of metaphysical distinction in technology is not an overcoming of these distinctions. While the literature on the middle voice points to an overcoming of the active/passive distinction, we shall see in the next chapter, the digital collapses this distinction without overcoming it.

The middle voice is an antiquated verb form, uncommon in modern languages, where the active and the passive voices dominate. To illustrate these different voices, consider the active statement “Paul made a mistake.” It follows the subject-verb-object sequence, which is considered as basic to modern languages. Such a statement is also paradigmatic of Cartesian dualism. As Heidegger points out, the Cartesian mind/matter distinction is self-evident precisely because it is expressed in this basic sentence structure, where an agent acts on something else. An example of a passive voice statement is “a mistake was made.” In this formulation, the agent is no longer present but is still implied. Thus, “a mistake was made (by Paul).” However, in the middle voice formulation “mistakes were made” even this implied agent is no longer present.

Scott, 1989
A statement's voice is carried by the verb form. There is some confusion in English because the same form of the verb is used for both passive and middle voice formulations. While there are many instances of middle voiced formulations in modern languages these are generally interpreted as passive, where an agent is still implied. A good example are the statements of science, “prices rise as quantity demanded increases” or “metal expands when heated.” Such statements are technically middle voiced, but they are generally understood in terms of the actions of agents or of natural laws. Such examples are also transitive, in that they involve a direct object. Another common, contemporary example of middle voice statement, are reflexive statements such as “I wash myself.”

There is, however, a form of middle voiced verb use that was common in ancient languages such as Greek or Sanskrit, but that is almost impossible to find in modern languages, namely the non-reflexive, intransitive middle voice. Charles Scott gives us examples from Sanskrit.

In the case of the intransitive verb, the active of drmhati, for example, means “makes (something) firm.” The intransitive middle drmhate means “becomes firm,” or, we might say firming comes of its own action.” In the case of the middle voice of ‘die’ (mriyate) we translate dying occurs (of itself). 86

As Scott points out, we tend to understand these examples in a quasi-self-reflexive way.

We are inclined by our structures of expression to speak of an action doing something in relation to itself and thereby indicate an incipient subject-relation in the verbs action. 87

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86 Scott, 1989 p. 747
87 Ibid.
These examples clearly resonate with Heidegger’s attempt to use language in such a way as to try to wriggle free of the metaphysical restraints imposed on it. In a way that chime with the examples above, Heidegger tells us that things “thing” and that the nothing “noths.” Scott suggests that we can understand this Heideggerian terminology in terms of the middle voice and, in this way, highlights the importance of the middle voice in challenging modern subjectivity. Moreover, he argues that the tendency to interpret these Heideggerian statements in terms of an incipience subject/object relation has led to confusion in understanding Heidegger. For example, Moore argues that the turn in Heidegger has been mistakenly interpreted “as a turn from the active voluntarist resoluteness of Being and Time and the writings of the rectorship to the passive, submissive releasement of his later works.” Rather than viewing the earlier works as active and the later works passive, Moore suggests that we understand the entire corpus as middle voiced. In this way, he maintains that “Heidegger’s appreciation of the middle voice stands as a significant contribution to efforts to think outside of metaphysical binaries such as activity and passivity.”

While the middle voice is primarily a grammatical construction, philosophers are quick to point out its significance at the level of discourse or metaphysics. Lewin, for example, suggests that the middle voice is a “linguistic mode that places agency between activity and passivity” and Scott, in the influential paper *The Middle Voice of Metaphysics*, talks about middle voiced events such as the staging of Oedipus the King as described by Jean-Pierre Verant. This staging of this play is middle voiced, because the ambiguity within the play mirrors the ambiguity in the situation of its audience. What makes such events middle voiced according to Scott their ability to express “multiple values.” Scott claims that the use of the non-reflexive, intransitive middle voice allows a “word with several, even countervailing meanings” to be expressed without a narrowing down of these meanings. Middle voiced events are events which

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88 Moore, 2017 p. 26
89 Moore, 2017 p. 27
90 Lewin, 2012 p. 1
91 Scott, 1989 p. 747
allow a similar excess of meaning to come to rest. We can draw a parallel between this discussion of the middle voice and Heidegger's account of metaphor in the preceding chapter. Scott's claim that an event is middle voiced by virtue of the fact that it embodies multiple meaning, resonates with the account of metaphor. We can understand this by noting that Heidegger's seeming metaphoric language is used precisely because it opens up multiple meanings. An aesthetic view of metaphor operates by trying to shut down this ‘excess’ of meaning by viewing them as figurative. This is similar to the way that the middle-voiced expression in modern languages tend to be understood in terms of an implied subject/object relation. Metaphysics can be understood in terms of the tendency to shut down the significance of things, and to understand them as self-contained, discrete objects.

For our present purposes, however, it is enough to note that without getting beyond metaphysics, we cannot get beyond technology. In order to develop a free relation to technology, it is essential to overcome of the dualism of activity and passivity. Scott locates the discussion of the middle voice within a discussion of metaphysics he asks “[c]an Metaphysics come to an end? What could its ending mean? Is its ending found in the questionableness of its foundations?”92 It is beyond the scope of this thesis to fully consider these questions, but they do point to the fact that we cannot address technology in the sense of devices and processes without addressing the metaphysical binaries that are continuous with them.

The following chapters question whether we can see evidence of this Heideggerian “essential reflection” in contemporary poetic movements. In particular, we will consider those movements which deal explicitly with technology, specifically digital poetry and post-internet poetry. We have already seen in Chapter 4, that for Heidegger, great poetry must transcend metaphysics. When Heidegger speaks of great poetry or indeed, Gelassenheit he is attempting to speak beyond the technological into the realm of the poetic. One way to grasp
this possibility is in terms of the middle voice.

4.9 Conclusion

Heidegger's ontological use of the term technology captures technology's power to unconceal reality as standing reserve. This power is not separated from the devices and processes we normally associate with the term, but is, rather, continuous with them. Technology is the epoch we are living through now, and thus, it is a way of unconcealing reality. In particular, Heidegger's account gives us a way to understand how technology is intensified in the digital. Technology, unlike other modes of unconcealment, reveals without bringing forth. It is not poietic. While the great art of the previous age, had the ability unconceal the essence of something by bringing us out of our usual circumspection i.e. to bring something forth in its essence. This possibility is now past or, at least, under serious threat. The reason for this is that technology does not bring forth but rather it unconceals everything, including the human being, as orderable, and endlessly replaceable. In this way, it barely makes sense to ask what something is its essence. Given this, we must be critical with respect to Heidegger's claim that we can still confront technology. However, Heidegger offers us two options Gelassenheit or the poetic. In the rest of this thesis, we will examine, in particular, how the poetic may confront digital technology.
Chapter 5: Towards An Ontology Of Digital Poetry

5.1 Introduction

As we have seen in Chapter 2, Heidegger’s places poetry at the centre of his account of language. Language is that which makes things manifest, and notwithstanding language’s tendency to conceal, poetic language brings things to manifestation in the most authentic way possible. However, contemporary poetry’s ability to authentically uncover is subject to the influence of technology. In this way, Heidegger’s accounts of poetry and technology offer us a conceptual framework with which to view movements in contemporary poetry. If, as we have proposed in Chapter 4, the digital is the realm in which technology, as the greatest danger, becomes more deeply entrenched, can we see the effects of this danger in contemporary poetry? In short, if technology is the way that things are, and language is that which makes them manifest, how is the language of poetry affected by digital technology. In this chapter, we begin our investigation of these question in terms of contemporary poetry. While Heidegger describes poetry and technology as two opposing modes of unconcealment, he also claims, that neither can fully escape the influence of the other. Art is threatened by the challenging nature of technology, and yet the dangers of technology can be revealed by the saving power of the poetic.

It is a banality to note that digital technology now extends into practically every aspect of our lives, including the arts and poetry. For good or for ill, poetry has now become inexorably interwoven with technology. Poets have certainly critically confronted the technological as subject matter, but technology is also used in the composition and disseminating of poetry. In an age where natural language generators are being ‘taught’ to compose poems, do we need to concede that Heidegger’s bleak warning, with respect to technology, did not go far enough, or does Heidegger’s distain of the technological seems ridiculous, when we consider the fact that anyone who writes a poem using word
processing software had unwittingly enframed the poem, by using a technology based on the exact science of physics?

Given these Heideggerian considerations, it would seem fruitful to examine the cultural practices that explicitly combine the digital and the poetic. In this chapter, I will consider digital poetry. I will give a brief description of the difficulties inherent in defining and categorizing digital poetry, given the flexibility and variability of technology used by digital poets. I will consider digital poetry in terms of Heidegger's categories of ‘world’ and ‘earth.’ In the *Origin*, the most contemporary example of an artwork used is van Gogh’s painting of the peasants’ shoes. The painting is used to demonstrate how art allows us to know the shoes in their essence, which in the case of the shoes, is their *equipmentality*. The shoes depicted are clearly an example of old technology. It is interesting to ask what, if any, contemporary art work, would give us the essence of the new technology, especially as technology has become digital. It is clear that, Heidegger’s account of technology can be understood in terms of art. We are told in the *Question Concerning Technology*, that technology is the realm in which truth is driven out, and as a consequence of this, the nature of art becomes mysterious. I will attempt to extend Heidegger’s account into the realm of the digital, by asking what prevents technological devices or processes from functioning as the earth of poetry. To these ends, I will compare how earth operates, in traditional and in contemporary poetic modalities. I will show how the earth of digital poem operates, and argue that because of its enframing essence, digital technologies do not conceal, and therefore unconceal, in the manner of traditional poetry, and that this seriously impinges upon or prevents any possibility of truth disclosure. Heidegger exalts poetry because it is a language based art form, and we will investigate how language is presented in digital poetry. Borrowing from video game theory, I will consider digital poems as actions. Heidegger tells us that poetry has nothing to do with action. In fact, it is this that makes poetry an “innocent” occupation. The innocence of poetry, is this respect, can be related to how it is

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1 Heidegger, 1978, p. 307
understood in aesthetic accounts. Digital poetry represent a move from passivity to action, but it fails to transcend the active/passive duality of metaphysics, and it cannot be described as middle voiced. In short, this chapter will ask can we consider digital poetry act as a Heideggerian confrontation with technology, or is it a realm where the poetic is further concealed by technology.

5.2 Can the digital gather the fourfold?

As we have seen, if we begin with a broadly Heideggerian characterization of the digital, there are a number of possible ways to confront it. Of course, these depend on how we interpret Heidegger's account. In terms of digital poetry, the question becomes whether it represents a way in which we can develop a free relation to the digital, or simply an expression of how the digital drives out poetic truth. We have examined a number of possible responses to technology and now we will see how they inform an analysis of digital poetry. In particular, we will investigate the views of Borgmann, and Dreyfus, and Spinosa in this respect. Notwithstanding the subtleties of their respective positions, we can understand them as different responses to technology. While these differences are possibly differences of degree rather than of kind, they have substantive consequences for an account of digital poetry. Borgmann suggests that we should look away from technology towards focal practices, while Dreyfus and Spinosa suggest that we affirm technological devices themselves. These positions differ from Heidegger's solution in that Heidegger asks us to both affirm and negate technology. We will ask whether digital poetry offers a way towards this.

While Borgmann appreciates the advantages that some technological devices offer, as we have seen, he suggests, we can ameliorate the influence of technology by looking away from it and turning our attention to focal practices such as the rituals associated with a family meal. From such a perspective, digital poetry seems like a movement in the wrong direction. Rather, it would seem that the act of opening a book and reading a poem could be seen as exactly the sort of focal practice that could reorient us away from technology. From a
Heideggerian perspective, the obvious problem with this type of solution lies in the assumption that we can turn away from technology in the first place. If technology is prior to us, it is not amenable to our will, and therefore not something we can wish away. The idea that we can simply turn towards focal practices, may actually blind us to the detrimental effects of technology and lull us into believing that we can sidestep its influence. We may seek out authentic experiences, but these are provided to us by market forces, and are ultimately kitsch, for example, a pub rebranded as a traditional Irish pub.

Alternatively, we have seen that Dreyfus and Spinosa suggest that we learn to affirm technology itself. This seems a more hopeful candidate for developing a Heideggerian free relation to technology, and a way to philosophically defend digital poetry. Heidegger’s free relation involves tells us saying both “yes” and “no” to technology, we cannot simply turn away from it. Affirming technology may seem a better approach, but how do Dreyfus and Spinosa propose we affirm technology? Rather than becoming standing reserve, they suggest, we become disclosers of technology. “We must first get a clear picture of exactly what it is like to be turned into resources responding to each situation according to whichever of our disaggregated skills is solicited most strongly” and then learn to affirm this state of affairs. Tellingly, the example they give of how “mortals” can “morph” in this way involves a “pack of today’s teenagers” buying a CD. When a group of teenagers want to get a new CD, the one with the car (driving skills and capacity), will be the most important until they get to the store, then the one with the money (purchasing skills and capacity) will lead, and then when they want to play the CD, the one with the CD player (CD playing skills and capacity) will be out front.

Of course, buying a CD is now a thing of the past. The only skill required now to acquire music, is the skill to search the preferred tracks on Spotify and press play. Even this is not truly required as Spotify will suggest music and the preferred way to listen to music is though earphones that minimize the need for

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2 Dreyfus and Spinosa, 1997 p. 170
3 Ibid.
the social interaction required to buy the CD. The notion that we can easily affirm technology by becoming disclosers of it, seems to underestimate the power and momentum of digital technology. The example of buying a CD, only serves to demonstrate how the rapid evolution of the digital can overwhelm any attempts to disclose it.

Wrathall⁴ offers another possible explanation of why Dreyfus and Spinosa’s solution is doomed to failure. This attempt to affirm technology cannot work because it does not fully acknowledge the essential role of the fourfold, especially the divinities, in Heidegger’s account. Although the fourfold can be a challenging aspect of the Heidegger’s thought, some theorists such as, Mitchell claim that it is “nothing less than the inauguration of Heidegger’s later thinking.”⁵ In the later work, Heidegger becomes more focused on everyday things. A thing is the thing it is, because it ‘things,’ i.e. it opens up the fourfold. In short, simple things are inherently relational. This is not an account of what things can do i.e. things can relate, but rather an ontological account of what they are: A thing is not something that possess the ability to extend past ‘itself’ in a system of relations, but rather, a thing can only be with respect to these relations.

As Mitchell puts it, “thanks to the fourfold, these things unfold themselves ecstatically, opening relations with the world beyond them.”⁶ Things in this sense are contrasted with the things of metaphysics which are “unworlded.” We can understand this in terms of Heidegger’s notion of finitude. For Heidegger, Mitchell tells us, “[f]initude is a kind of relational radiance.” The finitude of things can only be understood in terms of something “beyond” the thing. This beyond is not the “empty void” of metaphysics but rather, it is capable of “transmitting these radiant relations.”⁷ In this way, something is ecstatic, in a Heideggerian sense, when it is inexorably connected to this beyond, so as to be

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⁴ Wrathall, 2011
⁵ Mitchell, 2015 p.3
⁶ Mitchell, 2015 p.3
⁷ Mitchell, 2015 p.5
“unthinkable apart from it.” We cannot think the thing without this ecstatic relationality, and the thing, in its turn, helps to generate this relationality. Things are only the things they are, in terms of this relationality, and it is precisely this relationality that is challenged by technology.

It is important to note that the account of technology, and the account of things thinging are developed simultaneously by the later Heidegger, and they represent a progression on his thinking in terms of objectivity. Technology is, for Heidegger, an epoch where being is abandoned. In this time, objects cease to be objects, and they merely “put on a performance of objectivity.” Objectivity and representation are modes of unconcealment associated with modernity, but towards the end of his writing life, Heidegger views these as further corrupted as the standing reserve becomes the dominant mode of being.

While affirming technological devices is central to Heidegger’s account of Gelassenheit. It is unclear whether a technological device, or indeed a digital device, can ‘thing’ in this sense. Things thing, for Heidegger, when they gather the fourfold of earth, sky, divinities and mortals. While this idea is certainly strange to contemporary philosophy, as we have seen, the gathering of the fourfold is a central idea in Heidegger’s later philosophy, and one that cannot be simply glossed over without doing considerable violence to his position. Wrathall suggests that Dreyfus and Spinosa’s understand this idea metaphorically and that such a metaphorical reading cannot support their entreaty to affirm technology.

Dreyfus and Spinosa claim that when Heidegger speaks of the fourfold,

his thinking draws on Hölderlin’s difficult poetic terms of art; yet what Heidegger means has its own coherence so long as we keep the phenomenon of a thing thinging before us.10

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8 Mitchell, 2015 p.7
9 Mitchell, 2015 p.27
10 Dreyfus and Spinosa, 1997 p. 166
In this way, they describe the divinities in a way that reigns in Heidegger’s seeming overblown, metaphysical language. They claim the language is poetic; that it makes sense on its own terms. While we can recognize the special quality of a focal event, such as a family meal. We need not take Heidegger entirely seriously, when he suggests that the divine is an actual part of this event. In this way, Heidegger’s ascription of a divine aspect to a thing or an event is not literal, and rather refers to the tendency such events have to be graceful, and to have a momentum of their own.

When a focal event such as a family meal is working to the point it has a particular integrity, one feels extraordinarily in tune with all that is happening, a special graceful ease takes over, and events seem to unfold of their own momentum – all combining to make the moment more centered and more a gift. 11

The divine aspect of a family meal is the feeling that a gift has been bestowed on the occasion. While saying grace was the traditional way to acknowledge the gift of a family meal, even in the absence of the prayer there is the feeling of a gift. This feeling is what, according to Borgmann, creates a community from strangers, for example, in the context of baseball game. So for Dreyfus and Spinosa, the divinities provide something that is, somehow, beyond the efforts of those involved in the focal practice and is dependent on the context in question. In this way the divinities, as understood by Dreyfus and Spinosa, can be seen as simply a feeling of community or gratitude but, as we have seen in the above example of teenagers buying a CD, this “feeling” is subject to erosion from the continuing progression of technology. It is not difficult to imagine a situation where a family meal becomes a rare situation and one that is increasingly encroached up by technology.

Contrary to this, Wrathall gives a much more literal account of the fourfold. In fact, he claims that Heidegger’s describes the fourfold generally, and the

11 Dreyfus and Spinosa, 1997 p. 167
divinities in particular in an “infuriatingly literal fashion.” While acknowledging that the metaphorical reading is “certainly preferable” to most contemporary philosophers, Wrathall’s focus on Heidegger’s seemingly literal account is compelling. As Wrathall points out, there are many instances of very literal accounts of the fourfold by Heidegger; the earth of a jug, for example, is earth. The jug gathers the sky by holding and pouring the wine that results from the action of the rain on the earth. Passages such as this are meant “quite literally” according to Wrathall. Moreover, he claims, metaphorical readings “do violence to the text.” In fact, according to Wrathall, the sky is the sky, the earth is the earth used make a jug, we are mortals, and the divinities “are divine beings.” Without the ability to gather each element of the fourfold in this literal sense, things become meaningless and inauthentic.

However, we cannot read Wrathall’s account without acknowledging that, for Heidegger, it is metaphysics that imposes the literal/figurative distinction onto reality. It is wrong to say Heidegger’s account is mostly metaphorical or mostly literal, when it is precisely these metaphysical categories that are questioned by Heidegger. These literal examples of the fourfold resonate with the thinking metaphor from the Principle of Reason discussed in Chapter 3, where thinking is described as an extension of hearing. According to Heidegger, there is no cut off point after which it becomes figurative to call thinking a hearing. Similarly, the earth is that which the jug, as thing, is concealed. It is from the earth of its clay that the jug performs its task of holding and pouring wine, in this way it mirrors the earth from which the vine grows but not in a metaphorical way; the wine is from the sky and the earth. For a thing to thing, all this significance is apparent, implicitly or explicitly.

In terms of poetry, greatness is achieved by transcending the boundary between the sensuous and the non-sensuous. In a technological age, this limit is
pulled tightly around the object itself so that the sensuous is understood in a very minimal way; the jug is represented by or framed within its measurable physical qualities, its monetary value, or its orderability and exploitability. As the technological can only deal with things in this way, the figurative becomes the repository of anything beyond these brute physical or calculatable dimensions. Poetry is the realm in which this boundary is transcended, or at least shown as arbitrary. In enframing, the earth in its role as material, sucks up the other elements of the fourfold. The technological jug is a replaceable object that serves a simple purpose of pouring a liquid. It is earth, but in such a way that conceals itself and everything else, except for its status as standing reserve, which is challenged forth from it. In this way, it cannot thing. The poetic is the realm in which the jug, or in this case the technological device, is reconnected to the sky, the earth, mortal and divinity, if such a reconnection is possible. In this way, Heidegger’s account of the fourfold should not be understood as either literal or metaphorical because our line of demarcation between the two is a driving force of the metaphysics, a historical force that is transcended by but culminates in the digital.

If a digital poem can function as a way of developing a free relation to digital technology, then it must thing. We cannot simply understanding this thinging in terms of the figurative. In order to thing a digital poem must open up the fourfold. If a digital poem can do this then it provides us with a way to affirm digital technology, and if it cannot we must ask what is it about digital technology that prevents this world-opening. In order to investigate these questions, we will begin with an ontological analysis of both traditional and digital poetry. However, because this thesis concerns art, specifically poetry, the most crucial aspect of the fourfold for the present purpose, is that of earth. I will focus on the account of earth in terms of the work, as it is presented in the *Origin*.

As we saw in the previous chapter, Heidegger’s critical attention is focused on the literal/figurative distinction, which he associates with metaphysics. In the *Origin*, as we shall see, Heidegger associates with metaphysics with a number of
conceptual dualisms, in particular, the subject/object dichotomy but also and relatedly, the notion that an artwork work is comprised of a material substructure to which aesthetic qualities adhere. Heidegger replaces this conception of the work with his account of world and earth and the strife between them. In the later work, earth is also one of the fourfold and therefore, a part of what it means for a thing to thing. The account of things, thinging, which comes after the *Origin*, is developed simultaneously with the account of technology. The thinging thing is contrasted with the technological thing, which is unworlde. Heidegger’s account of things is developed further as he comes to understand technology in terms of the danger it poses. Technology is an intensification of metaphysics. The conceptual dualisms of metaphysics are eroded in technology, but they are not overcome. In short, in the *Origin*, Heidegger uses the categories of world and earth to critique elements of metaphysics but later on, he uses the fourfold as a foil against which we can understand the how technology enframes the object, rendering it as standing reserve. In this way, it is important to note that the discussion of earth in the *Origin* is not identical to the discussion of earth as a part of the fourfold.

### 5.3 The Earth of an Art Work

To understand if or how the digital can operate as the earth of a poem, we need first examine how Heidegger understands earth in terms of the art of previous epochs. In the essay *The Origin of the Work of Art*, Heidegger attempts to give us an account of what art is, or more specifically what great art is. As we have seen, he contrasts his view with what he holds to be the dominant aesthetic view where an artwork is viewed as a thing, to which aesthetic qualities are somehow attached. While a painting is a piece of stretched canvas, with pigment applied to it, if we focus of this element we miss the point. The aesthetcian looks past the canvas and considers the work in terms of aesthetic categories, such as beauty. From this view, Heidegger tells us “the work makes public something other than itself; it manifests, something other.”

\[17\] Heidegger, 1971 p.19
is brought together (sumballein) with the work. The work is, then, a symbol bringing a thing, and something other together. Heidegger claims, “Allegory and symbol provide the conceptual frame within whose channel of vision the art work has for a long time been characterized.”

For Heidegger, the aesthetic view is problematic for a number of reasons. First and foremost, it is based on philosophical notions of thinghood that are inadequate for artworks. If we begin an analysis of art with an unexamined presupposition about what a thing is, then we get off on the wrong foot straight away. Things come with a lot of philosophical baggage. According to Heidegger, we tend to see “mere” things or things in an “almost pejorative sense,” as paradigmatic of thinghood, or even of existence more generally. To understand the work, we must first get beyond the idea of a thing that is basic to metaphysical world view of modernity. This metaphysical view, sees an art work is a simply another thing, but one with aesthetic qualities. Aesthetics, as defined by Heidegger, fails to make this move beyond metaphysics.

Heidegger tells a philosophical story about the shift from the Greek Hupokeimenon/ta sumbebekota to the Latin subjectum/accidens. This move, he maintains, conceals a shift from understanding things as beings, to an understanding of things as substances with accidental qualities. The Latin concept of thing mirrors the basic propositional structure of a sentence; a structure that allows some quality to be predicated to a subject. The question of which came first the structure of propositions, or the concept of things is unanswerable, according to Heidegger. However, the relation between them makes this thing-concept appear self-evident to us. Despite this, Heidegger considers it “rash” because it “would have to explain how first such a transposition of propositional structure into the thing is supposed to be possible, without the thing being already visible.” Moreover, such a concept of thinghood cannot capture what is particular about given things, because it

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18 Heidegger, 1971 p.20
19 Heidegger, 1971 p.21
20 Heidegger, 1971 p.24
applies itself equally to every sort of thing and in this way it does violence to all things because it does not “lay hold of the thing in its own being”\textsuperscript{21} as van Gogh’s painting of the shoes does.

Similarly, if we conceive of the thing as \textit{aistheton} “that which is perceptible by the senses,”\textsuperscript{22} we hit another problem. Harking back to Heidegger’s account of the categorial intuition, we are told that it is not sensations we encounter, but things. We do not perceive a “throng of sensations” but we hear the sound of a car approaching. Moreover, this account, like the concept of thing as a bearer or traits, captures all things and none. “In both interpretations the thing vanishes.”\textsuperscript{23}

Heidegger, then, considers the things as matter (\textit{hule}) and form (\textit{morphe}), a conceptual framework with obvious attractions for those interested in artworks. However, these “hackneyed” concepts again, allow everything to be subsumed under them. Moreover, Heidegger links the thing as formed matter with equipment, rather than artworks. Historically, it may seem that the concept of formed matter originates from the “workly character of the art work” rather than the “thingly character of the thing,”\textsuperscript{24} but Heidegger offers an alternative story.

Form as shape is not the consequence here of a prior distribution of the matter. The form, on the contrary, determines the arrangement of the matter. Even more, it prescribes in each case the kind and the selection of the matter-impermeable for a jug, sufficiently hard for an ax, firm yet flexible for shoes. The interfusion of form and matter prevailing here is, moreover, controlled beforehand by the purpose served by jug, ax, shoes.\textsuperscript{25}

It is usefulness that, according to Heidegger, underlies the notion of things as formed matter. Equipment is formed to do something, and so the

\textsuperscript{21} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{22} Heidegger, 1971 p.25
\textsuperscript{23} Heidegger, 1971 p.26
\textsuperscript{24} Heidegger, 1971 p.27
\textsuperscript{25} Heidegger, 1978 p.154
concepts of form and matter do not precede equipment but rather they flow from it. In this way, we cannot clump all things together under the banner of formed matter. Instead we have a continuum, with the fact of being produced by humans on one end, and self-sufficiency on the other. Equipment is midway. Like the artwork, equipment is made, but unlike equipment, the artwork is self-sufficient in the way that a “mere thing,” such a boulder, is self-sufficient. The dominance of the concepts of matter and form are too clumsy to recognize these distinctions. Moreover, they fail to recognize how close equipment is to us while, at the same time, failing to recognize that they have made equipment the very paradigm of thinghood. Yet, “the interpretation of the “thing” by means of matter and form, whether it remains medieval or becomes Kantian-transcendental, has become current and self-evident.”

The important point, here, is that all three concepts of the thing represent an encroachment of the individual thing. A given thing, first, loses its unique thinghood, and then it becomes hidden under a layer of conceptual analysis. Whether, we see the thing as a bearer of traits, a gestalt, or as matter and form, we “assault” it. “This preconception shackles reflection on the being of any given entity.” When we try to understand a given thing, we become immediately concerned with general thingness. We lose the thing under consideration. This philosophical failure is not accidental; it stems from the things themselves. In some sense, the thing refuses us. It is part the very nature of things to thwart our efforts to understand them. The individual thing, in its self-refusal, resists us. This self-refusal fuels philosophy’s failure to apprehend the individual thing. Even if we manage to leave aside the usual “assault,” we are still confronted with the entities own self-refusal.

Famously, Heidegger claims where philosophy fails, art has traditionally succeeded. The self-refusal of the peasant’s shoes yields in van Gogh’s

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26 Heidegger, 1971 p.29
27 Heidegger, 1971 p. 30
painting. It is only in the painting that we come to see the equipmental nature of equipment in its self-refusal. The shoe’s self-refusal is linked to their usefulness. Like the hammer in *Being and Time*, the shoes disappear into usefulness as they are worn. However, in the *Origin*, there is not the language of ready-to-hand and present-at-hand. Rather, we are told that, “This equipment belongs to the earth, and it is protected in the world of the peasant woman.” It is the painting and Heidegger’s poetic description of it, which brings the shoes “out of this protected belonging.” In this way, the “equipment itself rises to its resting within itself.” In simply terms, we do not reflect on equipment when we use it, and thus we do not see it in its essence. The work brings us “somewhere else than we usually tend to be.” This somewhere else is in the vicinity of truth.

For Heidegger, we cannot locate the reality of the work in its ‘thing.’ The reality of van Gogh’s painting does not reside in canvas and paint, as long as we understand this as equipment. “[W]hat we tried to treat as the most immediate reality of the work, it’s thingly substructure, does not belong to the work in anyway at all.” This is, in part, because we see things as equipment, and the work cannot be understood as a “piece of equipment that is fitted out in addition with an aesthetic value that adheres to it.” In this way, Heidegger discards the traditional aesthetic account of art as *sumballein*. The work cannot be understood as two distinct elements that are somehow gathered together. Moreover, this does not lead to a denial of what is ‘thingly’ in the work. Heidegger is nudging us towards a new understanding of the material substructure of the work and the relationship between it and nature of the work itself. As we have seen, in

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28 There is some debate on the relationship between Heidegger’s treatment of things in *Being and Time* and the later account. See, for example, Mitchell (2015, p. 12) who argues that there is a fundamental difference to the way in which Heidegger approaches things in the later period. Specifically, he claims, that *Being and Time* still objectifies the thing in terms of its status as equipment, which is subordinated to the will of Dasein. In this way Being and Time “participates in the general ignorance of things endemic to the history of philosophy.”

29 Heidegger, 1971 p.33

30 Ibid.

31 Heidegger, 1971 p.35

32 Heidegger, 1971 p.37

33 Heidegger, 1971 p.38
Chapter 1, this new understanding is concerned with truth. In the same way, as we force a poem into a metaphysical framework when we view it in terms of metaphor, viewing the work via a “preconceived framework” blocks our access to the truth of the work. Not only does the aesthetic approach misunderstand the nature of the work, it actually prevents us from seeing the truth, that is the nature of the work. The truth of the work is linked inexorably, but not reducible to its context. Heidegger begins his discussion of the ‘world’ and ‘earth’ of art with a discussion of “world withdrawal” or “world decay.” Once a work is removed from its context, either by being physically removed or by the passing of time, its status as truth is eroded. Great art is epoch defining, rather than the consequence of its historical context, and once this epoch wanes the truth of the art is lost.

In any epoch, the artwork is the exemplary thing. In the work we find the “sheltering agent” of earth; the world that is set up by the earth. The artworks exists as the strife between the two. Such an account is incompatible with a representational account of art. The statue in the temple is the god and not a representation. In a tragedy, “nothing is staged or displayed theatrically,” it is not something “referred to” but rather something experienced directly. Much as we do not encounter a thing as gestalt of sense datum, we do not experience great art as representation. “To be a work is to set up a world.” The relationship between earth and world is one of “setting up.” The earth sets up the “ever non-objective” worlding of the world. Rather than the work being symbol or representation, it is paradigmatic of truth. The earth of the work sets up the world, which can be understood as unconcealment. Thus, “space” is made by the work in the sense of Spielraum. The shoes are part of the peasant woman’s world. They facilitate her work, and her understanding of her life. The painting of the shoes opens the space to view the shoes in

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34 Heidegger, 1971 p. 41
35 Heidegger, 1971 p.42
36 Heidegger, 1971 p.43
their essence, they appear from out of their “covert” usefulness. The work discloses, while equipment, in its use, disappears\textsuperscript{37}.

As we saw in Chapter 1, the role of the artist in making the work is one of winning the open area or of making space. As different art forms involve different processes, the role of earth in the winning of the open space is crucial. “Earth is that which comes forth and shelters.” This happens in two ways. First, earth allows “historical man” to ground his dwelling in the world, and second, it sets up the work of art. What happens within the artwork is a reflection of the world-forming activity of human life. The work is not a thing that cannot be adequately captured by traditional philosophical concepts, rather it is, in microcosm, the activity of all historical humanity. In addition, the work allows “\textit{the earth to be an earth}.”\textsuperscript{38} Earth is not something from which world emerges. The dependency works in both directions. The world requires earth, and the earth requires world. The work allows each to be. “The work moves the earth itself into the Open.”\textsuperscript{39} It is the artist’s job to “set forth the earth.”\textsuperscript{40} We are told that the sculptor uses stone, as the mason does. She may use the same tools and work in the same workshop, employing similar techniques, but she does not use up the stone. The painter uses pigment, and the poet uses words. Each art form employs a different earth. The artistic process involves using a medium, that can be used equipmentally, but not using it up, as it would be used up in its equipmental use.

In this way, Heidegger views the work as the site of struggle between world and earth, or unconcealment and concealment. Rather than viewing the canvas as an object or thing, to which aesthetic qualities adhere, Heidegger views it as a locus of strife between concealment and unconcealment. The world opening that results from this strife is truth, in Heidegger’s alethic sense of truth. So great art, as we saw in Chapter 1, is truth, in the sense of essence, but for this truth to be,

\textsuperscript{37} I will discuss this this further in Chapter 7
\textsuperscript{38} Heidegger, 1971 p.45
\textsuperscript{39} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{40} Heidegger, 1971 p.46
it must struggle into the open from some sort of concealment. These considerations allow us to see how Heidegger’s account of earth functions both to conceal and unconceal an epoch-defining artwork. It is important to note that truth does not struggle free of this concealment, the concealment is not prior to the unconcealment, but rather, truth is “dominated throughout by a denial.”\textsuperscript{41}

This relationship between essence and unconcealment is a central theme of Heidegger’s work from the 1930’s onwards. It is expressed in terms of the strife between earth and world in the work in the \textit{Origin}, but it is also a central theme of his later writings on technology, where the thing is understood in terms of the fourfold.

In the epoch of technology, the object is understood precisely in terms of its availability, and this availability is understood as a failure to conceal. As we have seen, without concealment there cannot be art. As Mitchell points out, “availability targets the concealment of essencing.”\textsuperscript{42} In a discussion of Heidegger’s engagement with the Heraclitus fragment “\textit{physis kryptesthai philei},” explores further the notion of a reciprocity between concealment and unconcealment. Mitchell expounds on Heidegger’s translation, “that is to say, unconcealment let’s concealment show itself. And without this showing of concealment, there would be nothing concealed, for concealment would go unremarked, a lapse into oblivion. As in the \textit{Origin}, the idea is that it unconcealment allows concealment to be shown and, concealment allows unconcealment to be shown. Both are required for strife which in which essencing arises, be this in terms of works or things. In this way, concealment is not just something which unambiguously hides something else, but it is rather a sheltering. “To essence is to engage with concealment, to emerge in a way not entirely present.” Without concealment, essence is impossible.

We must examine digital poetry in terms of these considerations and ask does a digital ground allow for space or a world opening. Specifically, we can ask three questions; does the digital allow us to make space in terms of world disclosure?

\textsuperscript{41} Heidegger, 1978, p. 179

\textsuperscript{42} Mitchell, 2015 p.38
Can we ground our dwelling with digital technologies? And, finally, does the digital poet use but not use up the digital so that it first comes to shine?

5.4 The Earth of Poetry

Before attempting to answer these questions, we must ask how does earth function in traditional poetry? By elucidating this, we can contrast traditional poetic formats with digital ones in order to understand the consequences of composing poems using digital technologies. We are told in the *Origin* that language is primarily the earth of a poem however, a discussion of language does not exhaust the discussion of earth in this respect. Heidegger points out, that during the first world war, soldiers on the front kept books of Hölderlin’s poetry in their knapsacks, along with cleaning gear. A poem can be an object, but we are told that language is fundamentally earth of a poem; the linguistic work originates in the speech of a people. The earth of poetry is language, but language is not as simple a phenomenon as pigment or marble.

Language can be presented in a number of ways; in a book stored on a shelf, on the page when a poem is read quietly by a reader, but also in the sound of speech. Earth is the accent of the poet; the tone of her voice, but it is also the choice of font, the ink on the page. The earth of the poem is language displayed in one or more ways. No matter how it is displayed, it must, be displayed in a “wholly distinct way,” like the paint in a painting, or marble in a statue. The words of a poem should be used differently from words used in other domains. This is, in part, because they do not disappear into usefulness. In everyday speech, language rarely becomes an issue. In fact, generally speaking, to the extent that language becomes an issue, it fails to serve its purpose. In order to function, language must withdraw, but in the poem, language becomes an issue without failing. Heidegger tells us that when a word is set up in a poem it “first” comes to sound. In poetry we hear or see the words as words.
All these different ways in which poets present language; as written word, as sound, or as book, are employed by poets in various ways to wrest language from the unconcealment of everyday written or spoken language and bring it into appearance. Heidegger tells us that it is in poetry that the “word only now becomes and remains truly a word.”\(^{43}\) If this effort fails then the work has “miscarried”. The world opening has been lost, and the earth has swallowed up the words into their usual everydayness. In poetry this happens when the language used is banal or clichéd. In this case, the poetry cannot be considered great. In everyday language use, written or printed words only become apparent as words if something happens to interrupt their meaning, such as bad handwriting or a typo. The grammatical rules that govern language arrange words into clauses, clauses are arranged into sentences and, sentences are arranged into paragraphs. These rules facilitate the disappearance of language. While they are functioning, language serves its purpose as a self-refusing vehicle of meaning. In the act of listening to someone, or reading something, we generally do not consider language itself. However, the poet is not bound by the rules of regular language use. The presentation of words on the page is important in poetry. Poets present words in a number of ways; they write formal poems, they organize poems into to stanzas, they consider line length, and alignment, they write concrete poems, shaped to reflect the poem’s meaning. Even when poets write in a prose style, the decision to do so is a style choice, which must have some rational and when it does, it makes the prose style, itself, visible.

Similarly, when language is considered as sound, the sound of words also disappears into usefulness. Unless there is something to interrupt the sense of the spoken word, like a heavy accent, or a speaker’s unfamiliarity with a language, most speakers never ‘hear,’ or are generally unaware of the sound of the words used. In poetry, however, sound becomes key. The

\(^{43}\) Heidegger, 1971 p.46
poet brings the word to sound by use of rhythm, rhyme, assonance, and dissonance. Perhaps to an extent more than any other linguistic art form, the poet is concerned with the sound of the words. For example, the use of rhyme allows the rhyming word to be heard in its sound. It emphasizes the sound, and therefore the meaning of the word, and the word with which it rhymes. It connects these words in sound and meaning. The breaking of a rhyming scheme can have the same effect. Even a bad rhyme can have the effect of bringing a word’s sound into awareness.

The fact that poetry comes in books or pamphlets is perhaps the clearest notion of the poem as an object. A book of poetry is the same sort of thing as a textbook on physics. They are both issued ISBN numbers. A book is a thing is the basic or ‘mere’ sense; it can be picked up, measured, and weighed, but what about the book’s role as an earth for poetry? Do the words printed on the page come to shine? Certainly, books can be equipment. But can we say that the paper and card of the book is not “used up” in the reading of a book of poetry. Does the book not simply disappear into usefulness, even if it is a book of poetry? Arguably, the role of book as earth is not as important as the role of sound or the presentation of words on a page. It may seem that the paper a poem is printed on is incidental to the poem. Arguably, the book object does not influence the world of the poem in a significant way. However, on closer inspection this is not the case. Most poetry books are A5, and this constrains the length, width and spacing of the poems. It has long been commented on that the use of word processors, has limited poetry to what can be rendered in an A4 word document. It is interesting to ask how modern word processing has led to the dominance of the short, rectangular lyric. Despite this, the question remains, whether the book serves as an earth for the poem in the same way sound does? As I turn the pages of a book of poetry does the book itself “come forth”? There is certainly some degree of strife between the book, and the world brought forth by the poem. Sometimes this is related to the size of the book. Poets are generally are limited in terms of line-lengths, but poets use various devices that make the book itself explicit, for
example some poems such as Ann Carson’s “XXVII. MITWELT” from Autobiography of Red) is printed on its side to allow for longer lines so that the book has to be turned on its side to be read. In this way, the limitation of the book form is brought into the reader’s awareness.

5.5 Digital Poetry

Central to the history of any given art practice are the technological developments associated with it. The limitations imposed on an art practice have always been subject to change in the face of technological advancement. So, for example, the development of different types of pigment influences the possible subject matter, and durability of painted works. Similarly, advancements in techniques such, as the development of perspective, broadens the possibilities of visual art. Up until the modern age, the pace of this technological progress had been relatively slow, but the advent of digital technologies dramatically changed this, for practically every artistic domain. The development and widespread dissemination of new technologies has led to a dizzying pace of technological development.

In poetry, the influence digital technologies is manifest in a number of ways. As with other art forms, the internet allows for greater access to poetry than ever before. As with music and film, this has prompted a revaluation of traditional publishing and dissemination. The ease with which poetry can be published on the internet has led to a profusion of new, internet-based journals. Spoken word artists use video to record performances or make poetry films, which may be widely shared on Facebook, Twitter, and other social media platforms. One viral video can build a profile for a poet who would have been excluded from traditional publishing pathways. It can be argued that the democratization of poetry, by the internet, has opened up the art form to an exponentially larger audience, and that interest in poetry is greater than it has been in decades. Out

44 Berry, Carson and Collins, 2016
of three million Irish Facebook Users, 430000 list poetry as an interest. The internet also gives readers access to vast databases of poetry such as Poetry Foundation.

However, the philosophical implications of the internet go far beyond the distribution of content. Digital poets also use these technologies in the composition, and presentation of digital poems. Thus, we must add these technologies to our consideration of the earth of contemporary poetry. Technology offers poets freedom from the limitations of the printed page, and in some cases, freedom from language in any traditional poetic sense. Given this, it is important to ask what the implications are of understanding these technologies as earth. This question is not an easy one, not least because the question of how to define digital poetry, itself, is a vexed one. Digital poetry (electronic poetry or e-poetry) is an emergent literary form, with much of it written since the 1990's. Seiça, however, traces the roots of digital poetry in a number of historical art movements such as Dada, conceptual art and concrete poetry. The difficulty in defining digital poetry is further hampered by its relation to visual and film poetry. Furthermore, and central to this discussion, is the multitude of ways in which the digital poet can use technology to create poems. The term “digital poetry” is employed to describe works that are different in literally every aspect. Funkhouser, for example, describes digital poetry as follows:

The creative task of digital poetry often involves an artist observing and making connections between separate but poetically associable entities and then using technological apparatuses to communicate to an audience through compelling presentations.

While the engagement with technology is central to a definition of digital poetry, this engagement can manifest in myriad, and ever evolving ways. Digital poetry is not necessarily limited to works presented on PCs, tablets or mobile

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45 Seiça, 2016
46 Funkhouser, 2012
phones, but can include performances, and installations. Funkhouser points out that digital poetry’s “ever-present variability” is its primary attribute, inviting “vibrant, transformative multi-modal engagement for its practitioners and audience alike.” Notably, digital texts allow readers to interact with texts in a way that has been impossible until the advent of digital technologies.

Despite the variability of digital poetry, some commentators have attempted a classification. Leonardo Flores, for example, gives a seven-part classification as follows:

- Generative Poetry is produced by programming algorithms and drawing from corpora to create poetic lines. This is the oldest e-poetic genre and remains relevant today through e-literary genres like the bot.
- Code Poetry is written for a dual audience: computer and human readers.
- Visual Digital Poetry arise from Visual, Concrete, and Lettrist poetic traditions and is extended by
- Kinetic Poetry which uses the computer’s ability to display animation and changing information over time.
- Multimedia Poetry incorporates audio, video, images, text, and other modes of communications in its strategies.
- Interactive Poetry incorporates input from the reader in the e-poems expressive strategies.
- Hypertext poetry uses nodes and links to structure the poem into spaces for the reader to explore.

5.6 The Earth of Digital Poetry

Two interrelated problems arise when attempting to interpret digital poetry within a Heideggerian scheme of world and earth. Firstly, as we have seen,

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47 Funkhouser, 2012, p.3
48 Funkhouser, 2012, p. 3
49 Flores, 2014
Heidegger's account only applies to great poetry. The world opening that characterizes great art is not a feature of less than great art. As we know, a piece of art that fails to overcome the concealing tendency of its work material, whatever that work material may be, does not qualify as a great work. Thus, as we have seen in chapter 3, the question of greatness in poetry is an ontological one. To subject digital poetry to a Heideggerian treatment, we must first ask whether it is, in principle, possible for a digital poem to overcome the concealing tendency of its earth, and if it can, has it done so up till now? If we argue it cannot, then we are making the bold claim, that there has been no great digital poetry. But even if we claim that there is yet to be a great digital poem, this does not necessarily preclude the possibility of their being great digital poetry in the future. Questions of greatness cannot be avoided here. If a digital poem can, in fact, overcome the concealing nature of the technology employed in its construction, then such an overcoming would certainly qualify as a Heideggerian confrontation with technology. In this way, the question of the greatness (potential or otherwise) of digital poetry is one that has significance beyond the rather insular world of contemporary poetry.

The other difficulty we encounter is, as noted above, the complexity involved in defining and classifying digital poetry. It is difficult to know how to approach the earth of these poems, given that they are rendered in so many ways. In some respects, the digital poem can be viewed, simply, as a result of some novel, and unique combination of software and equipment. While as we have seen, a rough classification is possible, the meaning of the poem often resides in its particular use of digital elements. If the combination of software and equipment used in the poems varies from poem to poem, then it is difficult to generalize a discussion of the earth of digital poetry.

Finally, Before we can begin to ask whether a digital poem can be great in this Heideggerian sense, we must ask how are we to understand digital poetry in terms of Heidegger's ontology There are a number of ways we can approach this task. We can, following Hui, see a digital poem as a digital object (or as a collection of digital objects) or we can investigate various elements of
technology that are often utilized in terms of digital poetry and see how the specifically conceal and unconceal in term of poetry.

Hui (2016) defines digital objects as,

objects that take shape on a screen or hide in the back end of a computer program, composed of data and metadata regulated by structure or schemas. Metadata literally means data about data. Schemes are structures that give semantic and functional meaning to the metadata; in computation they are also called ontologies—a word that has immediate associations with philosophy."^{50}

Hui provides a fascinating account of digital objects based on a synthesis of Simondon and Heidegger. He begins with the insight that objects exist in different 'orders of reality.'^{51} While we tend to approach digital objects in terms of data, Hui points out, “at the level of programming, they are text files; further down the operational system they are binary codes, and finally at the level of circuit boards they are nothing but signals generated by voltage values and the operation of logic gates.”^{52} In terms of the current thesis, all of these levels can be viewed as earth if the digital object under scrutiny is a poem.

Thus, we must ask, how do voltage values and logic gates act as an earth in digital poetry. As Hui asks, are they “the substance of digital objects?” He makes sense of this situation in terms of “orders of magnitude.”^{53} The central insight here, is that any object can only be observed once an order of magnitude has been specified. Each order of magnitude may require different instruments and a different theoretical presuppositions and may lead to non-overlapping bodies of knowledge. Hui is centrally concerned with how to understand the connections or ‘relations’ between the orders of magnitude of digital objects.

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^{50} Hui, 2016 p. 1
^{51} Hui, 2016 p. 24
^{52} Hui, 2016 p. 27
^{53} This approach is based on Bachelard's 'phenomenotechnics' and Simondon's 'order of granularity'
Such an approach has obvious benefits in terms of analysing digital objects where there is a clear causal relationship between the different orders of magnitude of digital objects. His account provides an elegant framework to how these levels interact with each other. Hui isolates a number of “spectrums” of orders of magnitude with respect to digital objects e.g. from microphysics to that of representing on-screen,” but he focuses on the spectrum from code to phenomena, “because it is this that forms the intermediary between calculation and human existence.”

Following Hui, we will focus on the spectrum from code to phenomena. The phenomena that is a digital poem is typically presented on a screen, and almost all of it utilizes computer software and programming languages, so I will begin by considering these elements in their role as the earth of poetry. However, it must be born in mind that these elements cannot exhaust an account of digital poems.

5.7 Screen as Earth: The Poetry of Geoffrey Squires

To investigate the use of the screen in digital poetry, I will focus in the work of Irish poet Geoffrey Squires. While language central to his poems, the traditional book format is longer present in some of his work, which is exclusively presented on a screen. There are two ways to look at the use of screens in Squires’ work. In the first instance, this work breaks from what Seiça, calls “static linearity of the printed page,” and thus, it challenges the canon in new, and valuable ways. In the second instance, we can hold that the use of the screen as earth, prevents the world-opening that it is poetry’s aim and therefore, it represents an enframing of the poetic. We will consider both of these ideas.

54 Hui, 2016 p. 23
55 Ibid.
56 Ibid.
57 Seiça, 2016
Traditionally, poetry that seeks to challenge traditional formats is considered avant-garde or experimental and therefore as “other” as Kenneth Keating\textsuperscript{58} points out. Irish poetry is a case in point. Keating claims that experimental poetry “has been falsely homogenized and segregated from “traditional” or “conventional” Irish poetry.”\textsuperscript{59} In this way, digital poetry is generally considered outside of the canon. Squires is an example of this. While he is not a digital poet in a strict sense, his texts share, “certain elements with electronic literature [but] they do not fully adhere to conventional understandings of what constitutes contemporary electronic literature.”\textsuperscript{60} His works could, in principle, be rendered in book form. Though this is not the poet’s intention, and to do so would be to lose some element or experience of the work as it is. The poems are described by Squires himself as “texts for screens.”\textsuperscript{61} Despite this, the difference between Squires work and more traditional poetic forms can be characterized, almost solely, in terms of how it is published. Throughout his career, Squires has published poetry in a number of different formats including e-books, flash video, and a few in the “conventional page format.”\textsuperscript{62} Here, I will focus on the collection “Abstract Lyric and Other Poems,”\textsuperscript{63} which is only available as an e-book on Kindle.

The book consists of words on digital pages without any other visual elements or sound elements. However, as Keating points out, “these texts amount to more than a digital conversion of an original text to an e-book, instead embracing the technology central to their construction.”\textsuperscript{64} The poems consist of short phrases, each of which is presented on a single page. They are spread out over a number of pages. There are 918 pages or “locations” in the book. The phrases are related across the pages, but not sufficiently for linear meaning. The turning of the virtual page further disconnects the text. The selection of text and its layout disrupt the possibility of lyrical meaning. The “I” of the lyric is interrupted and

\textsuperscript{58} Keating, 2017
\textsuperscript{59} Keating, 2017, p.196
\textsuperscript{60} Keating, 2017, p.196
\textsuperscript{61} Squires, 2012, Location 51
\textsuperscript{62} Squires, 2012 Location 51
\textsuperscript{63} Squires, 2012
\textsuperscript{64} Keating, 2017, p.196
with it the subject-object duality. According to Keating, Squires “attempts to foreground a destabilization of singularity, particularly in relation to subjectivity and identity.” For this reason, Keating claims that Squire represents a significant challenge to the “Yeats-Joyce-Kavanagh-Heaney” cannon of Irish poetry. While Beckett, and indeed Joyce, mounted their own challenge to a pre-existing cannon with old-fashioned paper and ink, in contemporary poetry, the use of the digital media has, arguably, become central to this challenging.

Figure 1 Fragment of “Of the Ordinary,” Location 77 Abstract Lyric and Other Poems.

From a Heideggerian perspective, the disruption of the subject-object duality is a necessary element in overcoming metaphysics, and overcoming metaphysics is the hallmark of great poetry. But the question remains whether this overcoming can happen on a technological instrument such as a computer screen. For Heidegger, the screen would certainly be an example of new technology. Thus, its capacity to function as the earth of an artwork is compromised at best, and impossible at worst. The earth of a work must

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65 Keating, 2017, p. 196  
66 Keating, 2017, p. 195
become apparent and withdraw simultaneously in order that the strife, in which art happens can be present. While technology conceals and unconceals; it only unconceals things as standing reserve. In order to take Heidegger’s account seriously, we need to ask whether a screen prevents the world opening that defines poetry. For work, such as Squires, to be great it would have to overcome the concealing tendency of the screen. Like paint or paper, a screen is equipment, which generally disappears into usefulness. The question is whether it can become apparent in its role as the earth of a work? In the case of Squire’s poetry, we can view the screen as analogous to the page. The screen page works much as a paper one does. The poems are presented sequentially, to access the next segment of the poem, a virtual page is turned. Because the turning of the page adds to the fragmented aspect of the poems the poem’s presentation as an eBook is central to the poem’s structure and form and thus central to the possibility of the poems world opening. While, on the face of it, the use of eBook merely replaces an older technology, we must ask does Squires work acknowledge the consequences of moving between these formats. If we see technology as a danger, then we cannot simply move between formats without taking into consideration how these formats function as earth. The screen does not operate as a page does because it conceals in a different way. Thus, we cannot simply write poetry for a screen without asking what it would mean to overcome the concealing tendency of this format. To do so, is not to look deeply in to the essence of technology, as Heidegger asks us to do, but rather to treat technology as simply instrumental. It can be argued that, Squire’s collection does not overcome the concealing tendency of the screen. One way to do this is to suggest that there is no possibility of Spielraum in these texts. The screen is, as a technological apparatus, unconceals text as standing reserve. This means that the concealment required for art is not at work. Heidegger tells us that, “[t]he essence of truth, that is, of concealment is dominated throughout, by a denial.”67 This denial is, arguably, missing from the experience of Squires collection.

67 Heidegger, 1978 p. 179
5.8 The Earth of a Hyperlink Poem

It is also important to note that, “digital poetry functions as something other than poetry presented on a computer, involving processes beyond those used by print-based writers.” In many cases, a digital poem is based on the ability of digital technologies to manipulate and reconfigure data. Much of the functionality employed by digital poets, is used in other applications. It is, thus, familiar to the reader of the digital poem. Anyone who uses the internet is knows how to navigate a hyperlink. A hyperlink is simply an icon, graphic, word, or chunk of text that links to another file, object or Webpage. Hyperlinks are an integral part of the internet’s architecture, linking trillions of pages and files to one another. Digital poets have also employed hyperlinks in the composition of digital poetry. In order to understand the philosophical implications of hyperlink poetry we will use an example.

The Apostrophe Engine (2006) by Bill Kennedy and Darren Wershler-Henry is an early example of a hyperlink poem. It is a website, which presents the poem “apostrophe” written by Bill Kennedy in 1994 on its home page. Each sentence of the poem is a hyperlink. Clicking on a sentence instructs the site to send the sentence to a search engine. The results of the search are then “edited” by five virtual robots, which then harvest the results for phrases beginning with “you are” and ending with a full stop. This means that the phrases are often not complete sentences, giving the generated poem a fragmented, disjointed aspect. As with Squire’s poems, this has the effect of disrupting linear meaning. The new poems are complete when the search yields a set number of phrases or the robots have worked through a limited number of pages whichever happens first.

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68 Funkhouser, 2012 p.1
69 Kennedy & Wershler-Henry, 2006
The “engine” then removes any anomalies, such as HTML tags, and presents the findings as a new poem. Every phase of this poem now functions as a hyperlink, giving endless possibilities for new poems. The Apostrophe Engine has, at any given moment, the potential to be as big as the Internet itself. Also, as the content of Web changes continually, the subsequent poems change with each click. Like a lot of post-Internet poetry, the Apostrophe Engine is a poem composed of fragments collected from the Internet using a simple randomizing method, decided upon by the poet. However, in this case, software does the harvesting and editing. This poem cannot be rendered in book form. The technology employed is essential to its structure.

There is an obvious tension between the original poem and the subsequent ‘poems,’ which are generated entirely by software. We can assess the original poem as we would any poem. It is a prose poem that uses fragments in order to generate some sort of emergent meaning or tone. It either succeeds or it fails. It is great, or it is not. What about the subsequent poems, can they possibly “world”? Can we understand this poem with respect to a Heideggerian scheme of world and earth? If so, what is the earth of this piece? It is clearly not a case of

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70 I will define Post-Internet poetry in the next chapter.
simply swapping a paper page for a screen page. The poem is not simply presented on a website, it is a website. Thus, we must consider the website along with the hyperlinks that connect it to a search engine as the earth of the poem. In this case, a search engine along with hyperlink technology, and the programming languages that run it are elements of the poem. The question again, is can something that is inherently enframing, from a Heideggerian point of view, be an earth for a poem.

In the apostrophe engine, the word used serve two purposes. First, they function as all written language does; they carry the meaning of the words. Secondly, as the hyperlinks are embedded within the text itself, the words act as a tool by which the reader can generate another poem. Does this second function overwhelm the first? The purpose of poetic language is to Say according to Heidegger, but can this poem bring language to shine or does it simply enframe it? If language is enframed by the poem, how can we understand this? Undoubtedly, the generated poems can be interesting, in that the sequences of sentences or phrases can chime off each other in unexpected ways. However, once the reader understand the functionality of the poem, she knows that she can click on any phrase and generate a different, but similar poem. Knowing this fact makes the actual act of generating another poem practically irrelevant. Once the concept behind the poem is grasped, there is no real need to read more than the first couple of poems. In this way, it can be argued that while language becomes apparent in the poem it does so in the mode of standing reserve. The language in the apostrophe engine stands by awaiting further manipulation, but in this way, arguably, it ceases to be meaningful as language. Clearly, the language in this poem is present in a way which is entirely different from a traditional book of poetry. In a book of poetry, the written word ideally serves as the site of strife, from which a world is wrested. In the apostrophe engine, language is framed as resource standing by to be endlessly reconfigured or manipulated. Heidegger tells us that the

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71 In this case the software employed is mostly HTLM, which is not a real programming language but is used mostly to create links. This poem is from the 1990's and though the website has been updated a poem made like this today would involve software with better functionality.
revealing associated with technology “simply never comes to an end.” The apostrophe engine generates endless poems, but they are hardly worth reading? In defence of the apostrophe engine, it can be argued, however, that the meaning of this poem is the concept on which it is based. This concept can only be rendered in a digital format and thus, an assessment of the poem must be focused on this concept. However, even if this is the case, the language, used in the poem, still becomes secondary to this concept. The language of this poem becomes just so much text, harvested from the internet and arranged. Language does not “first” come to shine in this poem, rather it is swallowed up by its use. Arguably the use of a hyperlinks as earth is central to this “swallowing up.”

5.9 Software and Computer Programming Languages as Earth

It may be argued that the use of software and its source code in the creation of a poem is obviously paradoxical from a Heideggerian point of view. D. Berry, for example, points out that software, “transforms everyday life into data, a resource to be used by others, usually for profit, which Heidegger terms standing-reserve.” However, the possibility of a digital poetry offers a new possibility for digital technologies and the software that runs them, presenting “poetic alternatives to the WWW’s general ontology of promoting products and serving up data at rapid speeds.” If we are to take the Apostrophe Engine as a piece of poetry, then we cannot deny the role of software, and therefore, programming languages in its creation. But if search engines are inherently enframing, then the software and programming languages that underlie them must be seen as enframing too? The question, again, is can something that is inherently enframing be the earth of a poem? As we noted above, we could simple argue no because by claiming that Apostrophe Machine is not a great poem and Heidegger’s account only concerns great poetry. However, it is still worth questioning whether such poetry could act as a confrontation with

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72 Heidegger, 1978 p.322  
73 Berry, 2011, p.2  
74 Funkhouser, 2012, p. 5
technology. There are two related difficulties that hit us when we propose computer software as the earth of a poem. The first involves the ontology of computer programming languages and the second revolves around the notion of strife. If search engines, and the programming languages that run them, are enframing can they be the sites of a world opening?

If digital poetry struggles to overcome the concealing tendency of its technological earth, can we locate this tendency in the computer programming languages (CPL)\textsuperscript{75} that are essential in the construction of so much digital poetry? We can isolated a number of difficulties with respect to using CPLs as the work material of a poem. The first difficulty is ontological in nature, software is used in a most digital poetry and this software is created using CPLs. But when we say ‘language’ in this context, we mean something very different from what Heidegger means by language. It is worth pointing out the differences between Heidegger’s account of language and computer programming languages.

To do so we ask, in what sense is a programming language a language? We can begin by noting the historical link between programming languages and ideal logical languages. As we have seen in Chapter 3, the logical positivist’s famous attempt to design an ideal language scrubbed clean of metaphysics and metaphor failed. The logical positivist’s aim was philosophical. They wanted a language which would dissolve stubborn, longstanding philosophical problems, which they has recast as problems of language, for once and for all. To this end, they attempted to formulate a formal language. This language was designed to capture only the logically valid inferences of natural languages. If such a project is to be possible, natural languages have to be understood, as including sound inferential properties, and logically constant elements. In other words, to abstract an ideal language from a natural language, there must be the possibility of formal validity within natural language to begin with. This in turn, presupposes that some inferences will always be valid as long as the

\textsuperscript{75} As we saw above Huí (2016) also focuses on the spectrum from code to phenomena, when giving an account of digital objects.
representational or semantic features of certain parts of the representations are kept fixed. The meanings of words like “some” and “all,” for example, are held to be constant. These fixed elements are then abstracted from the natural language, while other elements, such as representational features are ignored. The languages that emerged from this project could not adequately describe the world, and twentieth century philosophy turned back to an analysis of natural languages. This turn towards natural languages in twentieth century analytic philosophy is clearly demonstrated by the difference in Ludwig Wittgenstein’s two seminal works the *Tractatus Logico Philosophicus*\textsuperscript{76} and the *Philosophical Investigations*.\textsuperscript{77}

However, the work on ideal languages did not go to waste. Some of it contributed to the development of computer programming languages. Indeed, 1930’s logicians such as Alonzo Church and Alan Turing were involved in laying the foundations of the theory of computation. Also, as Colburn points out, \textquote{\textquote{T}he development of predicate calculus by Gottlob Frege, has been drawn extensively by researchers in software engineering who desire a formal language for computing program semantics. Predicate calculus is also the formal model used by many of those implementing automated reasoning systems for mechanical theorem proving. These theorem proving techniques have even formed the basis for a style of general purpose computer programming called logic programming.\textsuperscript{78}}

Computer science, like mathematics, is a formal science and computer programming languages are formal languages, like the ideal language described above. While it must be noted that computer languages are in the imperative mode rather than the descriptive, and in this way, we are not comparing like with like It is, however, still fruitful to examine CPLs in terms of their ontological status. As we saw in chapter one, Heidegger completely rejects logical accounts of validity, because they view a proposition as the locus of truth. For Heidegger,

\textsuperscript{76} Wittgenstein 1954
\textsuperscript{77} Wittgenstein 1967
\textsuperscript{78} Colburn, 2015 p.3
this leads to an ontological difference between the actuality of the true proposition, and the actuality of things. Thus, the actuality of the truth is not equal to the state of affairs it relates to. Heidegger called this the Logical Prejudice. From a Heideggerian perspective, a language based on logic is necessarily a language that presupposes an ontology of being as presence. Russell's Logical Atomism is case in point. The world is composed of simple discrete entities or atoms that are somehow combined to form complex states of affairs, which are unambiguously present to, and captured by language.

Unlike the logical positivist's ideal languages, CPLs are not limited by the need to refer to, or describe the everyday world, in which we live. Since the 1980’s, philosophers and computer scientists have been working on the concept of ontology with respect to programming languages. Of course, ontology in this sense means something quite different to its various philosophical conceptions. It is, however, akin to the ontological conceptions of other formal sciences. In terms of computer science, formal ontologies are viewed as designed artefacts, which comprise of formal naming, representation and definitions of categories, relations, and properties of data, concepts and entities that make up domains. In the early 1990’s Tom Gruber offered this definition.

An ontology is a description (like a formal specification of a program) of the concepts and relationships that can formally exist for an agent or a community of agents. This definition is consistent with the usage of ontology as set of concept definitions, but more general. And it is a different sense of the word than its use in philosophy.  

Given these ontological considerations, we can characterize the differences between programming languages, and Heidegger’s conception of language, in a number of ways. Firstly, as we saw in the discussion of metaphor in Chapter 3, Heidegger maintains, we cannot split off some portion of language as steady or fixed, be it the literal, the sensible, or some inferential component or even evidence. Language is not representational and therefore, no section of it is

79 Gruber, 1995 p 908
prioritized or held fixed and therefore natural languages cannot satisfy the conditions for formal validity. In this way, and certainly from a Heideggerian account, a programming language cannot be understood as a language in any meaningful sense.

Secondly, the ‘fixedness’ of programming languages is not frustrated by a messy metaphorical world, which resists their assumptions. Rather programming language ontologies refer to “artefacts” built up from the very assumptions inherent within a given programming language or set of programming languages. So, while, some theorist, such as Turner and Eden, suggest that certain elements of the Quinean ontological framework are pertinent in terms of programming languages, these languages do not entail Quinean ontological commitments, because they do not describe an independently existing reality.

However, the question is not whether any meaningful comparison can be made between CPLs and natural languages, but rather it is a question of how our attention to the ‘world’ generated by these languages affects us. As the digital encroaches on more and more aspects of everyday life, this artefactual ontology, with its fixed array of possibilities exerts increasing influence. The more time we spend online, the more this online reality competes with the ‘outside’ reality and subsequently, the more we understand everything in terms of the digital. Of course, for Heidegger, the causality here works both ways. Because we are already under the sway of technology, we build and use devices, that reflect this mode of unconcealment, and these devices, in turn, reinforce this mode of unconcealment. The historical story that traces the move from the logical positivists ideal language to its use in CPLs is an example of this move. While the logical positivist program failed, it helped to generate a world where a computer language does refer to an atomistic, premanifest reality. And this world increasingly offers an alternative to a prior understandings of reality.

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80 Turner & Eden, 2007
5.10 Digital Poems as World Openings

Given these considerations, we can ask whether digital poems can ever serve as the site of strife between world opening and earth concealment. Without strife, there cannot be great art and without concealment there cannot be strife. Concealment is central to Heidegger’s philosophy. In *Being and Time* the hammer, concealed in its usefulness, is ready-at-hand until it breaks. In this broken state, it is unconcealed, but merely as something as present-at-hand; its equipmental essence remains concealed. It is only art that unconceals the essence of equipment. A peasant’s shoes are concealed in their use, but we come to see their essence in van Gogh’s painting. Despite this, in the essay on things we are given an account of a jug, which though it is undeniably equipment, its essence is not entirely concealed in use. Like the artwork, the jug is self-sufficient, or self-supporting. It opens up the fourfold or it “things.”

> In the gift of the outpouring earth and sky, divinities and mortals dwell together all at once. These for are one because of what they themselves are, belong together. Preceding everything that is present, they are enfolded into a single fourfold.

In this sense, the jug is a work, but not in the sense that art is a work. The thinging of the jug does not unconceal anything beyond the jug’s own opening up of the fourfold. The thinging of the jug opens up of a space in which, the jug itself shows up in its own thinging. The jug unconceals a horizon of intelligibility in which the jug becomes understood as a jug. The jug unconceals itself whereas the artwork can unconceal something other than itself.

If we compare the artwork to the jug, we can isolate different senses of concealment. In van Gogh’s painting there is pigment and canvas, but also the tendency of the peasant’s shoes to be concealed in their use. The world opening of the painting is won from both of these senses of concealment. In the case of the jug, we are told that the earth of the jug is earth, “the potter makes the

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81 Heidegger, 1971 p.171
earthen jug out of the earth that he has specifically chosen and prepared for it. The jug consists of that earth. But in this essay, the jug’s world opening is mainly contrasted with yet another sense of concealment. This is the concealment of science. This concealment threatens the jug’s status, and presumably the artwork’s, as self-supporting; it threatens a thing’s status as a thing. “The thingness of the thing remains concealed, forgotten.” Thus, we have three different senses of concealment, the concealment of the work material; the jug’s earth, i.e. the actual material a work is made from, the concealment of the peasant’s shoes in their usefulness i.e. the concealment that is only unconcealed in art, and, finally, the concealment of science, i.e. concealment in the sense of annihilation. We can term these three modes as 1. concealment of earth, 2. concealment of essence or truth and 3. concealment of science. It is probably impossible to distinguish unambiguously between the first two modes of concealment in terms of demarcating works from artworks. For example, the temple at Paestum is an example of art that does not refer to something beyond itself. However, it does serve to demonstrate that the concept of a concealing earth is a complex one. It also serves to show that the concealment of science is of a different nature in that it also is a mode of unconcealment, the mode of unconcealment, which annihilates things.

As we have seen, Heidegger links this annihilation of things by science with modern technology and technological devices. For Heidegger, the link between physics, the experimental method and technology is a given. This link can be understood in terms of an isolating tendency within physics. Physics isolates causal relationships, of the type whenever y then x, which require an experimental closure. As we have seen, this closure is provided by some sort of technological intervention and manipulation. For Heidegger, this technological manipulation of nature is a challenging, rather than an unconcealment. The experimental method serves as a sort of metaphor for how science conceals the jug’s opening of the fourfold. Rather than allowing a jug to thing in this way,
science treats the jugs as separate from its context and any associations beyond its brute physical dimensions. However, this is not simply a metaphorical assertion, the experimental method actually strips things from their context. For Heidegger, this is a process which begins in the laboratory but then spreads out into and permeates the culture. In enframing, the jug, as thing, is isolated from its own significance. It is cut from its context but in this sense, context is not simply a horizon that bestows meaning on this jug, but the jug is also something, which is constitutive of the culture, in which it has meaning. The jug and the cultural context in which it exists are inseparable. Science and technology destroy this context, and show the jug as only an object with a set of measurable properties. In this way this jug becomes a jug; entirely replaceable and interchangeable. Therefore as we have seen, technology is shown not only as a mode of concealment but also a mode of unconcealment. From the standpoint of science or technology, the jug is enframed, the wine becomes liquid and the horizon of intelligibility in which it is understood as an artefact of a culture and as a generator of a culture is shut down. The leeway or space to play is covered over by this third type of concealment. So while science and therefore technology unconceal this is an unconcealment that conceals. It presents the actual as endlessly orderable standing reserve. The objects of technology are entirely interchangeable; in this way, they are isolated from any possible context. This isolating mode of unconcealment requires, and fosters technological devices. As a mode of unconcealment without poiēsis, technology is the mode of the correct rather than the true. It is the unconcealment that blocks truth. This means that the technology associated with technology cannot, from a Heideggerian perspective cannot thing in the sense that the jug does and therefore it cannot unconceal essence, which is the function of art.

5.11 Conclusion

The digital poet faces a different sort of challenge from traditional artists. She must not only wrest a world opening from the concealment of the work material (concealment in the first and second senses), but also from the concealment of
science (concealment in the third sense). This concealment is of a different order, because it conceals things by simultaneously unconcealing them as standing reserve. This unconcealment threatens or destroys the very possibility of any other unconcealment. While, we have considered only a few poems here, we have seen, that in these cases, a Heideggerian analysis provides us with a way to express something about them that other accounts of contemporary poetry misses. There is, according to this thesis, something inherently different about using digital technology in the composition of a poem. Without investigation of the particular ontological status of technology as earth, it is not clear whether digital poetry can to overcome the concealing tendency of its work material. While the requirement to wrest unconcealment from some earth is the task facing every artist, this task is inherently different for the digital poet. Given Heidegger’s account, it is fair to question whether it is ever possible to wrest any sort of authentic world opening from a digital earth. If it is possible to overcome the digital in a digital poem, this would certainly represent a confrontation leading to a free relation to technology with all the promise that that entails.
Chapter 6: Post-Internet Poetry and the Essence of Technology

6.1 Introduction

If digital poetry must overcome the particular challenges posed by its work material in order to function as art, we can ask are there other contemporary poetic forms or movements better placed to disclose the essence of technology, and allow us to formulate a free relationship with it? However, we must bear in mind that technology does not just threaten the possibility of a great digital poem, it threatens the possibility of any great poetry, regardless of format. Technology, as mode of unconcealment, fosters devices, which in turn strengthen technology as the way things are. The devices reinforce the mode of unconcealment which enables them. Thus, while devices are a necessary part of technology's unconcealment, this unconcealment spreads beyond the direct influence of these devices, and into every aspect of our lives, including the capacity to write or appreciate poetry. Even if we try to avoid the use of digital devices, every aspect of our lives is, nonetheless, enframed.

As we saw in Chapter 3, Heidegger distinguishes between great and other poetry with respect to the use of metaphor. Poetry, which fails to transcend the literal/figurative distinction cannot be great in the sense of unconcealing essence. Essence in this Heideggerian sense cannot be understood from within metaphysics. Given this, it is interesting to ask how the literal/figurative distinction operates in digital age poetry? While the Heidegger's idea of an aesthetic philosopher may be a straw man, it is fair to say that philosophers of art tend to interpret a work in terms of symbol or metaphor. To give a crude example, the shoes in van Gogh's painting can be viewed as a metaphor for the life of the peasant or of the peasantry in general i.e. the shoes are symbolic, in that they stand in for something else. Of course, this analysis does not exhaust the symbolic nature of the painting. The work itself is structurally understood as an object to which aesthetic qualities are attached. From a Heideggerian
point of view, such a reading is insufficient, in part because it is based on a conventional separation between the sensuous and the non-sensuous. A Heideggerian reading understands the value of this work in terms of essence. In the painting, the essence of the shoes is shown. Similarly, with the painting in its actuality, the work material is not a thing to which aesthetic qualities are attached, it is an earth, which allows world to come forth. In both cases, Heidegger’s alternative reading relies on a dissolution of metaphysical categories. Heidegger tells us that in order to grasp the nature of art, we must overcome these categories, be it the literal/figurative divide or the distinction between art object and aesthetic qualities. However, Heidegger also acknowledges, that a most artistic works fail to overcome these categories. Such work, however, can be adequately accounted for in terms of metaphor. In short, aesthetics impedes the essential saying of even great works, in this case van Gogh’s shoes. Heidegger’s poetic interpretation, however, can retrieve the painting’s truth.

The move from the old technology to the new technology, discussed in Chapter 4, also influences this analysis of art. In an age of enframing, it is not just that we fail to understand art, it’s that how things are becomes further altered. In the age of new technology, things can no longer be understood as literal or figurative, but rather only as standing reserve. Things are challenged; they become enframed. In this way, they no longer hold the possibility of standing in for something else, even though it was a mistake to view them this way in the first place. The example of the peasant shoes shows us that while an aesthetic reading may have concealed the painting’s ability to unconceal truth, this ability was still there as potential, and it was brought forth in Heidegger’s analysis. In the digital, however, things are only standing reserve. Standing reserve can be seen as a corrupted version of the literal or the sensuous. While the literal holds the possibility of standing in, metaphorically, for something else. The transformation of things into standing reserve disrupts this possibility. In a technological time the literal is only unconcealed as a resource awaiting manipulation or exploitation. This analysis has profound consequences for an account of contemporary poetic metaphor. If it is contemporary poetry’s role to
disclose the nature of the digital, the questions becomes, is this still possible given the enframing nature of the digital? Can any poet be an essential poet in the digital age, and if not what is the role of the poet now?

Furthermore, as we saw in Chapter 1, For Heidegger, great art exists as a strife, which is preserved. We have seen that the subject who interacted with old technologies is itself enframed in the digital. We can further argue, that such an enframed subject loses the ability to either compose or preserve great art. Heidegger tells us the enframed subject is continually thrown back on itself so that all it experiences is itself. This means that an essential engagement with things becomes impossible because all the enframed subject encounters is a reflection of itself. To confront the digital, the poetry of this age must disclose this relationship between a subject, which has become standing reserve, and objects which are also standing reserve. In this chapter, we will consider the post-internet poetry of Sam Riviere in this respect. Another way to understand this relationship between subject and things, is in terms of boredom, which Heidegger holds up as the mood of the age. In deep or profound boredom, as in enframing, things are revealed as meaninglessness. I will argue that the Riviere’s poetry illuminates this deep boredom while ultimately remaining trapped within it. Thiele\(^1\) argues that deep boredom underlies the dominance of the technological, and its mode of revealing, and it challenges the very possibility of philosophy. I will examine Riviere’s work in terms of boredom and technology, and consider how things are presented in this work, specifically, I will argue that this work cannot be understood as metaphoric. I will conclude by claiming that Riviere’s poetry discloses the enframing of things by digital technology, especially Google. Finally, I was show how Riviere’s poetry unconceals the essence of search engines, such as Google, as enframing or as the essence of technology.

\(^1\)Thiele, 1997
6.2 What is Post-Internet Poetry?

Post-internet poetry is one way contemporary poets have responded to in the influence of the internet and social media on modern life. It refers to the practice of reformulating internet content to make poetry. Much of this poetry is rendered in predominantly non-digital formats. Of course, the practice of using pre-existing text as poetry is not new in poetry or art more generally. In fact, it can be traced back to Marcel Duchamp’s ready-mades. In poetry there is a well-established technique of found poetry, the literary equivalent of collage, which involves reformatting old text in order to create new meaning Maedbh McGukian, for example, used this technique to powerful effect in the 1990’s. Post-internet poetry uses the internet as its raw material. It is not exactly a new phenomenon, in 2015; Harry Burke edited an anthology of Post-internet poetry called *I Love Roses When They’re Past Their Best*. Each of the poets featured has developed their own method of engaging and interacting with computer or web-based technologies. These range from poems consisting of sequences of online search results, to works that take as their starting point the content of social media. While post-internet poetry is still very much in the experimental category, it is a technique showing up more and more in the world of contemporary poetry.

A prominent example of post-internet poetry is *Kim Kardashian’s Marriage*, the second full collection by English poet Sam Riviere. Riviere’s first collection *81 Austerities* won the Forward Prize for best first collection. At first reading, there is nothing to point to the collection’s distinctive methodology, but like the poems of his first collection, they all appeared first on Riviere’s blog. There are 72 poems, one for each day of Kim Kardashian’s first marriage. The book is divided in to eight sections. Each section is named after a stage in Kardashian’s famous make-up routine; PRIMER, CONTOUR, HIGHLIGHT, POWDER, BLEND,
SHADOW, LINER, GLOSS. The Introduction to the collection claims that these elements are employed “to explore surfaces and self-consciousness, presentation and obfuscation.” The poems actually have very little to do with the ill-fated marriage, and are in fact created by Googling the titles and then piecing together the results in a way that is reminiscent of the Flarf poetry movement. The titles themselves are chosen by employing an elaborate process of recombining chapter headings from Riviere’s previous books in order to generate a number of key words such as ‘girlfriend’, ‘grave’, ‘hardcore’ and notably ‘sincerity.’ These titles were then fed into Google. The poet took the first ten results of each search and edited them into poems. There is not one added word in the entire collection. The Introduction explains this by stating that Riviere “eschews a dependence on confessional modes of writing to explore what kind of meaning lies in impersonal methods of creation.” So for example, we have the following,

the new dust

I meet Franklin Delano Roosevelt.
He’s been walking for three days.
He makes necklaces of refined sugar,
human hair is toxic now.
Melted plastic in plants is OK,
leather is sugar, metal sugar,
and sometimes rope or wool.

The poems are bland yet compelling. Commentators are divided as to their value, and how to understand them. Leontia Flynn sums it up this confusion

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7 Riviere, 2015
8 The term Flarf was coined by the poet Gary Sullivan, who also wrote and published the earliest Flarf poems. Its first practitioners, working in loose collaboration on an email listserv, used an approach that rejected conventional standards of quality and explored subject matter and tonality not typically considered appropriate for poetry.
9 Riviere 2015
when she asks “whether Kim Kardashian’s Marriage marks a critique of contemporary tastes or merely a reflection of them.\textsuperscript{10} Can a Heideggerian approach can answer this question and provide us with a new deeper way to understand this collection?

\textbf{6.3 Boredom}

There is something deeply boring about the language used in Kim Kardashians’s Marriage. The work does not avoid cliché or banal language, but is, in fact, composed of such language. There is nothing vivid in Riviere’s descriptions, they are entirely bland. For example, in the new sunsets we are told,

Sunsets thru the trees.
It’s always beautiful.

and in spooky weather we read,

Lightening and thunder send shudders though your spine. Late October rain.
Drizzling down.

Certainly, the language lacks vivacity or freshness of description that is generally regarded as feature of good poetry. Viewed from one standpoint, these poems are just bad, yet there is something both unnerving and familiar about them. We are all subjected to the language of the internet whether we pay attention to it or not. There is practically no escape from it. By presenting this ultimately boring content as poetry, Riviere points out the saturation of such language in our everyday existence.

The boringness of this content is essential to the experience of reading Riviere’s collection, and it can be understood in terms of Heidegger’s contention that

\textsuperscript{10} Flynn, 2016
boredom is the mood of the age.\textsuperscript{11} We can link the enframement of the subject in the digital to Heidegger’s account of moods, particularly boredom. For Heidegger, we cannot understand moods as subjective psychological states; they are not “at hand” but rather they are central to how Dasein discloses being and thus “a fundamental manner and a fundamental way of being, indeed of being-there [\textit{Da-sein}].”\textsuperscript{12} Viewing moods as psychological states “inside” the subject is a consequence of metaphysics. Just as we are never a context-free, Cartesian spectator on the world, we never encounter the world without a mood; moods come before, and go beyond the capacity of the will to disclose the world.

In \textit{Being and Time}, Heidegger confers a number of moods with particular ontological significance. Both anxiety and boredom are considered fundamental moods in that they remove everyday meanings from things, and allow basic ontological structures to be apprehended. In fundamental moods, we are released from our everyday circumspection, and instead experience our “thrownness.” Anxiety or angst is most, perhaps, the most discussed of the fundamental moods. Heidegger describes it as “\textit{unheimlich},” which is generally translated into English as “uncanny.” However, it is important to note that there are other connotations at play in the German term, which are pertinent to Heidegger’s usage of the it. “\textit{Heimlich}” also means secret, thus the \textit{unheimlich} can also be understood, in some sense, as that which is has been brought out of secrecy. Again this show us that in anxiety things are brought out of their everyday circumspection and made apparent in a different way. In their everydayness, things are hidden from us, they are secretive in that we are unaware of them. However even though we are unaware, the things are still there, but in the way that a secret is hidden or unknown. Linked to this is the “homeless” aspect in the meaning of “\textit{unheimlich}.” In anxiety, we are rendered homeless in that our normal concerns, and the intelligibility or meaning that they supply to things, is drawn back or stripped away. In our ordinary, everyday interactions we are at home in the world, but in anxiety this at-homeness is no

\textsuperscript{11} Heidegger, 1995 p.160
\textsuperscript{12} Heidegger, 1995 p. 67
longer present to our awareness. For Heidegger both states are natural for Dasein. As Thiele points out, “human being oscillates between an ontic ensconcing in the world and an ontological alienation from it.”\(^{13}\) Most of the time, Dasein is inauthentic, getting on with its everydayness. Occasionally, however in anxiety, it becomes aware of the ungroundedness of its existence. It is not Dasein’s task to transcend everydayness permanently so that it lives a more authentic life. We should not strive to live in constant awareness of the ontological uncanniness, that is revealed by anxiety, but we should not try to suppress it permanently either. We need to be able to dwell, both in everydayness and in anxiety. As Thiele notes,

> Indeed, the uniqueness and greatness of human being lies in its capacity reflectively to experience its ungrounded contingency. What is dangerous, Heidegger maintains is the systematic effort to forego this struggle with contingency.\(^{14}\)

In the technological age, profound boredom becomes the fundamental attunement. Thiele relates this profound boredom with a refusal of anxiety and therefore the capacity to experience its contingency. While anxiety may render Dasein homeless, avoiding this entirely is dangerous according to Thiele. He is arguing that the main danger associated with anxiety, comes precisely from refusing it. Thiele suggests that the refusal of anxiety does not show up in a clinging to the everyday, as we may expect, but rather in boredom. He maintains that “commentators are frequently mistaken on this.”\(^{15}\) This is because they fail to see that, for Heidegger, deep boredom is a refusal of anxiety. Thus boredom prevents one from finding a home within the homelessness of anxiety. Thiele describes deep boredom as “a pervasive indifference to worldly existence as a whole.”\(^{16}\)

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\(^{13}\) Thiele, 1997, 501  
\(^{14}\) Thiele, 1997 501  
\(^{15}\) Thiele, 1997, 501  
\(^{16}\) Thiele, 1997, 501
6.4 Three Types of Boredom

To understand what is meant by profound boredom, Heidegger offers a progressive analysis of different types of boredom. This analysis reflects on how boredom is related to times and to things. Boredom is understood, by Heidegger, primarily in terms of time, but it is the analysis of things that is most pertinent to the present thesis. We are told that boredom arises “from out of things themselves,” a notion that is obviously difficult to square with the idea of boredom as a subjective psychological state. However this idea does chime with everyday language use. For example, when we say a book is boring, we are saying something about the book. From the point of view of everyday language, boredom is an “objective characteristic.” However,

boringness is not some exclusively objective property of the book after all, such as its bad cover, for instance. The characteristic of ‘boring’ thus belongs to the object and is at the same time related to the subject.

As Heidegger points out, this tendency to attribute subjective characteristics to objective things is generally explained away in terms of metaphorical transference. More strongly stated, in order to preserve the metaphysical distinction between subjects and objects, the idea the book’s boringness must be seen in terms of a transfer from the subject to the object. Obviously, such transference is common in poetic phases such as ‘the lonely hills’. However, as we have seen in Chapter 3, Heidegger critiques the idea that there are distinct metaphysical categories (the sensuous and the non-sensuous) between which characteristics can be transferred. Again in the Fundamental Concept of Metaphysics, he argues that this idea of the transference is difficult to justify. But this time he maintains that even from within a metaphysical view, subjective characteristics can only be applied to objective things where there is

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17 Heidegger, 1995 p. 83
18 Heidegger, 1995 p. 84
19 Heidegger, 1995 p. 84
20 Heidegger, 1995
some rationale, arising from the things, for the application. Things cannot be randomly transferred between metaphysical categories. He asks,

*why* do we transfer such characteristics of attunements onto things? After all this does not happen by chance, or arbitrarily, but evidently because we find something *about things* which demands of its own accord, as it were, that we address and name them in this way and not otherwise.²¹

For example, hills cannot be lonely in the poet’s sense, without there being some recognition of how hills can be lonely for the reader of the poem. The hills cannot be lonely unless they are lonely. What this means is that there is relational quality between the hills and the self. We can characterize this relation as a demand. The hills demand that we address them in a certain way. The poet, then is in a dialogue with the hills. However, we can understand this relational quality in a more mundane way; the term “boring” simply would not make sense, if it did not capture something about the boring thing, i.e., if it were just a subjective state attributed to an objective thing. Thus, boredom and every other attunement is “a hybrid partly objective, partly subjective.”²²

Heidegger analyses two types of everyday boredom, “becoming bored by something,” and “being bored with something” on his way to developing his account of profound boredom or as he terms it, “it is boring for one.” He uses the example of having to wait for hours in provincial train station as an illustration of “becoming bored by something.” This type of boredom initially comes from thing boring thing or state of affairs that engendered it. However, Heidegger tells us, that in becoming bored with something, the boredom starts to spread. “[T]he boredom is no longer nailed fast to something, but is already beginning to diffuse,”²³ Heidegger tells us. Eventually boredom diffuses and “settles over everything.”²⁴ In this case, we respond by trying to drive the boredom away by passing the time. In the example of waiting in a train station,

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²¹ Heidegger, 1995 p. 85
²² Heidegger, 1995 p. 88
²³ Heidegger, 1995 p. 92
²⁴ Ibid.
we find ourselves reading the timetables, or counting the trees. In this type of boredom, time becomes long [Langweile] and drags. We, in turn, respond to this by trying to drive time on. Our response is a refusal of the boring situation, in fact, we attempt to avoid it altogether. But when this attempt fails we find ourselves abandoned by things. This boredom may begin with some state of affairs or thing, but the boredom spreads beyond this thing and onto things in general, which in the end leave us empty.

The second type of boredom, “being bored with something” is illustrated by Heidegger with a description of attending a party. In this case, we see that the relationship both to time and to things is different. Time does not drag in this instance. In fact, an awareness of the passing of time is entirely absent. This form of boredom differs from the first in terms of things too. Boredom does not now arise out of specific things, “in the first form we have a determinate boring thing, whereas in the second form we have something indeterminate that bores us.”25 The circumstance of being at the party leads us to forget our own concerns. In this way we leave ourselves behind. “We find nothing that is boring.”26 Instead, it seems to be the situation of the party itself that bores us. We give ourselves over to the time we will spend at the party and in this ‘giving over’ time becomes inconspicuous to us. The relationship to things is also different in that things do not leave us empty. This boredom is characterised by what Heidegger calls casualness [Lässigkeit] towards things. Rather than see this instance of boredom as structurally different from the first type, Heidegger maintains it is a more profound level of boredom. What bores us in this case still leaves us empty but now,

26 Ibid.
27 Heidegger, 1995 p.117
We now no longer even look for things to satisfy us as they do in our circumspect everydayness, nor do we attempt to drive time on with them. In this type of boredom, what we discover is precisely that we can be bored without the boredom arising from specific things. It is ourselves that we are bored with.

We go along with things, we chat away, perhaps for some restful relaxation. Yet precisely our seeking nothing more from the evening is what is decisive about our comportment. With this ‘seeking nothing more’ something is obstructed in us. In this chatting along with whatever is happening we have, not wrongly or to our detriment, but legitimately, left our proper self behind in a certain way. In this seeking nothing further here, which is self-evident for us, we slip away from ourselves in a certain manner.28

In such situations, an emptiness forms and ‘being bored with’ is determined by this emptiness. In this passage, McNeill and Walker translate “unterbunden” as obstruct but it can also be viewed as a stifling. In this “seeking nothing more,” proper or authentic self (eigentliches Selbst) is stifled. Heidegger contends that this makes the second form of boredom more profound than the first. The casualness of ‘being bored with’ involves a leaving of ourselves behind and an abandoning of ourselves to the situation we find ourselves in. We no longer even struggle against the boredom, in fact, we barely recognise it.

The third type of boredom identified by Heidegger is profound boredom, or “it is boring for one.” This is understood as a further intensification of the first two. This type of boredom is not illustrated with recourse to an example. Again, the relationships to time and to beings is also different. In profound boredom, there is no question of driving it away by passing the time. “[A]ll passing the time is powerless against this boredom.”29 Indeed, profound boredom “conceals its temporal character and in this way it becomes overpowering.”30 This boredom is a fundamental mood because it manifests beings as a whole. It “has in itself this

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28 Heidegger, 1995 p.119  
29 Heidegger, 1995 p.135  
30 Heidegger, 1995 p.136
character of manifesting how things stand concerning us.”31 We are told that they become manifest in a “telling refusal [Versagen].”32 However, it must be noted that the Ver prefix used in the term Versagen, and in the other Ver terms in this section of the Fundamental Concepts (versagen, vertrieb, verschwinden, verwandlung, verbringen) is the equivalent of ‘mis’ in English, as in misspeak (Versagen), but it is also used for a transition to a new state – verschwinden – to disappear.

This refusal or failure does not conceal things, rather they become manifest in their refusal. In this way, profound boredom determines all of Dasein’s possibilities, in that beings as a whole become indifferent to it. Things are shown to us as a whole, but they are simultaneously refused to us.

Accordingly this telling refusal on the part of beings as a whole merely indicates indeterminately the possibilities of Dasein, of its doing and acting, it merely tells of them indirectly and in general.33

In a way that is reminiscent of technological enframing, the telling refusal makes things manifest as insignificant.

They recede into an indifference. Everything is worth equally much and equally little. Beings withdraw from us, and yet remain the as the beings they are.34

This withdrawal of things allows the temporal horizon, itself, to entrance Dasein. It is the essence of time that becomes apparent in profound boredom.

The temporal horizon entrances Dasein so that it can no longer pursues those beings in whose midst it finds itself disposed at all times, so that it neither sees not seeks any further possibility at all of concretely reflecting about itself within these beings in whose midst it is set in place. It is not beings that

31 Heidegger, 1995 p.136
32 Ibid.
33 Heidegger, 1995 p 140
34 Heidegger, 1995 p 145
properly refuse, but time which itself makes possible the mainfestness of these beings as a whole.\textsuperscript{35}

In profound boredom, the apparentness of time means that beings withdraw and this withdrawal of things is concurrent and with, and related to technological enframing of things. This link is easily recognized in the digital. We are told, "this profound boredom never leads to despair."\textsuperscript{36} In the first type of boredom, we struggle to avoid powerful attunement of despair or anxiety by trying to drive time on, but in the profound boredom of the digital age, this struggle is further away from us. We do not need to pass the time and could not do so we even if we wanted to. We are told passing the time is powerless against this deep boredom.

It would seem then, that the possibility of the first type of boredom is reduced or eliminated in the digital. In a time of profound boredom, where time entrances Dasein, there can be no question of passing the time, and thus we should no longer have the experience of becoming bored and trying to drive time on. It is obvious to anyone who becomes stranded in a train station now, that people use technological devices to distract themselves. The act of looking at a phone is not the same act as reading the timetable, or counting trees. Nowadays, when we sit in a train station looking at our phones it does not seem appropriate to say that we are trying to drive on time to escape boredom. Rather we are held in a sort of statis; neither bored nor interested. The engagement with our devices, in a train station, is not the circumspection, which users of old technologies were taken up with. Rather, our devices function as a technological embodiment of deep boredom. We use our phones in part, to access the internet in myriad ways, and thus when we look at our phone we encounter everything as a consumer products, all manifesting as, ultimately insignificant. Our devices allow us to encounter things as a whole in their telling refusal. While the act of taking out our phones in a train station seems to bring

\textsuperscript{35} Heidegger, 1995 p 150
\textsuperscript{36} Heidegger, 1995 p 140
us before myriad possibilities to pass the time, these possibilities are also present to us in telling refusal,

\[\text{t}\]his telling refusal does not speak about them [the possibilities], does not lead directly to dealings with them, but in its telling refusal it points to them and makes them known in refusing them.\(^{37}\)

We stare at our phones, with all the possibilities of the internet before us and yet we can do nothing. However, this is not just how people behave when they are stranded in train stations it is also how the digital subject spends time more and more of their time in all situations.

6.5 The Digital Subject in Poetry

We can now assess *Kim Kardashian’s Marriage* from a Heideggerian perspective, especially in terms of its ability to let profound boredom “arise” and to show things in their telling refusal. Profound boredom, as the attunement of this age, is difficult to apprehend, because it seems like no attunement at all. We can argue that the value of this collection derives, in part, from the fact it allows us some awareness of or access to the attunement of profound boredom. While we can say that the poems are boring, they are not boring in the first or second senses of boredom. Rather, they are boring in the sense of “it is boring for one.” The things presented in the poems do not bore us as a boring thing does, in the first sense of boredom. Boredom does not arise out of the things described in the collection. Rather, the boredom conveyed seems more like the casualness of the “being bored with,” where things are not encountered as boring in themselves. As we have seen, Heidegger sees these types of boredom as continuous with each other, culminating in profound boredom. The items mentioned in *Kim Kardashian’s Marriage* are not just boring, they are somehow also engaging; they keep our attention. The fragmented narrator is not looking to drive time on. She is not looking for a deeper meaning within the things presented to her. She just passes over them in numb, causal interest. She does

\(^{37}\) Heidegger, 1995 p.140
struggle against them. There is no anxiety. In this way, it is in Riviere poem, we gain an insights in to deep boredom, its relationship to time and, the eroded subject of digital age.

In *american sunsets* we read;

*We are sorry, this thriller movie is under construction.*

Picture twilight in Los Angeles: the city’s labyrinth of eight lane freeways is jammed with millions of cars.

*It rises like a dream / in the fall from a feather*

*Trees shed all their summers / Washes away my peach*

Which is your favourite?


Each element of this poem; the thriller movie, Los Angeles, the freeway, all the way to Noam Chomsky in the final line, flow into each other without anything being prioritizing. As in deep boredom, everything is worth equally much and equally little. This poem is not a narrative. It can be viewed as list of random and vaguely connected elements. It is perhaps the city’s labyrinth that rises like a dream but perhaps not. The ‘voice’ which emerges as a result of the collection’s methodology is certainly disinterested; it babbles on about this and that without making a point. The collection is predominately in the present tense giving the sense of a continuous present where things flow in and out of view, without making any impression. It is things as a whole that are shown to us in, no particular thing is lifted into significance, rather they are passed over without any resistance. Something new is always there to take the place of whatever has just been passed over. This poem, like the others, is forgotten almost the moment it is read. Riviere’s “impersonal methods of creation” show us something of the digitized subject described in Chapter 4. As we saw, the digital is the age where the subject of metaphysics is transformed into standing reserve, which stands by to be exploited. The digital subject becomes, simply, a complex of arbitrary desires, without what Dreyfus and Spinosa term “long-
term identities and commitments.”38 The voice that speaks in Riviere’s collection is without a long-term identity or particular concerns. It passes over content without resistance, just as the profoundly bored subject scrolls past whatever content is presented to by the internet.

6.6 The Essence of Google

While Riviere’s collection is full of things, it would seem reasonable to claim that these things are enframed. Enframing means that things are challenged; that they cannot be shown in their essence or rather, that they cease to have an essence. In addition, we can claim, that the things presented in this collection are disclosed in an attunement of profound boredom. As we have seen, this is the fundamental mood that unconceals things in telling refusal. However, we know that great art is truth and truth and, for Heidegger, this is linked to essence. From Heidegger’s perspective, it would seem, at first sight, preposterous to claim that Riviere’s collection can even be considered poetry. However, we can ask how do the things featured in the collection come to be enframed? We can point out that as all the text in the collection comes from Google, then the descriptions of things are simply fragments of internet content. While Google is not explicitly mentioned in the collection, it pervades the entire collection. We can ask, is it Google that is brought to the light of unconcealment? But what is the essence of Google? As a search engine, Google is certainly equipment. Equipment, we are told, in relation to the peasant shoes is, in its essence, useful. Certainly, Google is also useful in an almost bewildering range of ways, it makes possible our lives as digital subjects. But it does not seem to be usefulness that is at play in these poems, in fact, quite the opposite. Riviere highlights the banality of much of Google’s content. It would not seem that usefulness alone cannot capture the essence of the internet. The poems give us a sense, however, of what it is like to use Google. The random nature of the poetry reflects the way hyperlinks, embedded in text, allow the user to slip endlessly from page to page without ever landing at any destination. The poems

38Dreyfus and Spinosa, 1997 p. 162
are banal, random, concerned with celebrity and consumer products. As we have seen, things are floating unfixed by an overall narrative. They are presented to us in an almost dizzying sequence, each subsequent things replacing the last, which is immediately forgotten. Google is revealed as that which enframes. In this way, this collection shows us something of the essence of Google. Google is enframing in a way that is more fundamental that other examples of modern technology.

One clear way to understand how Google is the essence of technology, is to consider Google Ads (formerly AdWords). Google Ads processes user’s behavioural data by means of artificial intelligence, with the aim of matching ads with searches. Zuboff describes how what she terms a “surplus” of behavioural data was a by-product of the technological processes involved in the operation of Google. Initially this data was partially utilized in order to improve the service, but because Google was not making any profit, it did not take long to figure that this data could be put to work targeting advertising to specific users. As is well documented, this targeting turned out to be very effective, generating huge profits for both Google and for its advertisers. This led Google to seek data from numerous other sources, normally by means of cookies, which considerably enhanced Google’s store of UPI (User Profile Information). This allowed exponentially greater specificity in targeting consumers with advertising, in effect, transforming advertising from a guessing game to an almost sure thing. “With Google’s unique access to behavioural data, it would now be possible to know what a particular individual in a particular time and place was thinking, feeling, and doing.” The sheer quantity of data available alongside developments in artificial intelligence, allowed Google to move from predicting an individual’s behaviour to practically modifying or controlling their behaviour.

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39 Zuboff, 2019
40 Zuboff, 2019 p. 77
41 Zuboff, 2019, p. 78
While as we saw in Chapter 4, Zuboff theorizes this in terms of surveillance capitalism, from a Heideggerian perspective, technology determines beings as standing reserve, and it is this that allows Google to practically modify user behaviour. Once humanity is enframed, as standing reserve, it stands by awaiting exploitation. The monstrousness of Google is that as you use it, it uses you. While we can see Google as merely another example of a digital technology, to do so is to miss out on the power of Heidegger’s metaphysical understanding. Google is the essence of technology because it enframes both its content and its users. But though Google is the technology that arises to exploit humanity as standing reserve, the process by which humanity is enframed was well already underway before the specific technology used by Google was developed.

We cannot see this though because, technology, in all its senses; as devices and processes, and as mode of unconcealment, is hidden from us. Most of us do not have the technological know-how to understand how our data is being mined, or how technology stalks us, but neither do we grasp the process by which we are being converted into standing reserve, or how it is that we lose our own essence. When we use Google, we are being exploited but avoiding Google, even if this were still a possibility, would not save us. An account of Google as surveillance capitalism will not save us either because it fails to acknowledge that humanity, as standing reserve, loses the ability to respond to that which enframes it. Even if Google’s advertising strategy is 100% effective because it has the ability to completely modify consumer behaviour, this is not what is most monstrous about technology, because it already relies on the fact that humanity has become that which can be exploited in this way.

In Riviere’s poems, we come to see this monstrousness of modern technology. Yet this monstrousness is not frightening or even disconcerting, it is simply matter-of-fact. Commentators, such as Flynn, who ask whether, this collection simply reflects current tastes are failing to see that this is entirely the wrong question. The collection doesn’t reflect a choice that people make about how to see things, rather it shows us how things are, and how we are, as consumers of these things. Things are simply listed, they do not signify anything beyond
themselves. We consider them briefly and then pass on to the next thing, neither bored nor engaged. This process continues without end. Heidegger tells us that this ‘monstrousness’ can be understood in terms of poetry. Heidegger cites poetry as an alternative to the monstrousness of enframing.

In order that we may even remotely consider the monstrousness that reigns here, let us ponder for a moment the contrast that is spoken by the two titles: “The Rhine,” as dammed up into the power works, and “The Rhine,” as uttered by the art-work, in Hölderlin’s hymn by that name.42

The Rhine is enframed when it is viewed as a power work and forced to deliver its power, as electricity, over to storage. The Rhine, as a dammed up power works, becomes thingless. Heidegger is clear that we cannot just alternate between these two understandings, as we do not control the unconcealment, rather it holds sway over us. While it is human beings that have enframed the river, we cannot simply swap this for a more poetic mode of unconcealment. Similarly, we cannot simply revert back to our pre-digital understanding of things and engage with things poetically, because it is not just the river that has changed, we have changed too. We cannot simply dismiss Riviere’s poetry, and write more traditional poetry, where things have meaning beyond themselves, understood as metaphorical meaning. Because it is this very possibility that is driven out by technology. Enframing reveals things as only as standing reserve. We may try to ignore this but we are ultimately trapped.

Heidegger tells us that “[w]hat ever stands by in the sense of standing-reserve no longer stands over against us as an object.”43 He gives us the example of an airliner as a technology that presences in terms of standing by (Bestand). The airliner, on the taxi strip “has standing only on the basis of the ordering of the orderable.”44 Like the airliner, Google is completely a product of the technological age. But unlike the river, or the airliner, or most other examples of technological devices we can argue that Google is enframing in its very essence.

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42 Heidegger, 1978 p.321
43 Heidegger, 1978 p.322
44 Heidegger, 1978 p.323
This is because Google shares structural similarities with the mode of unconcealment that fosters it. For example, Heidegger tells us that enfarming results in “everything everywhere [being] ordered to stand by, to be immediately on hand, indeed to stand there just so that it may be on call for a further ordering.” The content of Google is always just a few taps or clicks away. Furthermore,

'[u]nlocking, transforming, storing, distributing, and switching about are ways of revealing. But the revealing never simply comes to an end. Neither does it run off into the indeterminate. The revealing reveals to itself to its own manifoldly interlocking paths, through regulating their course.

Again, this reflects the way Google operates whereby seeming endless paths through hyperlink after hyperlink never culminating in anything except another path. Google’s content stands by, always ready for immediate access. It is presented to us as standing reserve and thus, when you Google something the results “no longer stands over against us as an object.”

It must be noted, however, that Google is not a metaphor for enframing, any more than the earth from which the jug is formed is a metaphor for earth in Heidegger’s usage of the term. It is one of the strengths of Heidegger’s account that, by collapsing the sensuous/nonsensuous distinction, we can understand technology as an entire phenomenon, where devices are understood as being continuous with the way things are and the way we are. As we saw in chapter 4, there is no significant, metaphysical distinction to be made between technology as a mode of unconcealment, and our technological devices. Moreover, viewed in this way we can see clearly how our devices feed into the way in which reality is understood within this historical epoch. Google is an expression of technology, but it is also technology expressing itself. It is only Heidegger’s account of technology that allows us to understand Riviere’s collection in this way, and then to understand how Google shows up in this collection. Heidegger’s ontologically broad use of the term technology does not distinguish

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45 Heidegger, 1978 p.322
between technology as a mode of unconcealment, and the devices or process that we normally associate with the term. Digital devices are continuous, and inherently tied up with how digital things are. To draw a firm line between these two senses of technology is ultimately a slip into metaphysics.

6.7 How the Sunglasses Presence

If Riviere’s poems succeed in capturing the essence of Google, they do so precisely by presenting things as standing reserve. We can see this by investigating the status of objects described within the poems? “Sunglasses” is one of the words Riviere combined into the titles that were used to generate the poems. Therefore, there are eight poems in the collection that contain the word sunglasses in the title. A few examples are,

american sunglasses

In the movie The American (the 2010 film The American, which sees George Clooney as Jack, an assassin and gunsmith) George Clooney (looking effortless in the Persol 3009) wears a pair of Havana-coloured Persol 2883 sunglasses.

infinity sunglasses

A comprehensive selection hidden in the high-rise

You know what this means?! eyes love infinity

fucking pimped out FREE SHIPPING
the new sunglasses

It's here that eyewear
worn by countless
has crowned
over 100 brands.
Invest in this collection.
You can view the latest
detail on the temples,
eye-wateringly bright.

While the content of each poem is random, the choice of title is not. By including “Sunglasses” as a title word, Riviere is using the image of sunglasses as a motif or as a theme in the collection. While traditional poetic exegesis may be tempted to view the sunglasses as a poetic metaphor, by which the sunglasses stand in, or are a symbol for something like society’s obsession with consumer products, such a reading does not seem correct in these poems. In fact, it is in Riviere’s poetry that we get a glimpse of what Heidegger means when he says things become thingless. The sunglasses in the poems do not seem to stand in for something else, in the sense of metaphor, and yet neither do they “thing” in terms of opening up the fourfold, in fact, they barely presence in the poems at all. As we saw in Chapter 3, Heidegger maintains that metaphor is the way by which aesthetics explains the poetic away, in order for it to be fitted into metaphysics. While Heidegger criticizes such attempts, they are no longer required in Riviere’s treatment of the sunglasses. Now the sunglasses are enframed, they are no longer capable of metaphoric excess; they do not thing. In fact, they barely come to presence at all. This reflects the manner in which consumer goods come to presence in actuality. While, I have seen the film the American mentioned in the first poem above, I had no memory of what the sunglasses worn by George Clooney looked like. I Googled them and in doing so I discovered how much it would cost me to buy a pair, and of course, I could have ordered a pair then and there if I had wanted to. Google allows me to turn
each film I watch into a catalogue for meaningless consumer goods. As we can see, two of the above poems reference the sale of these glasses "FREE SHIPPING," or their availability for sale. In the digital age, the enframing of things is linked directly to their instant availability, as a product. In Heideggerian terms, rather than opening up the sunglasses in respect of what they signify, or thing, the poems shuts them down. They become mere stock or standing reserve. Enframing reveals the actual, in this case sunglasses, in the mode of ordering, i.e. as standing reserve. The sunglasses in the poems are revealed in this way, and the technological mode of unconcealment is also shown. The poems allow us to glimpse the way Google enframes objects, and presents them as standing reserve. Given this, it is only Heidegger’s accounts of poetry, and technology that allows us to understand the motif of the sunglasses in Riviere’s poems.

This, however, is only part of the story, Riviere’s collection also allows us to grasp something of the enframed subject. As we have seen, Google is not the essence of technology simply because it presents things as standing reserve. Google simultaneously enframes its users. As we have seen, it does this in a very concrete sense, by collecting behavioural data, so that it can target them more effectively with content and ads. As we use Google, our behavioural data is harvested so that it can stand by to be ordered by someone else. As the source of this data, we also, stand by, as a resource awaiting this harvesting. But what sort of being can stand by to be used in this way? As we have already seen, it is not the subject of modernist metaphysics, this subject still had the ability to metaphorically transpose one object for another. The ‘subject’ of *Kim Kardashian’s Marriage* does not use metaphors in this way.

Moreover, as is often noted, lyric poetry dominates modern and contemporary poetry. In this poetry, the lyrical ‘I’ stands amidst a world of objects, some of which can stand in, metaphorically, for something else, some of which, in the case of great poetry, even manage to transcend the binaries of metaphysics. However, while *Kim Kardashian’s Marriage* is composed of poems which are shaped like the short, rather neat lyrics, of modern poetry, there is no real
narrator. Rather, there is only a shadow of the ‘I’ remaining. Though the
fragments used by Riviere often include an ‘I,’ this ‘I’ is an illusion. It is created
by piecing together bits of data, so that some sort of subject seems to emerge,
but there is nothing deeper to this subject; it has no essence. It is the digital
subject, a mere amalgam of pre-existing content. The I which emerges from
Riviere’s method is merely a collection of behavioural data; a Google
constructed I. Moreover, the capacity such a subject has to create or recognise a
deeper meaning in things is now gone. In the case of Kim Kardashian’s Marriage
we can see this clearly in terms of the non-metaphorical status of the poems;
nothing stands in for anything else, because the “narrator” no longer possesses
this ability. Sunglasses, God, vanilla ice-cream, melodic death metal, all presence
in the same way to this enframed subject, without the possibility of
transcendence.

6.8 A Free Relationship

Given this, we can ask does showing Google, as an engine of technological
unconcealment, grant Riviere’s poems the status of great art? To do so might
seem a strange conclusion from a Heideggerian perspective, the mode of
unconcealment at work does not seem to be poiēsis. If these poems unconceal
truth, it is only the truth that we now interact with things in the deep boredom
of the technological. Alternatively, we can ask whether these poems confront
technology in order to lead to a free relationship with it? The sunglasses in
Riviere’s collection do not open up the fourfold; they do not thing, they cannot
stand in for anything else in terms of metaphoric transfer. If this is required for
a free relationship, then this collection does not deliver this.

“Yet,” we are told, “it is not that the world is becoming entirely technical which
is really uncanny (unheimlich). Far more uncanny is our being unprepared for
this transformation.”\textsuperscript{46} We are incapable of stopping the domination of the

\textsuperscript{46} Heidegger, 1966 p.52
technical, because it is not within our control. Heidegger’s account in this respect, allows us to understand the relentless pace of technological advancement, and its increasing influence. But in order to develop a free relationship to technology, we need first prepare ourselves for this transformation. This new foundation is to be found in meditative thinking. Heidegger’s notion of a free relation is then, the possibility of an engagement with technology in the realm of meditative thinking. Heidegger links meditative thinking with autochthony; with being at home or being rooted. While the old at-homeness is lost in the new technology, Heidegger asks “may not a new ground and foundation be granted to man, a foundation and ground out of which man’s nature and all his works can flourish in a new way even in the atomic age?” Such a new ground must involve a way of being with technology, and Heidegger suggests a possible comportment towards technical devices.

We can use technical devices, and yet with proper use also keep ourselves free of them, that we may let them go at any time. We can use technical devices as they ought to be used, and also let them alone as something that does not affect our inner and real core. We can affirm the unavoidable use of technical devices, and also deny them the right to dominate us, and so to warp and lay waste to our natures.

This passage seems at odds with elements of his account of technology, as unconcealment, and it may simply be that there is a contradiction in Heidegger’s thinking in this respect. Perhaps the most obvious contradiction is the idea that a corrupted, technological subject can still respond to technology. As we saw in Chapter 4, it is fair to question whether, the digital subject still has a “real and inner core?” Dreyfus and Spinosa tell us that the human being, as standing reserve, becomes a collection of desires, which are subject to manipulation and exploitation by various parties. Borgmann tells us that this new subject loses its “long-term identities and commitments.” The idea that a

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47 Heidegger, 1966 p.53
48 Heidegger, 1966 p.54
49 Dreyfus and Spinosa, 1997 p.161
50 Dreyfus and Spinosa 1997 162
post-modernist subject, enframed by technology, still has enough core to prevent technology from laying waste to its nature, is one that is certainly questionable. Moreover, if the ability to respond to technology still exists, will it continue, when the generation, raised on internet enabled devices reaches maturity. Even in the time since Dreyfus and Spinosa wrote on the subject, we have seen some erosion of this possibility. Despite this, it is still fruitful to question what sort of response is offered by Riviere's collection. A key element of a free relationship involves dealing with technology consciously. At core, Heidegger is entreating us to deal with technological devices by both embracing them and letting them alone. "I would call this comportment towards technology which expresses “yes” and at the same time “no” by an old word releasement towards things [Gelassenheit].”

I have argued that we cannot simply look away from the technological and towards Borgmannian focal practices. Part of Heidegger's solution is to say 'yes' to technology. Riviere's collection does not look away from the technological to find non-technological focal practices, but rather it looks at technology squarely. While it may become locked within it, it does allow us to see the way in which objects are treated in the digital. Arguably, this collection allows us to understand what it is we must say 'yes' to in order to develop a free relations to technology. We can agree, along with Heidegger, that things do not have the poetic significance they had in previous epochs. There are simply too many of them, and they are now too easily accessed. When everything is available, then noting is of particular significance. However, enframing is more than as result of abundance, this abundance of insignificant things is also a result of technology. To prepare a way to free relation with technology is to, at least in part, to acknowledge this. We cannot return to our former engagement with things. To say yes to technology is maybe to accept that thing’s status as, the locus of human meaning is past.

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51 Heidegger, 1966 p.54
A part of this acceptance comes from keeping watch over the unconcealment. The unconcealment associated with enframing is not just a point of view or a way of looking at the world that can be easily changed. We are told that man “merely responds to the call of unconcealment, even when he contradicts it.”

What is required is,

essential reflection upon technology and decisive confrontation with it [this] must happen in a realm that is, on the one hand, akin to the essence of technology and, on the other, fundamentally different from it... Such a realm is art.

Poetry, when it is great, is viewed, by Heidegger, as a way of transcending or breaking through metaphysics. In this way, the great poem operates at the level of metaphysics. Hölderlin’s poetry is a great because he writes poetry about poetry, and in this he recognizes the power of poetry as the founding word. In Hölderlin and the Essence of Poetry, we are told, “[w]hat supports and dominates beings as a whole must come into the open. Being must be disclosed, so that beings may appear.” Rivière's collection can certainly be understood in terms of keeping watch over the unconcealment. By presenting internet content as poetry, Riviere brings us into relationship with technology, as a mode of unconcealment. Such a relationship can only take place within the realm of the poetic. It is in the realm of the poetic that we can see how technology discloses. However, this picture is still ambiguous, because great poetry gives us the essence of things. The technological is that which blocks the unconcealment of essences—it prevents things from thinging. Thus, there is a tension when we consider Riviere’s collection in terms of Heidegger’s philosophy. On one hand, it is only in the realm of poetry that we can see how technology drives out the essence of things, but on the other, we can ask how can poetry operate when the essence of things is thus driven out? It is perhaps in the face of this tension that we can understand Riviere’s work in this collection.

52 Heidegger, 1978 p.324
53 Heidegger, 1971 p. 58
6.9 Dwelling

Riviere highlights the unrootedness of the digital and while, again, this, may seem to contradict Heidegger’s contention that the poetic is a dwelling, in fact, we can view it in terms of a preparation for a new dwelling within the technological. In Poetically Man Dwells, we are told that, “poetry is the original admission of dwelling.” While the point of this essay is ostensibly to tell us something about dwelling, it also tells that the nature of poetry is a “letting dwell.” Again, we find a point of tension between Riviere’s poetry, and the attempt to subject it to a Heideggerian analysis. Riviere’s poetry is unrooted, even uncanny. Can such work let us dwell? However, in an age like this, it may be precisely the job of poetry to bring us home to bring us to dwell, and to do this it must first bring us to dwell within the unhomely. Heidegger tells us that man can only dwell unpoetically because dwelling is in its essence poetic, (In the same way that the blind man is by nature endowed by sight, a piece of wood can never go blind). Furthermore, Heidegger tells us that if we dwell unpoetically, this is because of a “curious excess of frantic measuring and calculating.” But again we are told we can find our way ‘home’ to poetic dwelling, but only if we remain “heedful of the poetic.” Riviere is indeed heedful of the poetic. Despite their banal content, the poems are constructed in terms of form and rhythm. These poetic elements bring a sort of beauty to this content. In this beauty we, perhaps, find a way to acclimatize ourselves to the technological. Saying ‘yes’ in this sense does not mean to state that the technological is simply a positive development in human history; it doesn’t mean that we simply embrace technological devices rather it means that we accept that it is already prior to us; that we cannot avoid it or escape it. Riviere’s poetry acknowledges technology in all its shallowness. Understanding this must, at least, be a part of the preparation of free relationship with it.

Just as Kim Kardashians Marriage can be fruitfully examined in terms of Heidegger’s accounts of boredom and technology, we can come to understand

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54 Heidegger, 1975 p. 225
55 Heidegger, 1971, p226
something of Heidegger’s account of the danger of both boredom and technology with recourse to this collection. The collection is comprised of internet fragments that refer to celebrity culture, consumer goods, pornography, and other cultural elements, and in this it certainly discloses the boredom of the age but, arguably it remains trapped within this boredom from start to finish. If as, Thiele suggests, boredom is a refusal of anxiety then this collection may be trapped within a refusal of anxiety. In this Kim Kardashian’s Marriage may unconceal the mood of the age, but does not point beyond it and thus, it remains within trapped within the metaphysics of technology. However, even in this entrapment, it does show us how powerfully how our use of technology shields us from the authenticating influence of anxiety. The collection points out the way in which technology, as a mode of unconcealment, brings beings into the open. Any poet who can disclose the truth of his or her age is certainly fulfilling the role of poet. The collection does unconceal something essential about the nature of digital technology. While what is shown is precisely that technology does not allow for the opening up of the fourfold, and thus the question of greatness is still ambiguous. However, all contemporary poetry which attempts to encounter technology faces this ambiguity. In order to develop a free relation to technology, as Heidegger suggests we do, it is impossible to escape this ambiguity because technology is ultimately, in opposition to poetry. However, the situation is, arguably, worse for poets who eschew the technological because they are trapped within a mode of unconcealment to which they are attempting to avoid. If Heidegger’s account is to be taken seriously, we cannot wish technology away by simply avoiding it, technology is already too close to us for that. Thus, it can be argued that for poetry to be essential in the digital age it must prepare a new ground within the technological.
6.10 Conclusion

In the earlier works, Heidegger critiqued metaphysics, which he argued tended to understand existence, or being, in terms of presence. Thus, in the pre-technological world, things were understood in terms of sensuous presencing. While things could ‘thing’ in the sense of opening up the fourfold, this was generally mischaracterized by philosophers in terms of metaphor. The thing was understood as a presence, to which some subjective, metaphoric meaning was attached. The meaning of something was understood in terms of a transference of subjective attributes to an object. However, in the digital age, even this brute objective presence is threatened. Now things cannot thing, in fact they can barely presence at all. Because of this they are no longer able to symbolize or “stand in” for something else. This obviously has significant implication for an analysis of contemporary poetry. In the *Principle of Reason*, Heidegger claims that only less than great poetry should be understood in terms of metaphor. It is clear that we now need to reconsider what poetic metaphor could mean in the age of Google. Riviere’s collection is notable in that it shows how things are now, and how these things cannot be understood as metaphors.
Conclusion

It is not difficult to accuse this thesis of naivety. It is, perhaps, naïve in two, interrelated ways. Firstly, it characterizes the difficulties facing the world in terms of technology, rather than in terms of socio-economic inequality, or an impending ecological disaster. Surely, such a claim is naïve in the time of a global pandemic, an unprecedented refugee crisis, increasing political polarization, the rise of the right across Europe, identity politics, and civil unrest in the US in terms of the Black Lives Matter Movement. While it is not naïve to suggest that technology plays a role in these situations, it is controversial to suggest that it is the root cause, and perhaps even more so to suggest that in order to address these difficulties, we need first to address technology. Secondly, this thesis concerns Heidegger’s claim that poetry, or the poetic, is a way in which we can confront technology. Even if we agree that technology is inexorably tied up with the problems of our time, surely it is naïve to claim that poetry could play any role in ameliorating these problems.

This naivety is reminiscent of the innocence that Heidegger associates with the essence of poetry. He points us towards a line from a letter Hölderlin wrote to his mother, in which described the act of writing poems as “the most innocent of all occupations.”¹ Poetry, Heidegger tells us, is viewed as little more than play. It remains within the realm of the imaginary. As we see in chapter 5, it is divorced from the sort of action that could affect real change in the world, and in this way it is ultimately ineffectual or harmless. However, the distinction between action and the inaction, as we generally understand it, is a feature of metaphysics and, if we take Heidegger seriously, it is metaphysics, which prevents us from recognizing the role of technology in how the world is for us. According to Heidegger, the poetic can confront this metaphysics. From within metaphysics, language is understood as a system of symbols, passively reflecting a pre-existing world. What is important are the actual things in the world and how we interact with them, the words we assign to them are simply

¹ Heidegger, 1971 p. 53
arbitrary sounds and symbols that allow us to communicate effectively. From such a perspective, writing a poem is merely playing with language with no other aim that to please others. Because language, already presents us with an unambiguous description of what is, the poem is just a way to present words in order to make them prettier. Such an account makes it difficult to account for the force and power of some poetry; it means that there is little choice but to view poetry as an innocent occupation. The poet is an innocent. She deludes herself if she thinks her occupation is important. Indeed, it is a delusion to think of poetry as an occupation, nowadays, it is simply a hobby.

But innocence here is not simply a misunderstanding of poetry’s transformative power; it is also something inherent in the nature of poetry. In the next paragraph of his letter, Hölderlin writes that the innocent occupation is also one that he cannot give up without committing “as great a sin, nay even greater, than sinning against one’s own body.” Poetry is inevitable to the poet; she sacrifices any other possibility, for example the possibility of another profession, or any other life in order to write; if she does not then she sacrifices her own life. But even in the face of this sacrifice, the poet is in danger, she remains “inconsequential as compared to the work, almost like a passageway that destroys itself in the creative process for the work to emerge.” Both Hölderlin and Heidegger associate the innocence of poetry with risk or danger; the risk of saying something innocent. It is this innocence that is required to confront the metaphysics, a metaphysics, which now blinds us to the fact that all things are now unconcealed as technological things. Metaphysics obfuscates poetry’s transformative power, but poetry still has the power to counter this. If we insist that language is simply a system of signs, we fail to understand its inherently active role in human affairs. Language point out states of affairs as they are to be understood, given the metaphysics of a time. If we learn anything from Heidegger, it is that, over the course of history, the way in which reality is disclosed by language changes. For Heidegger, it is poetic language that drives this metaphysical change.

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2 Proietti, 1999, p. 186
3 Heidegger, 1978 p. 166
But what does metaphysics actually mean here? The action/inaction dualism is only one of the binaries that Heidegger associates with, and characterizes metaphysics in terms of. There is also the mighty subject/object dichotomy, the idea of things as formed matter, and of course, the division of language into the literal and figurative. But as we have seen, all these traits of metaphysics lose ground in the epoch of new technology. These dichotomies begin to break down; it becomes difficult, for example, to distinguish between the subject and the object or the literal and the figurative. It is perhaps a strength of Heidegger’s account that his description of new technology resonates so clearly with the effects of digital technology that have occurred since his death.

While the dissolution of these metaphysical binaries, in the digital, could herald the end of metaphysics, it does not. The erosion of these metaphysical categories is not an overcoming of metaphysics but rather an intensification of it, which results in the enframing of both objects and subjects. In the digital, being is challenged and unconcealed only as standing reserve. We can illustrate this in terms of the literal/figurative divide, with how it relates to poetic metaphor. As we saw in Chapter 3, the great poem is great precisely because it transcends the received metaphysics i.e. it cannot be understood in terms of some prior agreement as to what is sensuous. This transcending is not a once-off achievement, but rather poetry must always seek out a continually new appropriation. Less than great poetry, on the other hand, settles within a recognisable metaphysical framework. Its metaphors affirm the sensuous/non-sensuous divide. In short, a great poem overcomes the metaphysics affirmed by a lesser poem. The intensification of metaphysics, which we are associating with the digital, does not transcend the literal/figurative divide in the way that a great poem does. For example, in Riviere’s collection, the poems do not transcend metaphysics, but they do not disclose metaphorically either. In this way, Riviere’s collection demonstrates how digital things lose the ability to stand in for others things. As an object becomes enframed, it loses the ability to be a symbol. Similarly, the subject/object dichotomy is also eroded in the digital. While Heidegger’s account of Dasein in Being and Time, is concerned
with transcending Cartesian subjectivity, the erosion of subjectivity by technology is a negative development, because it simply reframes both subjects and objects as standing reserve i.e. as that which cannot open the fourfold, or simply as that which is meaningless.

Despite this, Heidegger’s account still includes the possibility of this enframed subject confronting technology. We must acknowledge, however, that there is some ambiguity with respect to this possibility in the digital age. If, as Heidegger tells us, subjectivity prevents us from understanding art, it is reasonable to ask whether there can be any possibility of art in age where the subject, itself, becomes mere standing reserve. Taking an optimistic view, we can see that to confront technology means to move beyond a conception of reality as that which can be Googled, and focus on how Google discloses reality. While reality is viewed simply that which we can Google, we cannot confront technology. We have seen how the post-internet poetry of Sam Riviere, discloses something of how reality is now disclosed by Google, and how this disclosure shuts down the possibility of meaning excess usually associated with poetry, whether we understand this in terms of the fourfold or in metaphoric terms. In chapter 6, we see how the objects that show up in *Kim Kardashian’s Marriage*, simply presence for a moment and then are replaced by some other object, which is in turn replaced with another.

By allowing a glimpse of how Google discloses reality as standing reserve, Riviere’s poems allow us to see Google as the essence of technology. In this way, we can understand the full implications of Heidegger’s ontologically broad use of the term technology. Google is not a metaphor for how things are enframed by technology but rather it is how things are enframed by technology. Heidegger’s use of the term technology is reminiscent, in some respects, of his non-metaphorical account of thinging or fourfold opening. To explain this, consider the jug Heidegger uses in order to illustrate things. In this discussion, the earth of the jug is earth. The fourfold captures elements of both what is considered literal and figurative from within a metaphysical account. The fourfold does not emanate from the thing implying that the thing is something
prior to the fourfold. The thing is the fourfold opening. Just as in the *Origin*, the world and earth of a work are not isomorphic with the aesthetic categories of an art object and aesthetic qualities. In a similar way, technology is both the devices and the mode of unconcealment. The decision to grant some element of reality the status of sensuous or literal, as we have seen, is metaphysics. Because of this, we can argue, in a Heideggerian way, that Google is the essence of technology and not a metaphor for how technology reduces things to standing reserve.

Google is not a thing in the ‘mere’ sense that Heidegger describes in the *Origin*. It is not a rock, or a book, or a pair of shoes, it is, however, how all things are now enframed. Poetry is one of the things that is enframed by Google, and this is, in part, why technology is so dangerous for Heidegger. We can Google a poem. Does this inevitably mean that poetry can only be another commodity on offer on the internet? Arguably, there is something different about the world of contemporary poetry. The internet at once democratizes poetry; bringing it to an exponentially bigger audience, and providing opportunities to poets, whose voices would have, once, been ignored, but does it also devalue it? This is a thorny issue, one that is beyond this thesis to consider, but what is relevant here, is how a poem is now something that can be instantly replaced with another, and another. Like the endless stream of potential amours on Tinder, what happens to poetry when we can just swipe left, the minute something is unattractive to us or makes us feel uncomfortable. Doesn’t poetry require that we dwell for a time? When everything is instantly available, nothing is significant, and everything becomes boring. While we can see Riviere’s poetry as an attempt to confront technology, by showing us the unconcealment at play, this poetry is ultimately boring. However, this is, perhaps, the route we must take. We cannot turn back. Rather to move forward we must continue to confront technology. We must hit it head on. This thesis argues that Riviere’s poetry, attempts to confront technology, but perhaps it only points us toward an awareness of the boredom of digital age.
We learn from Heidegger that, in order to confront technology we need to first of all think the essence of technology, language, and poetry. For example, if we move into the internet age without questioning what metaphor means now in terms of contemporary poetry, then we miss an opportunity to understand how technology discloses reality. Heidegger’s account gives us a way in which to ask these questions, and to understand how language is used in contemporary poetry. This is true of poetry that explicitly deals with technology and with poetry that does not. Poetry which eschews the technological and remains “traditional” is still subject to the technological. If what it means to use language has changed in the move from the old to the new technology, then appraising poetry in terms of traditional aesthetic categories is not just no longer relevant, but rather it prevents us from recognising the danger that we now find ourselves in. We cannot look away from technology. It is the poet’s job to bring to an understanding of this danger and ultimately to transcend it. However, in order to do so we must look with clear, and perhaps naïve, eyes into the danger.
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