SOCIAL MEDIA AND THE EXISTENTIAL TASK OF EXISTENCE

A Report of a Senior Study

By

Branden Hunt

Philosophy

Maryville College

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Date Approved _____________, by ______________________________

Faculty Supervisor

Date Approved _____________, by ______________________________

Division Chair
ABSTRACT

Modern technology continues to barrel ahead at breakneck speeds engulfing our lives in ever greater degrees. It is little wonder that the question of what technology holds in store for us is increasing in its significance. Focusing on one particular dimension of technology that has proved especially volatile and ubiquitous this thesis endeavors to ask what is going on at the meeting of social media and humanity. In an effort to ascertain a more critical ground from which to ask such a question, this project begins with a survey of two thinkers who devoted much due attention to the matter of human being: Soren Kierkegaard and Martin Heidegger. Both carved great and diverse inroads into the strangely proximal yet so often unasked question: what is it to be human? By drawing on and synthesizing significant aspects of their expositions, necessary pre-questions are asked to prepare the lingering question: what is going on with human being in a socially mediated world? The relatively brief conclusions given in response are an exercise in answering that question, revealing a fundamental altercation brought about in the mediation of human being through social media. That transformation is found to take place in technological enframent of human communication.
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AN INTRODUCTION

It is difficult to decide where to begin this introduction. I suppose this is due in part to the fact that it is equally difficult to name any part of this essay as the most important. That said, how about I begin with a brief overview of the construct of what you are about to incur. On a grand scheme this paper is divided threefold. Division one makes a short incursion into Soren Kierkegaard’s thought, arranged primarily around his first two of three stages on life’s way: the Aesthetic and Ethical. Along the way we stop and dwell on, in particular length, anxiety and social ethics. Coincidentally, anxiety and social ethics proves to be worthy of special attention in the second division also. That division makes an inquiry into the thought of Martin Heidegger, which is demarcated by three subdivisions, each concerning itself primarily with a single text, Being and Time, An Introduction to Metaphysics, and The Question Concerning Technology respectively. Finally, as one might expect, division three is a synthesis of the findings of the first two divisions.

That said there are some remarks about the deeper structure of this senior study that I believe will aid the reader. Many works are written in a linear fashion. This one is not. The first two divisions are not synthesized with one another to a great degree. Instead the synthesizing is saved, for the much greater part, until the third division. Some may say this detracts from the effort, and maybe it does. Certainly if this were a full-length book I would integrate divisions one and two more thoroughly, but it is not, and I do not
mostly for practicality’s sake. To more thoroughly draw out the connections between division one and two as I go along would significantly lengthen this thesis. So instead of a linear approach I opt for a triangular tactic. Sections one and two stand relatively independent of each other, but three is critically built upon both.

Let me now speak of division three. It brings together a number of diverse thinkers, including Jurgen Habermas, J.R.R. Tolkein, Franklin Gamwell, and Devaun Davis, not to mention Heidegger and Kierkegaard. That said, the method hints at what the writing itself is trying to get at, which is freedom. As human being we go about continually setting up divergent ways of being in the world. Still, it seems in our modern times there are some signs that such creativity is being endangered. Technology, specifically social media, is treated by way of the insights gained through division one and two. One should read chapter three then as developing a deeper meaning in, not behind, this isn’t Freudian or Marxist criticism here, social media. This development finds technology placing humanity in a frame of reference to the world, what shall be called enframent. Furthermore, a potential way by which this human ecological disaster can be averted is in a cursory manner sketched out.

Some particularly astute reader may notice the ethical-religious stage of Kierkegaard’s existence is not addressed, at least not explicitly. The religious stage is indeed central, and no matter how humanistic the currents of modern existentialism may be, they must be dealt with. If space and time permitted, such an inquiry would be carried out. But in light of the limits of this study, this endeavor will serve as an initial but valuable excavation for such a larger enterprise. For now this paper finishes with a beginning. A beginning that would when carried through reinstate Kierkegaard’s “alone
before god” in the task of existence: “to venture wholly to become oneself, an individual human being, this specific individual human being,... alone in this prodigious strenuousness and this prodigious responsibility.”\textsuperscript{1}

CHAPTER I

THE TASK OF EXISTENCE

You can live an entire lifetime without ever doing more than tossing in your sleep, or, perhaps if you are somewhat ambitious, you may even sit up in bed and fluff your pillow. It is more often than not the dark night of the spirit. So it seems fitting to begin an investigation into the human way of being in this nocturnal world.

Our present culture has certain fascination, to no small degree, with violence and death, and more precisely with living. Consider the likes of George A. Romero’s Night of the Living Dead movie series. In movies such as these there exist at least two levels. There is the world which exists for the critical-minded person – this world is often explored after having watched the movie – and it often offers up a critique of some social situation, such as segregation, race relations, technology, morals, consumerism, etc. On the other hand, there is with such horror/thriller movies the more immediate level, which enthralls the viewer. This is the level which delivers the adrenaline rush. In this level there is one predominant question which resides over the viewer; how shall the character or characters survive? In this what we see is an extraordinarily fictitious construct in which all that matters is physically living, but in life rarely is our presiding concern merely survival. Instead we find ourselves concerned, perhaps brooding, over something else entirely, and perhaps that itself is no small part of the enjoyment many derive from these thriller movies: a dampening down of that reliable protuberance. Now what is this
protuberance that we often find so tempting to quiet? That is the guiding question that we seek to explore in this pursuant chapter, and it has been exposited upon extensively by Soren Kierkegaard the famous 19th century Danish existentialist.

We begin with Kierkegaard’s aesthete as seen in Either/Or, particularly the idealized aesthete. By this term, “aesthete,” we do not mean, precisely, an art critic. What is, at the moment, being dealt with here is not the aesthete in the traditional sense of the word, as professor Louis Mackey points out. Rather, what is being dealt with is the aesthete in the sense of its Greek root aesthesis, which means sense reception.\(^2\)

Beginning with this notion of sense reception we will mark the trail of Kierkegaard’s aestheticism. Simply and broadly it is marked out by immediacy. The idea of a trail is a double-edged parallel for the aesthetic way of being. Just as when walking a marked out path one is fascinated by the immediate surroundings and looking expectantly for the next trail mark, likewise the aesthete is caught up in his/her surroundings entirely. At first hand what I am describing is a Don Giovanni of sorts, as in Mozart’s opera Don Giovanni. In fact that is Kierkegaard’s analogy of the ideal aesthete in Either/Or.\(^3\) This Don Giovanni fellow, Mackey clarifies for us, is an ideal aesthete rather than an actual aesthete for he most probably does not exist.\(^4\)

Of course why would I discuss a fictive man, and why exactly is he pure fiction anyways? Because fiction is so often art and, more to the point, fiction is so often art as poiesis. Poiesis, by the way, is important; remember it. It is the root from which we


\(^4\)Mackey, "Some Versions of the Aesthete," 40-41.
derive the word “poetry.” Toward the climax of this essay poiesis will become critically related to a disclosure of the essence of technology, which is critical to the ultimate aims of this study. Now, poiesis is a Greek word that Heidegger defines as: to bring forth here.\(^5\) By this bringing forth here Heidegger intends to intimate the meaning bring forth into the open or to bring out of concealment; that is to reveal.\(^6\) Maintaining this concept of poiesis and particularly the concept of art as poiesis, it should be readily apparent why it is of use to discuss a fictive man like Don Giovanni; Don Giovanni gets to the essence of the aesthetic way of being. He is an act of poetry in that function.

Returning to Kierkegaard, this poeticized aesthete, Don Giovanni, is functioning in this poetic way by idealizing what Mackey calls “immediacy immediately presented.”\(^7\) From here arises the import of the character Don Giovanni; he is the essential or ideal aesthete. What then is aestheticism in its immediacy? It is to merely live. Not as though breathing is equal to being an idealized aesthete, but if it is living in pure unreflectiveness, then it is enjoying life fully in its immediacy; it’s to be life, so to say, and only life. That is to be unreflective. Kierkegaard speaks in Either/Or of the danger of misunderstanding invoked by describing Don Giovanni's womanizing as seduction. The danger lies in that “seduction always takes a certain reflection and consciousness...Don Giovanni lacks this consciousness.”\(^8\) This is the moment in which dialectical relating shows up, and relating is critical to understanding the human being. Reflection, as in reflecting on something, always involves a relation. One does not reflect merely one

\(^6\)Ibid., 11, 12.
\(^7\)Mackey, "Some Versions of the Aesthete," 40.
\(^8\)Soren Kierkegaard, Either/Or, Vol. I, 98.
thing – to think is to make judgments. To make judgments is to relate two or more things. Therefore to reflect on life is not merely to consider actual or immediate life, in its immediacy. Immediate life, life before your nose, may be the central subject, but to judge is to relate the immediate life with something else. Hence to really live the Don Giovanni life is to live unreflective of life as Kierkegaard writes:

Listen to the beginning of his life; just as the lighting is discharge from the darkness of the thunderclouds, so he bursts out of the abyss of earnestness, swifter than the lightning’s flash, more capricious than lightning and yet just as measured. Hear how he plunges down into the multiplicity of life, how he breaks against its solid embankment. Hear these light, dancing violin notes, hear the intimation of joy, hear the jubilation of delight, hear the festive bliss of enjoyment. Hear his wild flight; he speeds past himself, ever faster, never pausing. Hear the unrestrained craving of passion, hear the sighing of erotic love, hear the whisper of temptation, hear the vortex of seduction, hear the stillness of the moment – hear, hear, hear, Mozart’s Don Giovanni.9

The Kierkegaard scholar Elrod helps us to get a superior grasp on the connection between reflection and sensuality. When consumed with such sensuality reflection is absent, but consciousness requires reflection.10 Moreover, it is this complete unreflectiveness which is untenable, at least for any significant duration, because for us in the land of the living there is always disruption in gratification.

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9Ibid., 103.
The crux of this turn from pure unreflective immediacy is that enjoyment involves certain implicit unity, a unity of the immediate environment and the one enjoying life, and as pointed out above that does not happen for anyone at every and all moments of life. Dissatisfaction inevitably occurs; not for any pure theoretical reason, but merely of existential necessity – it’s just the way life works. Don Giovanni's life is so that he can passively live it, unreflectively live it; life is synonymous with what he wants, and what he wants is synonymous with life so that he never is awakened to the realization that they are actually two distinct things. He is in effect lost in the world. “He desires and continually goes on desiring and continually enjoys the satisfaction of desire.”\(^{11}\) We, on the other hand, are consistently exposed to the disparity between what we want ideally and what we get. Life and desire, real and ideal are not synonymous, at least for a great portion of the time. Now when this discord occurs between reality/immediacy, and desire/ideal-immediacy, one is forced to reflect. Questions arise, what do I actually want; how can I get it? Notice that in this train of thought what one wants – the idealized immediacy, becomes disjointed from what is real. The possibility of real seduction is open, with all its connotations of “craftiness and machinations and subtle wiles.”\(^{12}\) Following this disjuncture, it is now the case that one can be without the other, life can be without being ideal, and the ideal can be without being lived. No longer, as in the unreflective life of Don Giovanni the pure sensualist, are these two things identical. Now the unity of desire and life, the ideal and real, is broken. Yet aestheticism is not closed off as an option.

\(^{12}\)Ibid., 98.
The aestheticism of the art critic is now available. In considering life or judging life, real people live in a calculating, critical, thoroughly reflective manner. They must reflect on the ideals of aestheticism – what they desire as “the good life” – and the reality of life, but in comparison to the other stages on life’s way this particular scheme for living life or accomplishing the task of living is somewhat one dimensional. Real aesthetes are like universal art critics who, consider what is before them, and compare it with the abstract ideal of life or art. The ideal is like an infinite number; an infinite number is unconstrained by being a concrete number, which is unconstrained by being a real concrete number, or in the case of the aesthete life/art.

Yes, in this way life becomes an art: the art of living. But even with all this use of ideals and infinities with which to guide one’s life, there is still the distinction to be made that these ideals or infinities are immediate ideals and infinities. They are necessary so to say. This of course sounds brutally paradoxical, but that is what it is; the ideal of life is determined by the given pleasures of the immediate. Don Giovanni’s life is an aesthetic ideal because of the given aspects of life, such as the carnal instincts. Moreover, what is given is always necessary as Kierkegaard makes clear in *Philosophical Fragments* as quoted in Elrod:

> Everything which comes into existence proves precisely by coming into existence that it is not necessary, for the only thing which cannot come into existence is the necessary, because the necessary is…. Nothing whatever exists because it is

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13Mackey, "Some Versions of the Aesthete," 41-42.
necessary, but the necessary exists because it is necessary or because the necessary is.¹⁴

Because the body is the immediate, to use a term from Heidegger, it is as though we are thrown into our immediacy. We are not free in our facts, what sort of body we have, what society we live in, what epoch of history we live in, etc. Those are what are immediately before us; there is no possibility there but only necessity without freedom. In that way Kierkegaard thinks of something normally deemed contingent as necessary: the immediate which is those situations we find ourselves in. They are necessary from the perspective of the individual – the individual at that point in time does not bring the situation into existence but takes it as is and brings some other situation into being from it. Her freedom is not to change the situation she finds herself in but to make something new out of the situation given. From those necessary immediacies, the aesthete develops an immediate ideal. Hence no longer is the aesthete merely living the ideal as if it was the same as in Giovanni's case, but instead the aesthete is preoccupied with living the ideal. He reflects the immediacy and is not just the immediacy. Kierkegaard describes this thusly:

“Inasmuch as this view [that life is the pursuit of pleasure, the view of immediate consciousness] is split into a multiplicity one easily perceives that it lies in the sphere of [finite] reflection; this reflection, however is only a finite reflection, and the personality remains in its immediacy.”¹⁵

¹⁵Elrod, Being and Existence, 83.
The goal of the aesthete is pure gratification of every given “worldly” pleasure. It is to be gratification, and paradoxically the very means to gratification, pleasure, is the obstacle to it.

Now we can discuss the reflective aesthete’s solution to this problem of living aesthetically. As Mackey puts it, the solution is simply to have it his own way. Quite simple is this solution but its process is not. It requires a prudent, which is key here, amount of self discipline. What use, you may inquire, could self discipline have in the paradigm of the aesthete? In a sense it is the ultimate instrument of pleasure. Because as Mackey describes it, “The aesthete, knowing that he cannot have his pleasures by instinct seeks to contrive them by craft….He cannot attain to the condition of nature; he will therefore aspire to the condition of art.”16 The reflective aesthete then does not find gratification for his desire in mere life, but he makes life into his object of craft.

It should not be underestimated both how substantial and how minor of a change this turning constitutes. It is no trite reconditioning of aestheticism for we have now gone from the completely unconscious aesthete of Don Giovanni to the aesthete who is ready to announce, as Mackey quotes Kierkegaard, that:

“The essence of pleasure does not lie in the thing enjoyed, but in the accompanying consciousness. If I had a humble spirit in my service who, when I asked for a glass of water, brought me the world’s costliest wines blended in a chalice, I should dismiss him, in order to teach him that pleasure consists not in what I enjoy but in having my own way.”17

The real aesthete is clearly reflective and as such is not caught up in pure immediacy, that is, immediacy in its immediacy. This awakening then opens up the following elements, which Elrod notes are so prominent in Kierkegaard’s writings:

- Finite-infinity
- Body-soul
- Necessity-possibility
- Real- ideal

These contrasting elements are what must be brought together by the individual’s spirit through reflection. That is to say, the infinite, that which is not limited by being concrete or definite is in the reflective person brought to bear on the finite, that which is limited by being concrete; the reflective individual fantasizes and relates his fantasy with his reality. Likewise a similar process occurs between the other three relations. What distinguishes the aesthete is how he relates them. Richard Colledge in his article “Kierkegaard’s Subjective Ontology” describes the aesthetic individual as having “the characteristic of dealing with the world according to the dictates of the sense and of viewing the world from a pre-ethico-religious standpoint.” Criticality I would modify “the dictates of the sense” into the dictates of pleasure, because as pointed out above the impossibility of pure sustained sensual pleasure forces the aesthete into consciousness and thereby into declaring that pleasure does not lie in the thing itself but rather in the consciousness of the enjoyer. In that way the transition from Don Giovanni to a more real aesthete is trite; pleasure is still the rule in both, but it is no trifle in that the transition is

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from pleasure to preoccupation with pleasure.\textsuperscript{20} The end goal of the aesthete is to unite these relations for pleasure.

The Ethical

Ethical existence begins with conscious positing of self-commitment, which is important for it shows that once you have embarked on the ethical way of being you have begun to make your way down a slippery slope which, if it does not propel you straight into religiousness, will at the very least bring you to face it. In this thesis our focus will pertain to the ethical by stopping short of the religious. Our subject matter is the ethical, and it is the will.

The discussion of the aesthete ended with a positing of consciousness. And yet even with this consciousness is the aesthete really awoken or merely tossing in his sleep? The aesthete is merely dreaming in that he is always imagining himself as someone in relation to the world, but in truth he never is anyone. Life becomes for him a masquerade in which his mask is only what is best fitting for the moment as Soren Kierkegaard describes him:

Life is a masquerade, you explain, and for you this is inexhaustible material for amusement, and as yet no one has succeeded in knowing you, for every disclosure is always a deception. Only in this way can you breathe and prevent people crowding too close upon you and making it difficult for you to breathe. Your occupation consists in preserving your hiding place, and you are successful, for your mask is the most puzzling of all; in other words, you are a nonentity and are

\textsuperscript{20}Mackey, "Some Versions of the Aesthete," 42.
something only in relation to others, and what you are, you are only through this
relation.21

The aesthetic man is in such a way a dreamer and a dramatist. His life is but
drama. The ethical, on the other hand, chooses meaningfully. He is a visionary. An
ethical individual is earnest in spirit. He chooses to unite the dialectical relations not with
a concern for pleasure, but with a concern to his-self. That individual chooses for him or
herself. He chooses who he is; the ethical choice is how and where his “personality is
thereby consolidated.”22 Kierkegaard continues to elaborate on this person as one who
says, I know what I believe inside; she is self conscious as to who she wills to be, and
from that makes her choice. She is real, and now that she is real the good and the evil
become apparent in sincerity for now she is choosing herself, what she shall be.23 Life
has become serious.

There are in life certain moments in which ethics come into play, and there are
some in which they do not. What are they? Likewise one can be ethical, not in the sense
of being good but in the sense of being either good or bad, or one can be non-ethical in
the sense of being neither good nor bad. Non-ethical is more fitting, for un-ethical implies
the opposite of ethical while “non-ethical” connotes a mere absence of the ethical. What
then is it that makes a choice either good or bad as opposed to neither good nor bad?

We hallmarked the aesthete as having a preoccupation with pleasure; for clarity
and contrast, which is hardly undue here, we can likewise hallmark the ethicist as being
pre-occupied with her self. By Colledge's accounting of Kierkegaard, the ethical person is

22Ibid., 167-169.
23Ibid., 167-169.
in being ethical being self-reflexive or representing her self to herself.\textsuperscript{24} Hence this is where the inwardness of living, the subjectivity of existence, the importance of being earnest wells up. It is in self representation, or as Kierkegaard puts it, imagination, \textit{that a moment becomes an ethical moment}.\textsuperscript{25} This faculty, Colledge makes note of, is coined by Kierkegaard “the faculty for all faculties”:

\begin{quote}
It is not a faculty like the other faculties – if one wishes to speak this way – it is the faculty instar omnium [for all faculties]. What feelings, understanding, and \textit{will} a person has depends in the last resort upon what imagination he has – how he represents himself to himself.\textsuperscript{26}
\end{quote}

This helps to clarify those moments in life when ethics come into play: those instances in life in which one comes face to face with who one is and who one \textit{wills to be}. These are the instances when a choice becomes either good or bad: the either/or as opposed to the neither/nor. Once again then, we envision a relation, a relating of who it is that in every ethical situation you find yourself to be and who it is you will to be: the collision of the real and ideal. Furthermore one most bring together his finite bounded factual self with what it is that one wills to be: necessity and ideality. Yet is what one wills to be ideally simply bounded by the possibilities of the situation? Does one act merely according to what is suggested by the given situation? Or does one push against the boundaries of possibility set forth by necessity by “the facts” to envision for himself a new horizon of possibility within which he wills to be himself – an infinitized possibility,

\textsuperscript{24}Colledge, “Kierkegaard's Subjective Ontology,” 13
\textsuperscript{25}Ibid.
unbounded, unshackled from necessity from “the facts.” Absolutely. Our souls push our flesh to move for that which is beyond itself: that for which the flesh does not will and that which the current situation does not advise in prudence.

This idealism holds a contrast between the aesthete and the ethical person. Both the ethical and aesthetic imagine, and both of them will, and both of them will within what is broadly speaking possible, but the aesthete dares not will outside the bounds of the stricter possibility set forth by the necessity of the situation; he dare not ask for, he dare not will for, that which he cannot have. In that is the key to his gratification, because what is gratification but to achieve what one wills? The ethical person, on the other hand, is not limited in his imagination by what the situation will allow him to have, but instead he wills to be in every situation that self that he is committed to being. This means the ethical wills to be a certain someone regardless of the situation; there are no ethical masquerades.

In such limitlessness, doesn’t the task of becoming an ethical self “appear to be beyond the possibility of actualization”?27 Accordingly, in the second volume of Either/Or the anonymous pastor from Jylland asks:

Were you never anxious about yourself, so anxious that it seemed to you as if there were no sin so black, no selfishness so loathsome, that it could not infiltrate you and like a foreign power gain control of you? Did you not sense this anxiety? ...If you did sense it, then, my listener, I ask you: Did you find rest in those words, “One does what one can?”28

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The answer, a resounding no, is given on the next page: “So every more earnest doubt, every deeper care is not calmed by the word: ‘One does what one can.’” Such is anxiety, a concept which is hard to overestimate the importance of in Kierkegaard’s thought. The aesthete continually evades and the ethical man is continually faced with anxiety. This endangering is always and only incurred upon when the boundaries of possibility are pushed beyond the limitations of necessity and the ideal is posited beyond that event horizon set forth by that black hole of immediacy, the world which tries to entangle you in the dark.

What then is it that brings rolling out of the deep of immediacy into life this anxious struggle and wherein will it reach its climax? The curt answer is spirit, which, contrary to Hegel’s spirit, is the spirit of the individual, and it is the slumbering giant which awakens out of the depth of the individual to bring about anxiety. It is most assuredly impossible to understand the ethical and the religious-ethical modes of existence without recourse to the concept of anxiety, and so we turn to anxiety to understand how it is that the anxious struggle is brought to life in the individual, and second to pave the way to understanding the climax of the struggle, the task of existing, in its proper relation to the individual. What then is the concept of anxiety? Conveniently enough Kierkegaard devoted an entire book to just that: The Concept of Anxiety, or in Lowrie’s translation The Concept of Dread.

Gordon Marino describes anxiety in negative terms: anxiety is not sin. On the contrary, as Haufniensis, the pseudonymous author of The Concept of Anxiety relates the
two, it is right beside it; anxiety precedes sin in that it is what makes it possible.29 Now sin is something feared or something one is averse to. Though some may bicker about what activities should be classified as sin, little argument is to be made over the fact that sin is to be avoided. That said what would Kierkegaard qualify as a sin? Kierkegaard’s yardstick is nothing other than yourself and God. As we have demonstrated so far in the ethical sense of Either/Or, sin is twofold. First, not choosing to be anything or insincerity is sin. Second choosing wrongly or against one’s ideal possible self, positing yourself as someone you wish not to be, is also sin.

Kierkegaard makes a statement in Fear and Trembling that at first glance equates the ethical with social morality: “the ethical – that is, social morality....”30 One page prior to that statement at the beginning of the “Problema I” the opening line is: “The ethical as such is the universal, and as the universal applies to everyone, which from another angle meant that it applies at all times.”31 Furthermore, a few pages later, Silentio’s persistently questions the telos of the individual in relation to the universal ethic and compares the myth of Agamemnon, the Greek hero as being with the situation of Abraham. In consideration of these passages I will make an effort to harmonize the apparently divergent meaning of ethical in Either/Or and Fear and Trembling.

In Fear and Trembling the central question that Silentio concerns himself with is whether or not a justification can exist for Abraham’s willingness to sacrifice his son Isaac, since by social standards or that of the “universal” he would be deemed a

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31Ibid., 56.
murderer, worse, one who would murder his own child. By using the term “universal” as interchangeable with the term “ethical,” Silentio draws out the reasonableness and communicability of ethics.\(^{32}\) Reason can be communicated, and thus a universally ethical act can be justified before others by presenting the reasons the actor has for committing such an act. Herein lies the difference between the tragic hero and Abraham. The tragic hero, such as Agamemnon, the Israelite Jephthah, or Brutus, kills a beloved daughter or son as Abraham tries to kill Isaac. But each one of them could give a reason for why he did what he did. Jephthah made a promise, Brutus defended republicanism, and Agamemnon pleased the gods by fulfilling the public oracle so as to be able to win the Trojan war. Abraham had none of that. He only was led privately by God to kill Isaac; from the outside, Kierkegaard asserts, there was no discernible reason to perform such a heinous deed.\(^ {33}\) Hence Abraham’s deed was purely subjective and unjustifiable, incommunicable, and undeniably unreasonable to the community or the universal. In so arguing, Silentio compares the ethics of the religious person, Abraham, and the ethics of the community and points out tellingly:

> For if the ethical – that is, social morality – is the highest and if there is in a person no residual incommensurability in some way such that this incommensurability is not evil (i.e. the single individual, who is to be expressed in the universal), then no categories are needed other than what Greek philosophy had or what can be deduced from them by consistent thought.\(^ {34}\)

\(^{32}\)Ibid., 57-59.  
\(^{33}\)Ibid., 59-60.  
\(^{34}\)Ibid., 55.
In summation of the above, he points out that if the perfection of ethics resides in reason, such that whatever action is incapable of being justified before others is evil, then it seems that the perfection of subjectivity is complete assimilation to social morality. Subjectivity is only good insofar as it is objectively valid. If interpreted in this way the ultimate aim of choosing one’s self, which Judge Wilhelm in *Either/Or* argues is so critical, is to posit oneself as the embodiment of social ethical maxims. The yardstick of ethics becomes the objective reasonableness of ethics, i.e., the public.

Such an understanding of ethics is to the utmost, as best I can tell, the anti-thesis to what Kierkegaard considers to be the ultimate purpose to which the individual must relate. The point of *Fear and Trembling* is that such objective public ethics is suspended, or in more clear terms, the purpose of subjective public ethics is not the highest purpose or *telos*; that highest purpose is in being one’s self before God.\(^{35}\) Why go through this somewhat long winded discussion of Kierkegaard’s notion of ethical standards? Because understanding that sin is ultimately subjective not objective in the public sense is critical to understanding anxiety, to which we shall now return.

Once again anxiety is not sin, but the possibility of sin. Moreover anxiety is not freedom but the possibility of freedom; better yet anxiety is the disclosure of freedom for freedom is never possible but only actual.\(^{36}\) This is not, when one ponders it, philosophical confusion. If one is free then one is free, unlike many other capacities of humanity. Consider this, you may feel an impulse of anger if the waiter spills your drink. The anger in this situation is, but its presence is a possibility for you to take up. You may become angry, or you may choose not to be angry and instead assure the waiter that it is

\(^{35}\)Ibid., 66-67.

\(^{36}\)Marino, "Anxiety in *The Concept of Anxiety,*" 317.
Alright while leaving him a really big tip when you leave. Freedom on the other hand is not so much of a possibility. Freedom, unlike anger, does not present itself for you to choose, for in so doing it is clear you must already be free; if you were not free then how might you ever choose freedom? How then does this insight work into our understanding of anxiety as the possibility of ethical transgression?

On page 49 of the *The Concept of Dread* (to facilitate continuity with the proceeding discussions throughout this essay it is best to think anxiety, not dread), Haufniensis describes anxiety as “where freedom is not free in itself but entangled, not by necessity, but in itself.” As the disclosure of freedom, anxiety is only possible in a free being, because anxiety is the manifestation of the possibility of choosing. In relation to sin, anxiety becomes on the ethical level the manifestation of the either/or. You the individual can in choosing, choose to posit your self in earnest: to actualize your ideal self. That is to say you do not, as the aesthete does, choose to go through life as though perpetually stuck in a dressing room in which you never decide who it is you wish to be, but instead merely “try things on for size” never determining to buy the clothes, never determining to make the clothes your clothes. It is life as a “time share.” In being ethical you commit yourself; you do not carry out your actions to merely see whether or not you like the way they fit, but instead your actions are an exemplification of who you are.

Anxiety then arises in that your choices become critically related to your self. It follows that whatever choice you make is a determination of who you are. If in relating to a friend you as an ethical person tell a lie, then you realize you have chosen not merely to lie but to be a liar. The aesthete is aesthetic, not so much in that his lies do not make him

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equally a liar, but in so much that he is not aware that he himself is indeed a liar; he is not earnest and in so doing he is not anyone. Anxiety for the ethical person is the fear of the possibility to choose that which she does not wish to be. So far as such holds, true freedom is entangled in itself. She is free so she should not fear, because she is free to choose what it is she wishes to be, for instance honest, but she is afraid because she realizes her freedom presents her with the opportunity to choose to be dishonest.

Remarkably we can conclude that although anxiety is the disclosure of freedom it is only when we disavow anxiety that we freely choose. Yet this picture is a bit to pleasant. In its place Kierkegaard understands one’s relation to anxiety as such that, “Anxiety is a desire for what one fears, a sympathetic antipathy, anxiety is an alien power which grips the individual, and yet one cannot tear himself free from it and does not want to, for one fears, but what he fears he desires.”38 I believe this could be clarified by understanding, as Colledge does, that in Kierkegaard’s conception the development of the self through the three stages of aesthetic, ethical, and religious, always meets with anxiety at each moment of the movement of the individual’s spirit,39 and from anxiety one realizes that there is an “escape hatch” by which one can choose the immediacy and thereby suppress anxiety through amusement. That is to no small extent the entire aim of much of the young aesthete’s musings on how to live life: how to amuse yourself so as to suppress spirit and thereby that protuberance of anxiety. This is done by immersing yourself in immediacy and thus distracting yourself from the task of existence: the

39Colledge, “Kierkegaard's Subjective Ontology,” 12.
movement of spirit to commence the task of actualizing the unity of the ethical ideal and real, which is the choice of Either/Or.

This, thankfully, brings us back to where we began our interrogation of anxiety: why do we find ourselves in an anxious struggle to fulfill the task of existence – the synthesizing of the ethical ideal and our reality? Because, in being earnest we put ourselves at risk, we become vulnerable to failure or a bad choice, and we fear this possibility of wrong choosing, but paradoxically we see in choosing wrongly, that is to choose to abandon the project of actualizing our ethical selves, the possibility of ridding ourselves of or at least getting our minds off of our anxiety. Hence the temptation is constantly there to choose gratification of desire in immediacy, and in our freedom we often choose to surrender ourselves to the world, to be entangled in the dark of unconscious amusement or into merely social ethics, and to shun what it is we believe inside: our authentic self. So often we do not desire to overcome the world. We do not push ourselves beyond the easy life of immediacy, by establishing ourselves as the ethical ideal, which lies beyond actuality waiting in the wings of possibility; “One does what one can,” but what one can do does not seem sufficient to establish yourself in that ethical perfection as the pastor from Jylland remarks. Yet the ethical requires commitment none the less. Once you realize this, the question arises as to whether or not ethical living is not an exercise in futility. From this point Kierkegaard would launch into the religious stage of life. We will have to abstain from following him there, for to do so would be to go beyond the scope of this project. Instead we will be considering the ethical as a commitment to be in one’s self the actualization of an ideal. Kierkegaard deems it repetition. Along with that we must keep in mind the subjectivity of ethical
commitments, that span beyond merely publicly recognizable commitments, and I concede that in acknowledging this I am already going a bit beyond the ethical stage and knocking on the door of the religious stage, but Kierkegaard’s stages were never meant to be neatly partitioned off.
CHAPTER II

ON BEING AND HUMAN BEING

In the previous division we investigated the different ways of living as a human being, which was grounded in our realization of our individual self as being a relation. The dynamics of this relation were developed thematically so as to disclose, although only in the most salient of details, the different ways that the individual relates to himself and the world. Now as an existential understanding, an understanding of our structure of existence, Kierkegaard brought out into the open a structure of human existence that can be oversimplified as falling into three broad categories the first two we dealt with while standing at the edge of the third:

- Relating yourself to immediacy
- Relating yourself to your ideal or infinite self
- Relating yourself to your ideal or infinite self while being before God

Of course the implication is that someone is doing all this relating of the parties (yourself and idealness in the ethical stage or immediacy in the aesthetic), and that is, of course, also yourself as spirit. Now I mentioned that this is an oversimplified schematization of human existence, and thus no one falls neatly into any one particular category of relation. In fact the usefulness of such a scheme is limited to conveying the idea that you as human are a relation, and you can relate in these three broad ways, but
you can also relate in certain “mixtures” of these ways. In layman’s terms there is a very wide grey zone between these different relations, and there are many nuances within each relation. That being said we can still understand the importance of the task of existence as a task for spirit in relating the individual’s self to himself in such a way so as to accomplish the actualization of the ideal in the real: to synthesize the real and ideal, finite and infinite, necessity and possibility. Moreover, we realize that in each attempt to fulfill this task the individual faces anxiety and due to this there is a contradictory pull on the spirit to both be sedated and caught up in the dark night of immediacy or to stay awake and continue the task.

Martin Heidegger in his 1927 book *Being and Time* builds on many themes from Kierkegaard’s existential investigations. Heidegger seeks in that book to more fundamentally and systematically elucidate the question of being by more deeply understanding the being of human being. Like Kierkegaard he too understood the fundamental importance of relation in the being of human being. For both of them there is no understanding the ground upon which human existence springs into life without an understanding of a human being as relating to itself and to the world around it. This relating Heidegger termed care. It is this care of Heidegger’s that will be laid out in the proceeding division as the grounds for the existential task of existence. As such, the essential relation between technology and care and thus technology and existential fulfillment shall be unfolded, lest we forget the original question toward which this essay was crafted.

Let us begin care with a short story from *Being and Time*: 
Once when “Care” was crossing a river, she saw some clay; she thoughtfully took a piece and began to shape it. While she was thinking about what she had made, Jupiter came by. “Care” asked him to give it spirit, and this he gladly granted. But when she wanted her name to be bestowed upon it, Jupiter forbade this and demanded that it be given his name instead. While “Care” and Jupiter were arguing, Earth (Tellus) arose, and desired that her name be conferred upon the creature, since she had offered it part of her body. They asked Saturn to be the judge. And Saturn gave them the following decision, which seemed to be just: “Since you Jupiter, have given its spirit, you should receive that spirit at death; and since you, Earth, have given its body, you shall receive its body. But since ‘Care’ first shaped this creature, she shall possess it as long as it lives. And because there is a dispute among you as to its name, let it be called, ‘homo,’ for it is made out of humus (earth).”

“Care”, if you haven’t figured it out by now, is an allegory for care. And care is an astounding rethinking of the human way of being. Actually in a since it is not. It really is just noticing what is plainly in front of our face. Yet as members of our own particular zeitgeist, it is not always a particularly easy achievement to remember the obvious things we have forgotten. Care is, in short, the human way of being in the world. As the above story indicates, care forms our living; it is the way we exist toward everything.

Now care is not merely what is normally called care, which following the Merriam-Webster dictionary includes as an intransitive verb: feeling troubled, feeling

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41 Ibid., 57, 177.
concern or interest, giving care to something, liking, fondness, or taste, having an inclination. As a transitive verb it includes: being concerned about or to the extent of, to wish. 42 All of these are existing manifestations of care, but what Heidegger is indicating by care in the above story is not those manifestations but instead the ground of or what makes those activities of care possible. 43 Care as the ground of our everyday sort of cares is Heidegger’s epistemological foundation much as for Descartes the Cogito ergo sum is the foundation of what can be known. In that sense care also is Heidegger’s answer to the old question of how can I know what I know, but Heidegger’s approach is vastly different than Descartes’, and in truth is a strong reaction against Cartesian notions of the ground of knowledge. 44 In fact although care functions as an epistemological ground it is much more than that. In that vein I will try in what follows to make clear how exactly it is that care forms the ontological foundation of reality and the world at large to us.

The care which Heidegger is developing, he calls the ontological understanding of care in Being and Time. 45 According to Richard Polt’s reading of Heidegger, it is care that shapes us and forms our lives by bringing you the individual and the world onto the same terms, the same plane of existence, or, if you will, into fellowship. 46 This is what Heidegger is intending when he says, “all modes of being of innerworldly beings are ontologically founded in the worldliness of the world, and thus in the phenomenon of being-in-the-world… Reality is referred back to the phenomenon of care.” 47 Care bridges

42 Merriam-Webster, 11th ed., s.v. “Care.”
43 Heidegger, Being and Time, 57.
44 Ibid., 201-202.
45 Ibid., 57.
47 Heidegger, Being and Time, 203.
the gap between the enclosed subjective world of the self, which we so often conceive as being privatized for each individual, and the “outside world.” Still, even this understanding of care is lacking, for care does not really “bridge a gap,” but instead it really brings the enclosed privatized subjective world out into the open of the outside.48 As a human being you are as care the way in which the world is disclosed to you; this seems to be the thrust of his point.49 In terms more closely resembling Heidegger’s, you, in taking care of things, are taken in by the world that you take care of.50

Furthermore, care as taking the caring being into the world shows that the objective world is not some world of mere objects that are present in various locations and times as we so often conceive, but instead in care the entities of the world, the world, are significant or of account and not merely “there,” as is conceived in the scientific fields of inquiry. This means in care every entity is wrapped up in a web of significance or, in Richard Polt’s words, “significant context.”51 Polt gives a great example to illustrate what I am hitting at here. In science we make “objective” observations of things as though what we quantify is merely “there” on its own regardless of all else. But even such factual observations as a rock being 10 inches long are not entirely isolated, because in order for such a measurement to be meaningful the notion of an inch must be meaningful.52 If distance is un-significant (“insignificant” carries too many connotations of smallness instead of the unilateral nothingness we are getting at here) to you than to objectively quantify the world in distances is impossible. Before all else one must be

48 Ibid., 60.
49 Ibid., 129.
50 Ibid., 61.
51 Polt, Heidegger, 57.
52 Ibid., 57-58.
affected by the world or be in relation to the world for anything to be said about what the world is. The individual is dependent on relations of significance to the point of requiring subjectivity to be on the same terms or in fellowship with your environment.

Significance, meaning, or value, precede abstract objective existence or facts in the scientific sense of the word. Significance means on the heels of all this that you are not fundamentally disjointed in your being to your environment disjointed from what is merely present as reality, because, as Polt makes clear, for Heidegger “reality” is a technical term indicating the scientific objective understanding of a thing as present, which can only be understood in the context of care.53

We can start out from this point of a rudimentary understanding of care into a path of inquiry about what it means to live or to be as a human being. Let us begin then with a question. If, as it seems to appear to us, to care is to relate to the world, then from where do we relate to the world? In asking this question we have hit upon a central focal point of western philosophy, and it is one which Heidegger himself did not fail to investigate.

It is this question concerning from where we relate to the world or to use Heidegger’s term, care for the world, that has driven the inquiry of the most astute philosophers in history all the way from Socrates’ incessant use of irony, to Descartes’s cogito, to Hegel’s phenomenology of Spirit, to Nagel’s philosophy of the mind, and the list can go on and on. As I said above, Heidegger himself qualifies to be on this list and he critically developed within his inquiry the notion of temporality and pertaining to that the concept of “thrownness.”

53Ibid., 81.
As a matter of existing as a human being we have the character of always having a past that places us where we are at. Such is the case that we all have a view of the world so that we see the world from where all of our past influences have brought us to. This Heidegger terms “thrownness.”\textsuperscript{54} The character of always having a view from somewhere is intrinsic to our human being. In an essential fashion mood is the phenomenon which discloses the thrownness of human being; it is the “thrownness of this being into its there….”\textsuperscript{55}

Mood is worth considering if we are to more thoroughly elucidate our comprehension of from where and how we relate to the world. In his inquiry Heidegger describes mood as attunement.\textsuperscript{56} A potentially helpful aid in clarifying what attunement indicates in human being is to think of it like tuning in on a TV or radio. At all times your TV or radio is bathed in wireless signals that transmit content, but unless your set is tuned into the proper frequency of those channels, then for the set it is as if they are of no meaning or significance; all the set creates is static. Likewise for us if we walk into a situation in a certain mood we are liable to be more sensitive or tuned in to certain things. No doubt you have experienced this yourself; perhaps in a rather jubilant mood you were completely oblivious to the melancholy of another individual, and in the course of your jubilation you annoyed that person. You, of course, did not realize that until later when you were in a more thoughtful mood and pondered why that person was not so happy along with you. That is a manifestation of attunement. As a human being in the world we

\textsuperscript{54}Ibid., 66.
\textsuperscript{55}Martin Heidegger, \textit{Being and Time}, 131.
\textsuperscript{56}Ibid., 130.
are at all times attuned to the world in some way; we are “always already in a mood” of some sort or another, and thus it is inescapable that our view of the world, our way of caring for the world, is affected by the way we are attuned to the world in which we are in.

At the moment I feel this has become quite scholastic and thus regrettably aloof of the seriousness of the subject. To remedy this let us envision what we discuss in a concrete form. It should, of course, be at all times held in mind that what follows is a concrete drawing out of manifestations and structures of care. Therefore, we will draw out the structure of care as composed of understanding, interpretation, attunement in mood, significance, meaning, discourse/articulation, throwness, falleness, projection, in-authenticity, and authenticity in the following scenario. The structure of care is what makes the following possible and is not wholly confined to the following. That is, the following is a phenomenon of the “thrown project” of care.

*Hamlet,* “This is the very ecstasy of love.”

What is it to feel the ecstasy of love but to find one’s self thrown into a most potent way of caring for the world in which you are in? The Urban Dictionary, a widely recognized authority on slang, brings us right to the matter at hand with its succinct definition of the term “Love Drunk”: “when someone is completely in love, everything they do together feels so real, is so real. It’s like the perfect feeling to have in a relationship… completely head over heels for this person.” Many of us know this

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57Ibid., 131.
58Ibid., 132-134.
59Ibid., 141-143.
mood. Those in it are in bliss. Those not in it either desire or despise it and have a tendency to somewhat deride those in this mood. In romance, as mentioned in the classic hymn, “the things of this world grow strangely dim” as it loses its significance in relation to the eminence revealed in the person of affection. Notice the choice of words in the previous section: “the eminence revealed.” It is not as though in love the lover bestows upon the beloved some value not already possessed, but instead it is that in love as attunement the lover is granted the privilege to see the extraordinary worth of the beloved; the worth is not created but disclosed to the lover in being attuned to the beloved.61 This being thrown into love opens up possibility to the lover.

This possibility is intelligible through discourse. Let me explain. The lover in being a lover understands himself as a project; his project is loving. As such he interprets the world he is in by weaving it together in such a way as to give immanence to his love. Immanence here means that it has its principle in itself. Now this becomes his thrownness. He understands himself as the possibility of being a lover and in so doing chooses to love the beloved for the sake of himself; he chooses to love so as to be a lover. This is, taking into consideration Heidegger and Polt's reading of him, what I believe Heidegger would deem an authentic lover.62 In parallel to our discussion of Kierkegaard it is a beginning move from the purely aesthetic form of romance, falling in love, into an ethical sort of romance, choosing to love. He has here thrown himself into love. On the flip side he could understand himself in terms of the world, not for the sake of himself, but for the world. This later inauthentic love might be more clearly understood as a love which exists merely because of the lover being thrown into the mood of love; that is the lover

62Ibid., 141; Polt, *Heidegger*, 70.
fell in love without ever choosing love – it is something that just happened. But in falling in love the possibility presents itself of choosing for the sake of the lover’s self to love. In this way in understanding his self as a lover, the lover throws himself into the mood of love for his own sake. Yet only in intelligibly articulating the significances of his world can he weave his world into something meaningful through the mood of loving and interpret the beloved as his beloved, “as a lily among brambles,” as beautiful beyond compare, as flawless, etc. etc. This “as” is the articulation of significance into meaning; this articulation is what Heidegger sees as discourse becoming the possibility of discussion.

What we have arrived at here is a more lucid comprehension of care through understanding, having the function of being cyclical, the circle of life so to say. It goes as follows in scenario style for our love drunk fellow:

He, on a rainy day, is walking down a street when he turns a corner and comes upon a young lady who, poor girl, is distant from her destination and without an umbrella. So he offers her the cover of his umbrella and inquires of her destination. Now he is in a rather leisurely laissez faire way of caring toward the world and so upon learning of her destination despite its distance offers to walk it with her. Over the course of their journey, say fifteen minutes, she in a curious mood caring to know about this kind man strikes up conversation with the aim of getting to know a little of him. As the dialogue progresses he is continually struck by characteristics of her, which he cares for significantly, and from his mood of laissez faire-ness he is inclined to pick up on the

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63Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 141.
64*Song of Solomon* 2.2 (NRSV).my italics.
66Ibid., 155; Polt, *Heidegger*, 74
more amiable traits of things; hence those things that are likable about the world around him are woven together in more significant meaning to him. And so he finds himself finding this young lady more and more likable. Now we perceive him falling into love. He now finds her company, he finds her, enjoyable or gratifying. Their walk progresses, and he now finds the end of their journey to have gained new meaning. The end of their journey, their parting company, her absence from his world, for him becomes an absence of a significant thing which is meaningful or valuable to him, an absence of part of the world for which he cares. Thus the tapestry of his world is re-woven, the significance of the things in his world is reinterpreted to have new meaning. He has a newly articulated web of care or a wholly different mode of caring toward the world. The end of their journey goes from being perceived as the completion of a not-too-inconvenient-good deed to something dreaded: the tearing away of something good and valuable from his world. He has fallen in love, and thus now from the current viewpoint in which he is thrown his interpretation of the world has changed.

Of course he is presented now with a possibility for himself. He understands himself from this viewpoint he is thrown into as being in love, effectively a lover, but he understands also from this viewpoint that it’s a bit, perhaps, over the top to fall in love after a fifteen minute walk. Despite this he decides for his sake or for himself that his affections, those things in the world which are significant and thus have an effect on him, are worthwhile or meaningful, and he will pursue this love of his, which is to say he has taken the first steps toward an authentic understanding of himself as a lover. No longer has he merely fallen in love. Now he chooses love; he projects himself as a lover and in
doing so he throws himself into the position of being a lover.\textsuperscript{67} He has become the thrown thrower, both the ball and the pitcher so to speak. The circle of life, the cyclical nature of care is abundantly clear as human life is, as is the lover in this scenario, a thrown project of care.

Now the moment arises; they turn a corner and she announces this is her destination. To his dismay, it is nothing but a subway terminal! It becomes clear if he leaves the world to its own devices he most likely will never see his beloved again! What shall he do? He must communicate his affections to her. He must become the affected effect, but how can he do this? He must articulate the web of meaning that is his interpretation of the world through which he understands himself as a being to which she is and will be significant.\textsuperscript{68} But to do that this web of meaning must be intelligible, and it is! How so? Because in existing we as human beings are always discursive with the world we are in; even when we are not communicating to anyone else we are nonetheless relating things back to ourselves and other things, understanding such and such \textit{as} such and such. He has understood her as beloved and that is intelligible to him, and so he communicates it to her. Granted, out of prudence he does not actually say he is in love with her in an outright way, but he does communicate that he finds her company quite enjoyable and would like for this goodbye to have its own hello. Wonderfully, joyfully, triumphantly for him she agrees, and they exchange phone numbers beginning what turns out to be a lifelong romance.

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\textsuperscript{67}Ibid., 69.
\textsuperscript{68}Compare this current of self-understanding to: Heidegger, \textit{Being and Time}, 144.
\end{flushright}
In this scenario then we have seen played out the concept of care and within care: mood as attunement, understanding, interpretation, significance, meaning, throwness, projection, falleness, and discourse not to mention authenticity and in-authenticity. Also we can see how these concepts began to play out in the task of existence, the move from aesthetic to ethical living. Likewise it comes to mind that a critical concept ubiquitous in the task of existence should show up here. That concept which was implicit, especially in the ending of the story, we are now ready to reinterpret in Heidegger’s framework.

Low and behold we are back at anxiety. We shall inquire into Heidegger’s investigations of anxiety in *Being and Time* and furthermore we will find how he reacts to Kierkegaard’s concept of anxiety:

It is true that existentielly the authenticity of being a self is closed off and pushed away in entanglement, but this closing off is only the privation of a disclosedness which reveals itself phenomenally in the fact that the flight of Dasein is a flight from itself.⁶⁹

Now this language is quite dense, but it really is rich in meaning and offers a great departure point from which to continue our query, notwithstanding the immediate impression that the concepts delivered herein are utterly, “inconceivable,” which is not at all abated by Heidegger’s incessant habit of using words in such ways as to invoke the reader to quip: “that word, I don’t think it means what you think it means.” First, a short definition for this word “existentielly” being used as an adjective would be: pertaining to life as lived or in living.⁷⁰ That said what Heidegger seems to be getting at in the first part of this quote is that in life as we live it our authenticity as being an individual is hidden

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⁶⁹Ibid., 179.
⁷⁰Ibid., 11.
insofar as we are lost in the world.\textsuperscript{71} To phrase this from Kierkegaard’s perspective and lexicon, the individual caught up in his immediacy suppresses the movement of his spirit keeping him from moving into an ethical way of being. It seems all too likely that the ethical stage was lingering in Heidegger’s mind while writing the preceding piece on authenticity. As with the aesthete who’s “life is a masquerade,” he is no one for himself but only in relation to others; in entanglement an individual is not for himself or authentic but for the world fallen in his entanglement with the immediacy of the world: caught up in his throwness. Moreover this depravity or privation reveals itself in Heidegger's thought to be a hardship or burden of being, being in the world or caring.\textsuperscript{72} Hence this entanglement of the individual in the immediacy is a flight from himself, from his own being, or “Dasein”.\textsuperscript{73} (For purposes of clarity, hitherto, I have refrained from using the term “Dasein” and instead have used human being, which is meant to impress upon the reader not the idea of a single human individual but the being that humans carry out. For Heidegger the being humans carry out is Dasein: “There being.”)

This flight is a flight toward the world, but why fly toward the world or immerse oneself’ self in the world when it is this being in the world as care toward the world which one is anxious about? Heidegger answers this by asserting that anxiety is also anxious for care.\textsuperscript{74} I become anxious about the web of meanings I weave, but at the same time I am anxious to have a web of meaning. In anxiety I realize that I need not have any particular interpretation of the world but I do need an interpretation of the world, and hence why anxiety drives me to immediacy, because in immediacy everything discloses itself to me.

\textsuperscript{71}Ibid., 175, 179.  
\textsuperscript{72}Ibid., 131.  
\textsuperscript{73}Ibid., 179-180.  
\textsuperscript{74}Ibid., 182.
as ready at hand. In immediacy I seek to be absorbed in the world. As a hammer in the hands of a carpenter is an extension of the carpenter, so I seek to make the world an extension of me, or in the case of Don Giovanni, I become life unreflectively lived. So in immediacy I seek to make the world my home, but not so much as a home which I choose but as the one given to me in a “no questions asked” manner.  

We can find a concrete exemplification of this once again in the story of our lover and his beloved.

We observed earlier how he noted that his falling in love so quickly seemed to him a bit ridiculous. This ridiculousness is a fine departure point into anxiety. We could reword “ridiculous” into “weird” or perhaps “uncanny.” “Uncanny” will be especially helpful in clarifying the connection to anxiety because “uncanny [unheimlich]” is the word Heidegger uses to describe “how one is” when one is anxious. In being strange or uncanny, the man realizes that his mood or web of meaning in which this lady has gained pre-eminence does not have to be so. That is why it is strange. That is why love makes such a splendid gateway into anxiety; we all know love does not need to be so and thus we are easily rocked into anxiety about our attunement of love or the mood of love with which we approach the world. In our realization that we need not be in the world in a lovely way the implication is we need not be in the world in any way; we are prone to become anxious about being in the world at all. Now the man realizes he could very much not be in love, and he dreads the thought of what his day would be like if he had not met this young lady. His world comes across as so accidental and, as accidental implies, meaningless. This leaves him with an implicit decision: does he choose to make this mode of being in love his own or does he choose against it? He must choose. Of

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75 Ibid., 183.
76 Ibid., 182.
course the word “implicit” is stuck in there for good reason. He may very well not perceive it as a choice but instead be so driven by his anxiety over the possibility of not being in love that he accounts himself as “love struck.” If he does so he seems to have no real choice but to live as though it is determined to be so, which is to say, go with the flow, throw himself in his throwness, be in-authentic, to despair.

Now, in continuing our investigation of anxiety we come face to face with responsibility and guilt, and this, not surprisingly, unfolds readily from our exposition of love. Being in love always seems to bring along with it a desire for permanency. Perhaps we could speculate that permanency is a primary distinction between lust and love: the former implies an use it up throw it out view while the latter seeks sustainability with all the connotations of permanency, togetherness, and building up the word “sustain-ability” can muster. For our point though love is a mood, and thus something a lover is thrown into and thus it is a past. Yet it at the same time has futuristic dimensions or responsibilities.

Skipping ahead then, we can see these notions of guilt, conscience, and responsibility unfold before us quite readily in romance; in fact I have seen it unfold on numerous occasions, as I am sure you have as well. Sometime later, say fourteen months, our star crossed lovers have continued, hitherto, to get along well in their romance. It becomes apparent to both of them that a decision must be made. They cannot stay in this laissez faire fallen in love state perpetually. Not that they can’t be in love forever, just by nature of its curiosity, strangeness, uncannyness, or non-necessity the lovers are drawn to not let this love be “left to chance” but chosen by each other as their own. In short they feel commitment or responsibility.
This is a wonderful portal through which to examine conscience, what Heidegger links together as a close relative of anxiety.\textsuperscript{77} It is that in love conscience comes knocking or in Heidegger’s words “summoning.”\textsuperscript{78} What is it that he perceives conscience is summoning? The individual’s very self.\textsuperscript{79} Conscience is calling the lovers to the understanding that they are in the situation they are in, that of lovers, and that they must choose to do something. Conscience thereby draws the individual into choosing to choose.

Once again then we can understand this in terms of throwness discourse/understanding and projection: the thrown project of care. The call of conscience is the call of one’s being to his self that his mode of caring for the world, his web of care, does not have to be so, which is to say his way of living in the world is uncanny or extremely unnecessary. This opens up the possibility of the future that in understanding himself as not imprisoned in his way of caring for the world, in Heidegger’s terms, not-being-in-the-world while being-in-the-world. He understands his future as open, his way as not determined, and so he is free to choose in projecting himself into the future or projecting his understanding of himself unto his way of caring. Conscience and anxiety then become united in a structure of being in the world as care. His web of meaning, his care, his discursive articulated understanding of himself in the world is not necessitated; it is not the case that he must love her or her him. He does not have to be her lover or her his. Yet it is the case that he has loved her and her him, and so that is an indebtedness or “guilt” (“debt” and “guilt” are one word in German:

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{77}Ibid., 267.
\item \textsuperscript{78}Ibid., 262.
\item \textsuperscript{79}Ibid.
\end{itemize}
“Schuld.” Because of this I suspect Heidegger had this double meaning in mind when devising his concept of guilt.) They must take this debt into account in choosing their future actions; if they decided to split ways they could not do so as lightly as if they had never loved, despite the fact such a splitting is still a definite possibility.

Thereby conscience calls them out of their fallen inauthentic self and makes them aware that they are free individuals who must choose who they are – conscience gives anxious distress. That is what is meant by conscience luring us in to “choosing to choose.” Each of us, no matter how much we might like to deflect our responsibility onto society or our situation, can choose our way. As our past didn’t have to be the way it was, albeit can’t be changed now, so our future doesn’t have to be a particular way, but it does have to be some particular way. In that way conscience brings us to realize that each of us must choose our own course, our own self, and in so doing each of us must choose against every other way; the future can only be a particular way. The future and, to make the most pertinent ethical point clear, our future self unlike the past self can be changed now.

After all that discourse remember the question of technology is our object of inquiry in this essay. In an effort to rendezvous with that line of inquiry we shall take a brief trail from here to explore this responsibility to choose our own self. In so doing, I suspect, we shall find that this path will lead us to our objective line of inquiry, which lies surprisingly close at hand just beyond the trees.

Malcolm Muggeridge a fairly well known 20th century journalist penned an insightful, although no doubt in Heidegger’s mind still pre-ontological, prose that will grant us a segue into choosing one’s self as an authenticating activity against the “they:”
In this Sargasso Sea of fantasy and fraud, how can I or anyone else hope to swim unencumbered? How can I learn to see through, not with the eye? Take off my own motley, wash away the makeup, raise the iron shutter, put out the studio lights, silence the sound effects and put the camera to sleep? Watch the sun rise on Sunset Boulevard, and set over Forest Lawn? Find furniture in the studio props, silence in a discotheque, love in a strip tease? Read truth off an auto cue, catch it on a screen, chase it on the wings of muzak? View it in living color with the news, hear it in living sound along the motorways? Not in the wind that rent the mountains and broke in pieces the rocks; not in the earthquake that followed, nor in the fire that followed the earthquake. In a still, small voice. Not in the screeching of tires, either, or in the grinding of brakes; nor in the roar of jets or the whistle of sirens, or the howl of trombones, or the rattle of drums, or the chanting of demo voices. Again, that still, small voice – if one could catch it.80

In relation to the authenticating activity of conscience through anxiety, Muggeridge is also snooping up on a certain sort of authentication and authentication against society. The conversation then shifts from “falling in love” to “falling in society.” In life the individual is normally dominated by the “true dictatorship”81 of the they or “publicness.” To explain this in terms of care, the self dictated by the they or public at large has its tapestry of meaning, its web of significance, arranged by the they so that it is “they” who did it. Interestingly enough, we could ask any individual in the they and we

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81Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 123.
shall find out that no one made the decision on what is and is not important. Expressly stated, the answer to the question of who decided how John Q. Public lives is no one.82

We all find ourselves everyday subsumed by this culture of the they so that in our every attempt to fashion our lives we are lost in a Sargasso Sea of public culture that Heidegger so elegantly describes in the following:

We enjoy ourselves and have fun the way they enjoy themselves. We read, see, and judge literature and art the way they see and judge. But we also withdraw from the “great mass” the way they withdraw, we find “shocking” what they find shocking. The they, which is nothing definite and which all are, though not as a sum, prescribes the kind of being of everydayness…. This averageness, which prescribes what can and may be ventured, watches over every exception which thrusts itself to the fore. Every priority is noiselessly squashed. Overnight, everything that is original is flattened down as something long since known. Everything won through struggle becomes something manageable. Every mystery loses its power.83

This reveals in us a nearly inexorable habit of leveling down all the possibilities of being. Disclosed to us now is a near irresistible pull into all the immediate illusions and delusions of the they: the truths of the auto cue, the ideals of the movie screen, the facts of the nightly news, the delight of the night club. It is perceivable that this is not the first time we have encountered the they-self. Fear and Trembling was in no small part Kierkegaard’s grappling with the-they self. Abraham’s actions violated the mode of being

82Ibid., 124.
83Ibid., 123.
of the they-self by allowing the authentic for him-self individual before God to supersede
or suspend the dictatorship of the they-self way of being.

Looking to find the structure of how our way of being occurs in the individual’s
relating of himself to others, the they, Heidegger finds there is a structural “character of
distentiality”84 that forms the individual’s way of relating, of caring, for others. This
distentiality does not indicate a literal distance, but it is a way of understanding one’s self
in the they, the they-self. This distentiality carries over into many phrases in society:
“keeping up with the Joneses,” “getting ahead in life,” “falling behind in school,”
“climbing the corporate ladder,” “an outstanding citizen,” and the list could go on for
pages. What this distentiality then reveals is that even in our attempts to “take the high
road” we so often are just succumbing to the prescriptions of the they.

In these concepts of distentiality, leveling down, and averageness we will incur
critical junctions in articulating the foundational questions that will arise in our inquiry
into technology. How does the roar of the jet, the radio of the motorways, the updates of
Facebook, the snippets of Twitter, the ever present closeness of smart-phones, the
inclusivity of internet, and the complete immediacy of technology altercate with our
being in the project of existence?

84Ibid.
An Introduction to Metaphysics

In what follows we shall be questioning concerning technology. Questioning builds a way. We would be advised, therefore, above all to pay heed to the way, and not to fix our attention on isolated sentences and topics. The way is a way of thinking. All ways of thinking, more or less perceptibly, lead through language in a manner that is extraordinary. We shall be questioning concerning technology, and in so doing we should like to prepare a free relationship to it. The relationship will be free if it opens our human existence to the essence of technology.85

By looking into Heidegger’s *Introduction to Metaphysics* and *The Question Concerning Technology*, I aim to draw out what he sees as the essential relationship between metaphysics and technology. In understanding the essence of technology and what exactly it poses to us, which is to say, what is in technology’s possession over us, Heidegger foretells in the above quote that we will have to come to a deeper conception of being and what understanding of our being and being itself is held within the essence of technology.

To achieve this task we must ask not only a metaphysical question but ask of metaphysics itself. Following Heidegger in an essential questioning of metaphysics and technology is the destination of this chapter. Once we have carried this out the possibility of achieving the goal of the final chapter will become clear: an elucidation of how metaphysics and especially the technological metaphysic relates back to the task of existence and the project of awakening and upbuilding.

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I take it for granted we are all familiar with technology but, as our now familiar German phenomenologist once asked, “Was ist Metaphysik?” Correctly speaking it is a branch of philosophy that deals with “the nature of reality as a whole.” Yet to get at the essence of metaphysics and in order to make manifest the essential relation between technology and metaphysics we are best advised to ask a metaphysical question, so says Heidegger. To ask this metaphysical question, in his mind, is to not merely ask a question and seek a logical answer to it, although surely it is that too, but it is to put oneself into questioning. Therefore to question is to walk a path. As we noted above it is taking this path that is valuable, not merely proposing solutions to a problem in propositional form with all your presuppositions, claims, and conclusions placed in order. We will leave such work as that to the analytic philosophers.

On the contrary what Heidegger seeks to do and we also in following his lead is “grasp the whole of the problematic of metaphysics and to put ourselves into question.” The guiding question of this chapter is “why are there essents [a fictive term the translator uses which indicates, “what is,” or “a being”] rather than nothing?” But before this question can be genuinely asked a recovery must be made. To dive full on into such a metaphysical swimming hole is foolhardy at best and dangerously naive at worst. Instead Heidegger points out in Introduction to Metaphysics that we must start out by taking some preparatory measures. Without these appropriate measures we will fail to

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88 Ibid., 33.
89 Ibid., 34.
90 Ibid., 1.
truly pose a question much less authentically think about it. Heidegger makes the case to us that what must be carried out is a peeling away of the small talk of philosophy: a peeling away of that way of thinking which is like “worn-out coins that we pass unexamined from hand to hand in an everyday life that has grown flat.”

In concept this endeavor is simple. The grounds for Heidegger’s desire to carry out preparatory work prior to really asking the question rests in his understanding that philosophy is a historical activity: “Because it is only in philosophy…that essential relations to the realm of what is take shape, this relation can, indeed must, for us today be a fundamentally historical one.” Yet philosophy insofar as it is real philosophical inquiry is not a product of the pattern of thoughts, the avenues of thinking, or the presuppositions of the contemporary times: “All essential philosophical questioning is necessarily untimely.” Therefore a true inquiry “opens up the process of human being-there in its essential relations… opens it up to unasked possibilities, futures, and at the same time binds it back to its past beginning, so sharpening it and giving it weight in its present.” If we are to truly inquire in a way that does not just pass around the old hat of philosophy but makes open to us the fundamental grounds of being, we must go back through the development of Western thought and reach to its birth in Greek thought so as to bring to the fore those ways of thinking upon which our present thinking is founded and thus reveal that which has destined Western philosophy hitherto for the questions it has posed and the answers it has given.

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92 Ibid., 44.
93 Ibid., 8.
94 Ibid., 44.
All of this historical exploration that Heidegger carries out aims at a liberation that comes from knowledge. Just as we shall seek to be liberated from the ordering that the essence of technology invokes, so do we here seek to be liberated from the essence of Western philosophy. To be clear, liberation should not be confused with a doing away with. Instead it is a coming to terms. By bringing into the light this essence of Western thinking we can see how it is that as agents of the Western “spirit,” if you will, we are pre-destined to ask meta-physical, actually just about all, questions in a set way; we frame our questions in accordance with the Western spirit and thereby pre-determine the paths of thinking to resolve the question and thus delimit the potential answers. By coming to terms with this essence, which pre-destines our thinking, we can then reach beyond the box of such thinking.

In light of this it is to the Greeks that Heidegger turns. The way in which Heidegger looks at Greek thought differs from merely reading *The Republic* or some epic of Homer’s. To do so, Heidegger figures, would be too superficial and would merely result in a timely or contemporary Western interpretation of ancient Greek thinking. In his mind, “words and language are not wrapping in which things are packed for the commerce of those who write and speak. It is in words and language that things first come into being and are.”95 More still he ventures that “misuse of language in idle talk, slogans, and phrases destroys our authentic relation to things.”96 Following this train of thought Heidegger greatly desires to bring about a salvaging of language so that we can understand words and their relation to being as the Greeks did; otherwise when we read

95Ibid., 13.
96Ibid., 13-14.
words translated to us what we shall receive is not the multiplicity of connections the word(s) possessed but instead the connections the word currently has for us; we shall merely understand the Greek thinkers as if we wrote the texts.

He begins this voyage in language with an exposition of a word that for the Greeks applied to all things that are: physis. Even now your mind may be racing toward physics and thus comprehending physis as nature and Heidegger points out that this is the common understanding of the word in our time, but that is not, he argues, how it was conceived in the beginning of Western thought. “Physis is being itself,” and this “physis” denotes “the realm of things that emerge and linger on.”97 On that same page Heidegger elucidates this Greek notion of being as a sort of “self-blossoming (e.g. the blossoming of a rose).”98 It is the power by which things appear to us or their essence is made to stand out beyond itself.

The metaphysical question then is a question of why do things stand in their essence beyond themselves. Even at this point the robustness of the spirit of language, its connection to being is undergoing revival. No longer are we merely asking, why something exists rather than nothing, for in asking if something is, we are, in understanding being as physis, asking why does something stand out rather than nothing? Still there is another question Heidegger wishes to explore within this question. Specifically what do we mean when we throw this word “being” around; what grasp do we have on being? On page 33 of the Introduction he gives a few short examples of the distinct lack of a firm grip on being we experience. Each of these examples shares the

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97Ibid., 14.
98Ibid.
pattern of asking what is the being of the thing in question and how do you get to the
being?99 Is it by sight? If so what is it you are seeing that is its being? Is it by smell, but
surely the being of the thing is not based on its odor? Is it merely one of the parts of the
thing such as the leg of the table, or the color of the table? Perhaps being is held in the
hardness of the table? It seems no matter what we grab at we cannot take hold of being.
In the end we are flummoxed. This situation is reminiscent of a story from an old
Buddhist text, *The Questions of King Milinda*. In the story the central Buddhist doctrine
of the no-self is expounded. Here that story is summarized and excerpted from Volume 1
of the Comparative Religious Ideas Project:

A king by the name of Milinda located somewhere in what is now Afghanistan
asks a Buddhist monk named Nagasena what he means by no-self. Nagasena
answers with another question: “Did the king come on foot or in a chariot?” The
king says that he came in a chariot. Nagasena asks: “What does the word 'chariot'
refer to? Does it refer to the wheels, the floor, the reins, or some other part of the
chariot?” The king says that the word “chariot” is a conventional designation or
term that depends on all of these parts together. Nagasena then echoes the king's
language and says that the word “Nagasena” also is a conventional designation
that refers to the different, changeable components of his personality. There is no
single, enduring “self” to be called “Nagasena.”100

99Ibid., 33.
100Malcolm David Eckel and John J. Thatamanil, “Beginningless Ignorance: A
Buddhist View of the Human Condition,” *The Human Condition: A Volume in the
University of New York Press, 2001), 53-54.
Just as the King and the monk cannot seem to grasp hold of any definitive self so Heidegger points out that there is an uncanny elusiveness or perhaps even illusoriness to being. Trying to apprehend being is always “as though we were reaching into the void”\textsuperscript{101} or, as Nietzsche calls being, “the last cloudy streak of evaporating reality.”\textsuperscript{102}

Out of necessity the question becomes: “How does it stand with being?” This necessity Heidegger makes clear in reminding us of the link between language and being and gives us a rejoinder; because language is based on being and language shapes our world, so the destination of Western thinking, the spirit of the West, is determined by our understanding of being. In that case, “To ask 'How does it stand with being?' means nothing less than to recapture, to repeat, the beginning of our historical-spiritual existence, in order to transform it into a new beginning.”\textsuperscript{103} Is it that Western thinking has, by the emptying of being, become a brutal philosophical love affair with one thin view of being that has resulted in little more than a boulevard of broken dreams, which terminates in a most disparate nihilism?

In attempting to answer this question of how things stand with being Heidegger turns to the word “being” itself. He aims to investigate two things concerning the word itself: “1) the grammar and 2) the etymology of the word ‘being.’”\textsuperscript{104} Beginning with the grammar Heidegger seeks to see if some explanation and even restoration of this word “being” can be carried out. Before we begin to follow him we must understand that Heidegger wrote in German and as the translator Ralph Manheim clarifies the word Heidegger uses, which is translated as “being,” is “das Sein” or merely “sein” – both are

\textsuperscript{101}Martin Heidegger, \textit{An Introduction to Metaphysics}, 35.
\textsuperscript{102}Ibid., 36. (no original source given)
\textsuperscript{103}Ibid., 39.
\textsuperscript{104}Ibid., 52.
used by Heidegger and both are translated as “being.” Thus, to avoid confusion from this point forward we shall use the words “sein” and “das sein” in place of “being.” This should allow us to keep our thinking more in line with Heidegger's. Be sure not to confuse “Dasein” from Being and Time with “das sein.” They indicate completely different concepts as we shall see shortly despite their apparent similarity.

Sein, unlike “being,” Heidegger lays out, is an infinitive verb and thus “das Sein” is a substantiated verb which develops when we place an article “das” in front of the infinitive verb “sein.” As with Heidegger's brief discussion of being as physis, he intends to trace “sein” back to its Greek roots. Plato in the Sophist, Heidegger notes, interprets the difference between nouns and verbs – the noun belongs to onoma which is “revelation through sound, in respect to and within the area of the being of the essent.” The verb belongs to rhema, Heidegger continues: “revelation of an action.” Action here is intended as “praxis,” describing it as “action and activity in the broadest sense....” Words then are revelatory.

I have to admit at first pass it is difficult to see what the distinction is between words as normally conceived and words conceived as revelatory. I submit that the distinction lies between an understanding of language as passive or active. Normally we view words as passive in the world. Allow me to explain. It is, I believe, our habit to think of what is as being there regardless of us, and given this we use language like a vessel. A jar, you could say, that we “fill up” with meaning and pass along to others or

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105 Ibid., 54.
106 Ibid., 69.
107 Ibid., 56.
108 Ibid., viii-ix, 58.
109 Ibid., 58.
even ourself. The meaning is already out there, and the language merely communicates it in various ways – it does not create the meaning. Heidegger is getting to that understanding in the quote noted above: “words and language are not wrapping in which things are packed for the commerce of those who write and speak. It is in words and language that things first come into being and are.”\textsuperscript{110} Heidegger is attempting to bring us to an understanding of language as active in creating the meaning. A little philosophy won't help here, because it seems that this too is ludicrous. How does a word create meaning? If we merely append active agency to words as we understand them, then it would seem Heidegger's point is ludicrous. Yet if we recall our survey of human being in \textit{Being and Time} a deeper insight can be attained. What is there is never just there, is Heidegger's point, as we perceived in a brief analysis of the scientific mindset. Instead everything is always in a context of meaning. This context is always \textit{articulated} in language in the broadest sense of the word “language.” Hence to be outside of language is to be meaningless or nothing. This, I believe, will become crystalline as we progress. All that said, how does language offer insight to the Greek understanding of this process of revelation?

Heidegger asserts that the answer to this is in the uninflected form of a noun or verb. The inflection of a verb is \textit{enklisis}, of a noun \textit{ptosis}.\textsuperscript{111} This inflection means a “falling, tipping, inclining… a deviation from standing upright and straight,” but it is standing upright and straight that the Greeks took as being.\textsuperscript{112} Further he illustrates this standing straight is intractably fused with \textit{telos} or ends. This “ends” is not a bad ends or

\textsuperscript{110}Ibid., 13.
\textsuperscript{111}Ibid., 59.
\textsuperscript{112}Ibid., 59-60.
harmful ends but a sustaining limit; “Limit and end are that where with the essent begins to be.”\textsuperscript{113} It is these very limits, the \textit{telos}, of what is that differentiates what is from nothing. From these limits \textit{physis} comes forth from concealment when it “accomplishes itself as a world.”\textsuperscript{114}

From here Heidegger argues that, “It is in world that the essent first becomes an essent.”\textsuperscript{115} To elucidate the meaning of this cryptic phrase Heidegger refers back to Heraclitus: “Conflict is for all (that is present) the creator that causes to emerge, but (also) for all the dominant preserver. For it makes some to appear as gods, others as men; it creates (shows) some as slaves, others as freemen.”\textsuperscript{116} A brief pause here to collect our thoughts is in order. I take Heidegger here to mean that only in opposition are things determined. Another way of saying that would be, something is what it is by virtue of its relations to the world, specifically insofar as it stands against the backdrop of the world.

If we take the word “emerge” and run with it here, perhaps a helpful illustration can be pulled together. Stars are at all times abiding in the heavens, but they are through the day abiding in the concealment of like unto like; the shine of the stars abides in the concealment of the Sun's shine, and not until the Sun's shine passes away and the darkness ensues is the shine of the stars revealed through the conflict of light and darkness. In the world of an inky black sky the North Star burns bright. Moreover only by engaging in this conflict is the North Star preserved in its presence. It seems fruitful at this point to carry the illustration further so as to liberate ourselves from the tunnel vision of opposites and to expand further on how conflict allows things to persevere through a

\textsuperscript{113}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{114}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{115}Ibid., 61.
\textsuperscript{116}Ibid., 61-62.
world. Polaris lays within the constellation of Ursa Minor, at her tail no less. She sticks out in her presence insofar as her telos limits her to such a relation amongst Ursa Minor; without this limitation, if Polaris were as a kite with no string flying about erratically, she would be unable to stand up and jut out to us. If she were without limits or in-finite she would be altogether nothing unable to stand as her own just as the unstrung kite is lost to the beach surf. Polaris rests by means of her activity of standing against the other stars in the constellation. It is by standing against them that she stands with them as part of Ursa Minor. To sum up, only because Polaris or any celestial being is at first seen as belonging to the night sky can it then be divided, contrasted, or delimited by and from the night sky.

Now if we can say “Polaris is bright,” and through our inflections mean or bring to the fore something significant by harbingering the difference of Polaris, Polaris' telos, within a world, then what is to be said of infinitives such as “sein”? Heidegger makes clear that the infinitive case is an inflection contra the view of contemporary grammarians. Yet in this inflection “person, number, mood are not manifested.”117 Instead Heidegger notes that “… the infinitive yields only what is represented by the word as such.”118

This brings us to Heidegger's brief exposition of the etymology of “sein.” If the infinitive “yields only what is represented by the word as such,” then we are left to seek out what is contained in the word itself. In drawing out the archaic Indo-European roots of the word “Sein” he develops the three roots which have converged into the word. The first such root is “es... life, the living…”119 “Sein” and “Sind” belong to this root. The

117Ibid., 67.
118Ibid.
119Ibid., 71.
second root is “bhu, bheu.” The Greek word “phuo” arose out of this root and it means, “to emerge, to be powerful, of itself to come to stand and remain standing.”

The final root is not from Indo-European language but does show some kinship with Sanskrit. Heidegger states: “The third stem occurs only in the inflection of the Germanic verb 'sein': wes; Sanskrit: vasami....” Wesen which usually means essence or “whatness” but originally meant “enduring as presence, presence and absence” came from this “wes.” These three meanings: living, emerging power, and enduring presence have been abstracted into “Sein.” Given that the facts of the grammar and the etymology of the word have been ascertained, now and only now, Heidegger emphasizes, are we ready to ask such an important question, “What sustains and guides the saga of being [sein]? I want to take a second and unpack this question. Our situation is this; we have found that the structure of the infinitive Sein seems to lean into itself so as to rely for meaning on itself and no other thing, and given the history of the word, as a long process of abstraction, we can ask: what is left of the word that can be leaned upon? Is the word through all its abstraction from those three roots hollowed out to such an extent that instead of indicatively leaning in upon itself it catastrophically implodes under its own weight? “Sein” has been abstracted to such degree that the whole world is laid upon its shoulder or, to more correctly phrase it, “sein” has been generalized to such an extravagance that it is the whole world, that which everything is.

120 Ibid.
121 Ibid.
122 Ibid., 71-72.
123 Ibid., 72.
124 Ibid.
In answer to the above, Heidegger begins to argue on page 92 that what unites the saga of sein is a definite trait within all the cases of sein that brings us to think of sein from a particular frame of reference. This frame of reference is “the sphere of actuality and presence, of permanence and duration, of abiding and occurrence.” Against this backdrop Heidegger enters into his final segment of questioning within which he recalls four distinctions of being that have dominated in Western thought: being and becoming, being and appearance, being and thinking, and finally being and ought. If we are to understand his pattern of inquiry in this final bit, we must ourselves recall what we have established so far, particularly we must remember physis: “…the realm of things that emerge and linger on.” Also it is necessary to keep in mind the operation of telos through conflict as we elucidated it in our example of Polaris in the night sky.

By briefly exposing ourselves to these four distinctions of being we shall be more prepared to ask how it is that technology sets our relation to being. The first of these distinctions is that of being and becoming. To clarify this distinction and unearth its true source, Heidegger places side by side two pre-Socratic philosophers who seem as disparate from each other as any two can be: Parmenides and Heraclitus. Heidegger draws upon the eighth fragment of Parmenides:

But only the legend remains of the way, how it stands with being; on this there are many indications: how being, without genesis, is without destruction complete, alone there without tremor and not still requiring to be finished; nor was it before,

125 Ibid., 92.
126 Ibid.
127 Ibid., 94-95.
nor will it be in the future, for being present it is entirely, unique, unifying, united, gathering itself in itself from itself.\textsuperscript{128}

Heidegger finds a presentation of being in which “being appears as the pure fullness of the permanent, gathered within it untouched by unrest and change.”\textsuperscript{129} With Heraclitus, on the other hand, we have a view of \textit{physis} that is in constant flux as we noted earlier. How can these two views be reconciled, if at all? Indeed they can, Heidegger claims. Recall that we had previously drawn out Heraclitus’ world of conflict as the generation of world through conflict. Then it should be clear to us how it is that conflict gives rise to presence or brings things to emerge. The conundrum then rests in the permanence – how can becoming and permanence arise from the same grounds; how is becoming and the unchanging simultaneously possible? If we are to resolve this we must determinedly ask about the remaining three distinctions.

The second distinction is that between being and appearance. Here Heidegger once again accuses Western thinkers of a mass forgetfulness of the original distinction between appearance and being and in turn admonishes us to reclaim it. To reclaim this connection Heidegger plays with words; therefore we will have to familiarize ourselves with another German term: \textit{schein}. \textit{Schein}, Heidegger shows, can be used in three ways: “1) \textit{Schein} as radiance and glows; 2) \textit{Schein} and \textit{Scheinen} as appearing, as coming to light; 3) \textit{Schein} as mere appearance or semblance.”\textsuperscript{130} Here he points out to us that the second use of \textit{schein} is central to the first and the third. Certainly \textit{schein} as appearing or coming to light is the grounds for the potential of an appearance or a radiance. Neither

\begin{footnotes}
\item[128] Ibid., 96.
\item[129] Ibid., 97.
\item[130] Ibid., 100.
\end{footnotes}
one nor three can stand without two. If we consider this beside *physis* we can see that the lingering emergence of *physis* is essentially an appearing or coming to light. “Appearing is the very essence of being.”\textsuperscript{131}

You may be inclined to ask what to make of error and illusion. If appearing is the root of being, what about incorrect appearances? Frankly, although Heidegger doesn’t say this in so many words, my reading leads me to believe he would say there are no incorrect appearances. Appearances are truth in the sense of revealing.\textsuperscript{132} In appearances being comes out of concealment. The incorrect nature of appearances or the potential for error arises from conflict or *polemos* (from which our word “polemic” derives). As that which gives rise, that which brings about world, Heidegger equates *polemos* with *logos*.\textsuperscript{133} It is in this con-flict (striking upon) that *logos* articulates and gives rise to meaning. Without it there is nothing. In that vein I believe a clearer presentation of Heidegger’s understanding of error and appearance is that only in how we relate appearances to appearances and how we relate any particular *logos* in relation to another *logos* can there reside error. This means error and illusion can be thought of in two ways. The first is that an appearance can only become an error or illusion within a wider context of meaning. Anything taken on its own or, to say the same, without a wider world, cannot be erroneous or illusory. Further the other form of error arises when two systems of meaning or syntaxes are compared. This is readily exemplified in a comparison of differing levels of objectivity and subjectivity. For instance, I may describe the moon as sinking below the mountains. In that particular syntax such is the case; the moon has sunk

\textsuperscript{131}Ibid., 101.
\textsuperscript{132}Ibid., 102.
\textsuperscript{133}Ibid., 98.
below the mountains. Notwithstanding this, from what is commonly referred to as a more objective or scientific syntax the moon has not sunk below the mountains; rather the opposite, it is in space high above the mountains! From one context the other is erroneous and vice versa. Now this gives us insight into being's potential to appear in a multiplicity of ways.

Do we take what is appearing in one syntax to be the totality of a being’s potency for appearing? On pages 105 and 106 Heidegger speaks of the power of appearing in contrast with mere appearance. This power is what I am indicating when I say “being’s potency in appearing.” An appearance is a true manifestation of being in that it reveals in some way being, but rarely, if ever, is any appearance an exhaustion of being’s power of appearing. Hence in one logos, say that of a stockbroker, Wall Street may appear as home or familiar territory and a place of great career potential. For, say, a rural American farmer however, it appears as a chaotic and strange place within which he is impotent. The power of appearing is exhausted in neither logos or syntax, just as in the two worlds in which the moon appears. This I believe is what Heidegger is encouraging us to see when he says, “If he is to take over being-there in the radiance of being, he must bring being to stand, he must endure it in appearance and against appearance, and he must wrest both appearance and being from the abyss of nonbeing.”\textsuperscript{134} Only through language, he argues, can we make anything and turn aside from an abyss of nothing, and this crafting results in a constant flux, for in language we are always bringing being to stand in new syntaxes.

\textsuperscript{134}Ibid., 110.
This positions us well to tie up some loose ends concerning the distinction between being and becoming and to segue into the third distinction of the four: being and thinking. Appearing seems to share a similar relation to being as becoming does. Both are an emergence. Becoming and appearing belong to *physis*, says Heidegger.135 “Appearance as appearing is a becoming of being.”136 The power of appearing emerges but not in completeness or fulfillment in an appearance. Likewise in disappearing or falling back into concealment, and every appearance as an incomplete appearance is a concealing of the remaining potential appearing of being, being is becoming no-thing: “…becoming is shot through with non-being.”137 We now have some light to shed on the distinction between becoming and being; being is becoming in its appearance, which is an essential power of being, and so being and becoming are inseparable. Now if we understand the thinking of the great Greek philosophers to concern itself in no small part with a “decision between the great powers of being and becoming, being and appearance,” then it was only a matter of time before this conflict, “molded the relation between thinking and being into a definite form.”138

Looking over history, Heidegger finds that the notion of being and thinking as distinct from each other is the four hundred pound gorilla lurking through the ivy clad halls of Western philosophy. This creature first made itself known to us, 2400 years ago when he came out of the dark of Plato's cave. As I have heard it attributed to Alfred North Whitehead, “The history of Western philosophy consists of a series of footnotes to

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135Ibid., 115.  
136Ibid.  
137Ibid., 114.  
138Ibid., 115.
Plato.” If that is true, Heidegger justifiably devotes his greatest effort toward understanding the distinction between being and thinking.

At the beginning of his exposition of being and thinking, Heidegger notes the role of *logos* in thinking. Beginning with a brief summary of the role of logic in Western thought, he says “Logic is the science of thinking, the doctrine of the rules of thinking and the forms of thought.”\(^{139}\) Logic, Heidegger claims, derives from *logos* which traditionally means statement.\(^{140}\) With these remarks concerning the traditionally accepted meanings of *logos* and logic in place, we are ready to get down to the meat of the matter, and Heidegger lays out this feast for us in five courses:

1. What is the nature of the original unity between being and thinking, between *physis* and *logos*?
2. How did the original separation between *logos* and *physis* come about?
3. How did a separate and distinct *logos* come to appear on the scene?
4. How did the *logos* (the “logical”) become the essence of thinking?
5. How did this *logos* in the sense of reason and understanding achieve domination over being in the beginning of Greek Philosophy?\(^{141}\)

Confronting the first question, Heidegger jumps into the fray by reinterpreting *logos* and *legein* (he uses them interchangeably throughout) from their traditionally consigned meaning “statement” into “to gather.”\(^{142}\) In so doing he cites the word “analogy” as carrying connotations of this untraditional meaning. Merriam-Webster agrees in their rendering of “analogy.” “Analogy” as a word is rooted in “*ana-* + *logos*.

\(^{139}\)Ibid., 119.
\(^{140}\)Ibid., 120.
\(^{141}\)Ibid., 123.
\(^{142}\)Ibid., 124.
reason, ratio, from legein, to gather, speak."¹⁴³ Still as it stands right now “reference to
the basic meaning of logos can give us a hint only if we understand what 'being' meant to
the Greeks: namely physis.”¹⁴⁴ That leaves us to ask: what does gathering have to do with
“the power that emerges”?¹⁴⁵

Depending on a good recollection of our previous discussion of Heraclitus,
namely that only in being together do things come into conflict and more still that only in
conflict do things arise, we can develop some root connection between physis and logos.
To quote Heraclitus' 36th fragment: “This world-order [the same of all] did none of gods
or we make, but it always was and is and shall be: an ever-living fire, kindling in
measures and going out in measures,” and to put it in conjunction with fragment 2:
“Listening not to me but to the Logos, it is wise to agree that all things are one.”¹⁴⁶ By
bringing these two together a link develops between being and gathering. The “Logos”
gathers and in its gathering it brings fire that symbolizes war, strife, and conflict.

Heidegger seizes on this notion of conflict and centralizes it in his discussion,
specifically, through an interpretation of Sophocles' tragedy Antigone. His reading of the
play centers on the proceeding two lines:

There is much that is strange, but nothing

That surpasses man in strangeness…. ¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 125.
¹⁴⁵ Ibid.
¹⁴⁶ Heraclitus, “Heraclitus”, in Philosophical Classics, Vol. 1: Ancient Philosophy,
5th ed. ed. Forrest E. Baird and Walter Kaufmann (Upper Saddle River NJ: Pearson Hall,
2007) 21,19.
¹⁴⁷ Martin Heidegger, An Introduction To Metaphysics, 148.
For the remainder of his discussion of being and thinking, Heidegger takes it upon himself to show how conflict is drawn out in *physis* and what all this has to do with logic and *logos*. The crux of this project is his demonstration of the concept of strangeness understood as new, unfamiliar, or out of one's comfort zone, so to speak. On page 149 Heidegger bases the word “strangeness” in *deinon* and its meaning is thus “the terrible in the sense of the overpowering power which compels panic, [and] fear....”\(^{148}\) Man is preeminently strange, is his assertion, insofar as he lives in the strangeness of *physis*.\(^ {149}\) To clarify why Heidegger believes *physis* to be strange, recall our preceding section of being and appearance in which we made note of and looked into the power of appearing. Just as an appearance does not exhaust the power of being to appear, so being as *physis* is a power of appearing which always holds in itself the potency of the new, unfamiliar, the strangeness of a hitherto concealed now unconcealed appearing. Human beings live in this sea of strangeness, but we are strange not merely by being among the strange.

A person “sets sail on the frothing waters, amid the south winds of winter, tacking through the mountains and furious chasms of the waves,” says Heidegger, quoting Sophocles.\(^ {150}\) This imagery suggests the raw overpowering nature of the stormy sea that is the world, and man abides on this sea in his dingy yet despite his minuscule presence, “Everywhere man makes himself a path; he ventures into all the realms of the essent... in so doing he is flung out of all paths.”\(^ {151}\) Human beings are preeminently strange, for despite being amidst such a mighty terrible strangeness that is the world all around us, such a manifest unfamiliarity, such an alien terrain that, as Jean Paul Sartre proclaims,

\(^{148}\) Ibid., 149.  
\(^{149}\) Ibid., 150.  
\(^{150}\) Ibid., 146.  
\(^{151}\) Ibid., 151.
can at times invoke a sort of nausea, a person continually clears fresh paths through the jungle. Each time her world is shaken she settles it back down. That clearing is what makes human being double strange and doubly potent.

We should turn to ask a simple question, how does human being go about trailblazing in the strange world? Heidegger's answer is violently, of necessity. As human being-there amidst the overpowering of being, we *apprehend* the beings of the world around us. Heidegger goes on to illustrate that we curb its emerging power so that being opens up “*as* sea, *as* earth, *as* animal.” In this apprehending of being, states Heidegger, we “capture” being. From there he continues to unfold how through language, which itself must be apprehended, we comprehend beings as beings. One might of course object: naturally it is only through us that sea *is* sea, earth *is* earth, etc. but regardless of the nomenclature the thing is still the same. To reply in such manner is, however, to forget that a name, as is elucidated above, is not merely a name. With a name comes a complete system of meanings that make anything meaningful to us. It is this syntax, this limiting, this in-the-world essence of being, I understand Heidegger to be hinting at here, because, as he says, when “the struggle [*polemos or logos*] ceases, the essent does not vanish, but the world turns away. The essent is no longer asserted (i.e. preserved as such). Nor is it merely found ready-made; it is datum… The essent becomes an object…”

Returning to our theme of overpowering being, Heidegger refers to this overpowering as “the machination, *machanoen*, entrusted to him [man].” His usage of

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152Ibid., 157.
153Ibid.
154Ibid.
155Ibid., 162-163.
156Ibid., 158.
the word machination is designed to bring to mind the Greek word *techne* from which our words “technique” and “technology” arise. But Heidegger makes explicit that *techne* meant neither of these originally but instead knowledge: “the ability to put *into* work the being of any particular essent.” Pay careful attention to the fact it is not “to work” but “into work,” so that a work of art is a work “because it brings about being in an essent.” Further *techne* is, as the machination of human being, an implicit going out into the strange or encountering being a new, which is to say going through given appearances to have *physis* reach out at you and you to it; through knowledge it wreaths being from concealment into the manifest as the being. “*Techne* is the violence of knowledge,” that shatters against “the being of the essent as a whole.” *Techne* is continually taking being and bringing it into meaning. It sets about being into beings, but to do so is to struggle, because as a work it comprehends being, but as being its exuberance does not allow for its comprehension in its entirety or as a whole; to know in the sense of *techne* is to never know but to forever struggle with meaning, with thinking. As Heidegger tells us, this “being as a whole” which *techne* struggles with is indicated by the Greek word *dike*.

In review we see *logos* as a gathering that violently apprehends *physis*’ unwieldy potency of appearing and cordons it off *as* something. This occurs in language along with

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157 Ibid., 159.
158 Ibid.
159 Ibid., 160.
160 Ibid., 165-166.
161 Ibid., 166.
all human activity for that matter. Language is the conflict between *techne* and *dike* and it is in language that man thinks. *Logos* as gathering is the thinking of man.\(^{162}\)

This will offer us a transition from the first to second question. Following Heidegger we can see the dialectic between *techne* and *dike* is quarrelsome. *Techne* seeks to apprehend and to hold on indefinitely: “to *administer* unconcealment to preserve it against cloaking and unconcealment.”\(^{163}\) Despite and even because of that, *techne* always shatters against being, because for every wave of being that human being goes over another comes after. The robust potency of the emerging power of being is like the robust potency of the emerging power of waves in the stormy sea, both are seemingly inexhaustible. Due to this:

the suspicion is bound to flare up at times that perhaps the overpowering will be most securely and completely dominated if the concealment of being – the emerging power, whose essence is *logos*, the collectedness of the conflicting – is simply preserved, if in a certain sense every possibility of appearing of manifestation is denied.\(^{164}\)

The virtue of this denial is the folding up and shutting up of being and human being-there, being open is violated. *Logos* then, in perhaps a gravely ironic sense, becomes the gathering together of being there, the folding up of being there.\(^{165}\) “*Logos* and *physis* move apart...,”\(^{166}\)


\(^{164}\) Ibid., 176-177.

\(^{165}\) Ibid., 177.

\(^{166}\) Ibid., 178.
Yet Heidegger claims “logos does not yet break away from physis.”167 This sets us up for the third question that Heidegger laid out. Logos breaks away from being and begins to assume dominance over being when thinking becomes ratio or reason over the being of those things which are.168 Heidegger goes further and determines that this arises with a mutilation of physis, a disfigurement of physis from emergence of being to a mere appearance or an illusion. Heidegger outlines this occurrence in Western philosophy in the work of Plato (Republic is a good example of this process as Heidegger outlines it here) and describes it as the transposition of appearance, “the essential consequence” of physis as power of appearing,169 into being itself. Heidegger challenges that Plato has swapped the consequence in place of the source. When this occurs idea, (here a transliteration of the Greek word eidos), “that which is seen in the visible, the aspect it offers,” becomes being, the appearance instead of the appearing/emerging power.170 This, of course, locks in being by robbing it of its potency of appearing because an appearance has no potential of appearing, no capacity, for it itself is a single manifestation of a potency of appearing. Thereby the subject of logos becomes not physis but appearances or ideas. Logos at this juncture is all about collecting together the way of viewing things, collecting the appearance of being. In this logos ideas are “apprehended and taken.” 171 Then logos as a gathering of ideas is made out to be logic: the way in which ideas are ordered, the rules of thinking.

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167 Ibid.
168 Ibid., 182.
169 Ibid., 180.
170 Ibid., 180.
171 Ibid., 181.
Logos, as the collecting of ideas, conjoined with the disjuncture of physis and ideas serves to answer our third and fourth question respectively. We have already hinted at how ideas became dominate over being, but in finishing our questioning of being and thinking let us ponder a little more what Heidegger brings to the forefront concerning this subjugation of being to thinking. In constituting being as an appearance, the idea becomes what the being is. This “what,” whether it be a pencil, fork, car, moral, fire, star, etc., becomes the essence of the being. Yet nothing of what the being is concerns that the being actually is. Essence, what something is, has been distinguished from existence, that something is. For Heidegger this is the cracked door which lets the gorilla of Platonic philosophy out of that dimly lit cave. What is existing as something always fails to be a “perfect” exemplification of whatever it is. No pencil is a only a pencil but is always a, say, short pencil; a fork, a tarnished fork; a car, a 2008 Mustang; a moral, a petty moral; a fire, a flash fire; a star, a blue star; etc. In this view “the idea now becomes a paradeigma, a model." Logos effected as language becomes statements about these models, the paradigms by which we view things. Logos as statement is true: “if the statement follows the essent.” Truth is conformity or mere correctness. Being is now determined by statement as truth is a mere “attribute of statement.” Further, “...to state is kategorial, categories." Immediately below this he elaborates on the domination of these categories over being: “It has long been taken for granted that the essential

172 Ibid., 184.
173 Ibid.
174 Ibid.
175 Ibid., 186.
176 Ibid.
177 Ibid.
characteristics of being are categories.”\textsuperscript{178} Logos now made into logic is the science of statement, the ruler of being by whose arbitration it is decided whether being is or is not.

At this point it is not difficult to see at all where the ought comes into play once the idea and by that the ideal comes to reign over being. Heidegger in a matter of but three pages outlines this progression of the ought over being. Once again beginning with Plato, the good as Plato was concerned with it was, “the valiant, which accomplishes and can accomplish what is appropriate.”\textsuperscript{179} This supreme good stands over ideas as beings, because insofar as ideas stand in the stead of beings they too are in need of the one way to perceive them. Ideas hone being down into one perspective or one frame, but the ideas also must be trimmed down into one framework. Thus, good the ought is “beyond being.”\textsuperscript{180} Logos as “self sufficient reason” is this way to view ideas.\textsuperscript{181} Now of course this chain cannot carry on forever so in order for the ought of logos to stand it must have an intrinsic value. This intrinsic value conceived of as something present in the ought resulted in the achievement of what Heidegger called a “maximum of confusion and uprootedness....”\textsuperscript{182}

\textsuperscript{178} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{179} Ibid., 196.
\textsuperscript{180} Ibid., 197.
\textsuperscript{181} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{182} Ibid., 198.
The Question Concerning Technology

Having familiarized ourselves with Heidegger’s metaphysical exploits we are ready to make a foray into, what I perceive to be, Heidegger’s development of the essence of technology in the light of these metaphysical explorations. In an effort to make his philosophical venture in *The Question Concerning Technology* more noticeable, I will break it down into four central questions:

1. What is the essential character of technology – what is the power in which technology holds itself, within which it stands as something?

2. What is modern technology’s relation to *techne* if there is any true grounding in *techne* besides a shared name?

3. How is being, as the emerging power (*physis*) which comes against (*dike*), subjugated to modern technology as *techne*, the violent overpowering of human being there in knowledge?

4. As a presence which presides over being, how does and to what extent does technology govern?

I decided to use the term “noticeable” above for I think what is more important than mastering Heidegger, which by all accounts is no easy feat, is to see what is occurring in his thought. As the quote at the beginning of the chapter indicated it is easy to become bogged down in the details so as to miss the forest for the trees. Through a concise consideration of these four questions, as I assert Heidegger is in fact doing in the *Question Concerning Technology*, we can come to notice the overall project of this questioning as an ascertaining of a free relationship to technology, by the act of bringing
human being there to the essence of technology, which is to say making us open to the
essence of technology, through an authentic questioning.

Let us begin. What is the essential character of technology? The current
conception of technology as “a human activity” and “a means to an end,”¹⁸³ which is an
instrumental definition of technology, is indeed correct, astoundingly correct in facts,
says Heidegger.¹⁸⁴ The next step he takes is to look into these terms “means” and “ends”
so as to understand them more clearly. It does not take an all too acute eye to see that
“means” and “ends” indicate “cause” and “effect,” and that is exactly where Heidegger
starts to find soft ground to dig up something deeper about the means to ends.¹⁸⁵

Once again reaching back to Greek thinking Heidegger retrieves a more robust
understanding of what cause is. This he finds in Aristotle’s four causes:

(1) the \textit{causa materialis}, the material, the matter out of which, for example a
silver chalice is made; (2) the \textit{causa formalis}, the form, the shape into which the
material enters; (3) the \textit{causa finalis}, the end, for example, the sacrificial rite in
relation to which the chalice required is determined as to its form and matter; (4)
the \textit{causa efficiens}, which brings about the effect that is the finished, actual
chalice…¹⁸⁶

Already you may notice some peculiar relations between \textit{physis} and these four causes.
The \textit{causa finalis} should especially ring a bell as it is the end, the limits within which
something holds itself and out of which it arises. The second cause, \textit{causa formalis}, is the
space that is, and critically it is only by nature of the being and into which the being

¹⁸⁴Ibid., 5.
¹⁸⁵Ibid., 6.
¹⁸⁶Ibid.
becomes. The *causa materialis* is the substance of which the being in question is. Finally the *causa efficiens* is the human being there, in the case of the silver chalice the silversmith. All of these causes are responsible for the chalice and moreover to each other. They are interdependent.\(^{187}\) How is this so? Recall we understood there to be in human being a gathering which continually embarks out into the strange and in so doing makes things anew. Heidegger once again reaffirms this in *The Question Concerning Technology*: “The silversmith considers carefully and gathers together the three aforementioned ways of being responsible and indebted. To consider carefully is in Greek *legein*, *logos*. *Legein* is rooted in *apophainesthai*, to bring forward into appearance.”\(^ {188}\) Each of these causes implies the others; there is no substance without form, no form without a *telos*, no *telos* without *logos* without human being there.

Technology becomes in Heidegger’s consideration a human activity that brings into the open what was concealed; it is revelation (*aletheia*).\(^ {189}\) At this point he fields a possible objection to this definition, and this objection will serve as a bridge to our second question: “one can object that it indeed holds for Greek thought and that at best it might apply to the techniques of the handcraftsman, but that it simply does not fit modern machine-powered technology.”\(^ {190}\)

In this case what does modern technology have to do with this technology, this *techne* which brings forth and means “to be entirely at home with something, to understand and be expert in it”?\(^ {191}\) Or, as we put it earlier, *techne* is to be on a path, a

\(^{187}\) Ibid., 7.
\(^{188}\) Ibid., 8.
\(^{189}\) Ibid. 12.
\(^{190}\) Ibid., 13.
\(^{191}\) Ibid., 13.
familiar path, cut through the strange or unfamiliar. In what way does the familiarizing power of *techne* that makes clear what was obscure still hold sway in modern technology? Through liquidation. I take a bit of privilege in using the word “liquid” and all its forms for I have not yet read a translation of *The Question Concerning Technology* that uses that word, but if we widen our sights so as to think of liquidity as more than cash value it is a word that can serve well in reference to this essay. Heidegger names the revealing of modern technology as a challenging that lays upon nature an “unreasonable demand that it supply energy that can be extracted and stored as such.”¹⁹² It is an “expediting.”¹⁹³ Much as liquidation expedites in two ways so does modern technology; it “unlocks and exposes” petroleum as energy, for instance, and yet that expediting always is never for itself but always for something else.¹⁹⁴ For instance, modern man unlocks petroleum’s chemical energy and exposes it not for the petroleum itself but as a means to propel a jet plane. Likewise the petroleum company unlocks its potential by selling the petrol, thereby converting it into cash. Then as cash it is on hand or “standing reserve” for some other use that is alien to itself, to borrow a Marxist term. Once alienated the petrol could be used to purchase a yacht for the C.E.O. funded by petrol sales. The petroleum has now been converted into a yacht. The two points to be gathered are that in the liquidating process the potential of something is released from its limits or unlocked, petrol doesn't of itself have the potential of being a yacht, and further this unlocking is always done for the sake of some other thing; no one has cash on hand for the sake of having cash on hand but always for some other use, such as the ability to pay

¹⁹²Ibid., 15
¹⁹³Ibid.
¹⁹⁴Ibid.
the rent if they lose their job. Modern technology maintains the aspect of revelation belonging to techne, but it is not an overpowering that reveals something for what it is, instead it unlocks it from its own telos so that it no longer has the ends out of which something as physis emerges. Under the challenge of modern technology, nothing stands by itself and for itself but is only melted down into some limitless form whether that is cash, energy, data, or whatever is needed for some other thing.\textsuperscript{195}

The third question is now ready to be proposed. At a first look it seems that the third question has been answered in the previous paragraph, but that is not quite the case. Previously we considered what is revealed insofar as modern technology is a revealing. We now set about to ask how modern technology goes about through human being revealing the world as standing reserve. This is done through a particular sort of gathering that, quoting Lovitt’s footnote, “puts into a framework or configuration everything it summons forth.”\textsuperscript{196} The answer to the “how” of technology lies in its way of revealing, not in what it reveals but in the way of its revealing.

Heidegger here once again makes a turn to Plato; “the real has been showing itself in the light of ideas ever since the time of Plato.”\textsuperscript{197} As we found in the previous section, Plato gave preeminence to ideas over being, that which is a presence before us. Even back then the path was being cleared for modern technology. Modern technology as an enframing cannot be carried out without this domination of idea, because modern technology demands something absolute and pure, something under absolute command and purely available, so that when what is always available is called upon, you only get

\textsuperscript{195} A heavy hitting exposition of this is Karl Marx’s “The Power of Money” in his Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844.
\textsuperscript{196} Heidegger, The Question Concerning Technology, 19.
\textsuperscript{197} Ibid., 18.
what is commanded. This is all the more clear in the modern environmentally conscious age: we seek to have cars, transportation on demand. The issue is the cars are shortcoming insofar as they produce something we do not seek to have: carbon dioxide emissions. Currently cars are not purely available in that our command of them invokes something un-commanded, greenhouse gases. Likewise email is not purely available insofar as our command of it invokes the possibility of a computer virus. Ideas as Plato developed them are the start of this, perhaps not chronologically, but they do hold the essence of the revealing of modern technology. Consider Plato's understanding of the idea of beauty; the idea alone is merely beauty – those things we call beautiful only partake of beauty and as such are both beauty and not beauty. “Now if there is something so constituted that it both is and is not, will it not lie between the purely real and the utterly unreal?... Knowledge corresponds to the real, and absence of knowledge necessarily to the unreal.”198 As an idea modern technology makes demands of nature concerning what is real.

Under the metaphysics of science nature is captured as real in being presented or revealed “as a calculable coherence of forces.”199 Thinking in that way qualifies as a metaphysical thinking, because it values the precise and quantifiable as the real and devalues the imprecise and unquantifiable – what else could be going on with primary and secondary qualities? This is the idea of modern technology, and just as Plato's ideas were the only real thing about which one can know anything, so likewise in modern technology only these calculable coherence of forces are real and only of them can

anything be known. Is it not the case that anything unquantifiable is looked upon
derisively as inferior to the objective knowledge of quantifiable data (recall how we
discussed mere “datum” earlier)? In this way modern technology as technē takes the
world which comes out before us with potency (dike) and arrests it into a permanent
unchanging order of a scientific ideal.

The final question builds off the thinking inspired by the previous three and asks
to what extent technology governs. The question of technology has become a question of
humanity's relation to being, which just as in Being and Time and An Introduction to
Metaphysics is the locus of Heidegger’s metaphysics. Returning to our question, if
modern technology is in its essence indeed a metaphysics just as much as it is a tool in
hand, if “it is nothing technological, nothing on the order of a machine,”200 then what is
the extent of its authority?

“Enframing is the gathering together that belongs to that setting-upon which sets
upon man and puts him in position to reveal the real, in the mode of ordering, as
standing-reserve.”201 Technology as that which reveals the world as standing reserve also
reveals man as standing reserve, Heidegger argues, and as the one who challenges into
standing reserve “man in the midst of objectlessness is nothing but the orderer of the
standing-reserve.”202 In the midst of this objectlessness human being is made into
standing reserve. How does this reigning over humanity occur? It reigns historically but
not historically in the sense of chronologically, instead historically in the sense of a path
of thinking. Every revealing, especially the technological, starts us upon a path: a path of

\[\text{\footnotesize\cite{200} Ibid., 23.}\]
\[\text{\footnotesize\cite{201} Ibid., 24.}\]
\[\text{\footnotesize\cite{202} Ibid., 27.}\]
gathering, a path of thinking, or a *techne.*\textsuperscript{203} As any start upon a way, the starting guides us; every start has a destination no matter how vague that destiny may be. As Heidegger put it, every way of revealing is “an ordaining of destining.”\textsuperscript{204} This “destining” in German is “*geschick.*”\textsuperscript{205} Heidegger connects, *geschick*, to the word *geschichte*: history, something destined.\textsuperscript{206} Enframing sets upon humanity in a historical way by starting and guiding us in a direction. It is because we are thrown in this path of revealing that we are led to understand being as standing reserve.

The authority of the essence of technology is over man as a historical being, but what is the intensity of its authority? This intensity, this acuteness, Heidegger refers to as the “danger” of enframing.\textsuperscript{207} Our understanding of human being as “being-there,” “Da-sein, [there-being]” or “being-open,[Heidegger’s preferred phrase instead of Da-sein throughout his later writings such as *The Question Concerning Technology*]” is essentially to understand human being as revealing being. To be human is to be involved in this continual back and forth between the strangeness of nature and a violent overcoming or trailblazing, which familiarizes nature. This “trailblazing” we called *techne.* Moreover the danger of modern technology as with the domination of ideas resides in humanity rescinding her nature as being-open. No longer are we open to the strangeness of being “in Enframing, which threatens to sweep man away into ordering as the supposed single way of revealing, and so thrusts man into the danger of the surrender

\textsuperscript{203}Ibid., 24
\textsuperscript{204}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{205}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{206}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{207}Ibid., 28.
of his free essence.\footnote{208} The enframed human is threatened with the loss of his free relation to being, his ability to go out into the new and learn again, to know again, to bring about a new techne, to engage in authentic repetition. This threat is the potential danger; for herein lies the intensity of the tyranny of modern technology.

Having trekked through all four of our questions the possibility of a free relation to technology is made open. By bringing ourselves to term with what technology is in its essence and not merely representing technology as an instrument (such a representation binds us to a will to master it by entangling us in its enframing)\footnote{209} we can bring ourselves to see in a new way what we are in our essence as human beings. We are beings that are open to the world who go about revealing being and bringing it into the open and we maintain it in unconcealment. In such a way enframing is both dangerous and saving in its power, concludes Heidegger.\footnote{210} It is a manifestation of our human being, but it also threatens to stamp out all other manifestations of our human being. Thus if we are not to revoke our way of being, our humanness, we must be free and not entangled in our relation to technology.

\footnote{208}Ibid., 32.  
\footnote{209}Ibid., 33.  
\footnote{210}Ibid., 130-133.
CHAPTER III

SOCIAL MEDIA AND THE TASK OF HUMAN BEING

Since Martin Heidegger penned *The Question Concerning Technology* the long march of technological progress has continued along multiple fronts. At every turn, in every corner of the globe every facet of human life, not a human activity has been untouched by technology in all its manifestations. Arguably the realm that has been most wildly transformed is socialization. Notably media, of the many branches of the technological tree, receives only passing remark by Heidegger in his essay. This only serves to signify that if we are to expect a meaningful treatment of the essence of the technology that seizes new ground continuously upon human socialization, namely, social media, then we must draw not merely upon the insights of Heidegger but also upon every path of thinking we have yet traversed in this essay. Everything from Kierkegaard's Aesthete to Heidegger's poetic concept of humanity will be called upon. Over the course of what proceeds we shall look upon the internet as the pinnacle achievement of media technology, the phenomenal experience of social media within the internet, the public being of being-in-the-world, the defining existential moment of anxiousness, and the radically founding existential ethic of upbuilding. We aim to carry through on all this with the hope of not only gaining a free relationship with our modern age but also to
develop a resolve to meet with our own task of existence and all the danger and peril of that task and the saving power held therein.

What are we doing with the internet? We are achieving, it seems, the pinnacle of media as a technology. The internet is the media of medias. Through it television, radio, newsprint, telephony, even money is transmitted. Merriam-Webster defines the internet as “an electronic communications network that connects computer networks and organizational computer facilities around the world.” As a communications network it is on the surface quite unique; actually the internet's uniqueness is more manifestly displayed on the deep net, not the surface net but I mean surface here in a different sense. In contrast to other forms of media, such as cinema, television, radio, and newsprint, the internet's content is not by and large centrally developed and then distributed to consumers. Instead of a hub-and-spoke lay out constructed almost entirely out of one way streets, we are given a network wherein the content is created just as much by the users. Perhaps nowhere more has this user-generated character been disseminated than in social media. Through Facebook, Flickr, Blogspot, Youtube, and Twitter, to name a few, the possibility of using and creating on the internet has been expounded with unparalleled success. On the surface what we see is a media in which voice, in the broadest sense of the word, is given to the individual. The individual is presented with a platform on which to make him or herself known in the world, a relief valve from the normalized world of mass media, an outlet in which the individual's uniqueness can be exerted, an opportunity for alternatives. Yet, might this mediated freedom hold within it danger below the surface?
If we hope to gain for ourselves any deeper view into the essence, the core, of social media, we must think. In thinking we can unlock the possibilities of being, in thinking there is a portal to truth, a revelation of the potentiality of authentic being. Of course, by language I do not intend only words such as I write here, but communication of meaning, which is at all times rich, robust, alive, and complete only when the viewer is open to its playful animation of connotations and denotations. One does not understand a classic work of art and one certainly does not gain a decent appreciation of it focusing only on each isolated color of a painting, note of a musical composure, or “definition” of a word given in poetry. Language is a vessel of being, and it is more. It is an agent of being through which being irrupts. We must think on media.

The dictionary definition of medium is: “a means of effecting or conveying something.”211 Considering only the words given here, there isn’t much in this definition, but much can still be pulled out of it. This word “means” draws together a number of meanings. A brief sampling of these are: middle, method, average, and way. These are just a few of the more obvious ones, yet within these there is yet another connotation, which, will be of some significance to our project, namely, the connotation of a border, a border that distinguishes or separates.

Consider our first connotation, middle – that which stands between two things. As the middle that which is between separates two things from one another. The appearance of the middle as the middle arises from our focus on that which is across the middle, so that when I am focused on what is in front of me what is beside me, is of no significance and most certainly not a middle. It will also remain a not middle till I turn my focus to

something to my side at which point the space beside me between me and the focus of my attention, separates us and becomes the middle.

By building off of this and turning our attention to “method” some other paradoxical content arises. Method is tied up with instrumentality a way of bringing something desired about, a cause and its effect. As such its connection with this notion of border is complex. A method is a way in which one is: I am riding a horse, rewiring a circuit, detonating an old land mine, posting a sign, lecturing, or typing, for example. In each of these much is at play. I abide in my method; I relate to the world in my method. Yet a method all the while supposes an object. I ride a horse to win a race, rewire a circuit to fix a radio, detonate an old land mine to make safe a field, post a sign to inform a passerby of a yard sale, lecture to educate, enlighten, enliven, and even breathe spirit into students. A method implies a certain division between a subject and an object, but by no means is this distinction permanent or complete. The method of the subject depends upon the relation between the subject and object just as a border, whether between geopolitical entities, genres of art, schools of philosophical thought, or the “aisle” that divides political parties, depends on the relation between things.

Average bears itself well to this idea of a border. An average is both neither/nor and both/and. The average American woman has 2.1 children; no woman has ever had 2.1 children, much less an American one. Still, it is the average that arises from all American women. The average of 10 and 20 is 15. The average of any two things is neither one nor the other but it is what results from both – just as a borderland belongs to neither entity but belongs to both.
“Way” presents a fine way to show the duplicity in all these meanings. A way is that by which someone or something becomes. This becoming can be a road that must be traveled to get to Rome, enlightenment, a corner office, college, power, prestige or countless else. I am on one end of the way and my destination lies on the other. I must go across the way as one goes across a border.

At the center, the point of all this is to draw out once again the nature of conflict. Note in each of these discussions of the connotation that go along with “mean” there is another meaning: that of bringing together or gathering into one. A means is a gathering together that acknowledges separation, division, a border. A means is a conflict. As we said above means connotes a way that is gone over; a means implies an overcoming. What we have then is an overcoming gathering that conveys or delivers.

If we continue to think on media, turning it over and bringing out the richness of its being, we are faced with the question of what does social media convey? Thinking back to being-in-the-world we must consider how we are in the world in media, which overcomes distinctions in its gathering together and conveyance. How is it we live amidst this ubiquitous duplicity of both distinguishing and bringing together that is occurring 24/7 in the media and all the more completely in the internet, the mediation of all medias?

We are inclined to think that media conveys content, which the receiver makes sense of. Yet if we explore media in interaction with the individual and take it to a deeper level, something shocking arises. For the following, I must give credit to a conversation I had with my friend Devaun Davis<sup>212</sup> about the cinematic phenomenon of the origin story.

<sup>212</sup>Devaun Davis, in person conversation with author, October 31, 2013.
By origin story what is meant is not a particular genre but a motif in many films both of long ago and of late. The modern superhero movie is a prime example. What has notably ascended to predominance in the structure of recent superhero films is the origin story. Such movies, *Spider-Man*\(^{213}\) for instance, are built around the story of where the character has come from and who he is, and importantly involve a coming to terms with his/her self. *Spider-man* begins with a normal Peter Parker. Rapidly after gaining his spider like abilities he is faced with a number of issues arising from his original life – the transformation of his relation with high school friend Harry Osborn, the death of his uncle, his appropriation of his Uncle's moral character, and his affection for Mary Jane Watson. If we frame this in the terms of *Being and Time*, Peter Parker is thrown into a strange new world and he must re-understand who he is in light of his conscience that reminds him of his indebtedness to his old life.

The narrative structure of the film – the hermeneutic center around which the movie gathers life so as to make a sense of it and bring to it a cohesiveness – centers around where the protagonist and often some other characters came from. It is by looking back to their source, their “original” values, hardships, joys, pains, or, to say the same, what essentially constituted or made sense of their original life and re-adapting it or re-interpreting it to their new life, that the movie orients the experience of the film to a stable foundation. In this framework a central question is always how the character will affirm his or her inheritance – hence a, even the, central issue that hangs over all of

\(^{213}\) *Spider-Man*, DVD. Directed by Sam Raimi (2002; Culver City, CA: Columbia Pictures, 2002).
Christopher Nolan's *Batman* trilogy, especially evident in *Batman Begins*, is how Bruce Wayne will affirm what his father believed in, which remarkably like Spiderman's story, is engraved as the central dilemma by means of a responsibility to his inheritance. Both of their fathers were killed and now both have taken on a responsibility to live out what their fathers believed in. For the latter it was to help the city of Gotham using his great wealth, for the former it was to take responsibility for the problems of the world around him in proportion to his ability to solve them: “With great power comes great responsibility.”

Reflecting on this motif of origins and the existential situations that arise in film structured in such a manner, my first inclination is to think that the reason why this plot structure has become so prolific is that it speaks to something in the human psyche. Devaun Davis pointed something out to me qualifying my assumption; origin plots *work*. Clarifying this, the origin plot structure is easy to work into the limitations or framework imposed by cinema as a medium. That is to say, the form of media, which is the film, gives itself readily to a story of origins. It simply is easy to do in film, which is not to say that the question of origins isn't important to people, but it does render suspect the conclusion that origin plots are so popular *because* they speak to the human soul. Perhaps instead they are popular because you can reasonably develop such a story in roughly two hours, you can convey the lines of development without making the plot so complex that viewers can't keep up, and finally it allows for a cohesiveness in the movie so that it does not have the feeling of a collage of random actions scenes but is instead guided by a sensible narrative throughout.

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Here is how this relates to my concerns: on account of origin plots working well in films, the question of origins comes up for the moviegoer. The media of cinema by its enframing power predisposes those engaged in the media, the producers and viewers, to pick up on the question of origins. Now if, as is common, what works is copied in the industry, then the question of origins rapidly inundates the cinema, which inadvertently frames the thinking of moviegoers. As is clear, people think from and about what they engage in. If you engage in cinema, your thinking will often emanate from the movies you see. This of course is merely saying the obvious: people reference their lives from the movies they see just as they do the books they read. The issue is that when the origin story becomes prolific in cinema it becomes a more centralized reference point in the culture which engages in cinema as a medium. The medium, it appears, due to its inherit structure, is disposing the culture toward certain themes that can be conveyed through cinema. This raises the question: how central are the themes of life we perceive as central, or is their importance a product not of the existential experience but rather of the structure of the mediums we engage with? Might the existential experience of human being be falling under the enframement of media? Could it be that what is being handed over in the media is not content but the viewer into a way of thinking and therefore being enframed by the media in question?

Social Media, The Individual, and The Public

If we have unearthed in the above discussion that what is being given over in media is not merely some content to be received but instead the user of the media to a way of being enframed by the media itself, then how does social media as an enframed
transmission of being treat human being? What is the essence of social media; how does human being stand in its use of social media?

People are doubtless social creatures. We seek out, create, and relish in societies. Considering that, it is really little wonder media as a technology has been developed in the first place, and further still that it find an achievement in social media. Since it seems inevitable when the technology is available, that we will desire to use it, I would like to focus our inquiry toward the how of social media; how do people approach social media? Clearly humanity was social prior to social media as an internet technology. Therefore, how does social media stand in relation to human socializing as a whole? Augmenting it is a plausible answer, and yet it begs to be asked has social media so radically augmented socialization that transforming becomes a better term to describe the power of social media upon human socializing? Let us then continue by looking into the way in which people approach social media and how their social experience is then transformed by the media itself.

Considering our probing hitherto into what technology is, we have determined that a central theme of technology is liquidation. Given this, we may expect to find this liquidation playing out in social media. Does it? I would like to make the case that it does, but that it does so on multiple levels. First it does so on a grand level; it commoditizes socialization itself by bringing its availability to a more complete level. Second it does so on a more precise level: it commoditizes social actions by regulating them. Finally, closely intertwined with both of these, social media liquidates socialization on a much more elusive level or, to use philosophical jargon, on a “meta-media” level.
The first level is readily recognized and easy to grasp. Clearly as technology, social media allows the user to engage in social media on command. Insofar as the term “commoditize” implies making something easily and freely exchanged, social media technology commoditizes socialization by allowing it to be had on demand. I can buy corn on the commodities market at demand, and likewise I can socialize whenever I so please on social media. I may be alone in my house, but by logging on to Facebook, I can associate with others much more readily than meeting them in person, which would require a sufficient amount of time to go to a particular destination at which to meet. Of course the person or persons I wish to socialize with may not presently be logged onto Facebook, but is that not what the Facebook mobile app is for? There is no need for a computer. A tablet or smart phone will suffice now. At every present moment one can be logged onto Facebook. In such manner socializing is becoming perfected in the technological sense that it is always already available whenever one so pleases – friends are ready at hand.

Moreover, not only is it always available it can always be avoided whenever one wills it away. I am reminded of the numerous scenes of neighbors Tim Taylor and Wilson Wilson on the 90's television show Home Improvement. In some instances Tim would be calling out for Wilson's sage advice on life issues, but in other episodes Wilson would inadvertently overhear Tim's problems and begin giving his unsolicited advice from over the fence. Wilson, as part of his sagacity, was not a voice or social facet of Tim's life that could be turned off at Tim's will. He was just about always there when Tim wanted him, but he was also often there when Tim wanted him not to be there. Facebook remedies this

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issue. It allows us to log out of our social lives. Sociability ceases to be something, like Wilson, which looms over us, and on the contrary we loom over it deciding when to engage and when to disengage. Our approach to social media then takes on new airs. No longer is it something spontaneous. One is not shoved into Youtube, Twitter, Facebook, or World of Warcraft; you pick it up. Our approach to socializing through social media is drastically altered from a task that is forced upon us in which we take a part in or make a space for ourselves, into a task that we approach as masters of and for which we create a space.

Therein lays a connection to the second way in which social media liquidates socialization. If the first level augmented socialization by bringing sociability under a more complete command of the social individual, then the second level augments our ability to control our social acts while we are socializing. I will take a moment to clarify this relation. Socialization is being social or being in a community of some sort, but a social act is what one does toward other people or what one does in a communicative way, such as talking, writing, body language, listening, etc.

Social media brings under greater conscious control our social acts. Take a YouTube video as reference. As a video it allows for a fairly wide usage of social acts: a video can transmit audio and images. If you can communicate it in either of those ways; then a video can transmit it. Nonetheless, compared to a live social act, a YouTube video allows for an impressive level of control. Not only can you retake a video if you do something inadvertently, but the very format of video allows you to control the point of view of the viewer in space and time. Furthermore, you can choose where and how to execute your social actions to reinforce a message you desire to communicate to the
viewer or to downplay a message you desire the viewer not to perceive. Now this merely
cursory inspection shows the power of YouTube to control social actions. But if we turn
to other forms of social media, it is apparent that even greater control and precision are
possible. The “status” of Facebook is a text based format, and as such the content it can
deliver is much more limited than what a video can deliver; and just as it is easier to hide
in a large crowd, so it is easier to miss something unintended that slipped into a video
than it is in a text. A much greater level of communicative precision may be executed in
text than video, and given the great level of control one can have over his YouTube
videos, how much greater is the control one may have over his Facebook profile.

Social actions are brought under a greater level of control when carried out across
social media than live. What the socialite communicates to her peers is almost entirely
under her discretion thanks to the tools of social media. This discretion goes especially
well with a particular type of social action described by Jurgen Habermas as
“dramaturgical action.”²¹⁶ Dramaturgical action is a sort of social action that we all
employ, and so the large name ought not to intimidate. Paraphrasing Habermas'
description on page 86, dramaturgical action is action in which the social actor views the
other social beings to which he relates as a public or audience, and he purposely selects
his actions to impress the audience with a certain desired impression of who he is.²¹⁷
Habermas sharply contrasts dramaturgical action with other social behaviors: “Thus the
central concept of presentation of self does not signify spontaneous expressive behavior

²¹⁶Jurgen Habermas, The Theory of Communicative Action Vol. 1: Reason and The
Rationalization of Society (Boston, Beacon Press, 1984), 85.
²¹⁷Ibid., 86.
but stylizing the expression of one's own experiences with a view to the audience.”\textsuperscript{218}

This is reminiscent of the Underground Man from Dostoevsky's \textit{Notes From the Underground}. In that novella the unnamed main character, “the Underground Man,” is throughout obsessing over his social actions trying to fine tune what he says and does to give people a particular impression of who he is. Of particularly amusing relevance is the section at the beginning of “Apropos of the Wet Snow” wherein the Underground Man is absolutely determined to make an Officer see that they are of equal social status in the Underground Man's mind.\textsuperscript{219} If the Underground Man had social media imagine how much more effectively he could utilize his social actions to this end. Therein lays the effectiveness of the second level of commoditizing socialization, namely, in bringing social acts down into identical interchangeable units, e.g. the status, tweet, like, comment, character class of massive multiplayer online (MMO) games, and blog. Each of these units is ready at hand for a user to pick up and deploy in order to bring about a certain impression in the eyes of his audience.

This begins to bear on the final commoditizing carried out by social media. Dostoevsky's character has obsessive desire to control the impressions others have of him, and likewise this is the tip of what the meta-media of social media invokes. First, I will make a clarification of the term “meta-media” via comparison. A metaphor is, of course, a literary device in which something is used symbolically as something else, but more to the point “meta-” indicates “among, with, after”\textsuperscript{220} while “-phor” indicates “to

\textsuperscript{218}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{219}Fyodor Dostoevsky, \textit{Notes From the Underground} (Project Gutenberg 2008) http://www.gutenberg.org/files/600/600-h/600-h.htm

\textsuperscript{220}Merriam-Webster Collegiate Dictionary 11th ed. s.v. “Meta-.”
bear,”221 and this really gets at something profound about metaphors. From a metaphor always comes an interpretation not actually explicit in the metaphor. That is, the metaphor gives itself to certain interpretations even if those interpretations are not guaranteed or made explicit by the metaphor. Hence, the Genesis story of Eve’s creation out of Adam’s rib says nothing explicit about her being inferior to him, but more often than not the story is taken metaphorically as implying her subjugation to Adam. The way in which a metaphor is taken up by a person in an interpretive context lends the metaphor to certain interpretations, thereby the “meta-” in metaphor: the meaning that is borne along with A similar phenomena is present with meta-media. As we saw above with the discussion of origin stories, the media of cinema does not explicitly necessitate an origin story in a movie, but it lends itself to it. Now turning this to social media, in light of the way in which social media is approached as a tool, we can ask what the meta-media of social media is.

As something implicit and subtle this augmentation of socialization given by social media is perhaps the most potent, and as such is the point at which augmentation really becomes an inadequate term. We seem to be dealing here with transformation not mere augmentation. Looking back at the first layer of augmentation, the bringing of sociability under command, what unfolds along with commoditizing society, making company “on demand,” is a particular interpretation of the relation between oneself and society. Insofar as it is I who chooses when to appear before others or to enter into relation with them, the relationship itself becomes subject to me, and the implication of

subjecting the relationship to me is that the other become subject to me. Allow me to
place this point more definitively.

Consider the example of a group of friends, say a fraternity, to an individual.
Depending on the need of one for the other a sense of superiority arises in one party over
the other. If the individual is in need of the social resources offered by the fraternity, then
he is in need of them and therefore in limited control of the relation, assuming the
fraternity does not need him as much as he needs them. In the fraternity's power is the
choice of whether or not to accept him and on what terms; in his power is only the choice
not to be included in the fraternity. He can say no to their acceptance or choose not to
seek acceptance in the first place, but he is not at liberty to merely decide he is part of the
fraternity. Certainly power dynamics in relationships are very complex and, well,
dynamic, but generally it seems safe to say the one with the power to choose is in a lesser
need of the other.

A peculiar thing occurs with social media. Without doubt a social individual
needs a society to be social in if he or she is to be social, but with social media the power
to choose to be in or out of the society is to a fairly great degree in the hands of the
individual. He or she chooses to post a video, set up a Facebook account, create a
character on a MMO game, and moreover when to participate in them both in a positive
and negative sense; he can choose when to be a part and when not to. Of course you
could speculate that a person may create a Facebook account and then not be “friended”
by anyone, but due to the habits of Facebook users in “friending” and the sheer number
of users, 1 billion strong, such a scenario is simply implausible. Thereby the power of
choice is in a revolutionary way given over to the individual rather than the group. The
common expectation of this revolution is that this social interaction should foster some sort of authenticity. By having a secure platform from which to relate to others, a person ought to be free to be themselves with little concern for the impression of others, but quite the opposite seems to happen.

The network someone creates through social media is simply massive. Consider that a blogger can have thousands of followers and someone can have hundreds and even at times thousands of friends on Facebook. This creates a sense of largeness, and just as one can feel lost in crowd, so too one can feel lost in social media. The pure grandness of its scope hands the individual over to the feeling of being before an “auditorium” full of people. This sets up a twofold manner in which the individual is made to understand himself as an actor of sorts – he is given a feeling of control over his sociability and is placed before a grand crowd, an audience. Then, as if of necessity, social media provides the tools to be the best actor one can be. Social media augments one's ability to control the impression he or she makes on the audience, what the audience thinks of her or him. The call to understand ourselves as actors is daringly close at hand whenever social media is picked up as a tool. Once this call is heeded a transformation is enacted in the social being. Her own identity becomes, to a vastly expanded degree, a conscious act of construction before the public with an eye to the public. No longer do we merely understand ourselves in relation to society, but we purposely create ourselves with an eye to effecting certain impressions in the public's eye to a very severe degree.

This aimed self-construction recalls Johannes the Seducer of “The Seducer's Diary” near the end of Kierkegaard's Either/Or, Vol. 1. Given the constraints of space,
we were unable to discuss the Seducer in chapter one, but the foundation for understanding him is available in the other two levels of the aesthete. Once the pursuit of pleasure becomes a reflective strategic exercise, then the possibility of finding pleasure in simply getting what you wanted with scant regard for what you really want is fairly clear. If we receive pleasure in getting what we want, then prudence requires that we want what we can get. The Seducer as the perfection of this aesthetic pursuit has ceased to have a self and instead has become a mere illusion. Everything he “is” is merely tailored to get what he wants, which itself is tailored to being something he doesn't yet have but can get. The aesthete then has no substantial self, but is only a constant flicker of calculating desire and equally clever action. In short he is consistently living only a dramaturgical social life. The parallel with the social media user lies in this. In being transformed into a social actor or dramatist the user's self becomes a construct for the public. What the user presents himself as is what will be impressive upon the audience, and by means of the ability to control with even greater precision his social action than most professional actors, the social media calls the user to consciously construct his or her social identity with little opening for an actual non-dramaturgical self. This brings us back to Judge William's critique of the aesthete in Either/Or, which we referenced in the first chapter:

Life is a masquerade, you explain, and for you this is inexhaustible material for amusement, and as yet no one has succeeded in knowing you, for every disclosure is always a deception. Only in this way can you breathe and prevent people crowding too close upon you and making it difficult for you to breathe. Your occupation consists in preserving your hiding place, and you are successful, for your mask is the most puzzling of all; in other words, you are a nonentity and are
something only in relation to others, and what you are you are only through this relation.\textsuperscript{223}

I would like to make clear that what I am getting at here is not that social actions are becoming almost entirely dramatographically based, although perhaps a case can be made for that too, but instead one's own self-conception is becoming dramatographical.

If we consider a fairly popular blog run by Carles, a pseudonymous author, we can see a description of this dramatographical self-conception in his blog post: “Does 'alt' even exist n e more?”\textsuperscript{224} In this post Carles begins to lament the ubiquity and longevity of what he calls “alt” in reference to the indie culture. “Indie” is shorthand for independent and indicates such stylistic, artistic, social preferences that are uncommon enough to escape the attention of the mainstream outlets for such things. In other words, if your outfit isn't sold in stores, your movie or music isn’t picked up by a major studio, and your friends are unpopular, you are alt. At least that is how it used to be, Carles laments. It used to be that people were alternative because they were just being themselves and not trying to fit in but not really trying to be abnormal either. They just were what they were with scant regard for the public at large. Therein lies the problem. Today it seems that everyone is “alt.” The mainstream, he points out in just one example, has picked up on “alt” so that those weird clothes that some few folks with an “indie” fashion flare used to wear are now in the window displays at fashion chain stores, such as Forever 21 and Hot Topic. The point is not that the clothes, cliques, and art that people appropriate as their own has changed or gone through just another trend. The point is that something much

\textsuperscript{223}Kierkegaard, Either/Or, Vol. II, 159.
\textsuperscript{224}Carles, “Does ‘alt’ even exist n e more?” Hipsterrunoff, www.hipsterrunoff.com/2013/01/does-alt-even-exist-n-e-more.html.
more fundamental has occurred. What you wear, watch, and listen to have all become a statement, and it is now normal or mainstream for social actions such as those to be carried out for the purpose of making a statement.

As out of place as this may seem, I want to now segue to Franklin Gamwell's work on democracy, trusting that the connection will soon become apparent. In the second part of his book *Democracy on Purpose: Justice and the Reality of God*, Gamwell begins to lay out the ethical implications of his metaphysical system. Furthermore, he argues that democracy is the logical ethical outcome of his metaphysics.225 I desire to hone in on a particular social practice forming a component of his democracy: “The Practice of Communicative Respect.”226 By looking at this I do not wish to comment on the democratic implications of social media, although perhaps such comments will be made. Instead I want to draw out a more universal effect social media exerts on human to human actions.

Gamwell calls communicative respect a formative principle, meaning that it is social action that manifests a meta-ethical principle.227 As a meta-ethical principle, communicative respect is what he calls “neutral” to any moral claim. The principle is a necessary ground for there to be such a thing as a morally valid claim, but it itself does not invalidate or validate any such moral claim. Rather, as a social action it is something a society must carry out to make moral claims possible. All that said, communicative respect is a concept Gamwell has appropriated from Habermas and Apel.228 The

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226 Ibid., 196-207.
227 Ibid., 197-198.
228 Ibid., 200.
principle, as a formative principle, is quite broad but perhaps Gamwell summarizes it best when he describes it as “treating others as potential participants in discourse...”\textsuperscript{229} To clarify what Gamwell means by “participants in discourse,” as it will prove to be the lynchpin of my argument for its serious connection to social media, there appears to be a direct relation between communicative respect and dramaturgical action. Referencing Apel, Gamwell points out that communicative respect is the affirmation of Kant's categorical imperative: “So act as to treat humanity, whether in thine own person or in that of any other, in every case as an end withal, never means only.”\textsuperscript{230} Further down on the same page, he states he is appropriating Habermas in his formation of this formative principle and calls this practice of communicative respect a communicative action.

Turning to Habermas himself once again in \textit{The Theory of Communicative Action}, he describes his concept of communicative action as:

\begin{quote}
The interaction of at least two subjects capable of speech and action who establish interpersonal relations... The actors seek to reach an understanding about the action situation and their plans of action in order to coordinate their actions by way of agreement.\textsuperscript{231}
\end{quote}

Communicative action fits in well with Gamwell's communicative respect as a necessary component to any moral discourse. This is where I see the issue with social media arising and the preference it gives to expression as dramaturgical action.

\textsuperscript{229}Ibid., 198.
\textsuperscript{231}Jurgen Habermas, \textit{The Theory of Communicative Action Vol. 1: Reason and The Rationalization of Society} (Boston, Beacon Press, 1984), 86.
On my reading of Gamwell, as is implied by his use of the word “respect” in “communicative respect,” an essential component of his formative principle is communicative honesty. This is the contrast between dramaturgical action and communicative respect. If participants in moral discourse are seeking to “reach an understanding” about the situation, then what is needed is a certain sort of honesty that is hinted at in Kant's exhortation to treat humans as an end in themselves. But what was Carles remorseful of, and what is a central dynamic of the clever aesthete in Kierkegaard's writing? Honesty or commitment to be oneself is not the rule; rather, manipulation is. Admittedly due to the connotations of the word “manipulation” a different word that does not attribute so much malevolence would be ideal. Nonetheless, the mainstreaming of “alt” by making common social actions into statements designed to make an impression is in fact manipulation: “stylizing the expression of one's own experiences with a view to the audience” is, de facto, a sort of manipulation. The mainstream alternative individual projecting his indie personality via tweets or status updates, videos or pictures is acting, sometimes consciously other times not, to bring about an impression in his audience, an impression about his or her own self.

Could it be that the understanding of ourselves conveyed by social media is bringing about a way of gathering and ordering our actions together so as to be impressive? If this is plausible, is it any wonder that our democratic political system is widely decried as devolving into a mere hubbub of bickering grandstanders? Putting those political considerations aside there are vastly greater and incomparably less publicized outcomes to the enframent of social media. This mediation is bringing about a
seismic shift in the contemporary world from augmentation of social action into dramaturgical action.

The Reformulation of Being-in-the-World and Its abolition of Anxiety

With our course being set out to explicate those repercussions of social media's enframent, it behooves us to give a cursory foreshadowing of where we shall go from here. As we proceed, I intend to show how this enframent of social media primarily, but not only, into dramaturgical action instead of communicative respect plays out through Heidegger's understanding of throwness, his concept of anxiety and its close consort with Kierkegaard's despair, and finally upbuilding. In conclusion, I intend to offer a corrective approach for a more free relationship with social media that re-invigorates anxiety, throwness, the acuteness of despair, and offers a transformative conception of upbuilding.

Returning to Heidegger's concept of throwness as an integral part of being in the world, it becomes apparent that although one can step back and ponder one’s life and conceive it as something he has been thrown into, it is a relatively rare conception. Media technology offers the possibility this self-critical thinking will remain rare and become all the more so. Media technology threatens to hunt this self-critical realization of throwness to extinction. This hunt is carried through by a unique double play. The first play involves an unlocking of possibility. This unlocking is readily found in media technology. A description of a popular video game penned by its developers confirms this: “Our goal has always been to create a game that offers unlimited possibilities. A game where you could be whoever you wanted and do whatever you wanted. ‘Live
another life, in another world’ has been our motto, and we want you to do just that.”

By opening up the possibility of living in an alternative world where our freedoms are expanded greatly beyond those normally possessed in real life, the game in effect transforms our experience of thrownness by bringing the point of view in which we find ourselves to a much greater degree into our hands. Media technology gives us a feeling of liberty from where we come from. This draws the user to see himself as not thrown anywhere; he can choose to play the game, not to play the game, and in comparison to normal life the controlling powers of normative expectations are nearly inexistent. In normal life we cannot or will not live in such a detached and uninhibited way; in fact the normative expectations that you find yourself thrown into are so potent you, for all practical meaning, can't do such a thing. In a game like this, however, you can.

All that freedom notwithstanding someone is still using the media. That user is nonetheless caught up in his or her way of contextualizing the world. The media does not overcome the fact that it is a specific person playing the game. As such that person is still thrown in the world. The accomplishment of this surface feeling of extraordinary freedom works to amuse us. As a prevention of thinking this amusement quarantines our thoughts from the critical self revelation of being caught up in an interpretation of the world.

The progress of technology is by no means complete, and it has much, much further to go, but it is moving forward, especially in media technologies, with a great stridency. The point then is not that thrownness has been fully transformed into a

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thrownness of our own choosing (a non-thrownness), and the truth is it may never be so. What we take away from this is that technology in its essence is pulling the awareness of thrownness away by placing more and more in our hands. The greater and wider implication of this is that since thrownness, is how we are in the world as an essential component of care in relation to discourse/falleness and projection, then media technology is essentially altering our being-in-the-world.

Technology's altercation with being-in-the-world as human being is continually increasing, insofar as technology develops, transformation of being-in-the-world into being-in-oneself. Attending to the relation between social media and dramaturgical action this plays out in the way in which dramaturgical action is a social action seeking to make an impression. By aiming to give an impression in the audience of what the dramaturgical actor wants them to perceive of them, the dramaturgical actor seeks to create to his liking what it is the others are interacting with. Think of it this way; if the people you are socializing with perceive you as, say, person A, then they shall interact with you by formulating and planning their actions as if you were indeed person A. This form of interaction has commonality with Habermas’ “strategic model” of action in which “there can enter into the agent's calculation of success the anticipation of decisions on the part of at least one additional goal-directed actor... It is this model of action that lies behind decision theoretic and game theoretic approaches in economics, sociology, and social psychology.”233 A dramaturgical actor in this situation may not expect that the others have goals in mind with their social actions, and they very well may not. It is possible that they are merely socializing, but it is clear that in dramaturgically socializing the actor

is stylizing her social actions to bring about a particular way of socializing on the part of the others to which she is relating. She presents to them person A so that they will socialize with person A, despite and even because of the fact she is someone different than person A. By like action, an individual is crafting for herself a social world of her own making, with varying degrees of success. The fact that people are crafting their own worlds is not novel. Such crafting of worlds is the very activity Heidegger is pondering in his lengthy interpretation of Antigone that we discussed earlier.

The more remarkable thing about this is that, as we have seen, the dramaturgical action augmented in social media brings the individual to create a public persona that is stylized to impress others, and moreover it creates a self-conception that is stylized to impress the public. Given this it follows that the world the individual is crafting or revealing, to use Heidegger's term stemming from poiesis, to their own liking through technology and dramaturgy is based on or to the preference of the self they have stylized themselves as. The world, their world, is being brought into conformation to their public self. Social media's enframent draws the individual into revealing themselves not as themselves but as a publicly impressive being, even to themselves – it is not a persona manifest to the public alone but even oneself. On my reading of Carles post, that very self-presentation to one's own self is the meaning Carles intends in his expose of the death of “alt” or counterculture.

Turning to anxiety and despair; we can see that a marked difference is enacted by social media's enframent of being-in-the-world. If this enframent is indeed a transformation of not only what constitutes the individual's understanding of world and himself, then it is also a transformation of the individual's relation to the world. Social
media's enframent brings about a new way of being-in-the-world in three ways: our way of relating to the world, understanding ourselves, and interpreting the world. If we are to understand this with some degree of specificity and thoroughness we must turn back to anxiety once again.

Anxiety, as we saw it in Kierkegaard's work, arises from our freedom. Someone is anxious over their freedom. In Heidegger this anxiety is reinterpreted as being concerned with our very being-in-the-world. The emphasis in Heidegger is transposed from our free choice to worldliness. Anxiety is being aghast at the objectivity of the world as something over and against yourself. Turning back to Introduction to Metaphysics it is exposure to the strangeness of the world that gives rise to anxiety in an individual. I would like to bring these two conceptions of anxiety into a synthesis. Realizing that Heidegger in formulating his understanding of anxiety is doing so in explicit reaction to Kierkegaard, I admit he does see his concept of anxiety as differing from Kierkegaard's; I am not arguing they are the same, but bringing them together will result in a richer more complete understanding of anxiety.

Anxiety is most certainly over worldliness in general – we become anxious when we realize we are in a world that does not so readily give itself over to our own networks of meaning. What we find significant, the world so often does not. In fact the world does not find much of anything significant it seems, but instead it often appears to act regardless of any framework of meaning. In short the world often presents itself to us as quite banal.\(^{234}\) This is my reading of Heidegger, and I find it fruitful to bring his concept of anxiety together with Kierkegaard's to make clear that the world is strange, and by the

same token we are free. The freedom of which Kierkegaard speaks as the ground of anxiety arises from our throwness into the strange world around us. When the world is meaningful, that is when we are “at home” and not in a strange world, we are caught up in a system of understanding ourselves and the world. In short to be in the understood, the normal, or at home, is to be in an environment where freedom is concretely situated. By this I mean that when “at home” the way in which we understand the world and ourselves is more or less pre-given; we are not presented with the need to decide. It is only when we come into the strange, the unknown, when we journey out of our homeland, the known, the normal, that we incur upon our radical freedom, even our necessity to choose how we see ourselves, how we see the world, and how we shall act as agents in that world. Therefore, I find that indeed they are both right – it is over our being-in-the-world, but specifically in our perceiving the world as strange and ourselves as radically free that we come into anxiety.

Pulling this into a relationship with social media, the enframent of social media opens up a diversion from anxiety. If we understand Kierkegaard's concept of despair as an aversion from one’s absolute standing, then it is apparent that despair in any form is an aversion from anxiety. By looking into how social media brings us to despair we will see how it steals us away from anxiety. In the mode of being through social media, the individual despairs from himself and to a public construct of him or herself. He or she relates to this public self. Insofar as social media is taken into the command of the user, or takes the user under its command, the world to which the user relates through social media is in the will of the user. Clearly this is the case we have argued hitherto. If a technology does not bring about what the user intends to bring about, then the technology
is broken. Perfect technology implies a perfect world: a world in perfect correspondence to the user’s intentions, or as we have been demonstrating a world in perfect correspondence to how the technology enframes the user to perceive the world. This effectually bars, insofar as the technology is effective, despair of oneself or a will to not be oneself, for oneself here is the publicly constructed self. Despair is thereby relegated to despair to will to be oneself. This in Kierkegaard's *The Sickness Unto Death* is represented as a will to be something one is not. That is how I understand him when he writes: “Here, however, it [despair] is unwilling to begin with losing itself but wills to be itself.” \(^{235}\) Relating this to Heidegger's understanding of what it is to be a human being, this means willing to be caught up in a pre-given understanding of ourselves and the world, a denial of the necessity to choose or create, what he would deem a denial of our poetic nature.

If the above line of reasoning is solid, then social media, insofar as it is in power, is a closing off of human being from anxiety by an institution of despair to will to be oneself. As much as we may see ourselves as authentically being what we portray ourselves as in social media we despair because we mistake ourselves to authentically be what we by the necessity of social medias mediation portray ourselves as and impress others as. We are in fact despairing of what we really are by laying hold of what we authentically are not. Making it to the next step will require a richer understanding of what I see to be the necessity of anxiety.

Recollecting our thoughts briefly back to the discussion near the end of the section on *Being and Time*, the themes dealt with were anxiety, guilt, conscience, and

publicness, each of which is relevant to give some greater depth to our understanding of the relation between our human being and social media. Conscience is a call out of immediacy into the awareness of the necessity of choosing, that we are free beings who can and indeed must choose. It is this relation between the need to choose and social media that I want to explore next through a treatment of Gamwell’s discussion of Reinhold Niebuhr in *Democracy on Purpose.*

In his consideration of Niebuhr, Gamwell focuses on Niebuhr's conception of sin and contrasts it with his own formulation, which he describes as “The Duplicity We May Choose”

By this duplicity he means a choosing against an authentic understanding of the self in favor of an inauthentic interpretation. His sense of authentic understanding is based on what he perceives to be our ability to understand the comprehensive telos of the Whole, as in the whole world. To rephrase this in layman's terms, an authentic decision is choosing to act in accord with the comprehensive good that one implicitly already knows instead of choosing in such a way based on an understanding grounded in a fragmentary, incomplete, or proximal understanding of the world. We are consistently tempted to choose the immediate or proximal over the distal or background because the immediate presents itself to us with such a greater vividness, life-force, or reality in our fragmentary existence. Relating this back to Kierkegaard, Gamwell sounds to be reaffirming Kierkegaard’s warning about the power of the immediacy as a way of being. And how can one argue with this idea of sin and temptation? Merely thinking about mass mailings soliciting charitable donations offers a buttress to Gamwell's argument. Imagine,

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236 Gamwell, *Democracy on Purpose,* 59-104.
237 Ibid., 94-97.
238 Ibid., 95.
239 Ibid.
if you will, that a letter arrives in the mail asking for donations to assist those who lost their homes and loved ones in a typhoon, which has hit the Philippines. Throwing the letter in the trash might require some brief struggle with a feeling of “I should make a donation,” but it would not bring most to tears or prove horribly compelling. Now imagine that the same charitable organization broke into your house that evening, stole you away in a large black SUV after suitably restraining and blindfolding you, stuck you on the next plane to the Philippines, drug you out into the center of a refugee camp and then removed the blindfold. I suspect that you would be more compelled to feel the need to make a donation. The sheer massiveness of the human suffering being experienced is more realistic. This is why so many charities include photos and illustrious descriptions of people's suffering: to make it feel real to you. What is distant loses its reality or liveliness.

Unmistakably Gamwell’s argument is that we find more persuasive what is close or proximate to us over other aspects of reality that are more distant from us. Because of this tendency, for example, our own family or interests seem more valuable than those of a stranger. But in fact they are of genuine equal worth. Hence our focus falls duplicitously upon the proximal world over the whole world.\(^{240}\) I will use Gamwell’s notion of reality and proximity to shed light on the way social media relates us to anxiety, despair, dramaturgy, and upbuilding.

Being-in-the-world is seriously empty. As what we are ontologically, it is not anything. Instead, as we saw with Heidegger, it is the possibility of being “as sea, as earth, as animal.” In short anxiety propels us to a flight from the ground of the possibility of

\(^{240}\)Ibid., 95-96.
meaning. We become anxious over the ground of the possibility of meaning or an affirmation of the meaning of our openness to the strange. Connecting this to proximity and reality, it seems clear that meaning already given will invariably appeal to the individual as much more significant or real than openness to the possibility of meaning. The possibility of meaning is less definite and by virtue of this less vivid than even a distant meaning. Therefore the least attractive thing to the individual is his own openness to being. This is part of why people are so often opposed to the questioning of their established systems of meanings. Given this opposition to questioning how much more will they be opposed to their need to choose a system of meanings when they could just have meaning? If the questioning is the prerequisite to coming to a junction at which one must choose and true questioning is so often avoided, then we should expect ourselves to be all the more averse to actually making a choice. So we take flight to what appears so real and proximate from what appears so unreal, so distant. We find an escape from anxiety, understood as the attunement to our being-in-the-world or our agency of free choice in the world, in that which is proximal, and we have good reason. In like manner to how Sartre’s Antoine Roquentin feels his anxiety and shrugs it off as if it were nothing at the first, Heidegger notes how anxiety is always over just that: nothing. After all, what exactly is it to choose? Yet, what we turn to in order to alleviate anxiety is always something, work, books, movies, friends, games, sports, etc. Social media thereby offers a double escape from anxiety.

Social media as a media technology brings our world together into an enframement of meaning and delivers our own self understanding over to it. Moreover

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the internet, through its continued expansion, is making immediately accessible this medium. Social media therefore is a capable reaffirmation of a self understanding and a readily available one. Social media is becoming available 24/7 to reaffirm our self understanding as beings before the public. A step back from anxiety can be taken in a step into the impressiveness of ourselves upon the public. Dramaturgy is essentially a turn from anxiety, and therefore to choose it is to despair to will to be oneself, and this despair seems ever so alluring through its realisticness and proximity. No small amount of attention has been given in the design and implementation of social media to ensure that the reality of your impression is dually felt. View counts on YouTube, followers on Twitter and Blogspot, and friends on Facebook all stand there to assure. There can be no doubt of your presentation; it is felt, and your impression is out there.

What then becomes of upbuilding? Anxiety as the necessity to choose is crucial to upbuilding, and to where has it gone? Enframed in social media it seems that a possibility of being anxious over what one is before the public may still occur, and yet, even to such a watered down anxiety, the answer is already being led to by the frame of the media itself. Needless to say there is some range of possibilities to choose from among the media provided opportunities, but it is clear the framework is all right there as if the only thing to do now is fill in the blanks. Of course, as in a school exercise when a student is required to complete the sentence, the choice is pre-intended by the way the question is given. Anxiety then, if not totally abolished, is incurably crippled. Upbuilding in like manner ceases to be about a building up to carry out an authentic task of being.

Upbuilding still lingers, but now as a building up to carry through a given task, just as a student is encouraged by the teacher to fill in the blanks. She is told she can do
it, that she is a smart girl, that she knows the material. So building up degenerates into a building up of a public self-understanding understood with an intention to the public. In essence this upbuilding completely misses the individual and becomes a building up of publicness understood as one's self, because authentic upbuilding is always in need of an authentic communicative respect not a dramaturgical play. Building up has ceased to be, if it ever was, an activity of bringing about an individual who takes a “venture wholly to become oneself, an individual human being, this specific individual human being,… alone in this prodigious strenuousness and this prodigious responsibility.”²⁴² Social media drives us to fabricate a whole ulterior world, selves included, out of which we begin to understand ourselves by throwing on just another veil to cover up the being behind the veil. The individual is no longer built up to authentication and sent out into the strange to make it his own. Humanity ceases to be that which is the strangest and in so doing has taken a holiday.

A Free Relation

I have heard it said that Karl Marx once announced, “I am not a Marxist” and in a similar manner I will say, “I am not a Luddite.” Not forgetting the quote with which the previous chapter begins, the purpose of this paper was and is not to denounce social media, but to come to terms with its true character and thus to be able to deal freely with it and not naively. That said, the path to a free relation must begin, naturally, with a confrontation of what is being dealt with, not on a superficial level but an essential one. What has been done hitherto, I hope, has been at the least a beginning for this. No debating it, more could be said about what is going on, and, I suspect, more shall be said.

²⁴²Kierkegaard, The Sickness Unto Death, XI.
From here I only seek to offer an ever so brief survey of what freely relating, which necessitates a return to being human authentically, would look like. Excuse me, I should say “will” not “would” – would indicates doubt as to whether or not it will come about.

I already indicated what will need to occur for this re-creation of being human to come about: it will require what is for some a most unexpected and yet for others a long expected journey. The journey will most certainly require a going out there and back again. Why a going out? Kierkegaard wrote: “That the definition of sin includes the possibility of offense,” and I would like to turn this around in a way that I can hardly doubt he would agree with: the possibility of offense is the possibility of upbuilding. Offense is exogenous and has the characteristic of not being your own and importantly resistance, or should I say to reminisce on Heidegger: violence? Upbuilding is likewise always the discourse between two, or more, beings strange to each other; hence it must have the possibility of offense. This is the difference from encouragement to upbuilding. Encouragement is a push in the same direction or tailwinds, but building up is a qualitatively distinct task. Building up is a making of something new.

A new what? A new self and a new individual. How so? In the interest of affording a legitimate answer to that, I wish to appropriate a brief essay that was, for the author and myself, a very much upbuilding moment. In writing this essay the author was facing a great deal of angst, I believe, about who he was and what it is he was to do. Yet in so doing, he made a choice that went very much against the public way of seeing things. Tolkein, the author, made a choice for the fantastic and in so doing opened up to

\[ ^{243}\text{Ibid., 83.} \]
no less than two generations the opportunity to see the poetic being of human being in the
world.244

By his radical choice, Tolkien recreated in the opening of human being, wherein
being manifests itself or comes to pass only along with the fantastic power of human
being to craft, an appearance of being out of the confinements of that one way which
being was continually enframed by in the midst of the closed world of twentieth-century
industrialism. That industrialism was not a mere economic industrialism, but also a
philosophical industrialism marked by the decline into an understanding of the world as
mere fact. In a sense, you could say, Tolkien was trying to deliver a literary coup d'etat
by overthrowing the analytic perspective of the early Wittgenstein; something we should
be greatly thankful for because insofar as the Tractatus was intended as an end to
philosophy, and in so far as it achieved its goal, it was the death of language. Such works
as the Tractatus represented a transformation of human being, which is always in
language, into the very machinations of industrial production that dominated the world
out of which such analytic work arose. In many respects such a turn from industrial-
analytic philosophy is what Heidegger is attempting in The Question Concerning
Technology and much of his later works. Many would say Heidegger believed
metaphysics in the classical sense to be impossible. That I am not so sure of. Instead, by
my account, it seems that his thinking leads not to a denial of metaphysic as a
philosophical discipline but rather to a questioning of its worth. In short I reckon
Heidegger to be saying not that metaphysics can’t be done, but that it shouldn't be

244 J.R.R. Tolkien, “On Fairy Stories,” California Lutheran University,
http://public.callutheran.edu/~brint/Arts/Tolkien.pdf
approached in the way it traditionally has. The same holds true, I perceive, for analytic philosophy. Instead he seems to be directing us to a more poetic form of philosophy. Classical metaphysicians and analytics are like those who visit the coasts of Cape Cod and think there to be a great deal of potential energy to be harvested there if we could just put in some wind turbines and wave catchers. In contrast, Heidegger and Tolkien see the philosopher as the person who visits the beach and feels compelled to write a poem, paint a picture, or compose a melody. The beach is of course language wherein being dwells. In such a manner much, of the critique that Heidegger levels at modern technology can be equally turned toward classical metaphysics and analytic philosophical methods; they share a common essence. Both enframe and lock down being, particularly by isolating existence from essence – *that* something is from *what* something is. This security is achieved by chaining language. The epitome of analytic philosophy or the manifestation of its essence is thus brought forward in Wittgenstein’s *Tractatus*, which argues for an understanding of words as forming pictures of the world, that correspond or not to what is or isn’t, are true or false. Thereby, one would expect, there is one true world picture, and how could being be more fully detained than by taking a snapshot, something that is unchanging, easily handled, and interchangeable of it and calling the snapshot being in its entirety?

By pointing to uses of language, ways of relating to the world outside of mere fact and not as if reality were Platonic forms to be found in the world, Tolkien and others like him work to bring us to a free relationship with language and being, which is also to say a free relationship with technology. This he aimed to achieve through fantasy:
“[fantasy] of course, starts out with an advantage: arresting strangeness.”

By confronting fantasy we may come to upbuilding and thus the advantage of fantasy:

But that advantage has been turned against it, and has contributed to its disrepute. Many people dislike being “arrested.” They dislike any meddling with the Primary World, or such small glimpses of it as are familiar to them. They, therefore, stupidly and even maliciously confound Fantasy with Dreaming, in which there is no Art; and with mental disorders, in which there is not even control: with delusion and hallucination.

Our natural disinclination to anxiety shows up once again. For when confronted with fantasy, and what is life but true fantasy, we may be brought to wonder; ponder the double meaning in that last word. We may wonder at the why of our own life, and at the majesty of what is before us. In wonder we can be opened up to the power of choosing. Anxiousness musters its full strength to bring to bear on us that we feel thrown into our way of being and self-understanding, and that indeed we have a choice. Why am I the way I am? Is this who I want to be? Fantasy gives “the inner consistency of reality,” the possibility that something else is indeed possible.

Furthermore and equally critical, Tolkien points out, fantasy possesses “the derived notions of “unreality” (that is, of unlikeness to the Primary World), of freedom from the domination of observed ‘fact,’ in short of the fantastic.”

I might say instead of “primary world,” “proximal world,”

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246 Ibid., 4.
247 Ibid., 5.
248 Ibid., 6.
meaning the proximal world which tempts us to inauthentically choose by Gamwell’s reckoning.

Fantasy opens up our eyes to the reality of our own thrownness by allowing us to see the possibility of existential choices and the necessity to choose. Therefore fantasy brings us to face our thrownness so we see we are in only one possible existential situation among a vast sea of possibilities, which in turn endows our own world with strangeness. Endowed with such unhomeliness, the possibility of choosing authentically becomes a possibility of our being. We are open to the wider world beyond our own given world, and this makes our world feel not only unnecessary but also smaller. This gives even our own world into which we are thrown a sense of strangeness. The homely becomes unhomely.

Immersed in this strangeness we become attuned to anxiety over our very own being-in-the-world. The unhomeliness of it compels us to question our being-in-the-world in general; as the question “why something rather nothing” so anxiety is disclosure of the question “Why me-in-the-world rather than not?” This compels us to flee from our own being as being-in-the-world, which often, ironically, results in us burying our heads in the world by enforcing an incessant busyness. We then are left with the options of burying our heads in the world, or turning back to the world so as to choose our way of being in the world in a non-given all the questions asked manner. Therefore, despair once again becomes the possibility of despair over oneself as a choosing being, but even if the despair of choosing is overcome, wherein does one make a decision so as not to despair to will to be oneself? Perhaps if we reconsider the relation between nihilism and poiesis
and then turn again to Gamwell, we can see some first glimpses of a foundation on which to choose not in despair.

That foundation is, I suspect, to be found in world as worldliness. Worldliness is always characterized by a contest; a struggle with a desire to take what is not ours and make it ours, a struggle to choose amidst a chaos that is not our own. Of course all this speech about choosing, fantasy, and possibility of being may give a very nihilistic air to the whole affair, but nihilism is neither what Heidegger nor I are getting at. If anything, the entire point of the essay on The Question Concerning Technology is to point out the increasing nihilism that grows as a shadow over us as technology blossoms in its full essence. Technology by leveling down all things into one liquid currency leads to a loss of difference and, consequently, to a loss of order, relation and meaning. The essential ideas behind technology, not the actual inventions, are a march toward nihilism, because everything is indiscriminately liquefied with no regard of its standing in the world. Everything is taken as the same thing. Technology in leveling down disregards the worldliness of things as it eliminates difference. All things are brought down to a common denominator, and one cannot order or evaluate identical things.

On the contrary, poiesis grants to being the power to stand as beings in a world of relations possessing difference and potentiality. The completeness of the achievement of being can only come about in a complete world. That is to say, that only insofar as all the ways in which being can manifest itself as a being can its power of appearing and becoming be exhausted. Yet no single subjectivity could exhaust all those possibilities because it itself is but one and no other subjectivity, and it is clear that to exhaust it would be to come to being from every opening. Therefore no angle of approach exhausts,
subdues, or gains a permanently secure grasp on meaning. To take any one view and
claim it as the view is to claim a permanent subjugation of meaning. Yet neither does any
one objective view, for an objective view is a mere abstraction or a reduction of the
vitality of an appearing, and clearly to reduce the power of a being to hold sway in its
becoming and appearing could not be an exhaustion of its power. The worldliness of
being must thereby be respected. That is to say, in developing shared openings to being
through our language, a communicative respect must be held to in light of the fact that
within each world being takes on a new presence.

This necessity for communicative respect does not stem from a resignation that
there is no meaning and following that all meanings are equally valid. No, in the world,
by the very concept of world, beings stand in relation to other beings. That, on my
account, is the power of being, that being can be approached from such a multiplicity of
angles. Choosing who we are to be authentically entails moving beyond what is given,
where we are thrown into, which requires a moving out beyond the proximal. By fantasy
we can take what does not seem real to us and invigorate it with the real, and by
communicative respect we can become acquainted with what is distant and unreal to us.
To choose authentically is to take this fantastic respect and decide in your own situation
how to act it out. Therein lies the going back again. Let me re-iterate. I am not advocating
that all viewpoints are “right,” but that all viewpoints are indeed viewpoints and must be
considered; this is the point of communicative respect. Moreover if we consider them
only flippantly without the talent of the fantastic, then it is once again like the situation
when we are aware of the Philippine disaster and humanitarian horror only dimly, and,
instead of feeling the gravity of the situation by the means of fantasy, we remain mesmerized by the proximal.

By the fantastic we can invigorate what we receive only dimly through communicative respect with liveliness. By the fantastic there can be an overcoming of what Kierkegaard calls “The summa summarum [sum total] of all human wisdom...this 'golden' mean: ne quid nimis [nothing too much]. Too little and too much spoil everything.”

The apathetic can become the pathetic, filled with the pathos of life. By this we feel the “prodigious strenuousness and this prodigious responsibility” of what it is “to venture wholly to become oneself, an individual human being.”

The following three “steps” will serve to sum it all up. In conjunction with fantasy anxiety rises up and brings us to face our throwness and the non-givenness of one's world, and worldliness in general. Then, through communicative respect we come to know the world of others, and by that we understand ourselves as in a greater world than our own, which is the beginning of upbuilding and the possibility of authentically choosing. As this chapter has sought to point out each of these three “steps” are not really steps but interdependent junctures of human being that are indebted to one another.

Needless to say such an upbuilding trek will not be carried out through the perfection of technology. Such perfection is merely an extrapolation of the technological enframing. We must instead think about what technology is if we are to come to a free relationship with it. Specifically if we are to engage in our current social cultural milieu in a philosophical way so as to be an agent in, instead an agent of, this technological social medium, then we must ponder how things stand with being in our historical era. It

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249 Kierkegaard, *The Sickness Unto Death*, 86.
250 Ibid., 5
is my hope that such a pondering has been carried out in these pages. Still, what is of
even greater necessity is not that thinking has been done in these pages but that you will
be sparked to contemplate this human historical world yourself. If it be that against every
conclusion in this project your response was “no,” so be it.

What is needed is not agreement but rather that a lit candle is put to another
candle and a certain fire spread: an ignition to dig deep and consider. Consideration is
paramount to being humanly authentic. Go ahead use social media. All technology, social
media included, is an opening to being. Social media as a human activity is a locus
wherein being comes to stand, where a world unfolds before us and even through us. Use
social media but not merely as a tool for to do so is naiveté. As a world wherein being
unfolds it is so much more than a tool; it is a genesis of meaning that sets us off on a
course of understanding ourselves and the world. As such it destines us in a world
historical sense to live and move and have our being in the socially mediated way. Yet it
is nonetheless a world like the worlds of those high fantasies. Enter into social media
realizing it is a fantasy in such a sense, and as fantasy it offers a clearing in which we can
understand our project anew and enter into a legitimate upbuilding of ourselves, our
world, and others. Engage in dramaturgy, but do so thoughtfully and freely and not as a
mere leaf carried away upon the surface of the river. To do so thoughtlessly is to merely
expand the boundaries of a soulless empire. In as much as it is the way to be it is the
sickness unto death. In as much as it is a way, an opening from which we can craft a
world and engage with others and ourselves, it is a preponderance of human being: being
open.


*Spider-Man*. Directed by Sam Raimi. 2002; Culver City, CA: Columbia Pictures, 2002. DVD.