Edukacja Etyczna 18/2021 ISSN 2083-8972

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DOI 10.24917/20838972.18.12

Being and Technē. Interpretation of Martin Heidegger's essay "The Question Concerning Technology"

Introduction

It is commonly known that Martin Heidegger was deeply preoccupied with the fate of the western thought, culture, and civilization since the very beginning of his philosophical journey. Such preoccupation should not be surprising when we remember that he was a witness of one of the most formidable crises the western civilization has had to survive. Furthermore, because his own thinking was shaped in direct relation to this crisis, he tended to set up himself in the role of some kind of savior who was bound to remedy it by finding a new intellectual solution for the western culture. Inspired by Husserl's phenomenology, he discovered a certain lack in the western thought – the lack of asking about being. Robert Sokolowski, at the end of his "Introduction to phenomenology", described Heidegger's way of thinking as: "[...]concerned with only one issue, the question of being and its implications. It is true that in "Being and Time" he introduces a number of what could be called "regional" issues, such as instrumentality and speech and death, but all of them are subordinated to the one question of Being"[1]. Even though the problem of technology was introduced much later than the aforementioned problems, it still would be treated as another "regional" issue. None the less, Heidegger took it very seriously. As Richard Rojcewicz reflected in his book "The Gods and Technology", the problem of technology is thoroughly subordinated to the primary question of Being. So, technology as such pertains to the set of essential interests of the German philosopher. "For Heidegger – he writes – technology in its essence is nothing other than an understanding of what it means to be. [...] Technology is the way we think Being i.e., the way we understand what it takes for something – anything – to be. Technology is thus an affair of first philosophy,

1 Robert Sokolowski, *Introduction to Phenomenology* (Cambridge: University Press 2000), 218.

ontology"[2]. As such, technology is probably much more than a "regional" issue, since our approach to it determines our possibilities of uncovering Being.

It is not hard to notice that science and technology have seen an enormous progress during the 20th century and have brought about far-reaching changes in the human's stance toward the world. Were we to convey it in Heidegger's terms, we would say that the understanding of being (especially the special being of human beings – *Dasein*[3]) has changed significantly. Such a state of affairs could not have simply arisen by itself. At least, not according to Heidegger, since for him every epoch starts from a metaphysical revolution which inevitably sets the frame of understanding of this epoch. He expressed it most emphatically in the essay "The Age of the World Picture" (*Die Zeit des Weltbildes*) where he stated: "If we succeed in reaching the metaphysical ground that provides the foundation for science as a modern phenomenon, then the entire essence of the modern age will have to let itself be apprehended from out of that ground"[4]. This ground lies of course in ancient Greek philosophy.

But what about our epoch? According to the quoted text, it is dominated by two essential phenomena: science and machine technology. Both have been contributing to our success with mastering beings and the simultaneous oblivion of their being. The result, which is the development of a specific understanding of being where everything becomes an object for us to control and use, and we, human beings, are no more than subjects with desires to satisfy, made us susceptible to anxiety and nihilism leading to a distressing, rootless, and anxious understanding of life[5]. As Heidegger reflected, the roots of this rather miserable condition of modern *Daseins* lies precisely in the essence (*Wesen*) of modern technology and modern science. Their presence, as he argues, was brought about by the development of western metaphysics.

Chapter one: Definition of technology in the light of the essence of truth

Since the problem of 'essences' of technology and modern science arose directly from Heidegger's earlier interests, it would be of utmost impor-

2 Richard Rojcewicz, *The Gods and Technology: a Reading of Heidegger* (New York: State University Press, 2006), 56.

3 The primal characteristic of the term *Dasein* – first introduced in *Being and Time* – is a manner in which a human being is, that is, in a constant presence. It may be also used as referring to the human being asking about his existence, his being (*Sein*).

4 Martin Heidegger, The Age of the World Picture, in: *The Question Concerning Technology and other essays*, trans. William Lovitt (New York & London: Garland Publishing, 1977), 117.

5 Hubert Dreyfus, "Husserl, Heidegger & Existentialism" interview by Bryan Magee, 1987, audio 45:50, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KR1TJERFzpo

tance to start with an accurate description of them. Even though Heidegger was always interested in one particular problem – the problem of concealment of being, scholars typically distinguish two periods of his philosophy: the 'early' Heidegger from the times of *Being and Time* and the 'late' Heidegger after a shift took place in his thinking that he himself called 'the turn' (*die Kehre*). In both of them, the understanding of the question of being is slightly different. Considering the earlier approach, we can follow Heidegger through his "Preparatory Fundamental Analysis of Dasein[6]" in searching for necessary conditions (*Existenzialen*) which enables us to ask the question of being. It is of great significance since traditional metaphysics used to inquire exclusively into beings (*Seienden*) with the simultaneous oblivion of their being (*sein*), that is, of the way in which they are present.

Even though the 'late' Heidegger never actually goes far from this standpoint, his understanding of being slightly changes. It ceases to be a merely metaphysical description of the way things are since man, through his openness (*Erschlossenheit*), becomes involved in the process of their disclosing. In the Introduction to his translation of Heidegger's "Question concerning technology", William Lovitt introduces this 'late' understanding of being quite accurately: "Being may perhaps best be said to be the ongoing manner in which everything that is, presences;[...]it is the manner in which, in the lastingness of time, everything encounters man and comes to appearance through the openness that man provides"[7] As we have perhaps noticed already, it is not obvious that such being as openness is constantly present in our contemporary life. If allowed, it might easily drift out of sight and remain veiled. That is the moment when we can see the difference between the 'early' and the 'late' Heidegger most accurately since his later approach to the issue of being consisted mainly in his preoccupation with the lack of concern for being in the modern world, whilst the 'early' Heidegger had been scarcely searching for conditions presupposing the question of being. As he described it in the "Letter on Humanism", in this turning, "[...] everything is reversed", although, "This turning is not a change of standpoint from "Being and Time", but in it the thinking that was sought first arrives at the locality of that dimension out of which *Being and Time* is

6 The following fragment in the original text: "Das primär Befragte in der Frage nach dem Sinn des Seins ist das Seiende vom Charakter des Daseins. Die vorbereitende existenziale Analytik des Dasein bedarf selbst ihrer Eigenart gemäß einer vorzeichnenden Exposition und Abgrenzung gegen scheinbar mit ihr gleichlaufende Untersuchungen [...]. Auf dem Boden der Analyse dieser Fundamentalstruktur wird eine vorläufige Anzeige des Seins des Daseins möglich".: Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1967), 41.

7 Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology*, p. xv.

experienced, that is to say, experienced in the fundamental experience of the oblivion of Being" [8]. Since the source of this oblivion can be traced to the overpowering domination of the technological and scientific worldview, Heidegger embarked on a systematic inquiry concerning the "essence" of both technology and modern science.

However, before I will write anything about the "essence" of technology, it is of great importance to start with the observation that Heidegger's critique of technology goes neither with affirming nor evading technology as such. Instead, his perception of the problem goes beyond this dichotomy and points rather to the modern representation (*Vorstellung*) of technology and its connection with modern science. Since such a realization can be traced directly back to its phenomenological roots, it appears useful to start with a brief note about Heidegger's approach to phenomenology.

It is rather clear that all the time we respond to events occurring to us and they somehow shape the way in which we perceive and understand the world. Moreover, we are constantly developing our language to keep up-to-date with this process. Not only our perception and language but also our understanding of them make up the representation of things appearing to us. In this process of representing "[...]we describe the various intentionalities and their various objects, as well as the self and the world. We distinguish between a thing and its appearances, a distinction that has been called by Heidegger the "ontological difference", the difference between a thing and the presencing (or absencing) of the thing"[9], or simpler put: the division into w h a t is and the b e i n g of what is. This being is, once more, crucial for him, since "Being is not just "thing-like"; being involves disclosure or truth, and phenomenology looks at being primarily under its rubric of being truthful. It looks at "human" being as the place in the world where truth occurs."[10]. Heidegger emphasizes it even more by employing the ancient Greek term *aletheia* and using it simultaneously as 'truth' and 'revealing'. They cannot be separated, especially, if we wish to conduct any kind of metaphysical inquiry since: "[...]in metaphysics reflection is accomplished concerning the essence of what is and a decision takes place regarding the essence of truth. Metaphysics grounds an age, in that through a specific interpretation of what is and through a specific comprehension of truth it gives to that age the basis upon which it is essentially formed"[11]. Since Heidegger is primarily

8 Martin Heidegger, The Letter on Humanism, in: *Pathmarks*, ed. William McNeill (Cambridge: University Press, 1998), 250.

9 Robert Sokolowski, *Introduction*, 50.

10 Ibidem, 65.

11 Heidegger, The Age of the World Picture..., 115.

interested in uncovering this basis, he embarks on the task of studious pursuit of the original essence of truth.

Considering the problem of truth in Heidegger's philosophy, the best way to start seems to be an analysis of the initial parts of "Being and Time" where we find the distinction between 'being-truth' and 'being-false'[12]. As such, this distinction is of phenomenological provenience since the difference between the aforementioned modes of being consists in the manner in which they appear to us. It could also be put like this: when we discover something in its essence, we perceive it as something unhidden; we see it in its 'being-truth'. But, as it was previously said, this is not obvious that we usually see things this way, because most of the time we are susceptible to 'being-false' which occurs when things are manifesting themselves as something they are not.

In his later lectures, Heidegger deepens his approach to this issue even further. In one of his most essential lectures entitled "On the Essence of Truth" (*Vom Wesen der Wahrheit*) from 1930, he introduces the dichotomy between the 'essence' (*Wesen*) and the 'non-essence' (*Unwesen*) of truth. The truth, conceived in its essence, is identified with freedom which is specifically understood by Heidegger as letting things be as they are (*Seinlassen*)[13]. As such, freedom requires man's openness for being disclosing itself through these things. In such a way, *Dasein's* freedom becomes a necessary condition for truth as unconcealment – original *aletheia*. The other part of the discussed dichotomy – the 'non-essence' (*Unwesen*) is a situation of revealing one particular entity which instantly brings about concealment of entities as a whole. It is inquiring into particular beings with the simultaneous oblivion of being as an ongoing manner in which everything is constantly appearing[14]. This is, in essence, a mystery which has been forgotten in the modern age, and this is due to the development of modern science and technology as the main factor. One of the reasons contributing to this state of affairs is the traditional but misleading concept of truth as *adequatio rei et intel-*

12 The description in the original text:„Das »Wahrsein« des logos als aletheuein besagt: das Seiende, wovon die Rede ist, im legein als apophainesthai aus seiner Verborgenheit herausnehmen und es als Unverborgenes sehen lassen, entdecken. Im gleichen besagt das »Falschsein« (...) soviel wie Tauschen im Sinne von verdecken: etwas vor etwas stellen (in der Weise des Sehenlassens) und es damit ausgeben als etwas, was es nicht ist". (SZ 33)

13 „Der Wesen der Wahrheit enthüllt sich als Freiheit. Diese ist das ek-sistentne, entbergende Seinlassen des Seienden". Martin Heidegger, "Vom Wesen der Wahrheit," in: *Wegmarken* (Frankfurt am Mein: Vittorio Klostermann, 1976), 192.

14 „Das eigentliche Un-wesen der Wahrheit ist das Geheimnis. (...) Für den Wissenden allerdings deutet das »Un-« des anfänglichen Un-wesens der Wahrheit als der Un-wahrheit in den noch nicht erfahrenen Bereich der Wahrheit des Seins (nicht erst des Seienden)". Heidegger, "Vom Wesen der Wahrheit", 194.

lectus, that is, the correspondence between the intellect and subjects appearing to it. This correspondence is precisely the aforementioned "specific comprehension of truth" giving the metaphysical basis to our age. Since only within this notion of truth any kind of scientific inquiry can be conducted, we become thereby confined to asking exclusively about entities. It happens so because entities conceived as a whole in no way are subject to being ordered, measured or calculated[15]. Since entities so understood become useless as objects of metaphysics and science, they have to be somehow forced to the other kind of revealment which would make them capable of being ordered, measured and calculated. This realization is bound to Heidegger's further critique of technology, since technology in Heidegger's sense is nothing else but a way of revealing things (in the sense of the aforementioned Greek term *aletheia*) which would be best described as bringing all things into the mode of being comprehensible and accessible.

In order to understand why we tend to understand technology like this, we should come back to the very beginning of "the Question Concerning Technology" where Heidegger indicates two "uncannily correct" definitions of technology: the instrumental definition according to which technology is simply a contrivance (in a sense of Latin's *instrumentum*) and the anthropological definition where technology is both a means to an end and a human activity. This conception corresponds the most with our modern casual understanding of the term. It might be surprising, but in no way does Heidegger claim that this concept is incorrect and should be rejected as such. It is clear for him though, that we are not fully aware of the consequences of using it as the current definition which, all in all, determines our way of thinking. Especially this correctness is deceitful since 'correct' it is not 'true' in the sense of *aletheia*. Therefore, it rather conceals than reveals what is essential. Moreover, it makes us unable to realize that we are lacking something since when we acknowledge instrumentality, we are bound to seek for the correctness instead of the truth.

But there is also another, a more severe and less conspicuous consequence of the prevalence of the aforementioned definitions. Heidegger indicates it with regret by saying: "Wherever ends are pursued and means are employed, wherever instrumentality reigns, there reigns causality"[16]. If Heidegger is right, instrumentality can be understood only in

15 „Das Verhalten des Menschen ist durchstimmt von der Offenbarkeit des Seienden im Ganzen. Dieses »im Ganzen« erscheint aber im Gesichtsfeld des alltäglichen Rechnens und Beschaffens als das Unberechenbare und Ungreifbare". Heidegger, "Vom Wesen der Wahrheit ", 193.

16 Martin Heidegger, The Question Concerning Technology, in: *The Question Concerning Technology and other essays*, trans. William Lovitt (New York & London: Gar-

its relation to causality. Therefore, the definitions discussed earlier, by forcing us to pursue the final effect impose on us a certain way of understanding every occurrence, namely, as the product of the cause-effect relationship. As such, the cause-effect relationship becomes an essential condition for any scientific inquiry and that is probably the reason why the instrumental and anthropological definition of technology entrenched itself so strongly in contemporary thinking. Since in order to develop modern science, we are determined to be satisfied with correctness rather than truth, we are left, in fact, with a mere shadow of truth.

Were we to fully comprehend the meaning of this statement, we would ask: Is there any way out of this predicament? What would happen with causality as the way of appearing if we temporarily suspended the concept of "the means to an end"? Heidegger, typically for him, proposes to start with tracing back the original meaning of the terms employed. By doing so, he links the contemporary meaning of "the cause" with the Greek term *aition,* which denotes the concept of being a cause as being indebted (*verschulden*) to something else. Therefore, the traditional concept of the fourfold causality[17] created by Aristotle is understood by him as the four ways of being indebted. As such, they become the four ways of bringing objects into being which allows them to be as they are in the sense of *aletheia*. From now then, Heidegger defines the Aristotelian fourfold causality as the four ways of occasioning[18] (*veranlassen*) and in his view, such a combination is a proper name for the essence of causality[19]. Moreover, this occasioning is directly connected with a shift in the way in which occurrences come to presence since they begin to appear in the original Greek sense. To provide some demonstration of this, Heidegger quotes Plato's *Symposium*: "Every occasion for whatever passes over and goes forward into presencing from that which

land Publishing, 1977), 6.

17 *Causa materialis* (a material of which something is made), *causa formalis* (the shape for the material object), *causa finalis* (the final effect for which something is made) and *causa efficiens* (something which brings about the effect)

18 "[…]let us clarify the four ways of being responsible in terms of that for which they are responsible. According to our example, they are responsible for the silver chalice's lying ready before us as a sacrificial vessel. (…) The four ways of being responsible bring something into appearance. They let it come forth into presencing [*An-wesen*] They set it free to that place and so start it on its way, namely, into its complete arrival. The principal characteristic of being responsible is this starting something on its way into arrival. It is in the sense of such a starting something on its way into arrival that being responsible is an occasioning or an inducing to go forward [*Ver-an-lassen*]". Heidegger, *The Question*, 9.

19 Gregory B. Sadler, "Martin Heidegger | Question Concerning Technology (part 1) "Existentialist Philosophy & Literature," filmed January 2014, video 1:03:39, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4rzYhOOOw40

is not presencing is *poiesis*[20], is bringing-forth [*Her-vor-bringen*]"[21]. It is crucial that it refers to "every occasion" – not only to those of human doing. Therefore, "*Physis* [nature] also, the arising of something out of itself, is a bringing-forth, *poiesis*. *Physis* is indeed *poiesis* in the highest sense"[22]. Consequently, we can say that occasioning refers, in fact, to any possible human experience without excluding occurrences which cannot be reduced to merely causal relationships. That is how the previously mentioned predicament imposed by instrumentality and its primary consequence – causality can be avoided.

To provide some exemplification of this shift in the understanding of the world, let us analyze Heidegger's example of a silver chalice. While considering it through the lens of his interpretation of causality, we see the silver chalice as indebted to four components: silver (as the matter of which it is made), the so-called aspect of chaliceness (as the form of the material object), the sacrificial rite (as the purpose – understood as *telos* – for which both the matter and the aspect become bound together), and finally to the silversmith (as the one who gathers together all the aforementioned components). Since they become indebted to each other and therefore co-responsible for the being of the silver chalice, all components instantly belong together. Because of this being together instead of being brought about by each other, the cause-effect chain is not possible between them. Such a realization is one of the preparatory conditions for further understanding what technology inherently is.

Another aspect worth consideration before introducing the definition of technology, is the ambiguousness of the Greek word *techne* from which the term "technology" is derived. In its ordinary usage, *techne* is understood as the human ability to produce things. Heidegger though, typically for himself, tries to reveal the original (that is the true instead of the merely correct) meaning of it and therefore he introduces *techne* as the name not only for the activities and skills of the craftsman but also for all the intellectual disciplines and the fine arts. In this sense "*Techne* belongs to bringing-forth (*Her-vor-bringen*), to *poiesis*; it is something *poietic*"[23] and only as such reveals itself in the sense of *aletheia*.

20 "In this context *poiesis* is to be understood as a process of gathering together and fashioning natural materials in such a way that the human project in which they figure is in deep harmony with, indeed *reveals*—or as Heidegger sometimes says when discussing poiesis, *brings forth*—the essence of those materials and any natural environment in which they are set." For more, see: Wheeler Michael, "Martin Heidegger," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2018), https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2018/entries/heidegger/>.

21 Heidegger, *The Question...*, 10.

22 Ibidem, 10.

23 Ibidem, 13.

Nevertheless, we still have to recognize that this understanding of *techne* does not hold for the modern mass production as it held for the ancient manufacturing. The difference lies for sure in the level of complexity and the range of impact on the environment but, except that, does modern technology reveal anything inherently different to us? Apparently, not only reveals something new, but also the way of revealing is intrinsically different since "[...]the revealing that holds sway throughout modern technology does not unfold into a bringing-forth in the sense of *poiesis*"[24]. The earlier, ancient forms of productive activity were like a sculptor "producing" a sculpture. He simply took raw material such as clay and intentionally shaped it to a final "product". In this sense, both the sculpture and the aforementioned silver chalice belonged to craftsmanship and therefore they were appearing in the "true" sense of *poiesis*. Modern technology, quite conversely, raises unreasonable demand to challenge nature in the sense of forcing things (nature) to obey and, as a result, use and store its resources according to the rule: maximum yield with minimum expense.

As could be expected, in such a process things start appearing to us differently, therefore Heidegger decides to add exemplification to his theoretical description. He indicates that the River Rhine transformed itself into a source of electrical power since a power plant was built on it. As such, the aforementioned river does not appear as a river anymore since its intrinsic nature – being a river – in modern technology is revealing itself as something different from its original mode of being. Since it was quantified, it becomes inherently unable to appear in its original, natural and poetic beauty anymore. It has been damned up to the number of kilowatts it is producing and, as such, its true mode of being remains veiled in the process of overpowering commodification.

Taking all the aforementioned statements into consideration, it seems useful to wrap up this chapter by introducing a more accurate and concise definition of technology in Heidegger's philosophical dictionary. Emphasizing once more that modern technology consists inherently in nothing else but a certain mode of representing things, Heidegger points out: "Instrumentality is considered to be the fundamental characteristic of technology. If we inquire, step by step, into what technology – represented as means to an end– actually is, then we will arrive at revealing. The possibility of all productive manufacturing lies in revealing. Technology is therefore no mere means. Technology is a way of revealing"[25]. That is, in a nutshell, Heidegger's phenomenological analysis of the phe-

24 Ibidem, 14.
25 Ibidem, 12.

nomenon of technology. Again, we should be constantly mindful of that while considering further aspects of his analysis.

Chapter two: Analysis of the "essence" of modern technology and its consequences

Although it is a rather basic philosophical knowledge, it is worth reminding that the word 'essence' has been of utmost importance for the history of western metaphysics from the very beginning. Its traditional definition would probably be best described as that which makes an entity what it is. In scholastic approach, in addition, this "what it is" is independent of its existence – "that it is". Since Heidegger did not approve of the traditional western view of metaphysics, in *Being and time* he stated that the "essence" (*Wesen*) of human being's being there (*Dasein*) lies precisely in its existence. As such, essence and existence are intimately intertwined in Heidegger's philosophy. To emphasize this shift even more, he introduces his own term *Wesen* to describe it. He does so because "[...]he wants an account of essence that contains a notion of endurance, but not the permanence in which an essence is what something is, always has been, and always will be. He draws his alternative meaning from the German word for essence, *Wesen*, which is derived from the obsolete verb *wesen*. He argues that this verb has the same meaning as *währen*, which means "to last or endure"[26].

Knowing that, we ought to constantly keep in mind, that the essence of technology discussed in this paper is specifically an essence in the Heidegger's way. As such, this essence is to disclose to us gradually, stage by stage, how things are presencing themselves through the lens of technology.

It should not be surprising then that the essence of technology is not a particular instance of any modern device. It is rather a manner in which all pieces of modern technology appear to us. Therefore, were we to find this essence, we ought to neither strive to master technology nor evade it since in so doing we will never catch a requisite distance to the occurrence we wish to discern. Without such a distance, we are permanently unable even to think about asking about the essence since the one who tries to do that "[...]becomes trapped in one of two attitudes, both equally vain: either he fancies that he can in fact master technology and can by technological means by analyzing and calculating and ordering – control all aspects of his life; or he recoils at the inexorable and dehumanizing control that technology is gaining over him, rejects it as the work of the devil, and strives to discover for himself some oth-

26 Trish Glazebrook, *Heidegger's Philosophy of Science* (New York: Fordham University Press 2000), 212.

er way of life apart from it"[27]. It is of utmost importance to highlight, that it happens so since the man usually does not know that the principle underlying all his interactions with the world is not of his doing. In the essay discussed, Heidegger talks about an overwhelming dispensing power that has thrust modern technology upon us and, which is even worse, it is intrinsically hidden from us. However, in order to comprehend it thoroughly, we need to take note of Heidegger's general vision of Western history linked with the specifically understood concept of destiny (*Geschick*) as its aftermath.

Generally speaking, the late Heidegger's view of the history of philosophy and the history of Western culture as a whole is divided into so-called epochs and these are nothing else but a certain framework of meaning. That is, in a nutshell, late Heidegger's basic intuition that the way in which the world appears to people differs depending on the culture to which this appearing discloses itself. He is thereby convinced that things revealed themselves differently in ancient Greece than they are understood in modern epoch for these are two separate frameworks of meaning. Therefore, thinkers are always confined to what is already present in their epoch; this is why: "The fact that the real has been showing itself in the light of Ideas ever since the time of Plato, Plato did not bring about. The thinker only responded to what addressed itself to him[28]". Such a rather unusual statement might be baffling for most readers since we would want to raise a question: If Plato, as a philosopher, is not the source of the concept of revealing the world in the light of Ideas, who or what revealed it to us through him? Once again, it is a wrong question. It is unattainable for us to indicate anyone since there is no 'author' of the way of revealing; "[...]it is Being's disclosing of itself.[...] Heidegger uses for that[...] the word *Ereignis*. It is a disclosing bringing to pass, a 'bringing to sight that brings into its own'"[29]. This technical term – usually translated to English as Event or Enowning – is characteristic of late Heidegger's path of thinking since it slightly changes his original understanding of being from his earlier work – *Being and Time*. The core of that shift consist in the fact that *Ereignis*: "[...]identifies the leap of the dynamic relationship between being [*sein*] and being-there [*Dasein*] and the mutual belonging together by which each "comes into its own" by virtue of that reciprocity. Heidegger makes use of the "own" meaning of "eigen" to ready the sense of the verb "ereignen," as to make one's own (...), enowning (*Ereignis*) come to light as that which de-

27 Martin Heidegger, "The Question," xxxiii.
28 Martin Heidegger, *The Question...,* p.18.
29 Ibidem, p. xxxvi.

termines the way in which being can be granted to thought, as much through its potential to recede as to manifest itself"[30].

It is of utmost importance to highlight once again that according to late Heidegger we have no control over the manner in which things are disclosing themselves to us. Instead, we are always trapped in a certain understanding of their being which in no way is of our doing. Such an intuition pushed Heidegger to formulate the concept of some kind of 'fate' understood by him as a scheme in which we interpret the world in a certain historical age and which, as such, is an outward dispensation brought upon us. The exact term for that in Heidegger's language is *Geschick* (destiny). In order to make this idea more comprehensible, we need to start with an assertion that "[...]no interpretative scheme is a purely subjective matter. It is shaped by cultural and historical forces that lie beyond the power of the individual. Any culture is therefore destined to look at the world in a certain way, in other words, to have their distinctive way of letting things appear. This way itself can be either heeded carefully or taken for granted and ignored. In neither case, however, can it be controlled freely, which means man's 'relation to being' (to the way things present themselves) is to a large extent an inevitable fate"[31]. Whatever then this way of appearing is, we cannot really be blamed for it and there is both a consolation and a risk in it. However what we should be aware of is that *Geschick* arises directly from *Ereignis* since "the turning in enowning [*Ereignis*] both previews and grants the destiny of being"[32]. This principle applies to every period in history.

In order to characterize our contemporary framework of meaning brought upon us in the aforementioned way, it would be useful to start with contrasting our epoch with the previous ones in the context of *Geschick*. To begin with the rather expected example of ancient Greece, it has to be said that "the fundamental Greek experience of reality was, Heidegger believes, one in which men were immediately responsive to whatever was presencing to them. They openly received whatever spontaneously met them"[33] and such a way of revealing, as it was already said in the previous chapter, applied also for their pre-modern technology. That is, in a nutshell, a way of being which was imposed on the Greeks. We, on the other hand, are forced to respond to a different kind of being since modern technology has imposed on us another framework of meaning; the framework in which things are given to us in a mode called

30 Frank Schalow and Alfred Denker, *Historical Dictionary of Heidegger's Philosophy*, (Lanham • Toronto • Plymouth:The Scarecrow Press, 2010), 101.

31 Corijn van Mazijk, "Heidegger and Husserl on the Technological-Scientific Worldview," *Hum Stud* 42, (2019): 519–541, https://doi.org/10.1007/s10746-019-09526-2

32 Frank Schalow, AlfredDenker, *Historical Dictionary...,* 102.

33 Martin Heidegger, *The Question...,* xxvi.

by Heidegger *Bestand* (a store or supply – typically translated to English as "standing-reserve"). As such, they appear through the lens of modern technology as nothing else but resources or inventory for commodification so their being consists now of being constantly ready for use or exploitation. This is a key characteristic of today's things' manifesting. The roots of such a state of affairs lie precisely in modern technology since modern technology both reveals and orders the standing-reserve. As a result, everything – even nature – begins to disclose itself in terms of standing-reserve. This process in which nothing appears as an object anymore, things lose their natural mode of presenting to us. This rather peculiar statement would become more clear if we compared the original words used by Heidegger to describe the differences between the 'true' being of objects (*Gegenstand*) and the "false" one (*Bestand*) which appears in the modern science and technology. The term *'Gegenstand'* implies an object which stands against something and that is the right way of appearing. This characterization contrasts with the word *"Bestand"* (a store or supply) which is more adequate to describe objects degraded by modern science and technology to the mode of "standing by". Heidegger uses such a distinction to emphasize how objects are ordered in modern technology, namely – according to the challenging demand ruling presences them as revealed. In such a context, their orderability and substitutability become more conspicuous[34]. That is also the moment when the technology ceases to be merely instrumental and becomes its own process of revealing and that is Heidegger's "true" characterization of modern technology.

As such, the "true" characteristics of modern technology goes about setting-in-place, ordering, and standing-reserve but it does not exhaust itself solely in this for the most important word describing modern technology – its essence (*Wesen*) – is the word *Ge-stell* – typically translated to English as *Enframing* which, as the essence of technology, is a kind of scheme according to which things appear to us[35]. As such, this scheme draws a general horizon of perceiving and interpreting our interactions with things and it does it, typically, by transforming everything to the aforementioned *Bestand*. This occurrence discloses itself most vividly in a moment when we make an imposition upon nature to withdraw resources from it for our own use and then store it for further consumption. If we proceed with this in an all- encompassing, multi-level pro-

34 Elaborated based on translator's remarks in: Heidegger, *The Question*, 17.

35 „*'Ge-stell' heißt die Weise des Entbergens, die im Wesen der modernen Technik waltet und selber nichts Technisches ist" (FT 24); "Es ist die Weise, nach der sich das Wirkliche als Bestand entbirgt*" (FT 27) (See, Martin Heidegger, "Die Frage nach der Technik," in *Gesamtausgabe. I. Abteilung: Veröffentlichte Schriften 1910ß1976 Band 7,* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2000), 5-36.

cess and with every potentially useful occurrence, we unwittingly tend to perceive the world as a set of things we can potentially store and use. This is just the first stage of the whole process in which the increasing consumption drives the endless production and activity.

Such a scheme, brought upon us by *Geschick*, is precisely the reason for the contemporary concealment of being. Heidegger seems to describes it most directly and bitterly in his famous Interview for *Der Spiegel*. He says ironically: "Everything is functioning. That is precisely what is awesome, that everything functions, that the functioning propels everything more and more toward further functioning, and that technicity increasingly dislodges man and uproots him from the earth"[36]. The most threatening result of the prevalence of the essence of technology is thus the situation in which a human being (as *Dasein)* is doomed to become the *Bestand* as well as nature he previously had challenged and reduced to being a mere commodity. That is the core of the existential threat Heidegger intends to reveal since in *Ge-stell* we may end up in a mode of being like robots, that is, reduced to our functionality, practical "usage" and omnipresent statistics which is definitely less than a truly human existence. We, who are living in the modern age, are especially susceptible to this threat since we are constantly subject to being revealed in terms of *Bestand* for we are on every social occasion reduced to the numbers, measures, statistics, and even to the certain norms or patterns of behavior foreseen in the society. In comparison to Heidegger's times, our current predicament with modern technology is even more formidable for at least two reasons: firstly, the development of information technology has taken place and forced the situation in which every information is literarily reduced to data ready for organization and secondly, we need more and more people to manage technological devices. It is remarkable, that the modern name for it – human recourses – perfectly fits Heidegger's vision, even though he could not have any idea about the reality of the 21st century. While participating in the process of production, we end up as being objectified and that happens even with relations to our own machines since we are their operators so the unavoidable part of the whole system. Consequently, the role of man becomes here quite ambiguous for, on the one hand, he is the one who commands the technological development but at the same time is commanded by it. As such, he remains in the predicament of being simultaneously the master and the victim of technology.

36 Martin Heidegger, "Nur noch ein Gott kann uns retten," *Der Spiegel* 30 (Mai, 1976): 193–219. Trans. by W. Richardson as "Only a God Can Save Us" in *Heidegger: The Man and the Thinker* (1981), ed. T. Sheehan, 45-67. http://www.ditext.com/heidegger/interview.html

Chapter three: Analysis of the essence of modern science and its relation to the essence of technology

It is rather uncontroversial to uphold that technology stands in a close relation to science. But if not for science, the development of technology would not have been possible. Considering the history of Western culture in a casual way, we must admit that such a claim is correct. Yet Heidegger, typically for him, does not agree with the common way of interpreting the world as much as he is not a friend of correctness. Despite this fact, however, it would not be an ungrounded statement that according to him technology and science belong together essentially, even though it may sound muddled. I would like to emphasize the word "essentially" since, as I pointed out in the previous chapter, Heidegger's understanding of this word usually differs from the traditional one. That is why he writes that "The modern physical theory of nature prepares the way first not simply for technology but for the essence of modern technology"[37]. That is, natural sciences have been contributing to the fact that things now disclose themselves in the manner of *Ge-stell* instead of being a simple cause of the technological development in its casual understanding. It happens so, Heidegger argues, as "[...]already in physics the challenging gathering-together into ordering revealing holds sway. But in it that gathering does not yet come expressly to appearance. Modern physics is the herald of Enframing"[38]. It established a certain revealment of the world in which, exclusively, the essence of modern technology was able to arise. The revealment discussed consists of the modern science's way of representing which "[...] pursues and entraps nature as a calculable coherence of forces"[39]. This way is, indeed, the most vividly present in modern physics because modern physics can advance only by imposing the mathematical projection on the universe. Because of that, "[...] physics, [...] already as pure theory, sets nature up to exhibit itself as a coherence of forces calculable in advance, it therefore orders its experiments precisely for the purpose of asking whether and how nature reports itself when set up in this way"[40]. As a result of this method, Heidegger argues, nature is forced to reveal itself as ordered and, as such, becomes susceptible to being mastered by humans wishing to dominate over it. The resulting model of revealment of nature through constant challenging pertains to the essence of modern science, which, according to Heidegger, is originally tantamount to research.

37 Martin Heidegger, *The Question...,* 22.
38 Ibidem, 22.
39 Ibidem, 21.
40 Ibidem, 21.

In the essay *The Age of the World Picture* he describes this term more emphatically as "Projection and rigor, methodology and ongoing activity, mutually requiring one another, constitute the essence of modern science, transform science into research"[41]. It is remarkable, that this way of inquiring into the world does not confine itself solely to natural sciences. It permeates all fields of human scientific inquiry, since, regarding the convenience of this way, there arises a strong tendency to reduce everything to the mode in which it can be ordered through calculation and thus somehow explained. Therefore: "Research has disposal over anything that is when it can either calculate its future course in advance or verify a calculation about it as past. Nature, in being calculated in advance, and history, in being historiographically verified as past, become, as it were, "set in place" [*gestellt*]"[42].

In this way, modern faculty of arts (including philosophy) is also subordinated to *Ge-stell*, even though it seems to be radically different from natural sciences.

Analyzing the essence of modern science, it should not to be overlooked that it is deeply ingrained with the metaphysical basis which in Heidegger's interpretation is to a large extent responsible for the modern technological-scientific predicament. As I already stated in the first chapter, Heidegger, at the outset of his philosophical inquiry into being, introduced the concept of the ontological difference which is a division between beings and their being. It is crucial that both sides of the division are present as when we focus on one of them, we instantly lose the other one. This state of affairs arose side by side with the development of modern science because science, in contrast to philosophy, is preoccupied only with beings, that is with the one side of the ontological dichotomy. It becomes conspicuous when we reveal beings in the process of scientific inquiry because we are then focused solely on their properties in order to take advantage of them. As a result, we become unable to ask about their being and this is a mystery modern *Daseins* have forgotten. Since human beings' attitude toward the question of being has a decisive impact on the epoch they live in, our error of one-sidedness established the domination of anxiety and nihilism which have come to prevail nowadays. "The question of the essence of science is therefore for Heidegger the question of an epoch in the history of being. This is the epoch of nihilism, in which being is forgotten in the face of scientific and technological success with beings"[43]. Therefore science and technology,

41 Martin Heidegger, *The Age...*, 126.
42 Ibidem, 126-127.
43 Trish Glazebrook, *Heidegger's philosophy of Science,* 213.

as dominant phenomena, are the best tools for Heidegger in uncovering metaphysics of modernity[44].

Taking all aforementioned statements into consideration, it would appear helpful to summarize this chapter by clarifying the relation between the modern science and technology. According to Heidegger, what they have in common is their essence, that is the way of revealing the world and shaping our thinking according to the scheme which sees everything in terms of commodity, being under our control, and immediate readiness to use. Through their common way of revealing things, they rule together in modernity. Trish Glazebrook, when comparing them, depicts their mutual relation this way: "The essence of technology is for Heidegger the way in which technology comes to presence and endures in the modem epoch. It is the holding sway of technology in modernity. Likewise, the essence of science is the way in which science holds sway in the modern epoch. Heidegger's claim that the essence of science lies in the essence of technology is tantamount to the claim that science and technology hold sway in the same way: they reveal beings in the same way"[45].

As I already stated, this way is *Ge-stell*.

Chapter four: The supreme danger and the saving power

Before presenting any proposition of overcoming the predicament of modern technology and modern science discussed in here, it would be of utmost importance to pithily pinpoint the existential threat it has brought about. As it was already clarified in previous chapters, the essence of technology destines a certain way of revealing. Since "[...] the destining of revealing holds complete sway over man"[46], modern technology is a supreme danger precisely because it destines a certain way of revealing – standing-reserve which simultaneously rules out any other potential mode of perceiving and interpreting the world. The greatest risk lies thereby in the possibility that man will acknowledge the standing-reserve as the only possible way of revealing. Having been destined this way, not only does he overlook the question of being, but also inevitably ends up as an object within the realm of standing-reserve. The existential situation of a man who is so destined becomes a rather miserable one for he "[...]is regularly expected, and expects himself, to be able to impose order on all data, to "process" every sort of entity, non-human and human alike, and to devise solutions for every kind of

44 Ibidem, 207.
45 Ibidem, 213.
46 Martin Heidegger, *The Question...,* 25.

problem; he is forever getting things under control"[47]. As a result, he ceases to have a fully human existence in favor of becoming a sort of machine programmed for solving problems. What is even worse, once he gets stuck in this mode, he can hardly escape since the standing-reserve, by providing an effective method of solving technological problems, remains very tempting for the human mind. It happens this way as reality, to be technologically useful, requires previous conceptualization, that is, requires imposing a certain vision of the world which transforms something unexplainable to something comprehensible and thereby allows us to rule over it. Moreover, conceptualization remains probably the only way in which we can explain how the world works, though we are overlooking the fact that any obtained explanation, despite being correct, is never "true" in the sense of the essence of truth, at least in Heidegger's understanding of this word. As we can reflect, through the successes with mastering beings that the standing-reserve provides, the danger becomes more formidable since calculation and the urge to explain everything becomes justified by these successes. Therefore, from the practical point of view, there is absolutely no need to ask about being so it remains veiled.

Despite all the aforementioned symptoms of the predicament in which modern *Daseins* have to operate, by no means does Heidegger claim that the situation is hopeless. On the contrary, he is convinced that we are capable of overcoming the essence of modern technology, though it requires some effort and sounds paradoxical at first attempt. It may seem to be so, as he suggests that the saving power lies precisely in the intimidating essence of technology: "[...]when we consider the essence of technology, then we experience Enframing as a destining of revealing. In this way we are already sojourning within the open space of destining, a destining that in no way confines us to a stultified compulsion to push on blindly with technology"[48]. Simpler put: we are discovering that the essence of technology is only one of many other ways of revealing and by realizing so we are already,"[...]taken into a freeing claim"[49] since we discern that we are free to respond to other modes in which what is appears to us. Through such a realization, which is tied to Heidegger's notion of freedom as openness[50], one can avoid the aforementioned objectification which the essence of technology had been bringing upon him until he

47 Ibidem, xxvii.

48 Ibidem, p. 25.

49 Ibidem, p. 26.

50 William Lovitt describes it this way: "For Heidegger freedom is not a matter of man's Willing or not willing particular things. Freedom is man's opening himself-his submitting himself in attentive awareness-to the summons addressed to him and to the way on which he is already being sent." (xxxiii/xxxiv)

realized it. Describing it phenomenologically, the unconcealment can be caught up only in relation to concealment. In order to reveal something, it is necessary to discern it first as concealed. Only by doing this, we can bring forth the concealed out of concealment. This is why Heidegger ever introduced the concept of the essence of modern technology and modern science. He embarked on this task in order to indicate how not to surrender to the overpowering influence of the two phenomena dominating our age.

Even though Heidegger does not point it out in his essay and it is not typically mentioned in this context, I would argue that Husserl's phenomenological reduction would be also an excellent way out of the scientific-technological predicament. Especially if it is about disclosing the question of being which is Heidegger's primary interest all along his philosophical reflection. Robert Sokolowski's description of possible approaches to the phenomenological reduction seems to be in support of my view. He writes: "When we shift from the natural attitude to the phenomenological, we raise the question of being, because we begin to look at things precisely as they are given to us, precisely as they are manifested, precisely as they are determined by "form", which is the principle of disclosure in things. We begin to look at things in their truth and evidencing. This is to look at them in their being. We also begin to look at the self as the dative to whom beings are disclosed: we look at the self as the dative of manifestation. This is to look at it in its being, because the core of its being is to inquire into the being of things"[51]. Considering this, the phenomenological reduction would be a process in which we discern ourselves as being susceptible to the essence of technology and, as I pointed out before, such a realization is already freeing up from its overpowering influence. However, the phenomenological reduction in Husserl's version is extremely difficult (if not impossible) to conduct so it may not be the best 'solution' for modern people to escape from being objectified. Heidegger proposes something different. He tries to convince us that we should remain conscious, mindful and attentive observers of our being in the world instead of simply doing what is easy and common, that is, thoughtlessly gaping at technology. He emphasizes it by stating that: "Wherever man opens his eyes and ears, unlocks his heart, and gives himself over to meditating and striving, shaping and working, entreating and thanking, he finds himself everywhere already brought into the unconcealed"[52].

51 Robert Sokolowski, *Introduction...,* 64–65.
52 Martin Heidegger, *The Question...,* 18–19.

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