

**On the uses and advantages of poetry for life.  
Reading between Heidegger and Eliot.**

by

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Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements  
for the degree of

**Magister Artium (Philosophy)**

in the

**FACULTY OF HUMANITIES  
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA  
PRETORIA**

**2006**

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## Acknowledgments

I would like to thank the following individuals:

- Prof. Schoeman, my supervisor, for teaching me that subtlety is the mark of understanding.
- Prof. Wessels, my co-supervisor, for his generous and humble spirit.
- Prof. Peeters, for the moments when I left his lecture room awed by the truth he had allowed me to glimpse.
- Prof. Medalie, for his unreserved support.
- And Ms. Catherine Botha, for being the first to show me the path.

I dedicate this to my parents.

*A.M.D.G.*

Table of Contents

Introduction	1.
Chapter One – Authenticity	8.
Chapter Two – Poetry	32.
Chapter Three – Language	69.
Chapter Four – Poetic dwelling	101.
Conclusion	127.
Bibliography	129.
Summary	134.
Opsomming	136.

## On the uses and advantages of poetry for life.

### Reading between Heidegger and Eliot (or the Saying of the unsayable).

And how could I endure to be a man, if man were not also poet and  
reader of riddles and the redeemer of chance!

(Nietzsche 1969: 161)

### Introduction

Poetry, for Martin Heidegger (1889 – 1976) was not merely a literary, aesthetic pursuit to be read during idle moments and perhaps pursued in formal studies by those among us privileged or passionate enough to do so. Heidegger elevated the need and use for poetry to a level where its existence and practice bears upon the very essential meaning of our being. His perception into the poetic realm demonstrates the ontological necessity for poetry in human existence. This dissertation is an exploration of this idea and an attempt to engage with the thinking of Heidegger in this respect.

The poetry of T.S. Eliot (1888 – 1965) features in this dissertation as a sustaining voice to the thought of Heidegger. Throughout this piece of writing the reader will find passages from the poetry of Eliot that clearly echo sentiments expressed by Heidegger. In that regard there is a ‘reading’ between the two men, although it is the presence of Heidegger that is clearly at the fore. The reason for this is simply because the main focus of this dissertation is on Heidegger. Eliot’s poetry features to validate Heidegger’s ideas. As the dissertation will demonstrate the two men shared the same modern historical frame of reference and both were disillusioned with it. Both, in their later writings, turned towards a more spiritual conception of human existence, which, above all, relies on poetry - not because of its aesthetic value - but because of its ontological importance.

Eliot and Heidegger never met one another. It is possible that they may have heard of one other, for they lived through the same century, although their respective biographies do not record any significant encounter. Yet, as will be highlighted throughout this dissertation, there are numerous concerns that the two men shared,

and this leads one to wonder what a conversation between them may have been like. It appears likely that there is a great deal that they would have concurred on and this dissertation will bear that out. For the parallels between Eliot's poetry and Heidegger's thinking reveal, in many respects, a vision of human being which is almost uncanny in the similarities that exist between the two men's thought. In fact, if one examines the development of T.S Eliot's poetry from *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock* through *The Waste Land* and culminating in the *Four Quartets* one could chart a similar journey in Heidegger's thought, beginning with *Being and Time* and developing towards his later reflections on language and poetry. Both men become more pre-occupied with the realm of the unsayable, looking beyond the limitations of language to what Eliot calls 'the heart of silence' and what Heidegger refers to as 'the Open'.

Eliot features here as a poet, arguably the greatest English poet of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. And Heidegger features as a thinker, arguably the greatest thinker of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Perhaps then, one should not be too surprised to find similarities in their vision of human being, for the two men lived through the same events which would have altered them profoundly. It is interesting to note, even at this point, as a precursory glance, the role of historicism and situatedness in both men's thought. Not only were Eliot and Heidegger products of their socio-political environment but both were also aware of the importance of one's situatedness. This is highlighted briefly in Shusterman's chapter, 'Eliot as philosopher', in *The Cambridge Companion to T.S. Eliot* (David Moody, ed. 1994). He writes that in both Eliot and Heidegger the idea of situatedness is a central philosophical concept. For Heidegger situatedness is central for his 'notion of *Dasein* – 'being-there' in the midst of the world and within a concrete historical situation' (Shusterman 1994: 42).<sup>1</sup> Shusterman highlights certain passages from Eliot's *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism* to illustrate that Eliot makes the same point: 'We are limited, by circumstance if not by capacities' and further on: 'limited by the limitations of particular men in particular places and at particular times' (Shusterman 1994: 42).

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<sup>1</sup> For the benefit of the reader who has never encountered the term *Dasein* before it basically designates human being. Literally translated 'Da' refers to 'there' and 'sein' to being. Hence the term refers to the being that is *there*, in the world, namely, us.

As both men argue for the importance of one's historical situatedness, I should also place both men briefly into their respective historical settings. I will not give a detailed biographical account of their lives; only try to 'place' them within a historical framework. Both Heidegger and Eliot were born late in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and died fairly late in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Heidegger some eleven years after Eliot. Thus they both lived through arguably the most tumultuous period of human existence and were witness to the cataclysmic events that occurred. The age of Enlightenment, with its promise of Truth and Reason as the ideals governing human existence were reduced to a farce in the trenches of the First World War and the gas chambers of the Second. The modern world, beginning with the implicit rationality of the *cogito ergo sum* of Descartes ended, arguably, with the words of Nietzsche - that God was dead.

In this regard, both Eliot and Heidegger were anti-modern in that they did not espouse the precepts of their age. Derr writes succinctly that both Eliot and Heidegger argued that 'because modernity focused mainly on logic, science and material progress, it had either ignored or completely rejected the spiritual and artistic aspects of human culture. This explains the spiritual destitution they found in modern society' (2002: 3). Both were clearly cautious and critical with regard to the role of technology in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the way in which it destroyed our relationship with Nature. Both men perceived the 'mood' of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, characterised by angst and a sense of homelessness that beset Western man. Both held poetry in the highest regard and both sought out a more spiritual and profound way of being. These are some of the similarities between the two men that are highlighted at different points throughout this dissertation. Heidegger was a philosopher and Eliot a poet, yet Heidegger also wrote poetry on occasion and Eliot completed his doctoral thesis on the philosophy of F. H. Bradley. Hence the two men were, in a general sense, familiar with each other's terrain.

Eliot's most important contribution to the world was his poetry. He wrote numerous critical essays and his publications were frequent and regular. These were, as Olney writes, 'the visible production of a professional man of letters' (1994: 3). He was at the forefront (along with the likes of Ezra Pound and James Joyce) of the literary movement known as modernism (not to be confused with the Age of Modernism or Enlightenment that traces its roots back to Cartesian thinking). This

movement was characterised by a ‘rejection of the traditional framework of narrative, description, and rational exposition in poetry and prose’ and was marked by persistent experimentalism (Drabble and Stringer, eds. 1996: 389). Eliot’s innovative poetic style and fragmentary use of allusions to the work of other writers, especially in his great poem *The Waste Land* (1922), created an original poetic voice that conveyed, in both form and content, disillusionment with the modern world. His later poem *Four Quartets* (1935 – 1942) is a sustained spiritual meditation in which his journey towards spiritual salvation culminates. Eliot’s work has become integrated within the canon of great Western literature and there is little doubt regarding the importance of his literary creations.

Heidegger occupies a more difficult space in the history of Western philosophy. In many respects he is an outsider, misunderstood and vilified because of his involvement with Nazism. The name ‘Martin Heidegger’ can evoke looks of incredulity and antipathy from many quarters of the Western philosophical tradition, and this revilement is not entirely justified. For although there are some who despise the man, there are others who revere him and regard him - not only as the most important philosopher of the 20<sup>th</sup> century - but one of the most important philosophers to have walked the earth. Personally, and not surprisingly, I fall into the latter group. Arguably, Heidegger’s greatest contribution to the philosophical landscape was the question of Being. A question, he believed, that had been neglected and forgotten by Western man, buried and hidden within language. The loss of this question resulted in the loss of the very mystery that there is, in fact, something rather than nothing. Heidegger’s entire project was to devote himself to the question and remembering of Being. His most important work, *Being and Time* (1927) ‘crystallized his study of virtually the whole range of past and contemporary philosophy’ (Honderich, ed. 1995: 346). In this text Heidegger thoroughly deals with the relationship *Dasein* has with its world, temporality, death, care and time, as well as retrieving and re-asking the question of the meaning of Being. It is an original and bold work and brought Heidegger recognition and consolidated his career as a professional philosopher. The first chapter of this dissertation will deal with certain themes in *Being and Time*.

The later work of Heidegger used in this dissertation is imbued with a poetic style and is quite unlike the text of *Being and Time*. It is in these specific texts though that

the argument of this dissertation is grounded and their importance in contributing to the areas of language, poetry, aesthetic and thinking in human existence is undeniable. Heidegger left eighty volumes of work that are still being translated into English, and as much as some may want to deny it, he is certainly one of the (if not *the* most) important philosophers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and his work has become an integral part of the Western philosophical tradition.

The first chapter of this dissertation will address the question of authenticity and its relation to human existence. This will rely on a close reading of certain sections of *Being and Time* where authenticity is discussed. Other important terms such as angst, the ‘they’ and ‘idle talk’ will also feature in the chapter.<sup>2</sup> These terms have important consequences for a fuller understanding of the context of authenticity, which will then feature again in reference to poetic dwelling in the final chapter. The first chapter will also make extensive use of Eliot’s celebrated poem *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock* in illustrating the concepts Heidegger uses in *Being and Time*. It will become evident that a Heideggerian reading of this poem will not only demonstrate the similarities between the two men’s respective writings but also allow greater insight into the Heideggerian terms themselves. Not only will the meaning of authenticity and inauthenticity emerge, but they will emerge through the floundering and hopeless nature of the protagonist of the poem – J. Alfred Prufrock. Thus a clear similarity will begin to emerge between Heidegger and Eliot in their respective earlier writings.

The second chapter will deal with the meaning of poetry from Heidegger’s perspective taken from his essay *The Origin of the Work of Art*. For Heidegger poetry is the path that allows us to re-appropriate an understanding of Being. The experience of poetry, from Heidegger’s description, allows the *Open* to manifest through the emergence of an ontological space, and thus grants us a glimpse of the presence of Being. Certain passages from Eliot’s poetry will be highlighted to demonstrate the similarities that exist in Heidegger’s conception of the Open and Eliot’s moments of encounter in his poetry. This particular essay of Heidegger’s is very lengthy and thus

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<sup>2</sup> Throughout the chapters of this dissertation – with the exception of the introduction - I have, where possible, tried to place Heidegger’s German word in brackets, next to its English counterpart. The German words are taken from either Inwood’s *A Heidegger Dictionary* (2000) or Stambaugh’s translation of Heidegger’s *Being and Time* (1996).



the second chapter attempts to account for the numerous interrelated elements he discusses throughout his essay. Concepts such as the *thing* and *thingliness*, the distinction between equipment and the artwork and world and earth all feature. The role of the artwork, as well as the role of the creators and preservers of the artwork is discussed. The underlying reason for this chapter is to arrive at the Heideggerian understanding of poetry, which demonstrates the ontological importance of the artwork for our existence. In other words: to begin to give an account of the uses and advantages of poetry for life.

Language is examined in the third chapter mainly to highlight the obvious relationship between language and poetry, which is centred on human existence. Heidegger's growing pre-occupation with the role of language begins to emerge in *Being and Time*. It is then fully developed and becomes one of the most important features of his later work. The so-called 'turn' with regard to Heidegger's thought is discussed in its relation to language in the chapter. In his *Letter on Humanism* the relationship between Being, language and thinking comes to the fore. In his later collection of essays *On the Way to Language*, it is language itself that his focus centres on. One also cannot discuss the role of language without reference to Heidegger's thinking on technology, and this particular relationship is given special attention with the use of Heidegger's essay *The Question Concerning Technology*. Eliot also features in this regard in order to highlight a similar negative perception of technology that both men share.

The fourth chapter attempts to connect the various concepts that have been discussed under the umbrella term of poetic dwelling. Special attention is given to Heidegger's meaning of *dwelling* and its relationship to poetry, language and authenticity. Thus all these concepts merge through the poetic dwelling of human beings as forming part of the fourfold – another term which is vital in Heidegger's later thinking. A striking similarity between passages from Eliot's *Four Quartets* and Heidegger's description of the fourfold is also highlighted. Authenticity is also given more attention in this chapter to point out some of the difficulties with the term, with regard to the earlier and later Heidegger's thought. The final thesis of the dissertation is concluded and in its most succinct form would be expressed thus: it is through the measure of the language of poetry that we can realise the possibility of authentic

dwelling. The argument is borne out that poetry is indeed useful and advantageous for life.

Megill (1985: 153) in reference to Nietzsche who held that the world is a work of art ‘that gives birth to itself’, states that for Heidegger, too, ‘the world is a poem of its own making’. I hope the reader will appreciate this sentiment in this dissertation for it emphasises the importance of poetry for Heidegger’s later philosophy. Heidegger himself made constant reference in his later writings to certain poets, e.g. Hölderlin, Rilke and Trakl. However, it is in the poetry of Hölderlin that Heidegger found his most sustaining voice.

In brief one may ask why it was Hölderlin particularly that influenced Heidegger so profoundly. The answer resides in Heidegger’s conviction that Hölderlin was his key to the path of Being. The following passage in an article by Van De Pitte (1962: 172) taken from Paul de Man expresses this idea, ‘[b]ut here is a man – Hölderlin – who tells us that he has seen it [Being], and, what is more, that he is able to speak of it, to describe it; he has visited Being, Being has said certain things to him which he has preserved and brought back to men’. Hölderlin is the witness that Heidegger requires to confirm his position and ‘establish a link with Being’ (Van De Pitte 1962: 172). For, to quote Paul de Man again from the article: ‘Heidegger himself is not so certain that he has seen Being, and, in any case, he knows that he has in the strict sense nothing to say of it, unless it be that it hides itself’ (Van De Pitte 1962: 172). For Heidegger not only had Hölderlin heard and understood the voice of Being, but he was also able to express it through the medium of poetry. Thus the path to the remembering of Being begins in the poetic realm.

Heidegger is the philosopher of Being. He has a deep, penetrating intuition for it and thoroughly immerses all his writings with the quest for Being. Yet even in doing so he understands and acknowledges that it is the poet, in the end, who holds the final word.

## Chapter 1 - Authenticity

The authentic interpretation must show what does not stand there in the words and which is nevertheless said.

(Heidegger 2000: 173)

The business of the poet is not to find new emotions, but to use the ordinary ones and, in working them up into the poetry, to express feelings which are not in actual emotions at all.

(Eliot 1932: 58)

### *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock* and the question concerning authenticity

In *Being and Time* (1927) Heidegger makes a distinction between authentic (*eigentlich*) and inauthentic (*uneigentlich*) being. For the purposes of this chapter I will demonstrate and explore the relationship authenticity (*Eigentlichkeit*) has with concepts such as inauthenticity, the ‘they’ (*das Man*), ‘idle talk’ (*Gerede*) and angst (*Angst*). In order to explore these terms and the role they play in Heidegger’s thinking I will cite passages from one of Eliot’s better-known poems, *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*. From my initial reading of Heidegger and Eliot I believe that this poem in particular will yield well to a substantial Heideggerian reading, expressing poetically what Heidegger discusses philosophically. The reason for this analysis is to give the reader an idea of what is meant by the authentic state that Heidegger discusses, because the understanding of what an authentic state of being entails is vital as grounding for the argument of this dissertation.

In *Being and Time* Heidegger states that ‘initially, and for the most part, Dasein is taken in by its world’ (Heidegger 1996: 107). The notion of being ‘taken in’ hints at the ‘thrownness’ (*Geworfenheit*) that Heidegger attributes to Dasein.<sup>3</sup> This being is

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<sup>3</sup> The term ‘thrownness’ is particularly effective with regard to our being, literally, *thrown* into Being. We are thrown into the There (*Da*) of Being (Inwood 2000: 218). This also implies that our being-in-the-world is contextual, we are *thrown* into a specific, worldly mode of being, influenced by factors as diverse as gender, geography, religion, ethnicity, political persuasion, economic status, education, etc. Hence, the fact that we are thrown into being is beyond our control, however, the possibilities that emerge from this ‘thrownness’ present us with choices regarding the course of our lives. These possibilities emerge because of another existential aspect of Dasein, which is called ‘projection’

one who finds itself in a world (*Welt*) which - if it allows - will subsume Dasein to the point where it forgets itself; forgets its *own* being and becomes part of the ‘they’ of everydayness (*Alltäglichkeit*). This attitude of being is one of *inauthenticity* because it reduces the possibilities of Dasein to those of the ‘they’. The reason for this limitation of possibilities is a result of the ‘averageness’ (*Durchschnittlichkeit*) that permeates the existence of the ‘they’. In the Nietzschean sense one is reduced to the herd mentality, a reduction of individuality to the lowest and most compliant form. For Heidegger, as will be discussed, the ‘they’ reduces Dasein’s possibilities of being and inhibits its striving towards achieving the authenticity of its own existence. It is also important to highlight the use of the word ‘world’ that appears in the above quotation from Heidegger. This word is one of many in Heidegger’s thinking which are important, for the term ‘world’ designates a specific reference to the cultural and historical world of Dasein, both as an individual and as a people. However, more attention will be given to this concept in the second chapter, dealing with Heidegger’s essay *On the Origin of the Work of Art*.

The concept of ‘thrownness’ has important ramifications for the being of Dasein. One may ask if human beings have always considered themselves *thrown* into Being, in the sense that understanding one’s ‘thrownness’ means to come to terms with what it means to be *here* – a being rooted in the rootlessness of Being. The underlying idea of ‘thrownness’, immortalised in the words of Hamlet, carries the existential burden of having *to be*, or from Camus’s perspective, having to deal with the possibility of wilfully causing one’s own non-existence, to cease to be.<sup>4</sup> However, suicide is non-being possibly brought about by the conviction that life is meaningless, whereas for Heidegger, *being-towards-death* as one of the fundamental facets of Dasein, allows meaning to emerge for human existence precisely because of this final possibility: death. The point though that may be raised is whether this notion of being *flung* into this world and having to deal with one’s own meaning and possibilities, while attempting to escape the vacuum of the ‘they’, is something especially relevant to the materialism and nihilism that permeates the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Has Dasein always felt its

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(*Entwurf*). Projection is essentially what drives us forward towards our possibilities of being. Human being ‘is both thrown and projected; it is *thrown project*, factual directedness towards possibilities of being’ (Heidegger 2001: 69 – see translator’s note).

<sup>4</sup> See Camus’ *The Myth of Sisyphus* (2000).

‘thrownness’ so acutely? Is it possible that postmodernity has created an obsession with our purpose and meaning; with the reason why we exist, because we no longer have recourse to a metaphysical ground or a pre-established narrative containing the reason for our being? Instead, to be confronted with one’s ‘thrownness’ is to have to deal with B/being without the certainty of anything, except, to a certain extent, one’s own, individuated being, and with the underlying and sometimes overwhelming fear that any possibility exercised, any choice made, is meaningless and purposeless. This is one of the most important problems underlying postmodernity, and the reason why the notion of ‘thrownness’ is so important in its characterisation of *this* era. For the term confronts us with the realisation that we are alone, without recourse to anything, except the uncanniness of our existence. The protagonist Prufrock in the poem by T.S. Eliot will amply demonstrate a continual and possessive obsession with his own ‘thrownness’ and the possibilities of his being that emerge because of it. What will also emerge in the last chapter of this dissertation is that for the later Heidegger there *is* a meaning to life that enables human existence to be purposeful.

#### Prufrock and the ‘they’<sup>5</sup>

In this chapter the concept of the ‘they’ will be explored more comprehensively because it has direct ramifications for Dasein’s authentic or inauthentic state of being. To begin Heidegger writes that the relationship Dasein has with the ‘they’ (or, in this particular quotation, the ‘others’) is

in *subservience* to the others. It itself *is* not; the others have taken its being away from it. The everyday possibilities of being of Dasein are at the disposal of the whims of the others (1996: 118).

Furthermore he refers to the ‘they’ as ‘nothing definite and which all are, though not as a sum, prescribes the kind of being of everydayness [*Alltäglichkeit*]’ (Heidegger 1996: 119). Hence the ‘they’ epitomise the masses; faceless society,

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<sup>5</sup> For the purposes of this chapter I would advise the reader to have a copy of T.S. Eliot’s *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock* at hand and to familiarise themselves with it. The chapter makes constant and continual reference to the poem.

represented by everyone and no one and yet exerting a remarkable power over each Dasein, in an anonymous and also somewhat ominous sense. This comes to the fore when one realises the extent of this anonymous power that gives an implicit directive to the way one should mould one's possibilities of being - according to the whims and directives of the 'they'. When this occurs Heidegger writes that 'being-with-one another as such [in the overwhelming grip of the 'they'] creates *averageness*' and that 'the care of averageness reveals, in turn, an essential tendency of Dasein, which we call the *levelling down* of all possibilities of being' (Heidegger 1996: 119).

This 'levelling down' occurs because the 'they' *already* presents each Dasein with specific, ready-made, acceptable moulds and attitudes that are deemed correct to ensure the well being of the 'they' as a totality. This is the reason Heidegger writes that the 'they' disburdens Dasein in its everydayness because it is never confronted with the responsibility of its own choice (1996: 120). Rather Dasein can always find recourse from itself in the unanimity of the 'they' and hence it is disburdened from itself; from the immediacy and perplexity of its own existence by allowing the 'they' to remove its responsibility for being (Heidegger 1996: 120). Essentially, this mode of being Heidegger would characterise as inauthentic.

However, he is careful to point out that this 'does not signify a lessening of the facticity of Dasein' (1996: 120), in other words; Dasein - being in an attitude of inauthenticity - does not make its existence less *real* than one who claims to be authentic. Both these attitudes form part of the facticity of Dasein and are necessary for being-in-the-world. Heidegger asserts that '*the they is an existential and belongs as a primordial phenomenon to the positive constitution of Dasein*' (1996: 121). Arguably, the reason he refers to the 'they' as a 'positive constitution of Dasein' is because through Dasein's inauthentic experience of the 'they' and realisation of it, Dasein may come to realise its own authentic self, which Heidegger defines very briefly as 'the self which has explicitly grasped itself' (1996: 121).<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> In this regard Safranski gives a succinct explanation of authenticity that has reference to the entire chapter, particularly to the discussion of *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*. The passage is as follows: 'Dasein is authentic when it has the courage to base itself on itself... when it can dispense with the unburdening offers on the part of the world of They; when it finds the strength to bring itself back from "being lost"; when it no longer toys with the thousand possibilities existing but instead seizes the possibility that one is oneself' (1999: 165).

Initially Dasein is always part of the ‘they’, and it is this world of the ‘they’ that, *initially*, constitutes Dasein’s ‘referential context of significance’ (Heidegger 1996: 121). Regarding this one could state that Dasein is already thrown into the ‘they-self’ before it has come to terms with its own self. However, Heidegger emphasises that this mode of being is *initial*, a beginning; and perhaps also implies that falling into the inauthentic nature of the ‘they’ is unavoidable, because the very nature of Dasein is one of being-with-others in a shared world. Therefore subservience, of a certain kind, to the ‘they’ is inevitable. The danger of this inauthentic mode of being - in subservience to the ‘they’ - has two results. The first is that Dasein may never discover its own authentic being and grasp itself, if it remains embedded and controlled by the dictates of the ‘they’. This in turn results in the second, which is the reduction of the possibilities of one’s being, for one’s own possibilities are limited and moulded according to the whims and desires of the ‘they’. Regarding this Heidegger writes:

If Dasein explicitly discovers the world and brings it near, if it discloses its authentic being to itself, this discovering of “world” and disclosing of Dasein always comes about by clearing away coverings and obscurities, by breaking up the disguises with which Dasein cuts itself off from itself (1996: 121).

If Dasein can come to a realisation of itself, that is, its own existence, which is unique and finite and does not require the assertions of the ‘they’ in order to fulfil its own Dasein, then Dasein will disclose its own authentic being. Heidegger makes the point that through disclosing the world and the ‘they’, ‘being-in-the-world became visible in its everydayness and averageness’ (1996: 121). It is through this visibility of everyday being-in-the-world that Dasein can clear away the ‘covering and obscurities’ that prevent Dasein from grasping itself. Therefore Heidegger intends for Dasein to overcome the world of the ‘they’ and realise itself. Although one must bear in mind that the being of averageness and everydayness is also a necessary and real way of being-in-the-world. In fact, for the most part, this is how Dasein’s being is generally characterised and it is largely an inescapable facet of its being-in-the-world. However,

although Dasein is certainly part of the everydayness of being, this should not limit Dasein's being to everydayness.

If one becomes subsumed within the world of the 'they' then one's existence becomes inauthentic, and one is cut off from the possibilities of one's own being. To achieve authenticity is to become aware of the disclosure of the world of one's own Dasein, beyond the averageness and everydayness of the 'they', and to seek one's own path of existence that is not confined simply to the being of everyday averageness. Heidegger expresses it in this way: '*Authentic being one's self* is not based on an exceptional state of the subject, a state detached from the they, *but is an existentiell modification of the they as an essential existential*' (1996: 122). One cannot escape the presence of the 'they' but that does not imply that one must succumb to the pressures and dictates of the 'they' either. Rather, through the *grasp* of one's own Dasein existential possibilities open up that are not limited by the dictates of the 'they', but dependent solely on the choice of the individual Dasein.

Having discussed Heidegger's ideas concerning inauthenticity and the 'they' I will cite specific passages from the poem by T.S. Eliot to illustrate these ideas. At this stage one may even superficially state that a great deal of Eliot's poetry deals with the question of authenticity and inauthenticity. Much of his earlier poetry such as *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock* (1917), *Preludes* (1917) and *The Waste Land* (1922) highlights the question and argument that Heidegger presents in terms of inauthenticity and the 'they', whereas Eliot's later poem, *Four Quartets* (1935-1942), I believe, depicts authenticity in Heidegger's sense, although this argument must still be born out conclusively.<sup>7</sup> I shall now consider *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock* and present and discuss certain passages of the poem that will bear relation to the arguments posited earlier. The opening passage of the poem is as follows:

Let us go then, you and I,  
When the evening is spread out against the sky  
Like a patient etherised upon a table;  
Let us go, through certain half-deserted streets,

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<sup>7</sup> Chapter four examines this question in more depth. Heidegger's authenticity certainly has bearing on Eliot's *Four Quartets*; however, this will be qualified because the context of authenticity in the earlier and later Heidegger is somewhat different.



The muttering retreats  
Of restless nights in one-night cheap hotels  
And sawdust restaurants with oyster-shells:  
Streets that follow like a tedious argument  
Of insidious intent  
To lead you to an overwhelming question...  
Oh, do not ask, 'What is it?'  
Let us go and make our visit

(Eliot 1985: 13)

What is evident in this piece? What strikes one initially is an overwhelming sense of hopelessness and uncertainty; one could refer to it as 'angst'. There is a directionless sense of being lost in the 'half-deserted streets', wandering among the 'they' and intuitively considering that there must be more to existence than this culmination of meaningless events. Initially we are confronted with an anonymous threat of plurality in the events that occur: 'restless nights', 'cheap hotels', 'sawdust restaurants', 'oyster shells' and 'streets'. All these places and things are written in the plural and this gives the impression that this has all happened before - innumerable times - and that these events have become a 'tedious argument of insidious intent'. They have compounded themselves and their repetition has begun to reveal something harmful and even terrifying in this banal, everyday existence. There is something implicitly ominous about these events, an underlying lechery in 'cheap hotels', an attempt to conceal *everydayness* in the extravagance of 'oyster shells' and a sense of hopelessness that emerges through wandering the 'half-deserted streets'. Eliot captures the portentous nature that is evident in Heidegger's the 'they'. There is an anonymous force present extending from the everydayness and averageness of existence that appears to swallow the 'us' in this first passage. The opening phrase 'Let us go then' also contributes to this general mood of hopelessness and tediousness and indicates a resignation in Prufrock to his fate, as if at the beginning of the poem he has already foreseen and resigned himself to the manner in which it ends.

Arguably the 'us' at the beginning of the passage refers to a couple engaged in a dating ritual that is permeated with a sense of inauthenticity and superficiality. It appears that this couple have also partaken of the events of the 'they' as the images

could suggest, and are themselves in this mode of averageness. A couple like any other, perhaps considering themselves to be unique, yet somehow conscious that their activities are the same as others' that have wandered the 'half-deserted streets' before. Therefore their state of inauthenticity is evident because their actions are portrayed as dictated, repetitive and somewhat fake. If the poem is read in this manner, as a 'Love Song' then it is certainly intended as an irony, for the experience of love is not readily present in the events and descriptions of the poem. One could also interpret the 'us' as representing Prufrock, the protagonist and the voice of the poem, beckoning the reader to wander with him and to understand something of the 'half-deserted streets' and the other sordid imagery that surround him. This imagery leads Prufrock into a state of anxiety because he perceives the overwhelming sense of inauthenticity and superficiality that prevails in his world. He also desires to disburden himself from this oppressive state by bringing the reader into his world. The passage breaks from this anonymous plurality and addresses the 'you' specifically: 'To lead *you* [my emphasis] to an overwhelming question'. The 'you' is the voice of Prufrock addressing and asking the reader the following:

To lead you to an overwhelming question...  
Oh, do not ask, 'What is it?'  
Let us go and make our visit

(Eliot 1985: 13)

When Prufrock is wandering these streets, having done so innumerable times before, there is a moment when he is overcome by the sense of inauthenticity that bears upon him. And in this moment, he, like any other Dasein, is led towards an *overwhelming* question. This question has some profound, underlying philosophical basis; it carries an ontological and existential weight. It could be something such as: 'What is the meaning of life?' or 'What is the purpose of my existence?' The question is of a kind that, for Prufrock (or any human being for that matter), is difficult to ask. It is this 'overwhelming question' that makes the reader (and Prufrock) confront him/herself as an existing, finite being asking what this *means*? As Heidegger has stated, to become an authentic Dasein one must attempt to *realise* oneself and in the

poem the possibility of this *overwhelming* question is the key to this. Prufrock seems to be on the verge of this question, and possibly then on the verge of confronting his own existence, which would enable him to grasp his individual Dasein.

However, this initial impulse is suppressed by what follows immediately on the next line: ‘Oh, do not ask, ‘What is it?’, Prufrock states, and one could characterise this as the anonymous influence of the ‘they’ exerting pressure upon Prufrock not to ask this existential, individuating question - not *now* - not at *this* moment, which then becomes a moment which will be perpetually put off throughout the poem. Instead, Prufrock seeks an immediate distraction of some kind, and this manifests itself in the form of ‘a visit’, which is what is suggested immediately: ‘Let us go and make our visit’ are the lines that directly follow the possibility of asking the ‘overwhelming question’. Prufrock slips back into the authority and the conformity of the ‘they’; he decides to make his visit and thereby distract himself from himself. In this passage one can perceive the tension that exists between the imposing force of the ‘they’ and how it exerts itself on Prufrock’s decisions. Also demonstrated is the illusionary ease that inauthenticity allows one’s own being, because it eliminates the difficulty of having to confront one’s own possibilities of being. Almost effortlessly Prufrock slips back into everyday conformity.

Throughout the poem the ‘they’ exert a force over the ‘hundred indecisions... and revisions’ (Eliot 1985: 14) of Prufrock, and the authority of the ‘they’ is manipulative to the point where it controls Prufrock’s every decision. Yet one receives the impression that he is acutely aware of what the ‘they’ *say* about him, as will be demonstrated in the passages that follows. This brings us to another term Heidegger discusses, which he terms ‘idle talk’. However, before this term is discussed there are more passages from the poem where Prufrock explicitly acknowledges the ‘they’ (which I have italicised) and what they say about him. These are worth noting:

Time to turn back and descend the stair,  
With a bald spot in the middle of my hair -  
(*They* will say: ‘How his hair is growing thin!’)  
My morning coat, my collar mounting firmly to the chin,  
My necktie rich and modest, but asserted by a simple pin -  
(*They* will say: ‘But how his arms and legs are thin!’)

(Eliot 1985: 14)

And further:

And I have known the eyes already, known them all -  
The eyes that fix you in a formulated phrase,  
And when I am formulated, sprawling on a pin,  
When I am pinned and wriggling on the wall,  
Then how should I begin  
To spit out all the butt-ends of my days and ways?  
And how should I presume?

(Eliot 1985: 14)

One may note that Heidegger's contention that Dasein stands in *subservience* to the 'they' is clearly illustrated by Prufrock in these passages. Prufrock attempts to be himself, with his bald spot and his necktie, yet underlying his public display is his acute anxious concern about what 'they' will say about him. Prufrock becomes obsessed with the 'they' and hence cannot disclose and realise his own possibilities, because he is closed off from them by this overwhelming compulsion for conformity and acceptance from within the 'they'.

Yet, disturbingly, one receives the impression that Prufrock is conscious of all this; he is aware of how he is 'levelled down' and 'averaged out', but he remains unable to force the moment to its crisis and grasp himself, in order that he may face the 'overwhelming question'. What further impresses this upon us is the phrase 'And I have known the eyes already, known them all', where Prufrock admits to himself and to the reader that this conformity is something that has already been considered and is acknowledged by him. Prufrock understands this inauthentic and superficial sense of security, yet is unable to break its grip on him. For Prufrock the 'they' are always 'formulating' him as if he is an insect for dissection 'sprawling on a pin'. Yet, instead of shrugging the 'they' off, Prufrock attempts to make excuses for himself: 'Then how should I begin... To spit out all the butt-ends of my days and ways?' He believes that he must demonstrate some kind of accountability and produce an explanation that will appease those formulating eyes. He looks for some sort of self-justification for his

existence that will satisfy the dictates of the ‘they’, yet ironically he also seems to resent that he must do this – yet he still does.

### Idle Talk

At this point another term from Heidegger will be worth exploring to enhance this reading of Eliot’s *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*. In *Being and Time* Heidegger discusses the concept of ‘idle talk’ and this will be a fruitful concept with regard to *Prufrock*. Heidegger asks the question:

What are the existential characteristics of the disclosedness of being-in-the-world, to the extent that the latter, as something everyday, maintains itself in the mode of being of the they? (1996: 156).

Heidegger is asking what basic characteristics of Dasein are constitutive of maintaining itself in the mode of the everydayness of the ‘they’? The reason he asks this question is in order ‘to make visible the disclosedness of the they, that is, the everyday mode of being of discourse’ (1996: 156). What he is implying is that if one is made aware of what constitutes the mode of the ‘they’ then this will further reveal to Dasein the nature of its own *thrownness*. More importantly, it will also make Dasein more aware of its initial inauthentic being-in-the-world and what it is that maintains it in this state.

One of the characteristics of everydayness is what Heidegger calls ‘idle talk’ and this constitutes the average everydayness of the ‘they’ when engaged in talking with one another. According to Heidegger the ‘discourse communicated can be understood to a large extent without the listener coming to a being toward what is talked about in discourse so as to have a primordial understanding of it’ (1996: 157). His point here is that one can engage in a discussion without having a complete ‘primordial understanding’ of the topic. The discussion that takes place is often superficial, based on the averageness of the everyday understanding of Dasein. If one shares the same language as another and a similar frame of reference one can engage in banter or ‘small talk’. However, Heidegger makes a careful distinction between discourse and

‘idle talk’. Regarding the former he writes that ‘Discourse expressing itself is communication. Its tendency of being aims at bringing the hearer to participate in *disclosed being* [my emphasis] toward what is talked about in discourse’ (1996: 157). However, because of the general superficiality and averageness that permeates the everydayness of Dasein this concept of disclosure - through discourse - and the primordial understanding that occurs with it, does not take place. Instead Dasein does not ‘communicate in the mode of a primordial appropriation of this being, but communicates by *gossiping* and *passing the word along*’ (Heidegger 1996: 158).

What happens is that what is talked about becomes widely accepted and gains authority, yet remains completely groundless in its essence. This is because it is not based on any form of primordial understanding, but rather on a superficial, average understanding. Essentially for Heidegger ‘idle talk is the possibility of understanding everything without any previous appropriation of it’ (1996: 158). The danger in this is obvious; certain beliefs may become prevalent in society that are, in fact, groundless and without any real content. However, because ‘they’ said so these beliefs are regarded as authoritative and exert a certain persuasion over Dasein’s behaviour and beliefs. Another point to be made is that discourse constitutes the disclosedness of one’s being-in-the-world, which is positive for Dasein. However, because it also holds the possibility of becoming ‘idle talk’, it can prevent Dasein from achieving an open and articulated understanding. Instead, ‘idle talk’ closes and suppresses this possibility. Heidegger writes that ‘when Dasein maintains itself in idle talk, it is – as being-in-the-world – cut off from the primary and primordially genuine relations of being toward the world, towards *Mitdasein*, toward being-in itself’ (1996: 159).<sup>8</sup> Any sense of genuine, open and reciprocated exchange between human beings, which furthers their own understanding, is closed if one is continuously engaged in or surrounded by ‘idle talk’. This is certainly a problem Prufrock perceives but cannot contend with and will be discussed shortly.

Although Heidegger does not emphasise it explicitly one could surmise that the distinction he makes between being open in discourse and thereby facilitating understanding, or engaged in superficial ‘idle talk’ are two categories which can be

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<sup>8</sup> The term ‘Mitdasein’ is a term Heidegger uses to refer to one’s being as a *being-with-others*. He writes that the ‘world of Dasein is a *with-world*. Being-in is *being-with* others’ (1996: 112). For a fuller discussion see *Being and Time*, part I, section 26 (1996).

placed inside either an authentic or inauthentic mode of being. For one to be in a relation of communication with another, as *Mitdasein*, would imply an openness to being which is reciprocal and authentic. However, being busy with ‘idle talk’ would imply subscribing to the precepts of the ‘they’, and essentially prevent appropriation and disclosure to occur in one’s Dasein. The superficiality and shallowness of this kind of engagedness with the ‘they’ closes Dasein off from itself and hence Dasein’s mode of being would remain inauthentic.

Eliot, in *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*, hints at the prevalence of ‘idle talk’ in the poem. The passage is a short one yet, arguably, it encapsulates this term throughout the poem, suggesting the continual shadowy presence of the ‘they’. This presence Prufrock is intensely aware of, yet unable to elude. It is clear that there is a tension in Prufrock’s own being; that he is aware of the possibility of his own authenticity manifesting, yet he cannot escape the exertion of the ‘they’. The lines to be discussed are as follows:

In the room the women come and go  
Talking of Michelangelo.

(Eliot 1985: 13)

These lines represent a perplexing moment in *Prufrock*. They initially seem to have no reason for appearing in the poem. One may surmise that perhaps, as these lines follow on from the last lines discussed: ‘Let us go and make our visit’, Prufrock is implying that during this visit he is aware of the persistence of women talking of Michelangelo. However this passage is not attached to the preceding line but is spaced and stands alone. Therefore one can argue that the lines themselves carry more weight than can simply be attributed to a single visit by Prufrock. What is also important and gives these lines more emphasis is that they appear again, in exactly the same form further on in the poem. The repetition is certainly deliberate and gives these lines a broader context that spreads throughout the poem. The repetition of these two lines emphasises the repetition that surrounds and governs Prufrock’s life, and seems inescapable and yet, ironically, Prufrock is conscious of this.

The deliberate repetition of the two lines creates the impression that for Prufrock wherever he goes there are women talking of Michelangelo. Not only that but their discussion of the artist is rather careless and indifferent for the line: ‘In the room the women come and go’ emphasises the callous nature of this conversation. The image becomes metaphoric for the inauthentic mode of Prufrock’s existence, epitomised in the women engaged in meaningless ‘idle talk’. The prevalence of idle talk for Prufrock is everywhere, and this characteristic becomes the key feature that prevents him from grasping himself, because ‘idle talk’ is a direct manifestation of the presence and influence of the ‘they’.

For Heidegger the possibility of authentic discourse is only possible through understanding. Yet if Dasein is closed off from this genuine mode of communication - which Prufrock is - then he will remain inauthentic in his being-in-the-world. Heidegger writes that:

It is in the nature of the obviousness and self-assurance of the average way of being interpreted that under its protection, the uncanniness of the suspension in which Dasein can drift toward an increasing groundlessness remains concealed to actual Dasein itself (1996: 159).

Hence, as long as Dasein remains within the mode of inauthentic being, and is enveloped in the assurances of the ‘they’ with the prevalence of ‘idle talk’, Dasein will be protected from ‘drifting toward an increasing groundlessness’. One may ask what exactly is meant by this groundlessness and the answer is found in *Prufrock* in lines that have already been mentioned:

To lead you to an overwhelming question...  
Oh, do not ask, ‘What is it?’  
Let us go and make our visit

(Eliot 1985: 13)

Prufrock, throughout the poem, is always trying to find the courage to ask this question. As mentioned earlier, the question carries an ontological, existential weight, which would, if asked, expose Prufrock to groundlessness and cut him off from the



assurances of the ‘they’ and the security of idle talk. He would be confronted by his *own* Dasein and all that that entails. It is clear that within Prufrock is this impulse towards groundlessness, manifest by the possibility of asking the ‘overwhelming question’. However, to face this means to cut off the assurances and protection of the ‘they’. There is a tension in Prufrock’s being whereby he perceives the inauthentic mode he finds himself in and his subservience to the ‘they’ versus his desire (which he perpetually suppresses) to ask the ‘overwhelming question’ that would allow him to realise his own authentic Dasein.

A distinction can be made in the poem between the prevalence of ‘idle talk’ and the ‘they’ that overshadows Prufrock, and the possibility of the ‘overwhelming question’ that consumes Prufrock. Both of these modes are created through language and language contains within it the power to open or close possibilities in human being. This leads one to the complex and intimate relationship that language has with authenticity. Prufrock is only *one* question away from grasping himself and dealing with what is entailed in his own authenticity, yet *that* question paralyses him. Again and again throughout the poem he cannot find the ‘strength to force the moment to its crisis’ (Eliot 1985: 16).

There are many moments in the poem that illustrate Prufrock’s hesitancy and the tension in his being regarding this decision. There is also a repetitive rhythm in certain lines that become metaphoric for the image of the ‘patient etherised upon a table’ (Eliot 1985: 13). For example, in the lines:

There will be time, there will be time  
To prepare a face to meet the faces that you meet;  
There will be time to murder and create,  
And time for all the works and days of hands,  
That lift and drop a question on your plate;

(Eliot 1985: 14)

And further on:

For I have known them all already, known them all -  
Have known the evenings, mornings, afternoons,  
I have measured out my life with coffee spoons;

(Eliot 1985: 14)

There is a sedative quality in these passages because of the repetition and rhythm. Throughout the poem there are passages like these, certain phrases are repeated and Prufrock's indecision and reluctance to 'force the moment to its crisis' becomes indicative in the way the poem itself flows and is shaped. The earlier image of the 'patient etherised upon a table' becomes another metaphoric image for Prufrock's own paralysis of being.

Prufrock appears to mirror Hamlet's own indecision, yet Prufrock admits: 'No! I am not Prince Hamlet, nor was meant to be' (Eliot 1985: 17). And this is true, for whereas Hamlet does eventually act decisively, at the end of the poem Prufrock is still lost in his own uncertainty, aware of an overwhelming authentic possibility yet unable to seize it. The ocean becomes an escape for Prufrock from the 'they' and the reality that inhibits and suffocates him. As the poem develops one is made aware of Prufrock's unsettledness, waiting for the right time to ask *the* question and yet using time as an excuse to wait, continually re-thinking how the 'they' perceive him and aware of the face he must prepare 'to meet the faces that you meet' (Eliot 1985: 14). From all this shallowness, superficiality and uncertainty emerge two lines that are unexpected, and calm the crisis in Prufrock's mind:

I should have been a pair of ragged claws  
Scuttling across the floors of silent seas.

(Eliot 1985: 14)

Given the tension in Prufrock before these lines appear, when they do their unexpectedness and their calming effect on his crisis may initially seem positive but the image itself is actually repressive. The repressive nature in these lines is that they represent another extreme; from being immersed in the 'they' Prufrock resorts to the desire to become nothing more than an isolated, insignificant crustacean, scuttling across floors of silent seas. Yet, even though Prufrock desires this escape, it still will not allow him to grasp his own Dasein. Instead he replaces one form of inauthenticity with another, in order to avoid the crisis that he faces. Once these lines have passed,

the poem continues and again Prufrock becomes more overwhelmed by all the possibilities of his own being manifest in his everydayness. He asks himself repeatedly ‘would it have been worth it’ (Eliot 1985: 16) implying whether or not confronting this crisis in himself would be worth the consequences he would need to deal with. Again the poem builds up a momentum of uncertainty that culminates in his paralysis and inaction. When the poem ends he returns to images of the ocean again:

We have lingered in the chambers of the sea  
By sea-girls wreathed with seaweed red and brown  
Till human voices wake us, and we drown.

(Eliot 1985: 17)

The paradox, in the last line of the above passage, of drowning in ‘idle talk’ caused by the flood of the voices of the ‘they’ inverts the idea of drowning in water. For in the ocean, instead of death, Prufrock finds an escape, an etherisation from being-in-the-world in the solitude and silence of the sea. And for as long as he allows himself to linger in the sea he is at peace. He will not have to ‘force the moment to its crisis’ because he has briefly escaped it and is no longer within the confines of the ‘they’. Yet this respite is temporary. Eventually the human voices call Prufrock back and in that return comes the knowledge that, again, he must face the ‘they’ and the women talking of Michelangelo. He must prepare a face to meet the faces that he meets.

### Angst

The reason for Prufrock’s obsession over his inauthentic state goes deeper than the ‘they’ and the world that Prufrock is condemned to and *thrown* in. Arguably, it is not simply the presence of the ‘they’, but Prufrock’s own angst that is the largest factor for the cause of his inauthentic state of being. This state of angst is made more intense and compounded for Prufrock because of the presence of the ‘they’. The term ‘angst’ is discussed in *Being and Time* and is an important facet of Dasein’s being-in-the-world. It will be illuminating, especially for *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*, to

discuss this term of Heidegger's in more depth because it will reveal more about the nature of Prufrock's own being. The definition of angst is complex and it is difficult to explain in brief terms. Hopefully its meaning will emerge in the pages to follow.

At the beginning of the discussion of angst Heidegger writes that 'the absorption of Dasein in the 'they' and in the 'world' taken care of reveals something like a *flight* of Dasein from itself as an authentic potentiality for being itself' (1996: 172). If one uses the behaviour of Prufrock as an example of this, one can perceive his flight away from his own authentic potential for being certainly applies to his behaviour. The irony is that although Prufrock attempts to escape the 'they' he is actually attempting to escape *from himself* for 'the flight of Dasein is a flight *from* itself' (Heidegger 1996: 173). Hence, even Prufrock's futile and escapist desire to scuttle across floors of silent seas will not confront him from his own Dasein, because he has still not grasped himself. The reason for this is because the basic constitution of Dasein *is* being-in-the-world and hence 'that about which one has Angst is being-in-the-world as such' (Heidegger 1996: 174).

As long as Prufrock is a being-in-the-world, no matter what he does or where he goes he will always *be* in being, he cannot escape his own 'thrownness'. This is something that Prufrock is aware of, but instead of realising the inevitability of his own being and comprehending himself (and thereby relieving his angst), he perpetually procrastinates 'forcing the moment to its crisis' and shifts from the oppressive idle talk of the women 'talking of Michelangelo' to the hermit-like desire to scuttle across floors of silent seas. What Prufrock most obviously cannot escape from is *himself*, and the fact that he is a being-in-the-world, yet this desire to escape and to become anything but himself is his underlying goal throughout the poem. This is what Heidegger would define as the cause of angst: the inability to reconcile one's self with oneself.

Furthermore, angst does not relate to a *particular* phenomenon, but rather the threatening character of angst is precisely so because it is nowhere. Heidegger emphasises that 'nowhere' 'does not mean nothing... what is threatening cannot approach from a definite direction within nearness, it is already "there" – and yet nowhere. It is so near that it is oppressive and stifles one's breath – and yet it is nowhere' (1996: 174). He continues,

What oppresses us is not this or that, nor is it everything objectively present together as a sum, but the *possibility* of things at hand in general, that is, the world itself (1996: 175).

Precisely because angst is ‘nowhere’ particular in worldly phenomena, and emerges because of Dasein’s being-in-the-world, angst is caused by being-in-the-world as such. The danger of angst is that ‘it takes away from Dasein the possibility of understanding itself...It throws Dasein back upon that for which it is anxious, its authentic potentiality-for-being-in-the-world’ (1996: 176). Furthermore, it is characterised by a feeling of uncanniness, of ‘not-being-at-home’ (1996: 176). For the most part Dasein is ‘at home’ in that Dasein is part of the average, everydayness of being, absorbed in ‘the everyday publicness of the they which brings tranquillized self-assurance, “being-at-home” with all its obviousness’ (1996: 176). However, for Heidegger angst is the feeling that *removes* Dasein from this tranquil self-assurance, it removes Dasein from the entangled absorption in the ‘world’ whereby everyday familiarity collapses (1996: 176). Dasein finds itself displaced and anxious, which is brought about by no *real* reason that is particular to the individual Dasein’s everyday being, but rather because of *being* itself - the fact of Dasein’s existence. One is made aware of one’s own being-in-the-world through the experience of angst that creates a sensation of indefiniteness and anxiousness. However, even though this sensation is unnerving and unsettling, ‘in angst there lies the possibility of a distinctive disclosure, since angst individualises. This individualizing fetches Dasein back from its falling prey and reveals to it authenticity and inauthenticity as possibilities of its being’ (Heidegger 1996: 178).

Angst allows disclosure to occur in Dasein’s being and disentangles Dasein from everydayness, because it reveals to Dasein the possibilities of its own being. What Heidegger emphasises is that these possibilities are essentially my *own*, in that I am individuated by angst to confront the possibilities of my own being-in-the-world. I, the individuated Dasein, am presented with the realisation of choice that occurs through the experience of angst. Although contained in this experience of angst is also the power to paralyse me from making the choice. One could argue that until one has

had the experience of angst one remains in a state of inauthenticity within the exertions of the 'they'. Through this experience Dasein is confronted by the uncanniness of its own existence; its own *thrownness*, and this would precipitate the realisation of the possibility of an authentic or inauthentic existence. One may note an interesting parallel between the 'they' as existing nowhere particularly and yet producing a powerful exertion over the behaviour of Dasein, and angst which is also nowhere particular in being, yet it is precisely the 'nowhereness' of angst which brings about its disquieting nature. Both these terms manifest themselves through Dasein's being-in-the-world, yet neither possesses a definite location.

The sensation of angst is clearly demonstrated in the behaviour of Prufrock, for through angst Prufrock is made aware of the possibilities of his being-in-the-world. However, he cannot realise a single possibility because his inauthentic mode of being, compounded by his angst, paralyses him in indecision. A few lines from the poem illustrate this:

And indeed there will be time  
To wonder, 'Do I dare?' and, 'Do I dare?'  
Time to turn back and descend the stair

(Eliot 1985: 14)

And further:

Do I dare  
Disturb the universe?  
In a minute there is time  
For decisions and revisions which a minute will reverse.

(Eliot 1985: 14)

Clearly Prufrock's angst has confronted him with the authentic possibility that exists in his own being, yet the danger of angst is also that it may remove the possibility of realising this completely. For Prufrock there exists an overwhelming choice to 'disturb the universe', a daring moment, irreversible, which would leave him unable to 'turn back and descend the stair', or allow 'revisions which a minute will reverse'. Hence there is a continual tension throughout the poem between Prufrock's attempting to reach toward and seize the moment of crisis and grasp his

own authentic being, or instead, to succumb to the pressure of the ‘they’, compounded by the protagonist’s own severe angst, and remain inauthentic.

This tension toward the ‘overwhelming question’ is continually built up and developed in the poem, but then overwhelmed by the paralysis of angst. Prufrock desires to keep exits available so he may reverse his decision without creating a scene in front of the ‘they’ and certainly without making a leap of faith that would lead to an irreversible possibility. The reason for this is that the nature of the grasp of one’s authentic being is such that this decision *cannot* be reversed and Prufrock, even though he hopes for the possibility of revision and re-consideration, knows that it will not be an option. The emphasis and repetition of the word ‘dare’ is conspicuous in the passages, for the word captures the courage required to make an irreversible choice which would permanently alter one’s being-in-the-world. Prufrock is certainly conscious of the gravity of the question and understands the consequences of it, yet remains gripped by the power of the ‘they’ and impeded by his angst.

For Heidegger one of the most primordial modes of being-in-the-world is that of understanding, because understanding allows Dasein the possibility of grasping itself and hence becoming authentic. In this regard, angst ‘discloses Dasein as *being-possible*’ and ‘reveals in Dasein its *being toward* its ownmost potentiality of being, that is, *being free for* the freedom of choosing and grasping itself’ (1996: 176). Consequently there is a relationship between understanding - as the possibility of grasping oneself - and the requirement of angst to be experienced in order to bring about the potentiality for authenticity. The danger is that angst can also *remove* the possibility of this understanding occurring because it may overwhelm Dasein and create an incapacitating state. Prufrock is clearly in a state of angst and this does make him aware of the possibility of the choice that exists to grasp himself. However the intensity of his angst paralyses him in his own indecision and he is unable to overcome it.

*The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock* proceeds in a regressive and somewhat desperate fashion for Prufrock, which is created by his angst and further compounded by the presence and dictating power of the ‘they’. There is a steady decline in Prufrock’s own ability towards realising his authentic self, as he becomes more and more concerned about the desires and judgements of the ‘they’. Even though his

experience of angst makes clear the possibility of his authentic being and brings Prufrock to the point of confronting the uncanniness of his own Dasein, at the end of the poem he is still completely submersed within the dictates of the ‘they’, perhaps even more so than initially at the start of the poem. In the poem the notion of ‘daring’ arises, as has been mentioned, when Prufrock asks himself:

Do I dare  
Disturb the Universe?

(Eliot 1985: 14)

This is a pivotal moment in the poem, for if the answer to the question is affirmative the course of the poem and of Prufrock’s life will change irreversibly. This is the ‘overwhelming question’ presenting itself again, demonstrating that Prufrock is still attempting to find the conviction required for this question, i.e. that the question is still a real possibility for him. However, towards the end of the poem even this moment of ‘daring’ is diminished for it appears that Prufrock has lost all courage. Not only can he no longer consider ‘daring to disturb the universe’, but even insignificant moments and actions paralyse him in indecision:

Shall I part my hair behind? Do I dare to eat a peach?

(Eliot 1985: 17)

Actions as insignificant as parting one’s hair or eating a peach Prufrock has elevated to the same level as ‘disturbing the universe’, diminishing his pursuit for authenticity. He has allowed himself to slip firmly back within the dictates of the ‘they’ - more so than before - and remains securely within the mode of inauthenticity. The poem ends with the lines, as mentioned earlier:

We have lingered in the chambers of the sea  
By sea-girls wreathed with seaweed red and brown  
Till human voices wake us, and we drown.

(Eliot 1985: 17)



In these lines, not only is Prufrock overcome, or perhaps more aptly, ‘washed over’ with human voices belonging to the ‘they’ manifesting in ‘idle talk’, but furthermore the angst generated by his fear of embracing the authentic possibility of himself, overwhelms him and he remains in his mode of inauthentic being. As the poem ends, distinctly - in the background - one can hear the hum of the women who come and go, talking of Michelangelo.

In conclusion, Eliot’s *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*, analysed with the use of Heidegger’s philosophy emerging from *Being and Time*, reveals something, not only of the state of the western human condition in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, but also a pattern of thinking that is expressed in the form of poetry by Eliot and in Heidegger’s thinking. It is clear that both men shared similar ideas about the nature of our being-in-the-world and Heideggerian concepts such as authenticity, angst, the ‘they’, and ‘idle talk’ describe characteristics of our behaviour (and Prufrock’s) which are necessary in enabling us to understand ourselves. This understanding can allow Dasein to overcome the inauthentic mode of being that it is in, and help it realise itself and the possibility of an authentic being. Prufrock, unfortunately, fails in his quest for authenticity. He cannot find the courage to realise his own finite Dasein and escape the oppressive nature of the ‘they’. His angst is too acute and overwhelming for any decisive action toward authenticity. In the end he gives up the possibility of individualising his own existence and seeking the meaning of his being. Instead he remains in the world of the ‘they’ and conforms to the superficiality it requires from him to remain accepted.

The reason for this chapter is twofold. The first, and perhaps more important reason is to discuss the nature of authenticity. This theme is crucial for the development of this dissertation, arising again in the fourth chapter, where the entire argument of the dissertation will be unified and completed. Authenticity’s role in this, put briefly, is to demonstrate the mode of being required of Dasein, in order to understand the uses and advantages of poetry for its life. However, more of this will be explored in the fourth chapter. The second reason for this chapter is perhaps not as important as the first for the argument of the dissertation, but is vital in demonstrating a clear, unmistakable parallel between Heidegger and Eliot regarding their individual intellectual concerns and their shared precepts. Authenticity, discussed in *Being and*

*Time*, is aptly demonstrated in poetic form by the unfortunate Prufrock. In this English poem one finds examples that capture the essence of Heidegger's German thought. And although this occurrence is perhaps not that unlikely, given the shared historical time frame of the two men, it is still one that reveals the fertile, and sometimes blurred boundary between Philosophy and Literature.

## Chapter 2 – Poetry

The value of art is that it takes us away from here.

(Pessoa 2002: 300)

Implied in the title of this dissertation is an attempt to create a bridge between poetry and life and demonstrate why poetry is advantageous and useful, not only as an aesthetic pursuit for truth, but also that the *ideal* of poetry can translate into defining how one might come to live an authentic life. The argument, in extremely simplistic form, consists of the following: there is an element in poetry that can reveal the realm of possibilities for *our* being-in-the-world, because it is we who open up and experience these possibilities in a poem. The argument that will be explored in this chapter, following Heidegger and his essay *The Origin of the Work of Art* (1935-1936), is that poetry is vitally important for our being, not only on an aesthetic level, but also on an ontological one because it leads human being towards a clearing that enables the contemplation and remembering of Being. Poetry opens up possibilities of human existence that may never have been considered or perceived before and creates the possibility of authentic dwelling. Language plays a crucial role in this because of its direct relation between human being and poetry. However, the fullness of the argument will only be developed completely in the third and fourth chapters. The purpose of this chapter is to define poetry. I will open with a passage from Heidegger's *The Origin of the Work of Art*, which is the defining passage of this chapter, although the point of this discussion will be to understand why he describes poetry in this manner. He writes:

Poetry [*Dichtung*], however, is not an aimless imagining of whimsicalities and not a flight of mere notions and fancies into the realm of the unreal. What poetry, as illuminating projection, unfolds of unconcealedness and projects ahead into the design of the figure, is the Open which poetry lets happen, and indeed in such a way that only now, in the midst of beings, the Open brings beings to shine and ring out (2001: 70).

Initially this could be construed as a pseudo-mystical statement without any real philosophical underpinning. It raises a number of questions: how does poetry let the Open happen? What is meant by the Open? What is the intent of the passage? It is difficult to answer these questions with rigorous analytic clarity because that would involve exacting definitions. This precision would destroy the poetic and layered quality of such a passage. Heidegger is aware of the difficulty of describing exactly what poetry is and does, for to attempt to do so would destroy the essence of poetry. If one is analytical about the description, then generally it will confine one to a particular perspective on the nature of poetry. This could be classified according to a particular school of thought, such as New Criticism or Russian Formalism, or one may agree with a particular theorist and base one's definition of poetry on their ideas. Moreover, to complicate matters one should note that this 'definition' from Heidegger illustrates that he is not trying to *define* poetry as a theorist may. Rather, he is attempting to discover what poetry *does* to the person experiencing the poem and what the meaning of this experience is, and once that is discovered the reason or meaning of poetry will emerge.

The purpose of this chapter is to explore what the passage from Heidegger means and how it contributes to the argument of this dissertation. To arrive at this description of poetry I will initially explore some of the problems that exist in attempting to find a suitable 'definition' of poetry. Then I shall perform an exegesis of Heidegger's *The Origin of the Work of Art* because it is in this essay that the essence of the definition of poetry that I require resides.

*The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics* (Preminger, et al. 1974: 639) begins its 'definition' of poetry with the following lines, 'There is no uniquely valid way to classify theories of poetry; that classification is best which serves the particular purpose at hand'. The definition proceeds to examine different theories of poetry, from the ancient Greeks up to the likes of Wordsworth and concludes with 20<sup>th</sup> century philosophical ideas on poetry originating from Wittgenstein. The dictionary states that:

A number of these philosophers deny the possibility of formulating any significant definition of art and poetry, or any general theory in which these definitions play a part,

on the grounds that such definitions are arbitrary, because there exists no procedure for deciding in favour of one or against another by empirical evidence or counter evidence... the only legitimate criticism is applied criticism, which is regarded as a set of verifiable statements about the properties of individual statements of individual poems or works (Preminger, et al. 1974: 648).

This is certainly a valid point concerning the attempt to create a single, universal theory of poetry. An example one could use of ‘applied criticism’ could be my Heideggerian reading of *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*. If one takes the ‘earlier’ Heidegger (the Heidegger of *Being and Time*), then one could apply certain criteria from his philosophy to a poem and read the poem in a certain manner. Although this may not work with every poem or work of literature, Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* would render an interesting ‘earlier’ Heideggerian reading. However, a poem such as the following by William Carlos Williams would prove more difficult:

The Red Wheelbarrow

so much depends  
upon

a red wheel  
barrow

glazed with rain  
water

beside the white  
chickens.

(Ferguson, et al. 1996: 1166)

A poem such as this complicates the issue of how we would attempt to define poetry to an even greater extent. This poem is included in *The Norton Anthology of Poetry* which suggests that it has the stamp of canonization. Clearly this poem does not conform to the traditional and conventional characterisation of poetry and poetic

devices. However, having said that and following the first quotation from *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, what exactly are the traditional characteristics of poetry? One may refer to specific literary devices, perhaps typical to certain historical periods or specific poets. Hence to attempt a definitive and technical definition of poetry will certainly exclude certain poems from that given definition. If the above poem were written as a sentence then it would appear in the form of prose and would not be considered poetry. Yet because of its form and structure we approach the text with a certain pre-conceived expectation, i.e. this, at first glance, *looks* like a poem. Arguably, reading a play by Shakespeare or Python's *Gravity's Rainbow* requires two different conceptual approaches, not based purely on the content of the work, but also on the form the work takes. To a large extent, what determines the way we read something has to do with the way it appears on a printed page, and also the way the text itself indicates to the reader in what manner it could be read.

At this point a definition of poetry will seem to be elusive, perhaps impossible to attain. But for the purpose of this dissertation a workable definition of poetry is required. If all that can be concluded is that something is considered poetry based either on the opinion of the theorist, or the textual appearance on the page, then these vague criteria will not contribute to furthering this argument. One should ask *the question* of poetry, as I have done at the beginning of this dissertation and as Heidegger does in his essay *The Origin of the Work of Art*. It should be re-iterated again that the key to defining poetry is possibly not to look for a precise definition. As *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics* has stated and been demonstrated further by the poem *The Red Wheelbarrow*, there is no certain criteria. Perhaps, for the sake of exploring this argument one could examine the definition of poetry in a dictionary of philosophy. *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy* defines poetry in the following manner:

No satisfactory single-concept theory of poetry has been produced: a poem is not essentially a representation, or essentially expression, or essentially a formal or 'organic' unity. Not because none of these functions is relevant to poetry, but because no one of them does justice to its complexity and many-levelled nature (Honderich, edit. 1995: 691).

Again, this highlights the difficulty of defining poetry. One could argue that the reason ‘no satisfactory single-concept of poetry has been produced’ is because the definition of poetry emerges only after one understands its *use*. To paraphrase the quotation from Heidegger, the *use* of poetry is the illumination of the Open which directs Dasein to an encounter with Being. As this chapter develops, I hope that what will emerge is that any attempted definitive and technical definition of poetry will not be necessary to understand what poetry, in truth, *is*. Rather, following Heidegger, poetry will be understood as a *happening (Ereignis)*, allowing Dasein its projection (*Entwerfen*) into the Open and as ‘the advent of truth’.

### The Origin of the Work of Art

To substantiate this argument requires a close and extensive discussion of many of the elements in Heidegger’s essay *The Origin of the Work of Art*. He begins the essay with the following line, ‘Origin here means that from and by which something is what it is and as it is. What something is, as it is, we call its essence [*Wesen*] or nature’ (2001: 17). He then proceeds with the discussion on origin by writing that the origin of the work of art is to be found in the artist – who is the creator or crafter of the work - and the two concepts: artwork and artist, are mutually fulfilled by their co-dependence upon each other. Furthermore, both the artist and the artwork - to be considered what they are - are dependent on a third concept, namely art. The next question to follow is: What is art? One could answer that art is something produced by an artist in the form of an artwork. This, as Heidegger admits, tells us nothing about anything and we find ourselves trapped in a circular argument. We cannot define art without recourse to the artwork as something demonstrative of art, and to define art in purely abstract terms would produce an empty definition, without the physical presence of the artwork. One may be tempted to look up the definition of art in the dictionary, as I have done with the definition of poetry. However, I think it could safely be assumed that the same difficulty that persists with defining poetry will persist with the definition of art. Hence, Heidegger knowingly moves beyond the circularity of his argument to the point where he writes, ‘In order to discover the

nature of the art that really prevails in the work, let us go to the actual work and ask the work what and how it is' (2001: 18).

The *work* of art exists as a physical object in space and presents itself as a *thing* (*Ding*). Heidegger refers to 'the thingly character' (2001: 19) of the artwork. The artwork may consist of a volume of Dante, a painting by Mondrian or a performance by Abdullah Ibrahim. However, as Heidegger makes evidently clear, one does not possess, desire or view a work of art for the 'thingly character' of which it consists. This is a secondary consideration, though it is worth noting that one may prefer the physical book form of the Divine Comedy to a photocopy, the original painting of Mondrian to a print and a live performance by Abdullah Ibrahim to a recorded version. Yet whether the artwork is an original or duplication becomes a secondary consideration because the *essence* of the artwork resides *beyond* the 'thingliness' of the artwork.<sup>9</sup> The reason for this is that:

The work makes public something other than itself; it manifests something other; it is an allegory. In the work of art something other is brought together with the thing that is made ... The work is a symbol (Heidegger 2001: 19).

For something to be considered symbolic it should possess a deeper meaning, which exceeds its initial and apparent meaning. This implies allegorical complexity and depth in the artwork because the deeper meaning - contained by the apparent depiction - must be of such a nature that it is not representable. This deeper meaning links with the idea of the sublime, where one uses an expressible medium in an attempt to express something that is inexpressible. The more successfully this is achieved the better the hermeneutic quality of the work, because the symbolic or metaphoric meaning is emphasised, over and above the *thingly* character of the work.

Perhaps this is the reason Heidegger writes the following, '*All art, as the letting happen of the advent of truth of what is, is, as such, essentially poetry*' (2001: 70). This statement moves ahead of the argument that will still be explored more concisely. However, it is worth considering now in light of the discussion on

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<sup>9</sup> At this point in Heidegger's essay the symbolic meaning of the artwork is more important than its physical 'thingliness'. However, as his argument develops the physical medium of the artwork will also become an essential element in understanding the truth of the artwork. See page 57.



symbolic meaning. For Heidegger poetry encapsulates the *happening* of truth. Any artwork, whether it is literature, sculpture or music, in its most essential form manifests a poetic dimension, and hence can be considered poetry. However poetry itself, for Heidegger, is the purest form of human creation because its ‘thingliness’ consists only of words, and the use of words in poetic form is always an attempt to overcome the words themselves, to attempt the expression of an experience beyond the realm of language. The words become symbolic for and create a more profound experience of B/being.

Any experience of art relies on our ability to use language to enable a meaningful, expressible interpretation of the work. Yet paradoxically art is also an attempt to overcome our pre-conceived linguistic capacity and to open up a realm beyond language, which can only occur through the use of a ‘poetic language’ so to speak. ‘Poetic language’ is symbolic and metaphorical in the most emphatic sense of the word. This is the outline Heidegger explores in *The Origin of the Work of Art* when he discusses the painting by Van Gogh, featuring a pair of peasant shoes. His discussion of the painting is performed through language, yet in doing so he demonstrates the *poetic* dimension of the painting that lies outside his own individual interpretation of the painting. The reason for this is that Heidegger’s own hermeneutic approach to the painting should open up a *world* depicted by the painting.<sup>10</sup> This *world* emerges because of the horizon of experience each viewer of the painting brings to his/her hermeneutic understanding of what he/she sees. Heidegger’s discussion of the Van Gogh painting in this regard is twofold. Firstly it demonstrates his own individual *world* experience of the painting, but more importantly, his discussion should assist the reader in realising the potential for his/her own individual, hermeneutic experience of the painting. However, this argument will be borne out conclusively as the chapter develops.

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<sup>10</sup> The term *world* is an important Heideggerian concept and will be discussed as the argument develops.

## The Thing

At this point I shall return to the earlier point in the argument where Heidegger writes about the work of art both as a *thing* - an object that occupies physical space in reality - and how the work of art is symbolic. For Heidegger one cannot take the meaning of any term for granted, and as is the case with philosophy in general, it is sometimes the most obvious concepts which become the most difficult to define. One may speak about the work of art as a 'thing', but, in order to speak of it in that manner one must investigate what, exactly, a 'thing' is? This is rather complex. Nevertheless, according to Heidegger one can find important clues with regard to the meaning of the 'thing' in ancient Greek thinking and the ancient Greek language. He writes that, '[t]he thing, as everyone thinks he knows, is that around which the properties have gathered. One speaks, then, of the core of the thing' (2002: 5). In the example, he discusses certain things - such as a block of granite - by listing its properties: it is 'hard, heavy, extended, massive, unformed, rough, coloured, partly dull, partly shiny' (2002: 5). In order to describe the thing 'granite' one would list the characteristics that are associated with granite that form the basis of that thing. Yet, this is problematic for Heidegger, for in describing the characteristics of the thing, as such, one *assumes* that this forms the core or essence of the thing. However, the essence of the thing and the characteristics that make up the thing are two different aspects of a thing's existence. For Heidegger this distinction is vital in order to understand what it means to speak of a thing. This is the reason the ancient Greeks are important, for as Heidegger points out, the ancient Greeks had *two* words to describe a thing. The first is τὸ ὑποκείμενον (to hupokeimenon) and this is the *core* of the thing, its ground, which is always present (2002: 5). In order to describe the *characteristics* of a thing, the ancient Greeks used the following words: 'τά συμβεβηκότα' (ta sumbebekota) which designates that which always appears and comes forth along with the core, but is not the core of the thing (2002: 5).

This distinction is problematic for our current conception of language. This is because we would describe the characteristic of the thing as also constitutive of the essence of the thing - yet there is a distinction between the two. To describe the 'thingliness' of the thing, i.e. its core, is something our knowledge of language does

not permit us to do. Our experience of language does not allow us the insight the ancient Greeks had of the fundamental experience of the [B]being of beings in the sense of *presence* (Heidegger 2002: 6).<sup>11</sup> Heidegger's reason for this is the translation of the ancient Greek language into Latin. Even though the translation is faithful to the meaning of the word, what also occurs is a translation of the ancient Greek experience of Being into a *different* mode of thinking. He writes:

*Roman thinking takes over the Greek words without the corresponding and equiprimordial experience of what they say, without the Greek word. The rootlessness of Western thinking begins with this translation (2002: 6).*

One can gauge from this passage the importance Heidegger places in language, not simply as a way of communicating, but as a way of experiencing reality. For him, 'language is the house of Being' (1993: 217), and this brief statement highlights the importance that language has for Dasein.<sup>12</sup> This is further emphasised by the proposition that the rootlessness of Western thinking originates in language. Implied in this discussion is that the understanding of the essence of a thing is dependent on language, which in turn influences the way in which Dasein conceives of or *thinks* its *world*. The loss of the ancient Greek language distinction between the *presence* or core of a thing, and the appearance or characteristics of a thing resulted in the loss of our ability to grasp the meaning of something's presence (and essence). The loss of this understanding resulted eventually in the forgetfulness of Being itself. This is the cause of our rootlessness, which finds its source in language - the house of Being.

To elaborate on this one could refer to the first section of Heidegger's *Being and Time* (1996) that is titled 'The Necessity of an Explicit Retrieve of the Question of Being'. The opening line proceeds in the following manner: '[t]his question has today

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<sup>11</sup> The use of the capital 'B' here is problematic in this translation of *The Origin of the Work of Art* in the collection of essays titled 'Off the Beaten Track' (2002). The translators have adopted to translate the German word *Sein* (B/being) throughout the work as a lower case 'b' even in instances where, in context, it may require the capital. This has been done 'to take a stand in the controversy over the possible religious or quasi-religious implications of Heidegger's vocabulary' (Heidegger 2002: x). However, using two translations of *The Origin of the Work of Art*, one in 'Off the Beaten Track' (2002) and the other in 'Poetry, Language, Thought (2001) allows one, not only a glimpse at the difficulty in rendering an intelligible Heidegger translation, but the difference of opinion regarding the context of the text. I have used the capital 'B' when the context may require it (though, this is obviously debatable) because its use has greater implication for the sense of what is being said.

<sup>12</sup> This particular statement will come to the fore and be explored in detail in the third chapter.

been forgotten – although our time considered itself progressive in again affirming “metaphysics” ’ (1996: 1). There is an irony in this line: We are rootless, and yet we have forgotten why this is the case. Instead we have resorted to creating metaphysical systems in order to construct some kind of ground for our being, and to alleviate our rootlessness. Yet, following Heidegger, this kind of ‘metaphysics’ will not solve the problem because the cause of this rootlessness is that we have forgotten Being itself. Heidegger’s philosophical undertaking is to assist us in the remembering of Being and thereby alleviate our rootlessness.<sup>13</sup>

This may seem impossible, if to remember Being involves an attempt to retrieve and re-experience the presence of language in the same manner as that of the ancient Greeks. For Heidegger, although this may be difficult, it is not impossible to re-appropriate at least something of this original ancient Greek understanding. If one can understand the ‘thingliness’ of the thing then this will bring one closer to perceiving the essence of a being. The question he asks now is: how is this possible when this difficulty is rooted in the fact that when we speak of the thing we are, in fact, speaking of the thing in terms of bearing certain characteristics? (2002: 7). In speaking of the thing, violence is done to the thing itself, because we fixate our description of the thing on its *properties* and thereby lose sight of its *essence*. This rational approach will not suffice to bring us into immediate proximity with the essence of the thing. In fact this descriptive approach will always *deny* us the possibility of appropriating the essence of the thing. Therefore Heidegger presents another possible option that may allow this experience. He writes:

Only if we grant the thing, so to speak, a free field in which to display its thingness quite directly. Everything that, by way of conception and statement, might interpose itself between us and the thing must first of all, be set aside. Only then do we allow ourselves the undistorted presence of the thing (2002: 7).

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<sup>13</sup> In this context the rootless nature of our thinking is the cause of our homelessness (*Unheimlichkeit*). Our homelessness is the cause of angst and the reason we resort to creating metaphysical systems – in order to try create a home for ourselves; to root our being. The problem of metaphysics will appear again in Heidegger’s criticism of humanism in his *Letter on Humanism* discussed in chapter three. Chapter four will deal thoroughly with the question of homelessness and its relation to poetic dwelling.

This possible approach has a phenomenological basis, whose starting point is the reliance on the ‘self-evidence’ of one’s own consciousness; that the truth of the world is to be found in the unmediated experience of the individual’s consciousness (Solomon 1988: 130). Heidegger implies that by allowing the thing to come to presence through our direct conscious experience, we may grasp the essence of the thing through an intuitive, conscious understanding, which is not confined to descriptive rationality. Hence, at this point, he is proposing two possible approaches to perceiving the essence of the thing: the rational approach as the first instance, and the phenomenological as the second.

However he argues that neither of these approaches is sufficient. The phenomenological approach will not work because we never perceive something as a throng of sensations and then determine its thingliness. Rather, specific sensory experiences are immediately associated with their respective things and therefore it is the things themselves which are closer to us than any sensation (Heidegger 2002: 8). The desire to bring the thing to us in its phenomenological immediacy cannot be achieved because the sensation experienced is then taken to constitute the thingliness of the thing - this is in fact not the case. Therefore these approaches discussed will not actually bring us to the thing itself. The first approach distances us from the thing because it traps us in descriptive language about the characteristics that constitute the thing. The second approach brings us too near to the thing, causes us to become captured by the sensations created by the thing and miss the actual thing itself. Heidegger writes that ‘in both interpretations the thing disappears’ (2002: 8).

He then explores a third possible approach and suggests that the thing could be defined along the lines of form and matter, ‘The permanence of a thing, its constancy, consists in matter remaining together with form. The thing is formed matter’ (2002: 8). The thing, whatever it may be, should consist of a substance and this substance would take a form of some kind. For Heidegger this definition is *initially* adequate because, not only does it describe things of nature, but also things of *use*. This would imply man-made objects, which would include the work of art. Both these kinds of things consist of ‘formed matter’. However by now one must be more cautious in agreeing with this third concept of the thing. It is likely that it will be deconstructed and exposed as inadequate for the purposes Heidegger requires of it.

The initial point that Heidegger makes concerning this definition is that the distinction between form and matter is '*the conceptual scheme deployed in the greatest variety of ways by all art theory and aesthetics*' (2002: 9). One may readily assume that if this is true then - because we are dealing with the artwork as a thing in this essay - surely *this* definition of the thing will be sufficient. However, he quickly adds that this reason neither proves that the form-matter distinction is adequately grounded, nor that it belongs, originally, to the sphere of art and the artwork (2002: 9). In fact, this distinction could be used to define any thing that exists in reality and this is where the problem arises. Heidegger uses the example of a granite block, which exists in its unstructured form and contrasts that with a pair of shoes, which is something created according to a specific form to be used by human beings. In this regard he writes:

A piece of equipment, for example, the shoe-equipment, when finished rests in itself like the mere thing. Unlike the granite block, however, it lacks the character of having taken shape by itself. On the other hand, it displays an affinity with the artwork in that it is something brought forth by the human hand. The artwork, however, through its self-sufficient presence, resembles, rather, the mere thing which has taken shape by itself and is never forced into being. Nonetheless, we do not count such works as *mere things* [my emphasis] (2002: 10).

Heidegger makes the point that the artwork shares a likeness with the granite block, in the sense that both have a self-sufficient presence. However, we do not consider the artwork as a thing in the same way that we acknowledge that a piece of granite is a mere thing. Equipment though, such as a pair of shoes, occupies a halfway point between the thing and the artwork. The reason for this is twofold. The piece of equipment is characterised by thingliness because it is created from something else, a natural raw material; e.g. the shoes are produced from leather. Although, because of the *created* aspect the equipment also possesses, one *could* consider equipment to be (in certain respects) an artwork. It is not, but it is still created by human beings and so, obviously, is the artwork. Heidegger's argument at this point emphasises the importance of equipment, because equipment occupies this intermediate position between the mere thing and the artwork. Therefore it may be that the existence of

equipment is the key to understanding non-equipmental beings – things and works, and, ultimately, every kind of being (Heidegger 2002: 10).

The criticism he directs at creating the distinction of the thing as form and matter is that it has become commonplace and self-evident. He implies that by using this distinction to describe any thing that consists of form and matter is to do violence to the *specific* thing-being one may be describing. This occurs, for example, in a situation where one refers to a piece of equipment as a mere thing. In doing so two occurrences take place: firstly, one removes the character of serviceability of the equipment, its use-value; secondly, one also removes its created quality (Heidegger 2002: 11). By reducing the thing-being of the thing to a *mere* thing (in terms of form and matter), one destroys the essence of what is constitutive of the thing-being of the thing. This definition, as well as the other two definitions - all of which have evolved historically - have brought us no closer to grasping what the *essence* of a thing is.

Instead, these prevailing concepts of the thing ‘block the way to the thingness of the thing, the equipmentality of equipment, and all the more to the work character of the work’ (Heidegger 2002: 12). The task of thinking must begin again, for we cannot proceed further in attempting to understand the origin of the work of art if we have not managed a viable definition of the thing. Yet Heidegger points out: ‘The history of interpretation outlined above, indicates beyond doubt that the thingness of the thing is particularly difficult and rarely capable of expression’ (2002: 12). In this case must look elsewhere and find a different path of approaching the essence of the thing. He suggests that the key to this could lie within equipment. His reason for this is that equipment is both half-thing, and half-artwork; a thing created by the human hand but still in possession of its natural thingliness. For Heidegger, if we attempt to discover the equipmentality of equipment we may also learn something of the thingliness of the thing and the work character of the work (2002: 13).

Heidegger considers the equipmentality of a pair of peasant shoes. He writes that because this discussion only requires a representation of the shoes and not a physical pair, we could consider the painting by Van Gogh that depicts a pair of these shoes. One could view the painting and declare that all one perceives is a pair of shoes, nothing more. This perception though does not do justice to the artwork because

contained within it are innumerable possibilities of meaning, not *just* a depiction of shoes. Heidegger explores some in the following lines:

From out of the warm opening of the well-worn insides of the shoes the toil of the worker's tread stares forth. In the crudely solid heaviness of the shoes accumulates the tenacity of the slow trudge through the far-stretching and ever-uniform furrows of the field swept by a raw wind. On the leather lies the dampness and richness of the soil (2002: 14).

He attempts to understand the equipmentality of the shoes by placing them within a poetic dimension, in that he interprets the possibilities contained by the shoes according to the world of a peasant woman.<sup>14</sup> What becomes clear in Heidegger's description of the shoes and their equipmentality is how *earth* (*Erde*) and *world* (*Welt*) are integrated through their use in the being of the peasant woman. However, before this can be explored a definition is required of the terms mentioned, in order to explain how equipment brings the *rift* (*Riss*) between two together. Definition is never a simple task with Heidegger but I will attempt to give a brief explanation of the two terms using Inwood's *A Heidegger Dictionary* (2000). The concept *earth* in the context Heidegger uses it in *The Origin of the Work of Art* is the following:

In the mid-1930's, under the influence of Hölderlin and of technology, Heidegger revived the concept of earth, but now as the counterpart to world. World and earth are now in conflict. A world of human products and activities is established by taming and utilizing the earth on which it rests. The earth fights back, overgrowing, destroying and reclaiming our works if we do not tend and protect them. Earth and world need each other. The world rests on earth and uses earthy raw materials. Earth is revealed as earth by the world... He [Heidegger] also speaks of a *Riss*, 'rift, cleft', between earth and world... The rift between earth and world defines their contours and establishes a ground plan of human life... This rift does not let the opponents [world and earth] break apart; it brings what opposes measure and limit into a unitary outline (Inwood 2000: 50).

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<sup>14</sup> If the shoes in this artwork belong to the artist himself (which is commonly assumed) then one could re-interpret their possibilities according to the life of the artist himself, instead of the peasant woman. In the discussion the historical, factual nature of the thing depicted is not as important as its contextual, hermeneutic meaning for the person experiencing the artwork.



‘Earth’ refers to the natural, physical habitat upon which Dasein can create a *world*. However, implied in this passage is the exploitation that the earth is subjected to by us in the pursuit of natural resources. This theme, dealing with technological enframing and standing reserve, will be discussed at greater length in the third chapter. With regard to earth Heidegger writes that, ‘Earth is that which cannot be forced, that which is effortless and untiring... In setting up a world, the work sets forth [*Herstellen*] the earth... The earth is essentially self-secluding. To set forth the earth means: to bring it into the open as the self-secluding’ (2002: 24,25). The earth is that which endures regardless of our being upon it. The earth is itself, and is secluded from us because we exist in a *world*. However there is a way Dasein can bring the earth into the ‘open as the self-secluding’ (Heidegger 2002: 25) and this occurs through equipment. This will be explained shortly.

The definition of *world* relates directly to Dasein, and its English translation, *being-in-the-world*. Inwood writes, ‘Dasein, a properly functioning human being is... essentially in the world, and conversely, a world – in contrast to a collection of entities – essentially has Dasein in it’ (2000: 246). Therefore the definition of *world* emerges from Dasein’s *being* in it. The man-made objects that surround us, our histories, our activities and possibilities, in fact, everything that has to do with us defines *world*. *World* only exists because Dasein exists. In this regard Heidegger writes:

World in that always-nonobjectual to which we are subject as long as the paths of birth and death, blessing and curse, keep us transported into being. Wherever the essential decisions of our history are made, wherever we take them over or abandon them, wherever they go unrecognised or are brought once more into question, there the world worlds (2002: 23)

And further:

The world is the self-opening [whereas the earth is ‘self-secluding’] openness of the broad paths of simple and essential decisions in the destiny of a historical people. The earth is the unforced coming forth of the continually self-closing, and in that way, self

sheltering. World and earth are essentially different and yet never separated from one another. World is grounded on earth, and earth rises up through world (2002: 26)

For Heidegger, the point where *earth* and *world* intersect is equipment, e.g. the shoes of the peasant woman:

Equipment belongs *to the earth* and finds protection in the *world* of the peasant woman... The equipmentality of equipment consists indeed in its usefulness. But this itself rests in the fullness of an essential being of the equipment. We call this reliability. In virtue of this reliability the peasant woman is admitted into the silent call of the earth; in virtue of the reliability of the equipment she is certain of her world. World and earth exist for her and those who share her mode of being only here – in the equipment (Heidegger 2002: 14).

Equipment, as a thing made from natural resources, but shaped by the hand of humankind, represents for Heidegger the point where earth and world meet. It is in the raw, earth material of equipment, moulded and crafted by the needs of human beings where the *rift* is met between *earth* and *world*.

However, although this discussion opens up a new dimension in our understanding of *earth* and *world*, it still seems to have brought us no closer to grasping the thingliness of the thing and neither to what is most important in the argument, the nature of the artwork. Or, as Heidegger asks, has it?

*This* question is the turning point in the argument. For now, Heidegger writes, we have discovered something of the *equipmentality* (i.e. *essence*) of equipment, but how have we done this? We have not physically made a pair of shoes and we have also not spent a day with the peasant woman as she tends the fields. Rather, ‘the equipmental being of the equipment was only discovered by bringing ourselves before the Van Gogh painting. It is this that spoke. In proximity to the work we were suddenly somewhere other than we are usually accustomed to be’ (2002: 15). Something has been revealed to us through Heidegger’s discussion of the Van Gogh painting – we have been made able to perceive what the equipment, the pair of peasant shoes, in truth *is* (Heidegger 2002: 16). The artwork has allowed the being of the peasant shoes to be unconcealed in its being – this *happening* is known as *ἀλήθεια* (*alētheia*) in

ancient Greek. The simplest definition of this word in English would be ‘truth’. What occurs in the artwork, when there is disclosure of the being as to what and how it is, there is a *happening* of truth at work (Heidegger 2002: 16). For Heidegger truth is not a correspondence of description with reality. Truth is a *happening* revealed in the artwork.

What should be recalled here is the previous discussion on the *equiprimordial experience of presence* that was lost when ancient Greek was translated into Latin.<sup>15</sup> This is why Heidegger places so much importance on the ancient Greek language (and ancient Greek thought), because it once contained the understanding of the essence of things as presence. To say the word ‘ἀλήθεια’ now does not bring one any closer to understanding the ‘happening of truth’ that the word invokes. Everyday language no longer conveys that sense of presence alone. This is why Heidegger *uses* the artwork, as a path that leads us to truth; to the moment of revelation. In doing so he brings us closer to conceiving of what ‘ἀλήθεια’ meant for the ancient Greeks. This allows us to realise the possibility of unconcealment in the artwork for ourselves, and enables us to come into proximity with the essence of a thing.

For Heidegger the nature of truth in the artwork occupies a difficult position, for truth is not simply a correspondence with reality, but only emerges in the tension between revelation and concealment. The most evident example of this tension of truth manifests in Being itself, for Being is ‘something’ (or no-thing) most immediate to Dasein because it is enveloped within it, but at the same time Being is also mysterious and concealed from Dasein; ‘something’ intangible and elusive. When, in *Being and Time*, Heidegger asks the question concerning the *meaning* of Being the point he makes is that - even though we may not be able to comprehend Being as such - we can still ask the *question* of Being. This question reveals the tension between the concealment and unconcealment of Being that manifests itself through our being-in-the-world. Heidegger writes the following in *Being and Time*:

Every questioning is a seeking. Every seeking takes its direction *beforehand from what is sought* [my emphasis]... As a seeking, questioning needs prior guidance from what it seeks. The meaning of being must therefore already be available to us in a certain

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<sup>15</sup> See page 40.

way.... We do not *know* what 'being' means. But already when we ask, 'What is being?' we stand in an understanding of the 'is' without being able to determine conceptually what the 'is' means (1996: 3).

What is evident in this passage is the tension between our asking the question of Being and our limited, pre-conceptualised understanding of Being. Asking the question of Being presupposes something of Being revealed to us *already* because we can, somehow, intuitively ask the question. Yet the answer is concealed from us - which is the reason we ask the question initially. Our understanding of Being is vague and ambiguous, yet there is still something intuitive revealed to us by the recognition that *we can* ask the question. The answer though, in its complete fullness (or its complete emptiness), is concealed from us.

One can draw an analogy between Being and the shoes in the Van Gogh painting. Dasein can observe the immediate reality that surrounds it, but this does not bring it closer to understanding the meaning of Being. In the moment that Dasein asks and ponders the meaning of Being though, it does reveal *some thing* of the experience and mystery of Being. Similarly, if one examines the shoes in the painting, one could, initially, simply perceive a pair of shoes. However, this does not reveal the *essence* of the shoes. For this experience one must 'look' deeper, not at the shoes *as shoes*, but at the *possibilities* of meaning the shoes project. Then the *truth* of the being of those shoes is manifest to Dasein, and it can understand something of the *essence* of the shoes.

At this point the difficulty resides in the expressibility of the essence of the shoes. Something is revealed, but the revelation forms part of a hermeneutic experience, which is different according to the individual horizon of each Dasein who encounters the artwork. Heidegger describes the shoes in a context that he is more familiar with, i.e. the experience of German rural life. Another person's encounter with the painting would create a different hermeneutic experience. However, the essence of the content of the painting does not lie in the factual, historical circumstances of where and how the shoes were used, but rather in allowing us to perceive the *equipmentality* of the shoes revealed in their depiction through the artwork.

Heidegger writes that ‘the essential nature of art would be this: the setting-itself-to-work of the truth of beings... In a work, a being, a pair of peasant shoes, comes to stand in the light of its being’ (2002: 16). From this point he clarifies that he has *moved* art, from the realm of aesthetics to the realm of truth. The *use* of art is not limited to the realm of aesthetics but can reveal something of the truth of B/being to Dasein. For Heidegger a work of art is not concerned with a particular depiction of a specific object but rather ‘is concerned to reproduce the general essence of things’ (2002: 16). If one returns to the poem by William Carlos Williams cited earlier, the poem opens up dimensions that could be considered in light of these Heideggerian ideas:

The Red Wheelbarrow

so much depends  
upon

a red wheel  
barrow

glazed with rain  
water

beside the white  
chickens.

(Ferguson, et al. 1996: 1166)

One is again struck by the initial question of the poetic quality of this poem: whether it warrants qualification as a poem. However, this question has already been investigated earlier. What the poem serves to illustrate now is the revelation of the essence of the things named in the poem, without the reliance on the descriptive *characteristics* of the things themselves. In the poem what is revealed is the *equipmentality* of the things described. The line ‘so much depends upon’ places an emphasis on the *possibilities* that the red wheelbarrow possesses, without describing

them, much like the shoes in the painting. Thus the reader is brought to a moment of revelation where the things are as they are but also radiate possibilities and interpretations that are revealed through the individual's creative imagination. The poem displays the *presence* of the images it depicts, and *projects* the reader's imagination into possibilities that may never have been contemplated before. Similarly the Van Gogh painting presents a visual impression to the viewer and then permits one to move into a broader context of interpretation surrounding the objects themselves. The tension between what is revealed and concealed by the painting (or the poem) depends largely on the horizon of the observer. It is through this *happening* in the artwork that the essence of a thing is disclosed to Dasein. In this regard Heidegger writes:

What really matters is that we open our eyes to the fact that the worklikeness of the work, the equipmentality of equipment, and the thingliness of the thing comes nearer to us only when we think the being of beings... the artwork opens up, in its own way, the being of beings. This opening up, i.e. unconcealing, i.e., the truth of beings, happens in the work (2002: 18,19).

Heidegger's argument is that the artwork opens up the possibility of the disclosure and glimpse of the *being* of beings. The poem - even though it appears simple because of the sparseness of the image - still conceals a *world*. Yet, because it is an *artwork* the possibility is present for Dasein to explore the *equipmentality* of the equipment in the poem. This encounter *creates* the movement into a poetic realm where the *essence* of the things depicted reveal themselves through the creative hermeneutic encounter of Dasein with the artwork.

*In the artwork the happening of truth is at work.* Heidegger has demonstrated this, using the Van Gogh painting and the point has been further emphasised with reference to the poem by William Carlos Williams. However, this does not suffice entirely, for though we may have established something of the *happening* of truth in the artwork, the question that Heidegger raises now and that comes to the fore is: *what is truth and how could truth happen?* (Heidegger 2002: 20).

Heidegger's essence of truth and the 'clearing' in Eliot's *The Waste Land*

Understanding the *essence* of truth is a difficult thing. The reason for this relates back to the previous discussion on attempting to define the essence of the thing, which led to equipment and to the artwork. What has emerged is that the essence of any thing exists within the tension of unconcealment and concealment and it is through the hermeneutic process that 'ἀλήθεια' comes forth – beings shine forth in their being. This moment of revelation is constitutive of the essence of the thing. This allows the *happening* of truth. However, Heidegger now asks: what is truth?

He argues that the common understanding of the essence of truth is meagre and truncated and this is demonstrated by the thoughtlessness that pervades the use of the word (2002: 27). Our use of truth generally implies a reference to a particular kind of truth that corresponds to reality, and 'reality is that which, in truth, is' (2002: 27). This may be the common understanding of the word 'truth' but it does not further our understanding of the *essence* of truth. To seek an analytic definition (e.g. the correspondence theory of truth) for what constitutes the essence of truth would be self-defeating. Truth is the *happening* of unconcealment, particularly within the artwork, and its essence resides there. Truth is a glimpse of *Being*, both beyond and in beings. In this sense then truth is an *event* (*Ereignis*) not a correspondent definition. Heidegger writes the following regarding the experience of truth:

in the midst of beings as a whole an open place comes to presence. There is a clearing [*Lichtung*].<sup>16</sup> Thought from out of beings, it is more in being than is the being. This open centre is, therefore, not surrounded by beings. Rather, this illuminating centre itself encircles all beings – like nothing that we scarcely know (2002: 30).

This illumination is a happening/event and holds an ontological dimension that surpasses the things in their everydayness. Truth becomes an experience one has, through an encounter with the poetic realm, manifest in the work of art.

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<sup>16</sup> The word *Lichtung* that Heidegger uses which is translated into 'clearing' in English has a special connotation regarding its meaning. Inwood writes, 'Often he [Heidegger] revives an old meaning of an existing word. *Lichtung* comes from *Licht* 'light', but has now lost contact with it and means a 'clearing' in a forest. Heidegger revives its connection with *Licht* and reads it as 'lighting' (2000: 4).

For the purposes of this dissertation I will now highlight glimpses and moments in some of Eliot's poetry that demonstrate something of this realm. I think that Eliot expresses similar poetic ideas concerning the experience of the illumination of truth, through 'the clearing' in Heidegger sense which manifests in the artwork. However, what is also relevant in this argument is that Eliot expresses these ideas through the medium of poetry itself. In the poetry of Eliot, as will be demonstrated, Heidegger's thought is fulfilled and sustained:

'You gave me Hyacinths first a year ago;  
'They called me the hyacinth girl.'  
- Yet when we came back, late, from the hyacinth garden,  
Your arms full, and your hair wet, I could not  
Speak, and my eyes failed, I was neither  
Living nor dead, and I knew nothing,  
Looking into the heart of light, the silence.

(Eliot, 1985: 64)

These lines point to the 'clearing' that Heidegger speaks of. For the most part, throughout the poem *The Waste Land* there is an ominous *angst* that pervades it, fragmentary idle talk to fortune-tellers and explicit pub discussions over immoral concerns, the rubbish on the Thames, meaningless sexual encounters, and a myriad of other images, events, and voices which carry with them despair and nihilism. *The Waste Land* is a landscape cluttered with things that are hollow and hopeless. Gordon writes that for Eliot *The Waste Land* was the 'vantage-point he choose to reflect on urban despair in the twentieth century' (1999: 156). Yet the imagery of the hyacinth girl becomes this haunting possibility that upsets the seemingly inevitable degeneration of *The Waste Land*. The encounter with her is an illumination that occurs; the *happening* of truth - like 'nothing that we scarcely know'.<sup>17</sup> The 'clearing' is brought forth and the 'heart of silence' revealed. One could refer to that moment as a moment of authentic being, though, for much of the rest of *The Waste Land*

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<sup>17</sup> Traversi refers to this encounter in the poem as a 'moment of intuition' and writes that 'upon glimpses of this kind, tenuous and passing, but at the same time profoundly real, much of Eliot's best poetry will insistently play' (1976: 28).



(similarly to *Prufrock*) the mode of inauthenticity prevails. But whereas Prufrock cannot escape the powerful exertion of the inauthentic mode, in *The Waste Land* there are hints and possibilities of authenticity that culminate and are fully realised in Eliot's later poem, *Four Quartets*.

In *The Waste Land* there are certain fragments that point us towards 'clearings' in the poem. These moments are hopeful and full of possibility, beyond the barren and wasted landscape. Aside from the encounter with the hyacinth girl there is another passage one could highlight:

'...The boat responded  
Gaily, to the hand expert with sail and oar  
The sea was calm, your heart would have responded  
Gaily, when invited, beating obedient  
To controlling hands'

(Eliot, 1985: 79)

This passage directs us away from the wasteland. Instead one is on a calm sea, and the expert steering and obedient response of the vessel becomes analogous for the possibility of an authentic, purposeful life. Water represents fertility, purity and the possibility of hope outside the wasteland. The girl's hair in the hyacinth garden is wet and the encounter with her represents another place, fertile and alive. Hence what these fragments reveal is the possibility of *truth* in Heidegger's sense of 'ἀλήθεια', a moment of illumination - a *clearing* in the poem.

This occurs, particularly in *The Waste Land* and *Four Quartets* on two levels. The first level is obvious in the sense that we are dealing with a poem (which is an artwork) and we can explore it according to Heidegger's thinking on the essence of the artwork, and seek the 'truth' concealed in the work. The second level is that Eliot's *clearing* of truth in these poems is also self-conscious, in that the passages of illumination themselves manifest the poetic ideal (Heidegger's *Lichtung* – 'lighting') within the poetry itself.

Heidegger uses the artwork of Van Gogh to demonstrate the nature of truth, which is created by the *world* and *earth* tension within the painting. Eliot, in *The Waste Land*, for example, uses the medium of poetry to describe and explore the intellectual,

artistic and sexual sterility of the old world afflicted by the First World War (Watson, 2000: 189). He uses poetry to reveal the essence of that specific *world*. However, Eliot's poetry also points to the possibility of the 'clearing' itself, as a 'the heart of *light*'. I think it is apparent that he, like Heidegger, perceives the redemptive role of the artwork and how it can lead us to moments of revelation - not only in the artwork - but also in our life and its possibilities. Eliot and Heidegger are both, in their respective ways, attempting to bring us to the unconcealment of truth contained in and manifest through the experience of the work of art.

Both men share the same vision of the *use* of poetry (or the artwork is general) in this context in that it makes possible a brief glimpse into the 'heart of light', or a *clearing* in the midst of everydayness. Furthermore this encounter not only has an aesthetic value but also an ontological one. It should open Dasein up to its own authentic possibility of being and create a more profound appreciation towards the uncanniness of its own finite existence. The unconcealment of beings is never a state that is merely present but is a happening or event (Heidegger 2002: 31). Dasein, the being-in-the-world, brings this *happening* forth through the hermeneutic engagement of itself with the artwork. The artwork comes to revelation as a moment of *happening*, analogous to the moments of clearing in *The Waste Land*, as a transcendental illumination from the everydayness of our being.

### The Work as Thing

One could state that we have arrived at an understanding of the essence of truth. For Heidegger it is still not complete but what is *at work* in the work may have become clearer (2002: 32), i.e. the *happening* of truth. However, he points something out which is problematic because it underlies the initial discussion of this chapter. He writes the following:

It... seems as if, in pursuing the all-consuming aim of comprehending the self-subsistence of the work itself as purely as possible, we have completely overlooked one crucial aspect: a work is always a work, which is to say, something worked or produced (2002: 32).

For a work to be a work it must be created from some *thing*, and this medium is inherently part of the work, hence the *thingliness* of the work. For Heidegger this brings up a crucial question: how does *being created* (from something) belong to a work? To elaborate on this question further he asks two more questions: ‘[w]hat is meant, here, by *being-created* [my emphasis] and by creation as distinct from making and being-made?’ (2002: 33). What he may imply with this question is that equipment could perhaps be described as being *made* whereas the artwork is something *created*. However, this distinction will be borne out as the argument develops. The second question he asks is: ‘What is the innermost essence of the work itself, from which it can be gauged to what extent being created belongs to it, and to what degree being-created determines the work-being of the work?’ (2002: 33). One would immediately associate the essence of the work with the fact that it has been *created*; yet Heidegger separates these two facets of the artwork. He does this to demonstrate that even though we have established the *happening* of truth as constitutive of the artwork we have not discussed the *created* aspect of the work at all, which necessarily implies the *thingly* character of the work.

To understand the essence of the artwork and further our grasp of the essence of truth that manifests in the artwork, we must again return to the question of the essence of truth, but now in light of the *thingliness* of the artwork. At this point we have located the moment of revelation *outside* the actual artwork and explored the context that the artwork provides and the horizon that it opens up. However, in following this path we have neglected the *thingly* aspect of the artwork and the fact that the question of truth cannot lie completely outside the realm of the artwork. The essence of truth must also be *set* in the *thingly* aspect of the work. The relationship between truth and art must now be explored. For Heidegger to establish this relationship we must investigate the essential nature of art that is manifest through the actual work itself. He writes:

In the work the happening of truth is at work. But what is thus at work is at work *in* the work. This means that the actual work is already presupposed here, as the bearer of this happening. Straight away we confront again the question concerning the thingliness of the work before us. One thing becomes clear: however diligently we inquire into the

self-subsistence of the work, we will fail to discover its actual reality as long as we fail to understand that the work is to be taken as something worked (2002: 33,34).

The phrase ‘something worked’ implies two things. The first is that the artwork is created by *someone* and is formed within a process of creative imagination. The second point is that the work is contained in something, whether it is the CD that contains music, paint that produces a visual image or the page that contains the words of a poem: the respective medium then, is the *thingly* character; the *physical* constitution of the work itself. For Heidegger we must now turn our attention away from the artwork itself, as a finished product, and explore the *created* aspect of the work, which involves both the artist and the physical medium of the artwork.

Both equipment and the artwork can be considered because both are brought forth as objects of physical, human creation. For Heidegger the distinction must be considered between something we consider equipment and something we consider art. This distinction was alluded to earlier and the possible distinction made was that an artwork is *created*, whereas something equipmental is *made*. Heidegger confirms this perspective now but points out that regardless whether someone is a potter or sculptor, carpenter or painter, all these activities require the activity of craftsmanship (2002: 34). In fact, he points out that the ancient Greeks used the same word ‘τέχνη’ (*technē*) to describe both artworks and crafts.

The questions now are: why did the ancient Greeks make no clear distinction between artwork and crafts? And why did they use a word that means neither artwork nor craft to describe both these pursuits? The answer to both these resides in the fact that ‘τέχνη’ designates a way of *knowing*. Heidegger writes, ‘knowing means: having seen, in the broad sense of seeing which means the apprehension of something present as something present. For Greek thought, the essence of knowing is based on ‘ἀλήθεια’, on, that is, the unconcealment of beings’ (2002: 35). ‘τέχνη’ does not designate the activity of making or creating; rather ‘τέχνη’ refers to the unconcealment of what is *already* present, the bringing to *light* (*Lichtung*) of something out of its appearance.<sup>18</sup> In this definition both the artist and craftsman

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<sup>18</sup> This implies that both craftsman and artist use natural materials which already exist and trans-*form* them. E.g. the shoemaker would use leather to create shoes, a potter would use the clay to create pottery, a sculptor would use a block of marble to carve a sculptor and a painter would use dyes and

perform the same task: both *set forth* either works of art or equipment and therefore both allow beings to come forth in their presence, because both activities are a form of *knowing*, in the sense of revealing through the creation of things.

This requires further discussion for although the Greeks did not make a distinction between artworks and equipment, there is evidently a clear and necessary distinction that Heidegger explores. He writes that, '[t]he establishment of truth in the work is the bringing forth of a being of a kind which never was before and never will be again... bringing forth of this kind is creation' (2002: 37). The *created* aspect of the artwork reveals the uniqueness of the work - its original quality. However, the nature of equipment is that it is reproducible: if one makes one hundred hammers this does not make a single hammer more or less unique than another because what is at stake is the *equipmental* value of the hammer, not its original or aesthetic quality. On the contrary, to duplicate an artwork and then claim that the artwork is one's own original creation is obviously fraudulent and betrays the uniqueness of the work. Even Warhol's mass production of art through silk-screening method does not detract from the fact that there is such a thing as an *original* Warhol, as distinct from something that is merely a copy. This difference is acknowledged and protected to preserve that what is created as art is something 'which never was and never will be again'. This kind of bringing forth is termed 'creation' by Heidegger. At this point there remains one more question that must be asked in order to understand the essence of the *thingliness* of the work of art: in what does createdness consist? (2002: 37).

For Heidegger there are two characteristics of creation. The first characteristic is that truth establishes itself in the created work, which is something that has already been discussed (2002: 37). However to gain insight into the thingliness of the created artwork we must explore this idea again. Heidegger re-iterates that truth is essentially a tension between unconcealment and concealment and contains within itself the element of 'un-truth', because of this tension. He emphasises that truth is 'present only as the strife between clearing and concealing in the opposition between world and earth' and it is through this strife of world and earth that truth is established in the work (2002: 37). Truth in the work captures the mutual dependence of earth and

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pigments to make paint and create a painting. All these raw material exists – yet what is required is the *knowing* (*technē*) to transform them.

world in this perpetual tension. He writes that the createdness of the work means: ‘the fixing in place of truth in the figure’, and that what we call ‘figure’ in this instance, ‘is always thought to be *that particular* placing [*stellen*] and placement [*ge-stell*] as which the *work* comes to presence when it sets itself up and sets itself forth’ (2002: 38). I think what he means is that the work of art contains in itself, as a *figure*, a historical ‘placing’ that comes to presence in the work and displays the strife between earth and world in that specific historical moment depicted by the work. The work of art is made *from the earth*, in terms of its thingliness, yet it represents an aspect of the world - in terms of Dasein’s involvement in the creation of it - and hence it embodies both these elements. This is why the ancient Greeks regarded the creation of the work of art as the same activity as making crafts or equipment, because both activities rely on the use of earth (natural resources) for their existence. Heidegger emphasises again that the work of art is never merely the making of equipment because ‘the making of equipment is never... an effect of the happening of truth. The production of equipment is finished when the material has been so formed as to be ready for use. The equipment’s readiness for use means that it is released beyond itself to disappear into usefulness’ 2002: 39). This is clearly not the case with the artwork and brings us to Heidegger’s second characteristic.

What makes the createdness of the artwork unique is that it is *created* into the created work. Heidegger writes that: ‘[i]n the work createdness is expressly created into what is created, with the result that it expressly rises up out of the work’ (2002: 39). Therefore what gives the work its uniqueness is that it is created for the purpose of *createdness*. The artwork is made an artwork by the fact that it *exists*, rather than not; that the revealment of beings is happening *here*, in this artwork itself, and would not have happened if the artwork were never created. It is the *thatness* of the artwork, its created being-in-the-world that is constitutive of the unique existence of the individual work (Heidegger 2002: 39). One could say that *thatness* is also a property of equipment, but for Heidegger this is not the case. The reason for this is that the equipment’s existence disappears into usefulness when one uses the equipment. When one engages the use of a hammer, its existence becomes inconspicuous; the *thatness* of the equipment disappears into its equipmentality. In the artwork, however, ‘the fact that it *is* as such a thing, is what is unusual. The happening of its createdness does not

simply reverberate through the work; rather the work casts itself the eventful fact that, as a work, this work is, and exhibits this fact constantly' (Heidegger 2002: 40).

It is the *very existence* of the work that brings the work to presence, as something created which did not exist before. Equipment is not created for the sake of createdness as such, but rather because of its usefulness, whereas the artwork's createdness is its primary factor. But even this fact does not exhaust the reality of the work (Heidegger 2002: 40). In the openness to B/being that the work brings forth through its being, we, if we submit ourselves to the work are then displaced from the ordinary to the extraordinary. This occurs because the work reveals something to us that our everyday being-in-the-world does not. Heidegger writes that 'to submit ourselves to this displacement means: to transform all familiar relations to world and earth, and henceforth dwell within the truth that is happening in the work. The restraint of this dwelling allows what is created to become, for the first time, the work that it is' (2002: 40). The *createdness* in the created work is realised through the presence of Dasein and this allows the work to realise itself as a work. The presence of Dasein is necessary for the preservation of the work, which Heidegger defines as: 'standing within the openness of beings that happens in the work' (2002: 41). The work is preserved by our presence because this allows the Open or *clearing* of the work to occur; to enable the setting-forth-of-truth in the artwork. For Heidegger *this* is also a 'knowing'. It does not consist in being familiar with ideas about something, but rather he writes that 'whoever truly knows what is, knows what he wills in the midst of what is' (2002: 41).

Up to this point in the essay Heidegger has placed the emphasis of the origin of the work of art on the dependence of the actual existence of the artwork itself and what that entails. He has mentioned the role of the creator of the work, and in a similar vein to Eliot he diminishes the artist's role to a large extent. In the essay Heidegger writes 'in great art the artist remains something inconsequential in comparison with the work – almost like a passageway which, in the creative process, destroys itself for the sake of the coming forth of the work' (2002: 19). In Heidegger's *Discourse on Thinking* he complements this perspective: '[i]n these sounds [referring to the composer Conradin Kreutzer] the artist himself is present; for the master's presence *in the work* is the only

true presence. The greater the master, the more completely his person vanishes behind his work' (1969: 44).

Eliot writes something similar, '[t]he progress of the artist is a continual self-sacrifice, a continual extinction of personality... The more perfect the artist, the more completely separate in him will be the man who suffers and the mind which creates... Poetry is not a turning loose of emotion, but an escape from emotion; it is not the expression of personality, but an escape from personality' (1932: 53,54,58). It is clear that the two men regard the role of the artist in the creation of art in a similar vein.

Heidegger has implicitly emphasised this throughout the essay because it deals primarily with the artwork. However, it would seem obvious that any work, to become formative as a work, requires human presence to allow the work itself to come to presence and to be *preserved* (Human beings are the *preservers* (*Bewahrenden*) and their presence allows the *preservation* (*Bewahrung*) of the artwork). Dasein becomes a *knowing* agent who places itself before the presence of the artwork in a mode of resoluteness (*Entschlossenheit*). The word 'resoluteness', if literally translated from the German, means 'un-closedness' and what is implied by this is 'human being's opening up from out of its captivity by beings into the openness of [B]being' (Heidegger 2004: 41). There is a strong parallel with Dasein understanding itself in the mode of authenticity found in Heidegger's *Being and Time* and the *resoluteness* required when one enters into the presence of the artwork. The unconcealment of the work can only take place through the presence of a willing and knowing Dasein. It is this willing which is 'the sober resoluteness of that existential self-transcendence which exposes itself to the openness of beings as it is set into the work' (Heidegger 2004: 41).

Heidegger now redirects his discussion onto a path that leads us back to where we branched off. We must return, as Heidegger states, to our opening question: 'how do matters stand with that thingliness of the work which guarantees the work's immediate reality?' (2002: 42). And he replies immediately: '[t]hey stand in such a way that we no longer ask the question about the work's thingliness. For as long as we pose that question we take it as a foregone conclusion that the work is present to us as an object' (2002: 42). Here arises something of a predicament. This discussion began with the artwork being referred to as a thing. And this led to an attempt to



understand the nature of the thing. For Heidegger, if the physical artwork is a thing (which it is), then by defining the essence of the thing would necessarily imply defining the essence of the artwork. This occurred, but not in the way expected. Using Van Gogh's painting Heidegger defined the essence of equipment (in this instance, the shoes) through the artwork. And thus was also revealed the essence of the artwork.

However, this caused us to ignore the *thingly* nature of the work, as a physical object itself, because we viewed the artwork in terms of its metaphoric, symbolic meaning. As Heidegger writes, 'we do not allow the work to be a work but represent it, rather, as an object that is supposed to bring about certain conditions within us' (2002: 42). Hence we cannot perceive an artwork as a physical object - in the sense of equipment - because when we view the artwork, it is its *createdness* that we perceive and this prevents us from perceiving the *thingly* aspect of the work itself. Perhaps the problem here is that one is making a supposed distinction between the *createdness* of the work and the *thingliness* of the work when, in fact, it would suffice for us to state that the createdness of the work is constitutive of its *thingliness*.

For Heidegger though, there is one element residing in the artwork that is revealed when we question its thingliness, and that is the element of earth. The reason for this is that: 'Earth rises up within the work because the work is present as something in which truth is at work, and because truth only presences where it establishes itself in a being' (2002: 42). Earth is present in the work and rises up and establishes itself in the work, because the work possesses a thingly, earthly quality. He writes that the, 'essential nature of earth, of the unmasterable and self-closing bearer, reveals itself, however, only in its rising up in a world, in the opposition between world and earth' (2002: 43). Hence it is the existence of the artwork, *its createdness*, which brings forth and displays this opposition, because of its thingliness.

The point of this discussion has been to discover the thingliness of the work, and in doing so we have come to realise that the thingliness of the work is also the essence of the work. This essence can only emerge in the *createdness* of the work, manifesting itself through the tension between world and earth. Hence it is the work, as something created from earth (*its thingliness*), which allows the art to manifest.

### The Work as Truth

For Heidegger the essential nature of art is the setting-itself-to-work of truth (2002: 44). This statement has two intentions. In the first instance it implies that ‘art is the fixing in place of self-establishing truth in the figure’, which occurs in the creation of the actual artwork, thereby allowing the unconcealing of beings through the createdness of the work (Heidegger 2002: 44). The other implication is, ‘bringing the work character of the work into motion and happening. This happens as preservation. Thus, art is: ‘the creative preservation of the truth in the work. *Art is, then, the becoming and happening of truth*’ (2002: 44). The word ‘preservation’ in this context implies the *presence* of Dasein, who allows this happening of truth. Also implied in this concept of truth is that truth ‘will never be gathered from what is present and ordinary’ (2002: 44). And this reason is justification for the *use* of art, for it brings Dasein into the realm of the *extra-ordinary* - the openness and *clearing* (the heart of light) where truth can happen and be brought forth. Hence Dasein’s involvement is *vital* in the happening of art as truth. For Dasein itself is a *happening*, because of the inextricable relationship it has with being and time. Its *becoming* is the primary factor in art becoming the *happening of truth*, not only because the artwork is created from the impetus of Dasein, but because the truth in art is sustained by the presence and preservation of Dasein.

Truth, for Heidegger, is the clearing and concealing of that which *is*, and this happens through being *poeticized* (2002: 44). He writes that, ‘*All art, as the letting happen of the advent of the truth of beings, is, in essence, poetry*’ (2002: 44). For this dissertation this is an especially important statement, and underlies the reason for this chapter and the argument of the dissertation as a whole. For Heidegger the essence of art, as the setting-itself-into-work of truth, is also the essence of poetry. All art, in whatever form it may take, attempts to bring the Open (the *clearing*) into being. However, he argues that it is *specifically* poetry that ‘allows this open to happen in such a way, indeed that now, for the first time, in the midst of beings, it brings them to shine and sound’ (2002: 45). Heidegger broadens our understanding of poetry to encompass any art form. Rather than considering this to be a reduction of, for example, sculpture or painting, one must attempt to understand the depth of

Heidegger's argument, which advocates the idea that all human artistic creation is *essentially poetic*, in that its fundamental purpose is the revealing of truth. One may question why Heidegger regards poetry as being above all other art forms? What is so specific and unique about poetry itself? These questions reveal that one has still not entirely understood Heidegger's vision of poetry, that his definition is not contained in locating poetry as a specific style of writing, but that the poetic function is implicit in all art. The underlying reason for this is *language*. This is why Heidegger, in passing, mentions that poetry itself - as a linguistic work - is privileged in the sphere of artistic creation.

To explain this idea Heidegger's conception of language must be explored. This will be discussed in greater detail in the third chapter, but it will be briefly highlighted now to aid the argument thus far. It should be apparent that for Heidegger all the average definitions we may use for concepts are insufficient, and that to understand his ideas requires that we explore the way in which he defines the words themselves, and then move towards the formal argument. Before a word such as 'earth', 'world', or 'language', is used consideration must be given to what Heidegger *means* regarding that word. This chapter has been a search for a definition of poetry and from Heidegger's perspective we have arrived at one. However, having arrived at poetry implies that we must explore the essence of poetry and this directs us to language. To complete and conclude this chapter Heidegger's concept of language will be briefly discussed in *The Origin of the Work of Art*. It is interesting to note that we have moved from the artwork into the poetic realm and from the poetic realm into language. Yet it is the poetic realm - the realm of human creative imagination - that is the crossover point from language into the realm of art. Hence, what underlies the uses and advantages of poetry for life will also underlie language, and this in turn will link fundamentally with what is constitutive of Dasein.

Heidegger begins the discussion by stating that language, in the traditional sense, serves as a means of communication and that its ideal is to foster understanding between human beings (2002: 45). This is perhaps the most typical feature of language. However, the danger with *enframing* language in this definition is that it is too superficial to contain the greater significance of language. This significance is encapsulated in the later Heidegger's statement: 'Language is the house of Being'

which goes beyond the definition of language as merely a communicative tool. This statement places language within an existential and ontology realm. Language is the basis for Dasein's being in Being, and, more importantly, for the recognition of this being in Being.

For the later Heidegger language brings the unconcealedness of Being into the Open. To describe language as merely a communication device betrays Heidegger's vision of language, which arises from the ancient Greek understanding of language as inseparable from the presence of Being. However, we have forgotten the presence of Being manifest in language because we perceive language solely as a communicative, functional tool and as an aid to furthering technology aims. In this sense we betray our own ontological sphere as *beings-in-language* because of this restrictive, enframed viewpoint. Heidegger's most important and overriding philosophical question is to recall the memory and presence Being in Dasein. This is can only be re-discovered in the revelatory power of language. However, because we can no longer perceive language in this primordial, ontological way (as the ancient Greeks did) for Heidegger we must look to the realm of the poetic. This realm is discerned in the origin of the work of art and captured purely in poetry. The heart of the argument is this:

Projective saying is poetry: the saying of world and earth, the saying of the arenas of their strife and, thereby, of all nearness and distance of the gods. Poetry is the saying of the unconcealment of beings... Projective saying is that in which the preparation of the sayable at the same time brings the unsayable as such to the world... Poetry is here thought in such a broad sense, and at the same time in such an intimate and essential unity with languages and the word, that it must remain open whether art, in all its modes from architecture to poesy, exhausts the nature of poetry (Heidegger 2002: 46).

Perhaps paradoxically, the poetry ('projective saying') that Heidegger speaks of manifests most purely in silence, for it 'brings the unsayable as such to the world'. Eliot refers to 'Looking into the heart of light, the silence' and I think that both expressions capture the same idea: that poetry is an attempt to say the unsayable. There are two passages from the fifth movement of 'Burnt Norton' from Eliot's *Four Quartets* also display this idea in poetical form:

Words move, music moves  
Only in time; but that which is only living  
Can only die. Words, after speech, reach  
Into the silence. Only by the form, the pattern,  
Can words or music reach  
The stillness, as a Chinese jar still  
Moves perpetually in its stillness.

And further on in the same movement:

Words strain,  
Crack and sometimes break, under the burden,  
Under the tension, slip, slide, perish,  
Decay with imprecision, will not stay in place,  
Will not stay still.

(Eliot 1985: 194)

In these beautiful passages one can perceive that Eliot is attempting to express an experience that, even in poetry, is unsayable, because the words themselves become imprecise, in spite of the poet's attempted precision. Both Eliot and Heidegger are pointing to something that is beyond the comprehension of words, and yet, because words are the final medium that connects us to reality - and poetry is the purest manifestation of this medium - we have no other recourse pursuable to awaken in us the memory of Being other than poetic language.

What Heidegger's passage also emphasises is the depth and breadth of his conception of poetry, it becomes a word re-thought and re-defined. Essentially, the argument that has been developed and explored from the beginning of this chapter brings us to this point, when we can finally arrive at Heidegger's definition of poetry and also discover the essence of the artwork, which becomes the manifestation of the poetic realm.

As he reiterates: '[t]he essence of art is poetry. The essence of poetry, however, is the founding of truth' (2002: 47). The notion of 'founding of truth' implies the illumination of Being/beings through the manifestation of the poetic realm that occurs

through the work of art. This truth ‘that opens itself in the work can never be verified or derived from what went before’ (Heidegger 2002: 47) and this places the work within its own originary and original realm. Also, this poetic projection of truth, manifest through the being of the work is not arbitrary or indeterminate for Heidegger. Rather it is directed towards ‘coming preservers, that is to say, a historical humanity’ (2002: 47). This implies that through the historical situatedness of the work, the artwork is the opening up

of that in which human existence, as historical, is already thrown. This is the earth (and, for a historical people, its earth), the self-closing ground on which it rests, along with everything which – though hidden from itself – it already is. It is, however, its world which prevails from out of the relationship of existence to the unconcealment of being (Heidegger 2002: 47).

Again this highlights the importance of the tension manifest in the work between the *earth* and *world*, and how Dasein’s historical context, its *thrownness* determines the preservation and grounding of the truth of the work. This grounding

has the abruptness of what we call a beginning. But this suddenness of the beginning, the uniqueness of what is unique to the leap from out of this suddenness, does not exclude – rather it includes – the fact that the beginning has inconspicuously prepared itself over the longest time... Concealed within itself, the beginning contains already the end (2002: 48).

This suggests that contained within the work of art is a historical reference point that extends from the past (beginning with the ancient Greeks) to the historical present, and projects itself into the possibilities of the future. However, for the artwork to encapsulate this requires the preservative role of Dasein. This re-affirms Dasein’s historical embeddedness and *thrownness*, and also projects Dasein into an awareness of the future possibilities of its being. Therefore the preservation of the artwork through Dasein’s being-there brings forth the possibility of its *poetic dwelling*. This shall be dealt with in detail in chapter four.

Heidegger writes that '[a]rt is historical and, as historical, is the creative preservation of truth in the work. Art happens as poetry... Art allows truth to arise [*entspringen*] ... To allow something to arise, to bring something into being from out of the essential source in the founding leap [*Sprung*] is what is meant by the word "origin" [*Ursprung*]' (2002: 49). He says that 'the origin of the artwork – of, that is, creators and preservers, which is to say, the historical existence of a people – is art. This is so because, in its essence, art is an origin: a distinctive way in which truth comes into being, becomes, that is, historical (2002: 49). The origin of the artwork as art can only manifest itself through the historical embeddedness of Dasein as creator or preserver of the artwork. This stems from the fact that it is Dasein - as creator and preserver - who does, in itself, represent the truth of its individual and unique being-in-the-world and also the truth of its being as forming part of the historical being of a particular community. It is the dwelling of a community that is the origin of the artwork. Yet it is the artwork that grounds the truth of its historical people.

Nietzsche writes in his *The Will to Power* that '[w]e possess *art* lest we *perish of the truth*' (1968: 435). For Heidegger it is the opposite, one needs art in order to create and preserve the truth, which is the truth of a particular way of *being*. This can only emerge through the realm of poetry and that is why this chapter exists. For in Heidegger's exploration of what the poetic realm means one's understanding of poetry is transformed, from the dissection of poetry as it appears on a page, to a vision of poetry that discovers the *origin* of what our being means. This discovery will be discussed in the fourth and final chapter – when the argument reaches its fulfilment in what it means for humankind to dwell poetically.

### Chapter 3 - Language

Therefore has language, most dangerous of all possessions, been given  
to man... so that he may affirm what he is...

Hölderlin

(Taken from Heidegger's *Existence and Being*, 1965: 270)

For Heidegger we can never *get* to language. Language is not a static entity that may eventually be mastered by rigorous study. It is not an objective feature of our existence that is readily definable. Language is, rather, a possibility of what may be both spoken and unspoken through us. It is a phenomenon that is encompassed by us and yet beyond our full comprehension. Language defines us, as Dasein, yet remains itself indefinable.<sup>19</sup> We can never get to language. Rather, we are always *on the way to it*. Heidegger would even go so far as to write,

Language is the primal dimension within which man's essence is first able to correspond at all to Being and its claim, and, in correspondingly, to belong to Being. *This primal corresponding, expressly carried out, is thinking* (1977: 41).

This thinking on language is characteristic of the later Heidegger, who brings language forth into a primordial ontological position, whereas the earlier Heidegger's conception of language differs somewhat. This distinction (if it really exists) will be explored as the chapter develops.

One must - as in so much of Heidegger's philosophy - *ask the question* of language. In his later writings language becomes one of his central concerns because he perceives that language and Being are ontologically constitutive of one another. The way to Being is through language. As he writes in *Poetry, Language, Thought*:

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<sup>19</sup> The words 'man', 'human being' or 'mortals' will replace the use of the word 'Dasein' in the following chapters. There is still a clear correspondence between the two concepts - both relate to our being-in-the-world. However, the context of that being-in-the-world will alter somewhat over the course of these two chapters, from the homelessness of Dasein to the dwelling of mortals. The later term will become more explicit in the last chapter. Young argues that the reason for this change is that the existential abstractedness of the term 'Dasein' is replaced by the naturalness of the term 'man' as Heidegger's thinking develops (2000: 198).



Language is the precinct (*templum*), that is, the house of Being. The nature of language does not exhaust itself in signifying, nor is it merely something that has the sign or cipher. It is because language is the house of Being, that we reach what is by constantly going through this house (129: 2001).

Language becomes the possibility for human being as the path to Being. The reason I will explore language in this chapter is because language - especially in the later Heidegger - is the bridge to poetry, and poetry and poetic being/dwelling are the themes that are interlinked in this dissertation, as the way to experience the possibilities of what it means to be a mortal.

The question that should be asked is whether or not the conception of language that the later Heidegger discusses is comprehensible. Arguably we can no longer acknowledge language as anything other than a form of signification and communication, due to the advent of the technological attitude and technological enframing. It will also become evident that language and technology are phenomena that have a definitive effect on one another in Heidegger's thought. As a precursory note I will state that the technological attitude and technological enframing so prevalent in the 20<sup>th</sup> century has resulted in a change of perception of the nature of language. The *calculative* method of thought, brought about by technology, has resulted in our understanding of language losing a great deal of its ontological and poetic dimension. Dasein's thinking itself has become enframed within the technological sphere and hence language (spoken by Dasein) has also succumbed to this enframing. To begin the discussion on the role and importance of language in Heidegger's thought I will first discuss technology. Once Heidegger's writings on the effects of technology are understood, the importance of language itself becomes more pressing.

To begin I will highlight a parallel found in Heidegger and Eliot that demonstrates a shared insight concerning the negative role and influence of technology on our existence. Heidegger, in his essay *The Question Concerning Technology* (1993) discusses technological (*Machenschaft/Technik*) enframing (*Gestell*) and the rampant ordering nature of the technological attitude. The essence of the argument is that the *earth* becomes enframed and disclosed according to its stored productive use value.

*Calculative* thought becomes the only mode of our thinking which demarcates nature's resources (and human resources) according to their production value. When Dasein perceives nature it is no longer in terms of its natural environment, or as a place of dwelling, but only within the enframed technological desire to extract energy from it. The earth becomes a standing reserve (*Bestand*) (1993: 322) and this implies that the earth is no longer perceived within the *earth/world* tension discussed in chapter two, or within the realm of the fourfold, discussed in chapter four. These tensionful distinctions are lost; instead nature is perceived as a stockpile facility to be used to extract energy from. The forest is used to grow and pulp trees for paper, the earth is used to extract coal and oil for energy and the ocean is exhausted for food - to highlight only a few examples of this *enframing*.

The danger of technological enframing lies - not only in its exploitation of natural resources - but in its grasp upon Dasein. Dasein also becomes subsumed into this standing reserve. Phrases such as 'workforce' or 'human resources' have become commonplace to describe this phenomenon. In productive, calculative thinking Dasein becomes merely another tool to expand the technological enterprise, without identity or value as anything other than a (often exploited) labour force. This is evident in sweatshops, factory floors and on sheets of paper with statistical data concerning productivity, capital gain and retrenchment. Thus Dasein is reduced to a number, much like a tool in an assembly line. Arguably the most radical example of this is the concentration camps of the Nazi's where the drive towards the production of death in a swift, cost-effective manner was perfected through technological enframing and ordering.

The parallel between Heidegger and Eliot concerns their perception of a river. In *The Question Concerning Technology* Heidegger discusses the Rhine River whose current is now used to generate hydroelectric power. He writes that 'the hydroelectric plant is not built into the Rhine River as was the old wooden bridge that joined bank with bank for hundreds of years. Rather, the river is dammed up into the power plant' (1993: 321). In this passage the distinction is made between world and earth and how the 'old wooden bridge' unites the *rift* between the two. The river forms part of the *earth*, and the bridge is humankind's presence in the *world*. The wooden bridge is not

dominant as a *command* over the presence of the river, rather the river is let to be and the bridge is used to cross it. The relationship is harmonious and balanced.

However, in the case of the hydroelectric plant the river is now commanded by man and dammed up to direct its current - in order to maximise the power it can generate. The role of the *earth* in this technological ordering is lost. One may respond to this argument and state that ‘the Rhine is still a river in the landscape, is it not?’ (1993: 321). Heidegger, anticipating this response, argues that this may still be the case, but the river then becomes part of a landscape ‘in no other way than as an object on call for inspection by a tour group ordered there by the vacation industry’ (1993: 321). The natural state of the river has been interfered with and this results in the objectification of this phenomenon of the earth into simply another ‘natural *resource*’. Now, if one were to venture to the Rhine it would be impossible to perceive it in its natural earth state because it has become *man-made*.

Eliot, too, is concerned with the perception of a river in a passage worth exploring to illustrate the parallel between the two men. Although the context is slightly different, I think their underlying concern is the same. The passage is taken from the opening of ‘The Dry Salvages’ in Eliot’s *Four Quartets*:

I do not know much about gods; but I think that the river  
Is a strong brown god – sullen, untamed and intractable,  
Patient to some degree, at first recognised as a frontier;  
Useful, untrustworthy, as a conveyor of commerce;  
Then only a problem confronting the builder of bridges.  
The problem once solved, the brown god is almost forgotten  
By the dwellers in cities – ever, however, implacable.  
Keeping his seasons and rages, destroyer, reminder  
Of what men choose to forget. Unhonoured, unpropitiated  
By worshippers of the machine, but waiting, watching and  
waiting.

(Eliot 1985: 205)

It is evident in these lines that Eliot perceives the influence of technology on our perception of nature. He describes the river in terms of its usefulness ‘as a conveyor

of commerce' and as an obstacle overcome once a bridge is constructed across it and the river is 'almost forgotten'. I think that Heidegger would disagree with Eliot's implicit negative implication of the river as 'a problem confronting the builder of bridges' because Heidegger does favour the wooden bridge across the Rhine. There is a difference in their respective perceptions of the role of the bridge and the river. However, both men are clearly aware of what technology is changing in Dasein's relationship with the earth. In both cases, the rivers (the Rhine and the Mississippi) are forgotten as 'brown gods' - as natural, earth phenomena and subsumed into something that aids the technological attitude's desire for energy, or something useful for commerce, or simply as something that must be overcome as an obstacle. The *rift* between earth and world - created and sustained by humankind's existence through creation (whether it is a bridge or an artwork) - is forgotten.

An important term in this chapter which serves as the unifying theme between the poetry of the *Four Quartets* and the later Heidegger's thought is *mystery*. Both men become more attuned to the realm of the mysterious (or sacred) in our existence and its manifestation through the language of poetry. For Heidegger the technological attitude is in danger of destroying this glimpse of the mysterious, although towards the end of his paper *The Question Concerning Technology*, he does hint at the possibility of the saving power, paradoxically contained within technology itself. This I will return to when I explore the later Heidegger's discussion of language. Eliot, I believe, restores the sense of the mysterious through his poetry, particularly in *Four Quartets*. The role of language is vital in allowing the mysterious to reveal itself through his poetry.

The danger of technology is the enframing of B/being into a reductive and limited capacity that only accords with the drive of technology itself. This drive is so overwhelming and encompassing that Dasein (reduced to 'human resources') cannot conceive of any other way of being. The reason for this is because the technological attitude is so totalising that no other way of being can be conceptualised. Every possibility conforms to this attitude.

For the later Heidegger thinking is intertwined with language and these two phenomena can create an authentic way of poetic dwelling in Being.<sup>20</sup> If our thinking is made to conform to a calculative, technological mode this will *adversely* effect our conception of language and undermine (and even prevent) the possibility of poetic dwelling. If language becomes completely technologically enframed the *possibility* contained within language will be lost. Language would then be subjected to the rigours of an ordered, technological worldview and is reduced merely to a useful tool for communication.

Arguably our only avenue to revive the possibility of language is through poetry. It is the poetic realm that can manifest an experience of openness and mystery and allow a re-appropriation of the possibilities of our being - outside the technological frame. Bruns in his *Heidegger's Estrangements* writes:

poetry *exposes* thinking to language, to its strangeness or otherness, its refusal to be contained within categories and propositions, its irreducibility to sameness and identity, its resistance to sense – in short, its denial of our efforts to speak it... poetry is the letting-go of language (xxiv, xxv: 1989).

Poetry is created from language, but its essence is what is unsayable in language. Although to *attempt* to write about what is *there* but cannot be expressed in a comprehensible linguistic manner (the 'heart of light' / the *clearing*) still forms part of the ontological sphere of language, for what is *there* (the happening) is what is *possible*, but manifests outside competent expressibility. It is the *clearing*, created through the revelatory nature of the artwork that makes visible the poetic domain. This is why all art is metaphor, because the artwork *projects* the person experiencing it elsewhere - to a place not entirely comprehensible but still part of Being.

However, this *happening* still occurs in language, but it is the stillness (the *otherness*) of language that comes to the fore in the poetic realm – a mysterious ontological potency - the unsayable. Language becomes one of the later Heidegger's investigations because to look to the remembering of Being requires a deep reflection on the primary (and mysterious) role of language in our existence. It is language that

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<sup>20</sup> In chapter four this argument will be explored fully. At this point the idea of 'poetic dwelling' is mentioned because language plays a vital role in establishing this dwelling.

gives us the possibility of asking the meaning of the question of Being. Language is the movement (and the gift) towards this question. According to Sheehan (2003: 111) Heidegger ‘defines’ language in the sense that it does not primarily mean spoken or written discourse and the rules governing it, but rather, that for Heidegger ‘language means *logos* such as he thinks Heraclitus understood the term: the original ‘gathering’ of entities into meaningful presence so as to disclose them as what and how they are’. The name ‘Heraclitus’ recalls in *The Origin of the Work of Art* the importance Heidegger places on ancient Greek as a language because contained within it was the presence of Being. Through the translation of ancient Greek into Latin this *experience* was lost. Heidegger’s writing on language is an attempt to re-appropriate the ancient Greek understanding of language as *logos*.

### *Being and Time: Discourse/Language*

To explore his ideas on language, I will begin with a brief exposition of it in *Being and Time*, and then discuss some of his later writings. This will by no means be an exhaustive account of his writings on language, only a discussion of the important themes that have reference to this dissertation. I will also explore what is referred to as ‘the turn’ (*die Kehre*) in Heidegger’s thinking. This ‘turn’, as Inwood writes, is ‘often used to denote a sharp turn in Heidegger’s own thinking that is supposed to have occurred between BT [*Being and Time*] and LH [*Letter on Humanism*]’ (2000: 231, 232). Heidegger’s understanding of language is vital in discussing this ‘turn’ because it appears that the position of language changes with regard to Dasein in the earlier and later writings.

In *Being and Time* language is a primary facet of Dasein and plays an important role in understanding and communicating. It is Dasein who speaks language, as a tool, to communicate and signify its reality, and to make it intelligible and understandable. The later writings are more ambiguous and poetic. For example, in his collection *Poetry, Language, Thought* in the essay ‘Language’ Heidegger writes simply that ‘*Language speaks*’ (2001: 188). This is difficult to understand, and one would ask what this means and why does Dasein not feature in this statement? To what extent did Heidegger ‘turn’ in his later thought away from his earlier? Exploring his ideas on

language will be insightful in answering these questions and understanding the possible ‘turn’ in Heidegger’s thought.

I will only rely on a few key texts to discuss this so-called ‘turn’. This passage, written by Heidegger in his preface to Richardson’s *Heidegger: Through Phenomenology to Thought* with reference to the distinction the author makes between Heidegger I and Heidegger II, is significant with regard to this ‘difference’ (or ‘turn’) between the two. He writes:

The distinction you make between Heidegger I and Heidegger II is justified only on the condition that this is kept constantly in mind: only by way of what Heidegger I has thought does one gain access to what is to-be-thought by Heidegger II. But Heidegger I becomes possible only if contained in Heidegger II (Richardson 1967: xxii).

With this in mind then, I will begin with a brief reading of the section in *Being and Time* entitled ‘Dasein and Discourse: Language’ (Heidegger 2000: 150). At the beginning of the section he opens with the following:

The fundamental existentials which constitutes the being of the there, the disclosedness of being-in-the-world, are attunement [*Befindlichkeit*] and understanding [*Verstehen*] (1996: 150).

These two modes are primary for Dasein in order to understand its being-in-the-world. Dasein is *attuned* to its mode of being and this attunement is constitutive of understanding. Dasein understands its own existence (*there-being*), i.e. is conscious of itself because that is its ontological disposition (attunement), and it uses this understanding of itself to attempt to comprehend its *thrownness*. The next passage important in this regard is: ‘*Discourse is existentially equiprimordial with attunement and understanding*’ (1996: 150). Heidegger refers to discourse [*Rede*] and not language [*Sprache*] because in the same paragraph he writes that: ‘*The existential-ontological foundation of language is discourse*’ (1996: 150). It seems here that language is founded on the basis of discourse, and its relation with attunement and understanding. One may initially construe ‘discourse’ and ‘language’ as designating

the same meaning. At this point in the text it is not clear and this distinction will be addressed.

Discourse is defined as ‘the “significant” articulation of the intelligibility of being-in-the-world, to which belongs being-with, and which maintains itself in a particular way of heedful being-with-one-another’ (Heidegger 1996: 151). The intelligibility of discourse implies that there is a shared meaning of signification between one Dasein and another and that language can be used to speak to another who is grounded in the same shared *world*. The term ‘discourse’ is also used in conjunction with the word ‘equiprimordial’ in reference to its relation to attunement and understanding. What constitutes the being-of-the-there of Dasein are the facets of attunement and understanding. In this regard discourse is of primary necessity in facilitating this attunement and understanding taking place, in the sense that there is an *equiprimordial* relationship between them. However, language is not referred to in this context because its foundation *is discourse* and it would, given the context, necessarily stem from discourse.

When the term ‘discourse’ is used in *Being and Time* an English speaker may be inclined to consider it as that which is spoken or heard by Dasein, but this is actually misleading - to an extent - due to the translation. The Oxford Dictionary readily defines ‘discourse’ as ‘written or spoken communication or debate’ (1999: 409), which could lead one to assume that for Heidegger ‘discourse’ and ‘language’ could be interchangeable. This is not the case. The definition of ‘discourse’ is broader and encompasses any activity of signification which increases Dasein’s understanding of itself and its world. Whether one is engaged in the act of speaking or listening, or in thought about something, or using a hammer to drive in a nail, one is engaged in an activity of disclosure and signification. Heidegger writes that ‘*Discourse is the articulation of intelligibility* [my emphasis]’ (1996: 150) and this implies *every* intelligible act of engagement with Being of which Dasein partakes.

Richardson’s discussion on the meaning of discourse demonstrates that the translation does not convey the real significance of the word. Heidegger uses the German word *Rede*, which can be translated as ‘speech’, ‘language’ or ‘discourse’ (1967: 66). However, as Richardson writes: ‘the word [referring to *Rede* or discourse] does not mean ‘language-as-spoken’ but the ontological constituent of There-being



which renders language possible' (1967: 66). One may still render the meaning of *Rede* in another way, as Richardson highlights, by pointing out that Heidegger uses the word *Rede* to translate the ancient Greek word λόγος (logos) (1967: 66). Logos is defined in the *Oxford Companion to Philosophy* in the following manner:

A Greek word, of great breadth of meaning, primarily signifying in the context of philosophical discussion the rational, intelligible principle, structure or order which pervades something (1995: 511).

The word may be rendered in many different ways such as: word, speech, language, order, structure, rationality, etc depending on the context. Heidegger renders it as *Rede* in the German and it is interesting to note that in the Afrikaans language the word *rede* means 'reason'. The definition of discourse: 'the "significant" articulation of the intelligibility of being-in-the-world, to which belongs being-with, and which maintains itself in a particular way of heedful being-with-one-another' (1996: 151) aligns itself with the order and structure that pervades Dasein's existence. Hence *Rede* (logos) intends to denote the ordered and meaningful state of inseparability Dasein has with its world (*being-in-the-world*). Discourse is concerned with the creation and understanding of *meaning*. These actions are manifest by Dasein through its interaction with its *world* - this Heidegger refers to as the 'totality of signification' (1996: 150). He writes that if the disclosedness of Dasein is primarily indicated by being-in-the-world, then discourse must also have a worldly mode of being. Furthermore, whatever is intelligible must possess a signifiable reality, in other words, it must be *sayable as a word and hence expressible in language* (1996: 151). What is constitutive of discourse taking place is language. Dasein is fundamentally attuned to its being-in-the-world through its disclosedness of being, which is realised through discourse, and made intelligible through language.

It is apparent that for Heidegger language is verbalised discourse (both terms, after all, share the same root: *logos*). He writes that 'Dasein has language' and further that, '[t]he human being shows himself as a being who speaks' (1996: 154,155). It is interesting to contrast a statement such as this with the line from *Poetry, Language, Thought*, '*Language speaks*' (2001: 188). There is clearly a difference. In the first

instance it is clear that Dasein *has* language, implying it in the sense of an inseparable, ontological possession, whereas in the second instance it would seem that language *itself* speaks, with Dasein taking on a secondary role, as a being moved by and unable to resist the originary, ontological energy of language itself. As a brief precursor to the actual discussion on the later Heidegger's conception of language I will state that in the earlier Heidegger it seems evident that Dasein *speaks* language - this much has been said. However, in the later Heidegger it is language that speaks humankind. Clearly the roles are changed - there is a 'turn' - though it remains to be discovered to what extent this is the case. Walsh (1991: 228) gives a succinct explanation on the earlier and later Heidegger's perception of language. He writes that:

In *Being and Time* language is understood methodically within the framework of representation... in his later work, however, language becomes the place where Being comes to show itself and live for a spell, a dwelling place opened up by a quasi-mystical, meditative thinking understood as *Gelassenheit*.

The term *Gelassenheit* plays an important role in the later Heidegger and will be discussed in this chapter. However to return to *Being and Time* in the context of writing that 'Dasein *has* [my emphasis] language', Heidegger goes further and ask whether or not it was by chance that the ancient Greeks described the 'essence of human being as *zoon logon echon*?' (1996: 154). He indicates (in a footnote written later than the original text of *Being and Time*) that this Greek term could be rendered as 'Human being as the 'gatherer', gathering towards being – presencing in the openness of beings' (1996: 154). It has been said that Heidegger often takes liberties with his interpretation of ancient Greek terms and phrases; on this criticism I do not have the expertise to comment. However, this Aristotelian statement would certainly indicate the following: *zoon* refers to a living thing, *logon* is derived from *logos* and has a multitude of meanings, but for this context it could be rendered as 'speaking' or 'language', and a simple rendering of *echon* would be 'possessing' or 'having'. The statement could be translated as 'the living thing that speaks' (or the living thing that *has* language), which would obviously indicate human being.

In this regard Heidegger makes a point worth noting: the statement ‘The human being shows himself as a being who speaks’ (1996: 155) does not merely indicate the vocalisation of words but rather that ‘this being is in the mode of discovering world and Dasein itself’ (1996: 155). This implies that the phenomenon of language does not necessarily mean the act of speaking or remaining silent. Rather language takes up the *same role* as discourse which, Heidegger points out, is how it was initially understood by the ancient Greeks (1996: 155). For the ancient Greeks there was no word for ‘language’ as such, rather this phenomenon was rendered in the same way as ‘discourse’: *logos*. It was through the development of grammar and logic that this distinction was originally made and Heidegger discusses this in more detail (1996: 155). What comes to light in this discussion is Heidegger’s desire to re-establish ‘linguistics on an ontologically more primordial function’ (1996: 155). He does this by recognising, following the ancient Greeks, the fundamental role of language (*logos*) for our being.

This intention of Heidegger’s opens up the path to placing language in a primordial ontological position as his thinking expands. His discussion of language and discourse in *Being and Time* contains the *beginning* of the realisation that the ontological dimension of language *is* the path to Being. This conception of language is not the typical understanding of language, entailing grammar and syntax and other formal linguistic and analytic requirements. Rather it reaches beyond Dasein’s comprehension of it, and aligns itself more readily with the definition of poetry developed in the second chapter - but this will be explored in the pages to come.

To return briefly to the ancient Greek description of human being as the living thing that possesses language, it is interesting to note how Heidegger interprets this Greek phrase, highlighting the notion of ‘gathering’. The word *logos* can also be rendered as ‘gathering’, which links with the other possible definitions such as structure or order. Language is an ordering of what is, through Dasein’s naming. Through naming beings Dasein *gathers* beings towards it and makes its world intelligible. In this regard Heidegger writes in *Letter on Humanism* that ‘Man is not the lord of beings. Man is the shepherd of Being. Man loses nothing in this “less”; rather, he gains in that he attains the truth of Being’ (1993: 245). The shepherd is one who *gathers* his flock and cares for it and this analogy implies that Dasein is also the

gatherer of beings - through language. This passage also brings forth the notion of 'care', in that Dasein must care for Being as a shepherd would care for his flock, and is responsible for Being because of the inseparable, entangled involvement of Dasein with beings. The word 'care' (*Sorge*) is one Heidegger discusses comprehensively in *Being and Time*.<sup>21</sup> However, for this discussion I will not explore a fuller definition of care; only mention the succinct account David Farrell Krell gives of it as a footnote in Heidegger's 'Letter on Humanism' in *Basic Writings* (1993). He writes that care is the name

for the structural whole of existence in all its modes and for the broadest and most basic possibilities of discovery and disclosure of self and world... "Care" is the all-inclusive name for my proper Being. It expresses the movement of my life out of a past, into a future, through the present (1993: 223).

Heidegger's conception of language, based only on an account of it in *Being and Time*, demonstrates that he is still finding a path in attempting to understand the phenomenon of language. The relationship between discourse and language is highlighted, especially in light of the fact that both terms find their root in the ancient Greek *logos*. However, language itself has not come to the fore, and it is only after the so-called 'turn' that its role will become vital for his later thought. It is interesting to note that towards the end of the section examined in *Being and Time* he asks a number of questions. He writes that philosophical research

must for once decide to ask what mode of being belongs to language in general. Is it an innerworldly useful thing at hand or does it have the mode of being of Dasein or neither of the two? What kind of being does language have if there can be a "dead" language? What does it mean ontologically that a language grows or declines? (Heidegger 1996: 155).

It is clear from these questions that for Heidegger there is still a great deal to be explored concerning the phenomenon of language. The last paragraph in this section

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<sup>21</sup> See section VI of Part I of *Being and Time* titled 'Care as the Being of Dasein'.

of *Being and Time* demonstrates this and also hints at its ontological importance. Heidegger writes:

The foregoing interpretation of language has the sole function of pointing out the ontological 'place' for this phenomenon in the constitution of being of Dasein and above all preparing the way for the following analysis, in which, taking as our guideline a fundamental kind of being belonging to discourse, in connection with other phenomena, we shall try to bring everydayness of Dasein into view in a way that is ontologically more primordial (1996: 156).

From this passage it is clear that a space is opened up for more thinking about language - that its importance is recognised - but not yet fully developed and explored. Kockelmans writes that when Heidegger realised the inconsistency of his thought on language in *Being and Time* he immediately gave up the idea that *Dasein* 'has' language and began to defend the view that *Dasein* 'is merely the place where language speaks (1984: 147). Kockelmans states further that for Heidegger after *Being and Time* 'language is no longer a tool, but it itself speaks, and man's speaking is merely a response to its speaking, a response which presupposes that *Dasein* must learn to hear and listen to what the language of Being has to say' (1984: 147). These sentiments become evident in his *Letter on Humanism* that the next section of this chapter explores.

### Language after the 'turn'

As the passage from Inwood states, the so-called 'turn' in Heidegger's thought occurred between *Being and Time* and the *Letter on Humanism* (2000: 231,232). In this section I will explore Heidegger's conception of language in his later writings, beginning with where this supposed 'turn' culminates – his *Letter on Humanism* and then discuss *The Question Concerning Technology* and some of the essays in *Poetry, Language, Thought* and *On the Way to Language*. It will become evident as the discussion develops that there is a substantial development between the earlier and later Heidegger's position on language. However, from this development of insight one should not assume that one position is incorrect and the earlier Heidegger was

wrong and the later correct - or vice versa - but rather that there is a continuation and expansion of thinking in his conception. To turn on a forest path does not necessarily imply that one must backtrack; instead, one may take a path that few have taken, and one may go off the beaten track, so to speak. And in doing so one may open up a new path that others may also walk. I believe that this is what Heidegger did in his later thinking on language and poetry.

Heidegger writes at the beginning of *Letter on Humanism*:

Thinking accomplishes the relation of Being to the essence of man. It does not make or cause the relation. Thinking brings this relation to Being solely as something handed over to it from Being. Such offering consists in the fact that in thinking Being comes to language. Language is the house of Being. In its home man dwells (1993: 217).

This passage, if compared with the discussion of language in *Being and Time*, illustrates a marked difference in the ontological significance of language and its role in our being. In *Being and Time* it is evident that it is Dasein who speaks (has/possesses) language. The inseparable entanglement of Dasein with Being is made intelligible through discourse, which is *equiprimordial* for Dasein's understanding its *thrownness*. The role of language facilitates this discourse. However, it is also clear that Heidegger is still asking the *question* of language and indicates that it is a phenomenon that requires further investigation. The discussion of language in *Being and Time* indicates that it is something unique, and necessary for making our world intelligible. The relationship Dasein has with language is clearly one that is about our possession (or *having*) of language. However, this *possession* does not indicate that language *belongs* to us. It is this subtle distinction that becomes evident in the later Heidegger. From the above passage it is evident that something has changed in this relationship. In his *Letter on Humanism* Heidegger situates language in a primary ontological sphere, beyond the complete comprehension of Dasein and more fundamental than understanding, attunement or discourse.

Perhaps Heidegger realised that the question concerning the meaning of Being (and its implications for language) in *Being and Time* was limited by the very nature of the analysis. There is a marked difference between the formal, analytic style of *Being and*

*Time* and his later writings - which are far more poetic and mysterious. Arguably Heidegger realised that the attempt to understand Being through *Being and Time* was not consistent because there was still an element of the subject present in *Being and Time* - in the form of *Dasein* - even though Heidegger's intent was to undermine this Cartesian remnant. In this regard Kockelmans writes that

Being itself, which in *Being and Time* was described as the total-meaningfulness of the world which is projected by *Dasein*, is later described as that which gives itself to man, determines him, and even dominates him... in *Being and Time* Heidegger had stated that as long as *Dasein* is, "is there" Being, and only as long as *Dasein* is, "is there" truth; in the later works, however, it is clear that the *Da* itself is thrown, and it is thrown by Being itself (1984: 32).

In the earlier Heidegger Being is reliant on the presence of *Dasein* for its existence. The question concerning the meaning of Being is a question asked by *Dasein* and this question recalls the presence of Being. This relationship is inverted after the 'turn' as Kockelmans writes, and this complicates matters. It is possible to comprehend Being if one begins with *Dasein* as the focal point - as the being who reveals Being through its being-in-the-world. However, to change this relationship requires a different way of thinking and a different approach to the question concerning the meaning of Being. This will become more evident when the term *Gelassenheit* is explored in due course.

To return to the *Letter on Humanism*, it is clear that Heidegger establishes a relational trinity between Being, language and thought. The comprehension of Being by humankind is accomplished by thought, for it is through conscious reflection that we come to understand something of Being. Language is the phenomenon that presents *Dasein* with the possibility of this thought and therefore language becomes the house of Being. The reason for this is that whenever one encounters a human being (one who has the gift of *logos*) one finds language (Kockelmans 1972: 3). If *Dasein* reflects on what and how it is, then language readily presents itself as its defining feature. Without language *Dasein* would not have the potential for thought and would be unable to 'gather' B/beings itself. In this regard language is constitutive and originary in constituting the *thinking* of human being.

Language becomes the house of Being in that the human encounter creates the possibility for the contemplation of the meaning of Being. Language gives us the potential to ask the question of Being. Without the gift of language Being could not reveal itself. Yet to bring man back to the *nearness* (*Nähe*) of Being Heidegger writes that

he must first exist in the nameless... before he speaks man must first let himself be claimed again by Being, taking the risk that under this claim he will seldom have much to say. Only thus will the pricelessness of its essence be once more bestowed upon the word, and upon man a home for dwelling in the truth of Being (1993: 223).

In this passage Heidegger alludes to the remembering of Being, implying the sacrifice of the Dasein of *Being and Time* in favour of the human being relinquishing itself to the mystery of Being. There is an underlying parallel of this sentiment in Japanese Zen meditation where the self-conscious, individuated subject must attempt to extinguish and surrender its own subjective and separately perceived existence in order to contemplate the 'Nothing' - or the no-thing - for Being is precisely the no-thing.<sup>22</sup> Perhaps what Heidegger also implies in the passage is that to 'exist in the nameless' is to attempt to exist without any previously conceived concepts of language as a phenomenon that names and signifies *things* and subsequently cannot describe and comprehend the 'thing' which is both *nothing* and *no-thing*. To enter the realm of the *nameless* is to give up beings and surrender to the claim of Being. Thereby one is brought back towards the remembering of Being which allows 'man a home for dwelling in the truth of Being'.

A 'system' of language as signification and correspondence is arguably linked with Cartesian thinking. To describe language in dualistic, structuralist terms (in terms of the signifier and signified) reduces language to a tool that permits it to be objectified. This could be compared to reducing Dasein to a subject (perceived by other subjects as an object), which limits the ontological breadth of that being because this reduction separates that being from its (inseparable) being-in-the-world. Hence what underlies Heidegger's 'quasi-mystical' ideas is his attempt to push us beyond our previous

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<sup>22</sup> It is interesting to note that some of the first serious writings about Heidegger's thinking emerged from Japan.



conceptions of language as a system of signs. This requires a more poetic and open approach to thinking about language. He writes that ‘the liberation of language from grammar into a more original essential framework is reserved for thought and poetic creation’ (1993: 218).

In *Letter on Humanism* he says that ‘thinking is *l’engagement* [the engagement] by and for the truth of Being’, and that to understand this engagement - which constitutes the essence of thinking - ‘we must free ourselves from the technical interpretation of thinking’ (1993: 218). For the later Heidegger language and thought occupy the same ontological sphere, in that thinking is constitutive of language and both are inextricable phenomena. Language becomes that which *embeds* human being in Being, in that our dwelling is not just a being-in-the-world but becomes more emphatically conceptualised as our *being-in-language*. That is why our existence occurs within this uncanny ontological space or *clearing* - opened up by Being. In order to contemplate the essence of thought - which is the path to Being - we find ourselves on the way to language.

Two important essays that discuss this concern of Heidegger’s regarding the freeing of ourselves from our ‘technical interpretation of thinking’ can be mentioned at this point. The first is *The Question Concerning Technology* that has already been discussed at the beginning of this chapter. This essay highlights the danger the technological attitude and its enframing of beings poses - not only for Dasein - but also for thinking and language as such. In this essay Heidegger takes the question of the predominance of technical (calculative) thought very seriously, because if this predominance is ignored it will undermine all other ways of thinking (and hence also other ways of being). However, Heidegger also writes that, paradoxically, contained within this overwhelming technological drive, one could find the *saving power*, the redemptive moment that allows us to perceive and helps loosen the grip of the technological enframing.

For Heidegger the ‘essence of technology, as a destining [*Schicksal*] of revealing, is the danger’ (1993: 333).<sup>23</sup> The essence of technology is that it produces a very

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<sup>23</sup> The word ‘destining’ – *Schicksal*, in this context, means ‘the inevitability of an unalterable course’ (Inwood 2000: 69). This implies that the danger of technological enframing is that it has become our destiny. However, technology is also a ‘*Geschick der Entbergung* - ‘fate of unconcealing’, [therefore] a

specific worldview, one that is reductive in that it discloses the world according to a paradigm that *limits* beings to a productive, technological mode. He writes that:

The actual threat has already afflicted man in his essence. The rule of enframing threatens man with the possibility that it could be denied to him to enter into a more original revealing and hence to experience the call of a more primordial truth' (1993: 333).

However, as already mentioned, it is paradoxically this threat that contains within it the saving power. Heidegger writes,

in enframing, which threatens to sweep man away into ordering as the ostensibly sole way of revealing, and so thrusts man into the danger of the surrendering of his *free essence* [my emphasis] – it is precisely in this extreme danger that the innermost indestructible belongingness of man within granting may come to light, provided that we, for our part, begin to pay heed to the essence of technology (1993: 337).

In order to overcome the grip of technological enframing requires that we are not entirely swept up within it and remain alert to its influence on the world. Heidegger argues that *intuitively* human beings will not succumb to technological enframing because we value and will preserve our 'free essence'. If we perceive that we are in danger of losing this to technology, then the threat of this occurring will undermine itself. According to him this essence of human freedom manifests itself through *poetic revealing*. What Heidegger advocates in *The Question Concerning Technology* is not technological thinking, because that discloses and furthers only technological enframing. What he calls for is the saving power of poetry - in the broadest definition one can give it according to his *Origin of the Work of Art*. The poetic realm is the realm of *possibility* because it reveals the essence of human freedom - the freedom of possibility, which is not restricted to the technological mode. This is the encounter of 'poetry' and 'dwelling', which creates the meaning of our freedom. The 'saving

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providential blessing sent to us by being itself. It is thus an epoch in the history of being' (Inwood 2000: 69). This blessing is the 'saving power' that technology contains.

power' of poetry has a direct influence with the way we live in the world and dwell upon the earth. These ideas will develop in the fourth and final chapter.

The second essay that is important with regard to the statement in *Letter on Humanism*: 'thinking is *l'engagement* [engagement] by and for the truth of Being' and that to understand this engagement 'we must free ourselves from the technical interpretation of thinking' (1993: 218) is Heidegger's *Discourse on Thinking*. This discusses the prominence of calculative thought and highlights the need for a more kind of meditative thinking. This takes the form of what Heidegger terms *Gelassenheit* (*releasement*). The word *Gelassenheit* occupies a central role in the later Heidegger and describes his approach towards the remembering of Being, and also to our surrendering to the call of Being. *Gelassenheit*, as the translation would have it, could be rendered as 'releasement towards things' [*Die Gelassenheit zu den Dingen*] and Heidegger addresses this explicitly in his memorial address in *Discourse on Thinking* (1969: 54). He uses another term in conjunction with 'releasement towards things' and it is 'openness to the mystery [*Offenheit für das Geheimnis*]' . He writes:

Releasement towards things and openness to the mystery belong together. They grant us the possibility of dwelling in the world in a totally different way. They promise us a new ground and foundation upon which we can stand and endure in the world of technology without being imperilled by it (1969: 55).

Meditative thinking, as a way of overcoming the technological attitude and as an alternative to the predominance of calculative thinking, requires the attitude of *Gelassenheit* and *being open to the mystery*, for this reveals the possibility of *transcending* a technologically enframed world. Calculative thinking instigates technological enframing that dominates all aspects of our existence and ascribes productivity to everything that we do. All *mystery* must be uncovered because it can be harnessed for the forces of production. There can be no *hiddenness* to our world because everything must be made *transparent*. Sheehan, following Heidegger, expresses these same sentiments regarding the technological attitude: 'Entities are understood to be, in principle, endlessly knowable by an ideally omniscient reason and totally dominable by a would-be omnipotent will' (2003: 114). And Heidegger

writes in his essay *The Question Concerning Technology*: ‘The essential unfolding of technology threatens revealing, threatens it with the possibility that all revealing will be consumed in ordering and that everything will present itself only in the unconcealment of standing reserve’ (1993: 339).

Yet, even in the danger of this disclosed, ordered technological drive Heidegger writes in *Discourse on Thinking* that:

*The meaning pervading technology hides itself.* But if we explicitly and continuously heed the fact that such hidden meaning touches us everywhere in the world of technology, we stand at once in the realm of that which hides itself from us, and hides itself just in approaching us. That which shows itself and at the same time withdraws is the essential trait of what we call the mystery (1969: 55).

We must ask ourselves why the meaning of technology hides itself? I think that the meaning of technology hides itself in the fact that technology would purport to have *no mystery*. Technology exists to be as *unmysterious* as possible because this allows the calculative precedent and functionality of technology to be maximized. This would imply that language (and thinking) is also subject to the conformity of technological enframing. Technology serves to make the world a non-mysterious place, enframed according to the efficiency and productivity that the technological attitude creates. In other words, technology is solely concerned with disclosing - in a specific and restrictive sense. If this is the case then why would Heidegger write that the meaning of technology hides itself, when this is the last thing it would intentionally do?

I think that the answer to this question we find at the opening of Heidegger’s *Introduction to Metaphysics* (2000). He asks the question: ‘[w]hy are there beings at all instead of nothing? That is the question’ (2000: 1). It is a difficult question to ask, yet this question contains the beginning of all other questions, because *this* question extends from the fact that any question we ask must be because *there is something*. A question such as this returns us to the *mystery*. The mystery is simply that *there is something* instead of nothing. The hidden mystery in technology is that it *exists*; it is part of the mysteriousness of Being.

This is the reason meditative thinking is important - because it allows us to be *released towards things and open to the mystery of Being*. Heidegger writes that

the way to what is near is always the longest and thus the hardest for us humans. This is the way of meditative thinking. Meditative thinking demands of us not to cling one-sidedly to a single idea, nor to run down a one-track course of ideas. Meditative thinking demands of us that we engage ourselves with what at first sight does not go together at all (1969: 53).

Meditative thinking is not calculative thinking, or interpreting thought in a technical sense. Rather it calls us to come to the presence of Being and to appreciate the mystery that there is, in fact, something. Poetry is the *clearing* that allows this meditative thought to emerge, through bringing us into the Open, and allowing us to stand within and before the mystery of Being.

The question concerning technology becomes a question about the essence of human freedom. The reason for this is because the essence of modern technology is enframing and this enframing is a 'challenging-forth into ordering... an ordaining of destining, as in every way of revealing' (1993: 330). Enframing becomes a way of *revealing* and this creates a *specific destiny* for the world. For Heidegger the occurrence of revealing is something that is *intimately* linked with freedom because only through the *space of human freedom* can a clearing exist for revealing to take place. Human freedom 'is the realm of the destining that at any given time starts a revealing on its way' (1993: 330). Heidegger implies that when one looks for the *essence* of technology one comes to enframing - *yet* enframing is a form of revealing (a *destining*). Revealing is something made possible through human freedom and this means that the essence of technology deals with the question of *our* freedom.

The danger present is that enframing is a specific kind of revealing – an ordering, and as a destining

it banishes man into the kind of revealing that is an ordering [and] drives out every other possibility of revealing... the rule of enframing threatens man with the possibility that it could be denied to him to enter into a more original revealing and hence to experience the call of a more primal truth (1993: 332, 333).

Paradoxically, through technological enframing - which threatens to destroy any other ways of revealing - man confronts the essence of his freedom and the realisation that he is in danger of surrendering his free essence to technological enframing. Heidegger writes that

it is precisely in this extreme danger that the innermost indestructible belongingness of man within granting may come to light, provided that we, for our part, begin to pay heed to the essence of technology (1993: 337).

Hence it is this danger that technology reveals (as enframing) that allows us to perceive the *saving power*, which is to reaffirm the essence of human freedom. This is why Heidegger is so fond of the *poetic* lines from Hölderlin that appear in *The Question Concerning Technology* (1993: 340):

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

In these lines he finds a validation for his ideas concerning the essence of technology, which are then further substantiated by the following line from Hölderlin (1993: 340):

poetically man dwells on this earth.

This is the core of the argument. The essence of human freedom and human possibility manifest themselves through poetic dwelling (which reveals itself through human freedom). This is *not* an ordering of beings, rather this freedom brings about the possibility of *Gelassenheit*, and even the danger inherent in technology cannot overcome this. Rather, if man remembers and heeds his call to become the guardian of Being, then even the danger of enframing - because its essence (revealing) still contains the essence of freedom - will allow us to recognise and realise this freedom. This is where the saving power resides.

It is clear that if one regards technological enframing as a danger to human freedom, then language (as a phenomenon inseparable from what is ontologically

defining about our being-in-the-world) would too become inhibited and limited by the dictates of enframed ordering. In Heidegger's *Letter on Humanism* he briefly mentions the 'widely and rapidly spreading devastation of language' that arises from a threat to the essence of humanity (1993: 222). This threat, though he is not explicit about it at this stage of his writing (*Letter on Humanism* (1947) appears chronologically before *The Question Concerning Technology* (1954)), implies the danger contained in technological enframing. He does write in *Letter on Humanism* that 'language surrenders itself to our mere willing and trafficking as an instrument of domination over beings' (1993: 223), highlighting language as a *controlling* mechanism and as a means to ordering what is enframed. With this approach

we encounter beings as actualities in a calculative businesslike way, but also scientifically and by way of philosophy, with explanations and proofs. Even the assurance that something is inexplicable belongs to these explanations and proofs. With such statements we believe that we confront the mystery (1993: 223).

The point is to *confront and unravel the mystery*, and thereby attempt to make it non-mysterious. This would be the goal of technological enframing. Language, used as a tool to dominate and order beings, would be decisive in allowing this ordering and exacting to occur. Language serves as an *instrument* to make everything explicable and therefore controllable. Yet, in our instrumental use of language, according to technical and calculative thought, Heidegger writes that it 'still denies us its essence: that it is the house of the truth of Being' (1993: 223).

What is the essence of language if Heidegger describes it as the 'house of the truth of Being?' He writes that language is not the utterance of an organism, neither is it the expression of a living thing, nor does its essence reside in its symbolic character. Rather, '[l]anguage is the clearing-concealing advent of Being itself' (1993: 230). Kockelmans discusses this relationship in the following way:

Being comes, illuminating itself, to language. It is constantly on the way to language. In this way, language itself is raised into the clearing of Being. Language *is* only in this manner (1984: 152).

What is evident in this relationship is the *nearness* of language to Being, in fact, Kockelmans writes that for Heidegger ‘[l]anguage simply *is* Being itself formed into word’ (1984: 149). One may think that this formation is reliant upon the influence of Dasein to *bring* language to Being. This is not the case - as it may be with the earlier Heidegger of *Being and Time*. Rather, even though one might argue that it is Dasein who has created language,

in fact it discovers itself only in and with language. It also follows that Dasein in its speaking can come to the truth only when its own listening and speaking are directed towards the saying of Being (Kockelmans 1984: 149).

Here Kockelmans expresses the later Heidegger’s conception of the relationship between Dasein, language and Being. For Dasein to ‘come to truth’ it must let itself be claimed by Being - and this can only occur through language. Heidegger’s ontological project - the remembering of Being - can only happen through this understanding of language. And this happening is clearly linked to the mysterious and poetic element contained in language.

In its basic outline Heidegger’s *Letter on Humanism* is a critique of humanism because humanism is still a form of metaphysics and ‘closes itself to the simple essential fact that man essentially occurs only in his essence, where he is claimed by Being’ (1993: 227). Humanism (or any metaphysical system for that matter), according to Heidegger, does not allow this disclosure to occur. Heidegger’s critique of metaphysics in general is that even though metaphysics *does* represent beings in their Being and so thinks the Being of beings, ‘it *does not* [my emphasis] think the difference of both. Metaphysics does not ask about the truth of Being itself. Nor does it therefore ask in what way the essence of man belongs to the truth of Being’ (1993: 226). For Heidegger, if our understanding of language is governed according to the dictates of a specific metaphysical system then this will conceal the *essence* of language. This essence is that it is the house of Being and in this home man finds his essence. The discovery of this essence occurs through thinking, ‘for thinking in its saying merely brings the unspoken word of Being to language’ (Heidegger 1993: 262). Thinking is what brings man into the *nearness* of Being because of the inextricable relationship between language and thought.



Language and Poetry

At this point I will discuss a number of Heidegger's ideas on language in his later essay collection: *Poetry, Language, Thought* and *On the Way to Language*. Up to now, as we have seen in *Letter on Humanism*, Heidegger attempts to define language in its *nearness* to Being. The essence of language - in this context - is the 'clear-concealing advent of Being itself' (1993: 230). However, in his later essays on language, Being does not present itself as strongly in these discussions. Rather, Heidegger is attempting to find the *meaning of language in itself*. Thus, in his essay simply titled 'Language' (in the collection *Poetry, Language, Thought*) he writes that to discuss language is to bring to 'its place of being not so much language as ourselves: our own gathering into the appropriation [*Ereignis/Er-eignung/Ge-eignet*]' (2001: 188). Hence, reflecting on language means we must reflect on our own existence, in that language fulfils this capacity and ability to reflect. The question now is: what is language if it allows this possibility to emerge? And Heidegger answers this very cryptically: 'Language itself is – language and nothing besides. Language itself is language' (2001: 188). This statement is tautological and, arguably meaningless because it does not tell us anything about language as such. This Heidegger himself is quick to acknowledge by asking the question: how is merely saying the same thing twice supposed to get us anywhere? And to this he replies: 'But we do not want to get anywhere. We would like only, for once, to get to just where we are already' (2001: 188).

This could mean that to discover how language occurs *as language* we must allow language to speak - and in speaking - language will show itself as language. For Heidegger we must let language speak (2001: 188), and not confuse language speaking with our own speaking; only in doing this is it possible that

language will call us from there and grant us its nature. We leave the speaking to language. We do not wish to ground language as something else that is not language itself, nor do we wish to explain other things by means of language (2001: 189).

How is this possible? What does Heidegger mean and what is the sense of writing these things? Perhaps, we look for more meaning than what is written by posing such questions. Yet, there is simply no more to be said, for the statement that ‘language itself is language’ is self-fulfilling. Heidegger writes that these ideas confront us with an abyss over which he says we must ‘hover’ as long as we hold these thoughts in our thinking (2001: 189). There is no bottom to this abyss; no ground is to be found whereby our thinking on language may take root.

Heidegger is attempting to discover the essence of language - to find *the meaning* of language. To do this where does one begin? With language. Of course, we would reply: ‘But this does not get us *anywhere*’, and this, as Heidegger has already mentioned, is the point. He is not looking for a definition of language, or a concept that describes language as a system of meaning or something pertaining to a symbolic order or as a means of communication. Language is certainly all these things, and yet, in its *essence* it is none of them. If one was seeking a philosophical account of language and grounded this account within a metaphysical system, then the essence of language is accorded a foundation. In other words, one is trying to *get* language somewhere other than where it is. If one looks for the nature of language and finds it in *something else*, then the nature of language is betrayed by the metaphysical system that *supposedly* contains it. This is why writing ‘language *is* language’ confronts one with an abyss, because we can look nowhere else for the meaning of this statement. ‘Language is language’ encompasses itself: it tells us everything we could want to know about the essence of language and yet confronts us with nothing.

For Heidegger, if we reflect on and attend exclusively to language ‘then language requires of us that we first of all put forward everything that belongs to language as language’ (1982: 120). What is it that belongs to language? Arguably, it is *our being* that is primary in this belonging. The way this being finds itself in language is through the speaking of it. For Heidegger, the speaking of mortals ‘takes place as that which grants an abode for the being of mortals’ (2001: 190). To stand before language as language is to confront our own existence - not as a being speaking language - but as a being *bespoken by language*. Through language we find a dwelling place in Being, for language, in this regard, is the house of Being. If it is language that speaks (and not us) then where do we find this speaking? According to Heidegger - in what is

spoken (2001: 192). Speaking, if we return to the idea of *logos*, is the gathering of beings into their presencing. Language (not humans) allows the presence of things to manifest in their being by calling them forth into Being. Where does language find itself in its most *pure presencing*? In the form of poetry (Heidegger 2001: 192). Here is the crossover between language and poetry for Heidegger and for this dissertation. Language finds itself spoken purely in the poem. For poetry is what fulfils language to itself. And it is in poetry that human beings discover the power and mystery of language.

At this point in his essay Heidegger explores a poem by G. Trakl titled ‘A Winter Evening’ (2001: 192). The reason he gives for this is that ‘Language speaks. We are now seeking the speaking of language in the poem. According, what we seek lies in the poetry of the spoken word’ (2001: 194). In expanding the ideas that ‘Language is itself language’ and that ‘Language speaks’ Heidegger does not look towards an explanation as such, for he knows that this will defeat the intention of his writing on language. Rather, he looks towards a poem - not to answer these statements - but to demonstrate them. If the reader experiences the poem in the manner intended by Heidegger then what may be revealed is the way in which the language of the poem *speaks*, through the use of the poetic imagination of the reader. Heidegger is positing a metaphoric theory of poetry that has ontological implications for our experience of language. One would readily agree that a poem contains figures of speech such as metaphor, simile and others. However, for Heidegger one must conceive of the entire poem as metaphoric and in doing so allow the language of the poem itself to speak. Poetry reveals what ordinary, everyday language cannot because the language of poetry *speaks purely*. The truth of the poem does not reside in the words but in the *speaking* - which is more than the words themselves contain.

In this regard one should return to the passage from Heidegger’s *The Origin of the Work of Art*:

what poetry, as illuminating projection, unfolds of unconcealedness and projects ahead into the design of the figure, is the Open which poetry lets happen, and indeed in such a way that only now, in the midst of beings, the Open brings beings to shine and ring out’ (2001: 70).

The 'Open' could be interpreted as the realm of poetic imagination, which is the encounter of possibility for the being of Dasein. The *speaking* of language in the poem allows this realm to open itself up to human being. According to Heidegger this occurs through *stillness*. He writes that: '*Language speaks as the peal of stillness*' (2001: 205). To understand *stillness* I need to give an account of the concept of 'difference' that Heidegger discusses in his essay 'Language'.

In the essay he refers to the idea of *calling*, in that the language in the poem functions as a way of naming things. In this naming it *calls* things into the nearness, in that it gives them presence. Yet in this presence is also absence because the thing called is called by a word, and is itself, in physical form, not present. For example, consider the opening of *East Coker* from Eliot's *Four Quartets*:

In my beginning is my end. In succession  
Houses rise and fall, crumble, are extended,  
Are removed, destroyed, restored, or in their place  
Is an open field, or a factory, or a by-pass  
Old stone to new building, old timber to new fires,  
Old fires to ash, and ashes to the earth  
Which is already flesh, fur and faeces,  
Bone of man and beast, cornstalk and leaf.

(Eliot 1985: 196)

In this passage one is brought into the presence of these things, described by their words. These things in the *world* of the poem are called into nearness by its *speaking*. Even though the reader may be in a library or in front of a computer and experience the reality of the presence of those physical surroundings, through reading the lines from the poem the world of the poem is called into *nearness*. The question Heidegger asks now is which presence is higher: 'that of these present things or the presence of what is called?' (2001: 196). He does not answer the question, but instead he immediately follows this question with two lines from the poem by Trakl. Therefore the answer to the question resides in the experience of the words of the poem and how they affect us. If we consider the Eliot passage then this experience of *nearness*

becomes more evident. Arguably, if the intent of those lines is felt and appreciated then in whatever situation the reader is in, the presence of those lines becomes *more present* in their particular manifestation to the reader's creative imagination. In this sense poetry lets the Open manifest itself, in that it brings to presence thoughts, experiences and possibilities that would have remained absent without our encounter with the poem (or artwork). The experience of the poem also allows us to return to reality and experience it in a renewed - perhaps more mysterious way - because our experience of the poem alters our hermeneutic horizon.

For Heidegger what happens in the naming within a poem is that things are gathered into the fourfold (*das Geviert*), which consists of sky, earth, mortals and divinities (2001: 197). Through this unifying gathering one encounters the world. The fourfold is a vital part of the later Heidegger's thinking and will be explored in greater detail in the last chapter. His intention, in the context of the fourfold, is to highlight how naming brings things to the world. In naming a thing one calls it to presence, but in so doing one also calls the *world* of that thing to presence. For Heidegger there is a relationship between the thing and its world whereby each penetrates the other. They are intimate but not fused into one. Rather they remain separate and a division prevails, which he refers to as the 'dif-ference' (2001: 199). This deals with the way a thing is grounded in its world. The two are separate, in that they are *different* from one another but one cannot understand the being of a thing if one does not understand the world in which that thing is embedded. He writes that: 'The dif-ference for world and thing *disclosingly appropriates* things into bearing a world; it *disclosingly appropriates* world into the granting of things' (2001: 200). Although he does not say it explicitly at this point, the 'dif-ference' is language, in that when language names a thing it 'discloses' it (reveals it, or 'frees' it) from its world because the thing itself is brought to presence. It is *differed* from its world - yet at the same time a thing cannot be a thing without recourse to the world which grants the thing its *thingliness*. This unifying yet *differed* tension of presence is created through the *dif-ference* of language.

If one reads the passage from Eliot one can discern many things that are named in the poem and brought to *nearness*. Yet at the same time it is evident that these things cannot be disclosed in their fullness without the world that brings them to being. One

could highlight the thing that is called ‘house’ which represents beginnings and endings, possibilities both actual and imagined. It also brings us to appreciate the tension between earth and world brought into being by the naming of the thing. The house becomes a unifying thing that allows us to *differentiate* aspects of its world. Even things such as ‘fur’, ‘faeces’, ‘cornstalk’ and ‘leaf’ are present as things yet possess in themselves, through the context of the poem, another dimension entirely. They are not simply things but through their naming they allow us to appropriate a world, through the dif-fering of language in the poem.

Now one can consider the idea of ‘rest’ or ‘stilling’ that Heidegger discusses with reference to the dif-ference. The dif-ference

stills by letting things rest in the world’s favour. It stills by letting the world suffice itself in the thing... Thus stilled, thing and world never escape from the dif-ference. Rather they rescue it in the stilling, where the dif-ference is itself the stillness (2001: 204).

This is somewhat paradoxical. The dif-ference - as the unifying tension between the world and thing - is manifest in language. Hence language allows (and bears) the stillness or resting of the thing and world to reveal itself. This returns us to the idea that ‘*Language speaks as the peal of stillness*’, and that this peal is not anything human (Heidegger 2001: 205). The paradox is that not only does *language speak*; it also speaks as the *peal of stillness*, which one may construe as meaning silence. However, Heidegger has not written that language speaks through *silence*, but rather that language speaks through *stillness*. His intention is to demonstrate the *stilling* effect that language has when it brings the dif-ference into being. The thing and its world come to presence through the *gathering* and *stilling* force of language.

To illustrate this one could return to the house in the passage from Eliot. Through the calling of the house to presence the house is *stilled* and comes to rest in this presence. This stillness created through language allows the house to reveal the tension between itself and its world. Language speaks through this *happening*. In the essay now Heidegger reflects on the role of human being in this relationship with language. He writes that ‘Man speaks in that he responds to language. This

responding is a hearing. It hears because it listens to the command of stillness' (2001: 207). Mortals dwell in the speaking of language in that they respond to this difference. Heidegger writes that this '*presencing* of language *needs* and *uses* the speaking of mortals in order to sound as the peal of stillness for the hearing of mortals' (2001: 205). Through our coming to terms with the difference manifest through language we find our voice and come to conceive of ourselves as *beings-in-language*, through the hearing of this stillness.

It is difficult to fully comprehend these ideas. They do not conform to the exactness and clarity that some philosophy aspires to and hence they may frustrate the reader. What should be clear from the discussion are two aspects. The first is that Heidegger avoids *defining* language according to a descriptive definition because this would reduce language to a specific, limited capacity (e.g. technological enframing). For Heidegger the *essence* of language is contained in *itself*, and this makes it difficult for us to access the meaning of this phenomenon entirely. Our appropriation of (or being appropriated by) language is never complete. Language is a *happening*, which implies that language has a *dif-fering* nature that is always becoming and yet, paradoxically, comes most near to us in the *stillness* of the poem.

The second aspect is that the only way *we* can come into the nearness of language is through listening and surrendering to the call of language (i.e. allow ourselves to be appropriated by it). Heidegger tries to *think* language and moves beyond the restrictions of metaphysical philosophy into the realm of more open thought (*Gelassenheit*). His later writings are imbued with a poetic sensibility - which makes them difficult - but this is important because it undermines the reader's possible preconceptions of language and opens up an original and profound approach. This can only happen through an attitude of *Gelassenheit* and through seeking out what is *purely spoken*. For this seeking one must look to poetry.

## Chapter 4 - Poetic dwelling

The world about us would be desolate except for the world within us.  
The major poetic idea in the world is and always has been the idea of God.

After one has abandoned a belief in God,  
poetry is the essence which takes its place as life's redemption.

Wallace Stevens – *Opus Posthumus*  
(Taken from C. Taylor's *Sources of the Self*, 1989: 493)

In this dissertation there are three key concepts that have been discussed thus far: authenticity, poetry and language. All pertain directly to the way in which we experience life. The argument is thus: an authentic existence requires from us that we understand and appreciate the possibility of our individual (and communal) existence. This understanding of the possibilities inherent in our individual and collective being emerges from a reflection on language and, specifically the language spoken in poetry. In this realm we encounter the Open (the *clearing*) and through this we find our redemption. This redemption is the freeing of ourselves from the *grip* of technological enframing, re-appropriate the remembering and presence of B/being and coming to realise our own authentic existence.

According to Julian Young in his *The Death of God and the Meaning of Life* the *earlier* Heidegger establishes a meaning for human being that is not personal but communal (2003: 198). He argues that the earlier Heidegger, like the other philosophers he discusses after the death of God (Sartre, Foucault, Derrida, Camus and 'posthumous' Nietzsche), does not offer a universal, transcendental meaning of life. One can discover the meaning of one's *own* life within the community, but seeking a universal meaning and purpose to life itself is futile. However, for Young, the *later* Heidegger does propose a meaning of life for all humanity and it deals, simply, with our role as the guardians of Being (2003: 208). This idea has already appeared in this dissertation, where the role of man as the *shepherd* of Being is discussed. For Young the essence of the meaning of our collective human existence is found here. This is in contrast to man as the exploiter of the world, driven and



enframed by the technological attitude, which has also been highlighted in this dissertation and which also plays an important role - according to Young's reading - of the meaning of life in the later Heidegger.

His argument is that Heidegger returns to the ancient Greeks to demonstrate the difference between the modern technological conception of 'making' in comparison to the Greek concept *poiesis*, which means 'bringing forth' and also means 'poetry' (Young 2003: 199). Young gives a summary of the argument in the following manner: For the Greeks there were two types of 'bringing forth' (*poiesis*), one is referred to as *physis* and pertains to the bringing forth found in nature, such as a flower blossoming or a tree growing from a sapling. The other deals with the creative activity of human beings, which is referred to as *technē* and 'occurs when nature's blossoming is aided by the hand of the craftsman or artist – the Greeks drew no distinction between the two, classifying both as *technites*' (Young 2003: 199). The question for Young is why did the ancient Greeks consider both activities to stem from the same root – *poiesis*? The reason is that for them the world they inhabited was infused with a *divine mystery*, which was incomprehensible and yet capable of a breathtaking and awesome creative power (Young 2003: 200). Human beings were also infused with this mystery because they could partake of this creative force through the creation of crafts and artworks. Yet both natural and human activities extended from the same root. From Heidegger's perspective, ancient Greek *technology* would be a 'conserving and bringing forth upon nature' (Young 2003: 201) that would take place within a harmonious balance - whereas modern technology is an enframing and exploitation of nature.

For Heidegger, the remembering of the mystery of Being deals with understanding the world and earth in terms of *poiesis*, and with this realisation emerges the experience of possibilities of being, not limited solely to and enframed by the technological attitude. Instead, we again begin to appreciate and perceive the 'infinite depth, the boundlessness of Being' and conceptualise the world as 'something *granted* to us, something which, rather than being *of course* there, is something precious which *might not have been*, something fragile and precious' (Young 2003: 207). Following Heidegger's *Discourse on Thinking*, we must open ourselves to the *mystery* that there *is* something and not nothing. If we can contemplate this (through

*meditative* thought) then we can enter into a more profound and more authentic relationship with Being, and our task as humanity and the meaning of our collective being will emerge: the guardianship of Being.

One may ask why this should be the case? Why should we be the guardians of Being? And in reply to this question, Young (following Heidegger) writes that if we can contemplate the world in its mysteriousness, then we would come to realise that the world is a *holy* place and hence ‘*we have no choice* but to stand to it in a relation of respect and reverence’ (2003: 210). From this realisation our natural course to follow would be to take up our role as the guardians of Being. This would enable us to dwell poetically.

Poetry (also *poiesis*) is invaluable in this context because of the depth and breadth of the term developed in chapter two. For Heidegger the poet occupies a primary place regarding the mystery of Being, which he discusses in ‘What Are Poets For’ in his *Poetry, Language, Thought* collection. I mention this briefly because it has reference to the world as a *holy* place. One could argue that the world that we live in has become completely overwhelmed by technological enframing, to the point that *any* other way of conceiving the world is irredeemably lost and forgotten. To use Hölderlin’s words (taken from Heidegger’s writings in ‘What are Poets for?’) the time now is one of destitution; the gods have fled and there is very little hope for us to re-establish our dwelling with the fourfold (*das Geviert*). Our age is one of nihilism - on the edge of the abyss. In the past one would have looked to the priest or the holy man for meaning, yet now, in this destitute time, their words are fruitless and vacuous. This Heidegger realises. Now, if one asks where the guardians of the holy are to be found, the reply is: in the embodiment of the poets.

This is already evident in the title of Heidegger’s essay: ‘What are Poets for?’ and in asking this question as a title he emphasises how important it is - especially for this time of destitution and homelessness. The poets have become the guardians and the keepers of the holy. Heidegger writes:

To be a poet in a destitute time means: to attend, singing, to the trace of the fugitive gods. This is why the poet in the time of the world’s night utters the holy (2001: 92).

The poets are the ‘rememberers’ of the mystery and holiness of Being. This does not apply simply to any one who pretends to be a poet though. For Heidegger

it is a necessary part of the poet’s nature that, before he can be truly a poet in such an age, the time’s destitution must have made the whole being and vocation of the poet a poetic question for him (2001: 92).

It is obvious that Hölderlin is a poet of this calibre. Another poet whom Heidegger considers in this particular essay is Rainer Maria Rilke, who also has the poetic sensibility to perceive the destitution of the time clearly (2001: 94).

I believe that Eliot is another poet of the kind of calibre that Heidegger is describing. If one reads *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*, *Portrait of a Lady*, *Preludes*, *The Waste Land* and *The Hollow Men* it is evident that these poems deal with a destitute and inauthentic existence. I believe Eliot suffered the disillusionment of his age intensely, especially because he carried within him the burden and sensibilities of the poet. The destruction of the First World War had completely disillusioned him and at a ‘material, intellectual, and spiritual level – in all senses – Eliot’s world was laid waste’ (Watson 2000: 188). Thus Eliot’s burden as a poet, if we bear in mind the opening quotation from Wallace Stevens, was to find the words to express redemption in life, particularly in a destitute time. For it is in a world that is in danger of forgetting poetry where poetry becomes the most vital form of redemption. As Hölderlin writes:

But where there is danger, there grows  
also what saves

(Heidegger 2001: 115)

Eliot’s *The Waste Land* is about this destitute time. The poem is filled with lost voices, destruction, vulgarity and hopelessness and yet even in all this one finds moments of the ‘saving power’ and glimpses into the ‘heart of light’.<sup>24</sup> Even in the most desolate landscape the poet must leave a trace of the fugitive gods for us to

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<sup>24</sup> Some of these moments in the poem are discussed on pages 53 and 54.

follow; he must remain the guardian of the holy, the keeper of Being. In Eliot's *Four Quartets* and the later Heidegger we find traces of this path towards guardianship. Heidegger, as philosopher, understands this vocation of the poet and demonstrates it through his discussion of the poems of these singular German poets. Eliot, as poet, reveals his guardianship because he perceives the sacred burden that the poet must bear and it becomes, in itself, a poetic question for him. For to be a poet in a destitute time can only become possible if the poet himself believes in and seeks a transcendental sphere of existence that is that moment of encounter – the clearing. To maintain and protect his guardianship the poet (as the *craft*er of words) must always attempt to say anew what becomes elusive and almost forgotten. The poet must do this continually, for words constantly undo themselves. Eliot is seemingly aware of this vocation as he often confronts it in his poetry. Two passages from his *Four Quartets* will give evidence of this:

That was a way of putting it – not very satisfactory:  
A periphrastic study in a worn-out poetical fashion,  
Leaving one still with the intolerable wrestle  
With words and meaning.

(Eliot 1963: 198)

So here I am, in the middle way, having had twenty years–  
Twenty years largely wasted, the years of *l'entre deux guerres*–  
Trying to learn to use words, and every attempt  
Is a wholly new start, and a different kind of failure  
Because one has only learnt to get the better of words  
For the thing one no longer has to say, or the way in which  
One is no longer disposed to say it. And so each venture  
Is a new beginning, a raid on the inarticulate  
With shabby equipment always deteriorating  
In the general mess of imprecision of feeling,  
Undisciplined squads of emotion.

(Eliot 1963: 202, 203)

It is clear in these lines Eliot fulfils something of the poetic vocation that Heidegger alludes to. Even though Eliot was an established poet at the time of writing *Four Quartets* the poetic vocation remains something he reflects upon. He asks the question of poetry, something he describes as a ‘raid on the inarticulate’, acknowledging in this the redemptive poetic impulse to discover the ‘heart of silence’ and to attempt to articulate and encounter the *unsayable* mystery. And yet also expressed in these lines is the frustrating difficulty of trying to do this. The poet is always attempting to find the words to fit the meaning and then realising that what is said is no longer meant, or that what is meant is not longer said. The poetic vocation is perhaps a realisation that the poet is one who is always trying to use and master the meaning of words and that, essentially, every attempt must always end in failure.

This sentiment is felt most keenly by the poet - who aspires to the conscious mastery of language - and yet is always frustrated in the attempt. Eliot seems to be quite harsh, in this respect, on his own writing. The first passage: ‘That was a way of putting it – not very satisfactory/A periphrastic study in a worn-out poetical fashion’ refers possibly to *The Waste Land* (1922), which he wrote many years before *Four Quartets* (1935-1942) and which now he seems to regard with a certain amount of indifference.<sup>25</sup> Then in the next passage: ‘So here I am, in the middle way, having had twenty years–/Twenty years largely wasted, the years of *l’entre deux guerres*’ (the literal French translation of this phrase would be the time/space/events between the two wars) he again refers to his poetic writings spanning the twenty years or so that he had been writing poetry, roughly across the two World Wars. These years he considers ‘largely wasted’ in the pursuit of trying to ‘learn to use words’ which, for Eliot, always seems to end in some kind of failure.

Why is this the case for Eliot then? The answer could be found in Heidegger’s *Building Dwelling Thinking* where he writes:

Man acts as though *he* were the shaper and master of language, while in fact *language* remains the master of man (2001: 144).

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<sup>25</sup> That is one possible interpretation of those lines. One could argue that they refer to the preceding lines in *Four Quartets* itself, which Eliot writes and then expresses his dissatisfaction with. Regardless of the interpretation, what is relevant is the general sense of failure that Eliot seems to experience as a poet ‘trying to learn new words’ and always sensing defeat and frustration in the result.

Language opens up possibility in human existence; it is the *shaper* of man and allows us to ask the question of B/being. Eliot, in this context, perceives the difficulty of writing poetry through the realisation of the almost endless possibilities of expression that language allows. The poet must have the conviction and courage to attempt to shape language into words and yet still create a horizon of possibility and openness in those words. The poet must find a way of writing something impossible to express adequately, and yet, he is compelled by his vocation to attempt it. This is the poetic burden and the poetic vocation. The poet finds his being in this tension. One writes the words and yet the meaning is somehow elsewhere because we cannot completely shape and control something that we are not the masters of. Perhaps poetic courage is to cling briefly and foolishly to the possibility that, just for a moment, the poet is this shaper and then to admit, with humility and in failure that he is not. As Eliot writes in *Four Quartets*:

For us, there is only the trying. The rest is not our business.

(Eliot 1963: 203)

The only wisdom we can hope to acquire  
Is the wisdom of humility: humility is endless.

(Eliot 1963: 199)

One cannot overcome the possibilities contained in language. This is because of our finitude - we are limited beings - and yet language is this gift to us of almost infinite possibility, most evident in poetry. Poetry opens up this clearing and directs us towards reflecting on the *mystery* of language. This experience of mystery leads us towards an encounter with Being. For language becomes the *house of Being* and it is in this house that we can re-discover our *dwelling*. Through the humility of this knowledge we can submit to the call of Being and re-appropriate authentic dwelling.

This sentiment - which originates in Hölderlin's lines '...poetically man dwells...' that the later Heidegger is so fond of - will be explored in the last pages of this dissertation. The meaning of *dwelling* will be examined according to Heidegger's 'Building, Dwelling, Thinking' and '...Poetically Man Dwells...' from his *Poetry, Language, Thought* collection. *Being and Time* will also be returned to in order to

briefly discuss the importance of the word ‘possibility’ [*Möglichkeit*] and its context and use. Though there may be differences between the later and the earlier Heidegger, I think there is a strong continuity between the earlier Heidegger’s concepts of authenticity and possibility and the later Heidegger’s views on language, poetry and dwelling.

After having reviewed some of the material in *Heidegger, Authenticity, and Modernity* (Wrathall and Malpas 2000) dealing with authenticity, I have come to realise that for some Heideggerian philosophers the term ‘authenticity’ can only be applied to the Heidegger of *Being and Time* and not the later Heidegger. Others argue that Heidegger redefines the meaning of authenticity in his later writings. This question will be considered in the pages to come.

### Dwelling within the fourfold

Dwelling is a central concern of the later Heidegger’s thought. It implies a specific relationship of human beings within the fourfold, which stands in marked contrast to an enframed, technological existence. In the first pages of Heidegger’s *Building, Dwelling, Thinking* he explores the etymology of the word ‘dwell’ that he points out links to the word ‘build’. Thus, for Heidegger, building is actually dwelling and dwelling building - the significance of this will become evident as the discussion progresses. What is interesting is how he treats the German words *ich bin* in this context, which would readily translate into English as ‘I am’. According to him the word *bauen*, which means ‘to build’ in German, is the root to which the word *bin* belongs. And the word *bauen* takes its meaning from the Old English and High German word *buan*, which means both to build and to dwell (2001: 144). Therefore *ich bin* (I am) could be interpreted as saying ‘I dwell’ (or I build).

Heidegger writes that ‘the way in which you are and I am, the manner in which we humans *are* on the earth, is *Baun*, dwelling.’ (2001: 145). To be or to exist on earth is to dwell. Furthermore, the word *bauen* refers to the cherishing, protection and care of the soil, and *also* to building - in the sense of construction. In this context the meaning of ‘building’ is changed from the obvious English sense of human construction (e.g. bricklaying) to encompass the ‘building’ of that which grows from the cultivation of

soil (e.g. vineyards). Following this etymology, dwelling on the earth is characterised by *building*, in that human beings are involved in activities of either cultivation or creation. Dwelling (now in the sense of *building*) is the engagement of us with the materials of the earth that require cultivation and tending (e.g. a vineyard), or the creation of a thing through natural resources, such as a house or a ship.

Heidegger explores this idea in greater detail though and asks: Of what nature does dwelling consist? (2001: 146). He returns to etymology again to answer this question, examining the Old Saxon word *wuon* and the Gothic *wunian*, which he writes, like the old word *bauen* ‘means to remain, to stay in a place’ (2001:147). In the Afrikaans language one has the words *woon* and *woning*, which both designate the place where one resides, or stays. However, he takes this etymology further and writes that the Gothic word *wunian* is more distinct in the way it describes our experience of staying. The word also means: to be at peace, to be brought to peace, to remain in peace (2001: 147). He discusses the meaning of peace and argues that, essentially, to be at peace means to be *free*, preserved from harm and danger. This freedom is achieved through what he refers to as ‘sparing’. Peace can only emerge from the experience of freedom, and this can only emerge from *sparing* that which is in the world, to preserve

the free sphere that safeguards each thing in its nature. *The fundamental character of dwelling is this sparing and preserving* (Heidegger 2001: 147).

The place where one lives should be a place of peace and to experience this peace there should be a sense of freedom. An example is one’s own home or perhaps one’s country. Here one should feel safety and this allows the experience of peace and freedom to emerge. Essentially, if free human existence is about dwelling, and dwelling deals with the experience of safety and peace - then this is the very thing that we should cultivate. Ideally we should preserve this peace and in this preserving would be found the meaning of our being: the preservation and guardianship of Being itself, because it is Being that provides us with dwelling. The question of dwelling has reference, not only to where we live, but to the *sparing* of the world (and earth) itself that we live in (and upon).



At present this is not the case. One of the important reasons for this is technological enframing which undermines this way of experiencing B/being and which has contributed to a sense of homelessness and destitution. One could criticise Heidegger in that he is too idealistic about us conceiving of the world as a place wherein we  *dwell*, that the grip of technology is too overwhelming. However, it is a question of language, for the words themselves that he has used in establishing this ideal of ‘dwelling’ are words that once existed and that were used by our predecessors. This understanding of dwelling is foreign to our living in the present, but it is not an idea foreign to human beings. Following Heidegger, it is the originary and authentic way we should exist because it creates the experience of peace and safety - this I think any human being can respond to and seek.

Having established the basis of dwelling Heidegger now discusses the relationship mortals should have within the fourfold (*das Geviert*), which consists of mortals themselves, aware and unafraid of their mortality (a key to authentic dwelling), the earth, sky and divinities. For Heidegger dwelling emerges from within the fourfold, which is a balanced and harmonious  *being-with-Being*. Not only does it establish our guardianship of Being, but it also illustrates  *our own* dependency on the fourfold to understand the meaning and sense of our mortal existence. It is difficult to summarise exactly what Heidegger writes regarding the various facets of the fourfold and their interrelation. There is poetic quality in his words, which gives greater depth than a brief summary would convey. For this reason I will cite the entire passage:

Mortals dwell in that they save the earth... Saving does not only snatch something from danger. To save really means to set something free into its presencing. To save the earth is more than to exploit it and wear it out. Saving the earth does not master the earth and does not subjugate it, which is merely one step from spoliation.

Mortals dwell in that they receive the sky as sky. They leave to the sun and the moon their journey, to the stars their course, to the seasons their blessing and their inclemency; they do not turn night into day nor day into a harassed unrest.

Mortals dwell in that they await the divinities as divinities. In hope they hold up to the divinities what is un hoped for. They wait for intimations of their coming and do not mistake the signs of their absence. They do not make their gods for themselves and do

not worship idols. In the very depths of misfortune they wait for the weal that has been withdrawn.

Mortals dwell in that they initiate their own nature – their being capable of death as death – into the use and practice of this capacity, so that there may be a good death. To initiate mortals into the nature of death in no way means to make death, as empty Nothing, the goal. Nor does it mean to darken dwelling by blindly staring toward the end (Heidegger 2001: 148, 149).

This passage provides a harmonious and poetic description of the various aspects of the fourfold and how this dwelling within the fourfold gives purpose to mortals. There is a poetic quality to these ideas and to the writing itself; a rhythm of day and night, beginnings and endings, birth and death, all encompassed within a symbolic whole that is characterised by a relationship of care and preservation. Building and dwelling are linked in this regard: human dwelling is a *building* through the preservation and creation of human agency. This is an unceasing relationship within the fourfold and requires the continuity and dedication of generations of human beings. There are a number of lines from Eliot's *Four Quartets* that, I think, capture something of this poetic quality:

In my beginning is my end. In succession  
Houses rise and fall, crumble, are extended,  
Are removed, destroyed, restored, or in their place  
Is an open field, or a factory, or a by-pass  
Old stone to new building, old timber to new fires,  
Old fires to ash, and ashes to the earth  
Which is already flesh, fur and faeces,  
Bone of man and beast, cornstalk and leaf.  
Houses live and die: there is a time for building  
And a time for living and for generation  
And a time for the wind to break the loosened pane  
And to shake the wainscot where the field mouse trots  
And to shake the tattered arras woven with a silent motto.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Blamires writes that this passage depicts the 'cycle of birth, growth, decay, and death, evident in man's individual life and family life, and also at the social and civilizational level, binds us to the earth

(Eliot 1985: 196)

This passage, with regard to the fourfold, captures the sense of human building and the ongoing preservation required of mortals for that building. And yet, just as human beings die and bodies disintegrate, so too do their creations. Both return to the earth and the cycle continues. Here is another wonderful passage from *Four Quartets* that I shall present in its entirety:

In that open field  
If you do not come too close, if you do not come too close,  
On a summer midnight, you can hear the music  
Of the weak pipe and the little drum  
And see them dancing around the bonfire  
The association of man and woman  
In daunsinge, signifying matrimonie-  
A dignified and commodious sacrament.  
Two and two, necessarye coniunction,  
Holding eche other by the hand or the arm  
Whiche betokeneth concorde. Round and round the fire  
Leaping through the flames, or joined in circles,  
Rustically solemn or in the rustic laughter  
Lifting heavy feet in clumsy shoes,  
Earth feet, loam feet, lifted in country mirth  
Mirth of those long since under the earth  
Nourishing the corn. Keeping time,  
Keeping the rhythm in their dancing  
As in their living in the living seasons  
The time of the seasons and the constellations  
The time of milking and the time of harvest  
The time of the coupling of man and woman  
And that of beasts. Feet rising and falling.

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from which we draw our nourishment and to which we return' (1969: 42). This cyclical, harmonious relationship in *Four Quartets* bears an uncanny similarity to Heidegger's discussion of the fourfold.

Eating and drinking. Dung and death.<sup>27</sup>

(Eliot 1985: 196, 197)

The passage is particularly rich and full of allusions to various facets of the fourfold. The rhythm of the seasons is influenced by the passage and movement of the sky. The loamy earth is fertile and fruitful and is both the place where human beings may celebrate and couple. It is also the keeper of the remains of our mortality, which is used to nourish the earth so that the cycle of generation may continue. All of these activities partake of a symbolic spiritual order that is sacramental and mysterious in its coming to be, and therefore one finds the presence of divinities here too. These passages from Heidegger and Eliot demonstrate a remarkable perception that both shared about human being and its capacity to engage in an authentic, meaningful relationship with Being. For Heidegger it was to recall the possibility of poetic dwelling, enduring within the balance of the fourfold - beyond the enframement of technology and materialism. Eliot also looks toward the possibility a *holy* way of existing, encapsulating in the *Four Quartets* the hope and remembrance of a time and pattern that is restorative and meaningful - beyond the abyss of the waste land.

Intuitively I think both men, having lived through the two World Wars of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, perceived that the world they found themselves living in was slipping into materialism and nihilism. Both sensed that the supposed sustaining precepts that had governed the psyche of the modern, enlightened man were eroded. And both attempt to deal with these events in different ways (or in the same way but with a different medium) and respond to the threat of nihilism by returning to a deeper and mystical

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<sup>27</sup> This passage from Eliot is also insightful in terms of Heidegger's discussion on the importance of the festival. According to Julian Young (2003: 231) most of Heidegger's writings on the importance of festival have not, as yet, been translated into English. However Young does discuss this idea in detail in his *Heidegger's Later Philosophy* (2002). The outline of the argument is that the festival is a holiday (*holy day*), which allows man a genuine break from work, unlike modern holidays, which are defined in relation to work (Young 2002: 57). Through this *authentic holyday* one comes to realise the presence of Being and the *realness* and 'radiance' of the world is manifest. Heidegger uses a passage from Hölderlin to illustrate what he means in this regard (Young 2002: 59). I think that this passage from Eliot also captures the mood of festival in the same light.

According to Traversi the archaic spelling that is used in this passage is needed 'to connect the moral, doctrinal content with the older, immemorial rites on which it rests and which it is conceived as fulfilling' (1976: 131). Furthermore, he writes that in this passage the life of man is depicted as 'inseparably unified to the larger rhythms of the world of nature, involved through recognition of the temporal pattern in harmony and 'concorde' ' (1976: 131). This sentiment evidently complements Heidegger's depiction of the fourfold.

exploration of our relationship with Being. Both Heidegger, who presented the essays on dwelling and building in 1950 and 1951, and Eliot, who completed his *Four Quartets* in 1942, found in poetry and the poetic experience the meaning to overcome the nihilism and destruction of their age. Clearly, both were influenced by the cataclysmic event of the Second World War and their respective writings around that period exist in marked contrast to the rampant, destructive technological and material occurrences that they would have been surrounded by.

Returning to the question of dwelling within the fourfold in Heidegger's 'Building, Dwelling, Thinking' he writes, 'Dwelling, however, is the *basic character* of Being in keeping with which mortals exist' (2001: 158). Yet in writing this he admits that presently dwelling is not a state mortals readily find themselves in. He writes:

The real dwelling plight lies in this, that mortals ever search anew for the nature of dwelling, that they *must ever learn to dwell*. What if man's homelessness consisted in this, that man still does not think of the *real* plight of dwelling as *the* plight? Yet as soon as man *gives thought* to his homelessness, it is a misery no longer. Rightly considered and kept well in mind, it is the summons that *calls* mortals into their dwelling (2001: 159).

Our originary state or *basic character* of being-in-the-world is one of dwelling, yet, presently, we are not in this state. Rather we are always trying to learn anew what it means to dwell. We continually seek to move from the state of *homelessness* (*Unheimlichkeit*), characterised by *angst*, to a home wherein we can dwell.

The condition of homelessness, according to Young, is one of three major symptoms that Heidegger diagnoses when dealing with the destitution that emerged with the rise of modernity. This *dis-ease* Young writes is the 'loss of what Heidegger calls 'dwelling' – loss of being at home in the world, loss of 'homeliness' (2002: 33).<sup>28</sup> Therefore dwelling is presently only a possibility to be considered; to be *thought* as the answer to homelessness. This indicates the relevance and importance of

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<sup>28</sup> The other two major dis-eases of modernity (Young identifies minor ones as well) are the loss or flight of the gods, which Young also aligns with a loss of a sense of community with others, and the violence of modern technology through its enframing and reduction of both humans and earth to raw materials (standing reserve) (2002: 33). For a fuller discussion see pages 32, 33 of Young's *Heidegger's Later Philosophy* (2002).

the word ‘thinking’ in the title of the essay, for though we may not experience dwelling, in the reality of our being we can still *think* it. As Heidegger writes, if one can *reflect* on the condition of homelessness, then our homelessness is no longer a misery because our thinking becomes the summons to seek out the possibility of dwelling - to find a home.

The key, for Heidegger, to understand dwelling is *building*. The first reason for this is because building (physical construction itself and the result) assists in the alleviation of our homelessness because building - in some instances - allows us to create a place of dwelling. The second reason is more complicated and Heidegger discusses it comprehensively in the second part of his ‘Building, Dwelling, Thinking’. He writes that: ‘*Only if we are capable of dwelling, only then can we build*’ (2001: 157). The argument relates back to the fourfold and to the role that dwelling plays in unifying these four elements. He uses the example of a bridge - something built by human beings. The bridge, in its presence ‘*gathers to itself in its own way earth and sky, divinities and mortals*’ (2001: 151). The bridge creates the space for the fourfold to come into being, precisely because the bridge is what it is. The bridge gathers and unifies the fourfold into a wholeness through its own particular way of being. Importantly though, the bridge is something *built by us* and this implies that we *intuitively* understand what it means to dwell, because only if we understand this are we capable of building. In this way ‘genuine buildings give form to dwelling in its presence and house this presence’ (Heidegger 2001: 156).

What is still difficult to explain is how does one make sense of dwelling in the present age? Building, in terms of physical constructions intensified enormously in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, yet for all this clearly there was very little dwelling occurring. The reason lies in the destitution created by modernity and the rise, prevalence and dominance of technology. These factors have been the cause of the ‘dis-ease’ of our homelessness because we can no longer perceive the world as a *holy* place and no longer have a clear sense of our purpose. Young makes the question of dwelling more comprehensible by pointing out that Heidegger implicitly uses two senses of dwelling. The first is what he calls ‘essential’ dwelling (Young 2002: 74). This, in that we all dwell in the nearness of Being because that is our essence and it is something we all unavoidably possess and belong within. The second is *existential* dwelling and this is

more crucial for us in the age of post/modernity. Young argues, following Heidegger, that we cannot come to understand essential dwelling until we can understand existentially what it means to dwell (2002: 74). The reason for this is what Heidegger refers to as ‘metaphysics’, which includes technological enframing. This is the cause of our experience of *existential* homelessness, because systems of metaphysics have never addressed themselves adequately to the question of Being.<sup>29</sup> Physically we dwell on earth and build dwellings but *existentially* we are still homeless, because we no longer understand the *holiness* of the earth and the mystery that surrounds our existence. Instead of becoming the guardians of Being and fulfilling our call, we have become the exploiters of the earth. This causes *angst*, in that we understand that the earth is where we belong; it is our home - yet we feel an inexplicable homelessness here.

The question that remains to be asked is how is it that we, as mortals, seek out and discover the nature of the fullness of dwelling and alleviate our homelessness? To this Heidegger answers ‘[t]his they [human beings] accomplish when they build out of dwelling, and *think* [my emphasis] for the sake of dwelling’ (2001: 159). *Thinking* allows us the possibility of rediscovering that our *essence* is to dwell on the earth. Through this *meditative* thought the ‘saving power’ is found. Only through the *thinking* of what it means to *dwell* (and therefore *build*) within the fourfold can this manifest. It is a thinking that allows the reappropriation of the nearness of Being, and an experience of the profound sense of mystery of B/being. Language, in the form of poetry, is the source of this because it allows us the possibility of this experience. Poetry creates the Open (*the clearing*) and in and through the Open we come into the nearness of Being, and find our home (and guardianship). Following this path we align our existential dwelling with our essential dwelling and realise our *authentic* relation to Being.

### Authenticity

Authenticity in the later Heidegger becomes somewhat problematic. My initial impression at the beginning of this dissertation was that if man is to dwell poetically,

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<sup>29</sup> See *Letter on Humanism* discussion in chapter three for a fuller discussion on metaphysics.

then this requires an *authentic* relationship with Being. In order to defend the argument at this point requires a re-evaluation of the term ‘authenticity’ and its application. As the discussion will demonstrate it will become a matter of definition regarding the context of the use of the term. The term is still vital for this dissertation. However, the authenticity discussed in chapter one regarding Prufrock is not the same as authentic dwelling within the fourfold. Authenticity in *Being and Time* cannot be used in the same context if one is discussing later works of Heidegger. The word appears often throughout the pages of *Being and Time* yet seldom in the later Heidegger’s writings.

According to Young authenticity is a term that can solely be applied to the earlier Heidegger of *Being and Time* and does not have bearing on his later thinking. In his essay ‘What is Dwelling’ in *Heidegger, Authenticity and Modernity* (Wrathall and Malpas, 2000) he argues that *Being and Time* is concerned with how it can describe the context of an inauthentic and authentic life. Essentially, if we re-call Prufrock from the first chapter, this entails the ‘grasp of oneself’ and the courage to confront the ‘overwhelming question’ of one’s purpose. In this regard Young writes,

Being thus authentic is not, however, a homecoming. It is not a ‘solution’ to, or overcoming of homelessness. It is rather, a *living with* homelessness (Wrathall and Malpas, 2000: 189,190).

In this context one cannot equate authenticity with dwelling, for they describe two different conceptions of existence, one *at home* in the presence of fourfold whereas the other is a ‘heroic alienation, the courage to carry on in the face of the nihilating pressure of the nothing’ (Wrathall and Malpas, 2000: 190).

However, there are other philosophers who disagree with this stance. They argue that authenticity does play a role in the later Heidegger. Guignon, in his paper ‘Philosophy and Authenticity’ (in Wrathall and Malpas, 2000) argues that Heidegger’s essay *The Origin of the Work of Art*

points toward a conception of authentic existence as a matter of coming to be defined and orientated by virtue of one’s relation to a world-defining entity... Thus, the kind of insight Heidegger had sought in Dasein’s resolute “individualised” being-toward-death



now comes to be seen as arising from a total involvement in something outside the self – a world-defining work of art (2000, 93).

In Zimmerman's paper, 'The End of Authentic Selfhood in the Postmodern Age?' he writes, '[a]lthough later Heidegger redefined authenticity to mean being appropriated (*vereignet*) by the fourfold, he retained a profound concern for human mortality' (Wrathall and Malpas, 2000: 132). Further on he asserts,

Though later Heidegger spoke of the event of appropriation (*Ereignis*), whereby mortal Dasein is appropriated (*vereignet*) as one of the interdependent elements in the fourfold, early Heidegger spoke of authenticity [*Eigentlichkeit*] quite differently. In *Sein und Zeit*, he defined authenticity in terms of individual Dasein's resolve to own (*eignen*) its own mortal openness (Wrathall and Malpas 2000: 137).

It seems that the reason these two philosophers refer to authenticity in both the earlier and later Heidegger is because of the German root of the word, which is 'eigen' and means 'own' (Young 2003: 112).<sup>30</sup> This root makes up the base of the word authenticity (*Eigentlichkeit*) and is also the base for appropriation (*Ereignis*). Hence someone reading Heidegger in German would, I gather, immediately pick up this similarity between the two words and make a connection whereas in English this is not the case.

The point is that one can refer to our appropriation by the fourfold as an interdependent, *authentic* relationship. It must be made evident though (as Zimmerman points out earlier) that this does not refer to the authentic relationship Dasein has *with itself* in the earlier Heidegger. In *Being and Time* authenticity deals with the understanding of one's *own* finitude and the realisation of one's being-towards-death, whereas in the later Heidegger one must submit oneself to the call of language and become *appropriated* by the fourfold - which makes authentic dwelling possible. In the first instance Dasein is alone with itself in confronting the Nothing - this is how authenticity emerges. But in the second instance one enters into a

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<sup>30</sup> Young gives a literal translation of the word *Eigentlichkeit*: *eigen* means 'own', *lich* means 'ly' and *keit* means 'ness', therefore a more revealing translation would be 'ownliness' (2003: 112). For Young 'a person who has *Eigentlichkeit* is someone who is their own person' (2003: 112).

relationship with/in the fourfold, which requires a state of authenticity, in order to dwell in Young's 'essential' sense of dwelling.

The earlier definition of authenticity deals specifically with Dasein itself, without recourse to anything else. The later definition, following Guignon, implies that finding authentic existence is no longer dependent on the individuated self but 'one's relation to a world-defining entity'. This could take the form of a work of art, or following Zimmerman, our appropriation by the fourfold. In these two instances one allows one's 'ownness' to be appropriated in order to enter into an authentic state of existence, through the experience and contemplation of something outside the self. Therefore I think it is possible to speak of the *authentic* relationship required from human being in order to dwell poetically on the earth. The desire to overcome the grip of technological enframing and the prevailing sense of homelessness requires a resolute attitude. This, by its very nature, requires being authentic.

#### Poetic dwelling and possibilities

To conclude this chapter requires a discussion of poetic dwelling and the meaning of 'possibilities' in this context. This will require a brief exegesis of Heidegger's last essay in his *Poetry, Language, Thought* collection titled '...Poetically Man Dwells...' (2001), which is originally a quotation taken from Hölderlin. This essay discusses the ontological connection between human dwelling and the poetic domain and the way in which these two phenomena are interlinked. The meaning of 'possibility' should also be discussed because there is an important link between poetic dwelling and the realm of possibility for human existence. The word also features throughout this dissertation and has not, as yet, been given specific attention.

The argument is that language, in the form of poetry (*poiesis*), allows us to realise (or *think*) the possibilities that exist in our own life through coming to reflect on the possibilities contained within a poem (and thereby contained in language – ontologically inseparable from how we define ourselves). This realisation is what creates the possibility of dwelling. However, neither language nor human being can exist within an infinite number of possibilities. Language would become meaningless if it were constructed in a random fashion and human life is bound by the finality of

death. Both require *logos*, an ordering and gathering force so that language may be made intelligible and that human life is meaningfully ordered and purposeful.

This sense of *logos* is encapsulated through the *measure* of poetry, which is a vital concept in Heidegger's essay '...Poetically Man Dwells...'. In Eliot's *Four Quartets* this same impulse is expressed:

Words move, music moves  
Only in time; but that which is only living  
Can only die. Words, after speech, reach  
Into the silence. Only by the form, the pattern,  
Can words or music reach  
The stillness, as a Chinese jar still  
Moves perpetually in its stillness.

(Eliot 1963: 194)

This passage from Eliot clearly designates the concept of *logos* as a pattern or form that is manifest through the movement of time. This is the sense of *measure* that Heidegger refers to. Not only does the sense of measure exist in Eliot's poetry as such, but he is also aware of the pattern (*logos*) itself, as a life force which orders human existence.

For Heidegger it is through the *measure* of language in the poem possibilities of meaning emerge. This measure in the poem is analogous to the possibilities of human existence. It makes evident the tension between life in the present and the unknown possibilities that life will shape into in the future. This *measure* is present in the rhythm that governs the meaningful passage of time within Heidegger's fourfold. It is found throughout Eliot's *Four Quartets* (in poetic and ontological form – the above passage is one example). It also features prominently at the very beginning of the poem:

Time present and time past  
Are both perhaps present in time future  
And time future contained in time past.  
If all time is eternally present

All time is unredeemable.  
What might have been is an abstraction  
Remaining a perpetual possibility  
Only in a world of speculation.

(Eliot 1963: 189)

This passage depicts the relation between the experience of possibility and time itself, all encompassed within human existence. Some possibilities become reality, in the knowledge that other possibilities will become the speculation of what might have been. This is the burden of the knowledge of possibility (time present, past and future); it gives us the *freedom* to make choices in our life, aware that many choices are not reversible. In *Being and Time* the word ‘possibilities’ appears regularly across its pages. It is a word that is constantly associated with Dasein and it is vital in defining the essence of human being. A number of passages will demonstrate this:

The being which is concerned in its being about its being is related to its being as its truest possibility... Dasein *is* always its own possibility (1996: 40).

And,

Dasein is always what it can be and how it is its possibility. The essential possibility of Dasein concerns the way of taking care of the ‘world’ which we characterised, of concern for others and, always already present in all of this, the potentiality of being itself, for its own sake (1996: 132).

These brief passages highlight the importance of possibility in the being of Dasein. Possibility means the ability to be-in-the-world. Be-ing requires Dasein to be *something* that it can be, or at least to recognise the possibility of its being. Dasein’s being-in-the-world confronts it with the possibilities of how and what it may be. This knowledge also contains the recognition of death, because it is the end of possibility. Therefore Dasein’s concern for its own possibility is also motivated by the realisation of the unavoidable end of its existence.

What is of underlying importance is that Dasein understands its potential possibilities because of Being itself. Being is the clearing that presents these possibilities to Dasein who must engage with them because of its *thrownness*. Through being-in-Being there emerges a horizon of possibilities that Dasein recognises, and from these possibilities makes choices as its temporal life progresses. For the Heidegger of *Being and Time* the two principle choices for Dasein are authenticity or inauthenticity. If Dasein can realise itself authentically then this will determine the kinds of choices Dasein will make with its life. These choices will not be frivolous, or based on the dictates of the ‘they’ (like Prufrock), but will emerge from a consciously authentic state of being, motivated by the recognition of one’s own being-towards-death. This, in turn, implies facing the meaning of one’s life.

Perhaps for the later Heidegger there are also two principle choices of being. Either human beings are, along with everything else, enframed and dominated by the drive of technology and reduced to mere ‘standing reserve’. This would imply that our experience of possibility would be limited to a framework governed by the needs of technology, which is arguably the case in the present day. This implies that our existence is one of homelessness and that we dwell *unpoetically*, a term I will discuss shortly in reference to Heidegger’s essay ‘...Poetically Man Dwells...’. Or human beings can submit themselves to the call of language and assume the guardianship of Being. This would be conducive for authentic dwelling within the fourfold. The key though, in both the earlier and later Heidegger, with regard to *authentic existence*, is Being itself. Being is the clearing that allows us to conceive of the possibilities of *being*. This *clearing* emerges through language, because *language is the house of Being* wherein we dwell, a position discussed in chapter three. However, the danger of forgetting the presence and mystery of Being (because of metaphysics) results in an inauthentic state because this forgetting prevents the possibility of being able to conceive of another way of existing. In this sense Heidegger’s thought has a redemptive quality, in that it arrives in this destitute time and contains a saving power, for it presents another way of perceiving the world - in a richer, profound and mysterious manner. It opens up the *possibility* of learning anew how to dwell poetically on the earth.

The final aspect that must be discussed is what it means to write that ‘poetically man dwells’? This is something Heidegger asks of Hölderlin because the line appears in one of his poems. In what way is poetry and dwelling compatible? Heidegger writes that when Hölderlin speaks of dwelling,

he has before his eyes the basic character of human existence. He sees the “poetic” moreover, by way of its relation to this dwelling, thus understood essentially (2001: 213).

For both Hölderlin and Heidegger dwelling is the essential characteristic of human being and is in turn related to the poetic sphere - in an essential manner. The reason for this is because poetry takes its meaning from the ancient Greek *poiesis* which means the making or bringing forth of something into existence. When one reads that ‘poetically man dwells’ this implies that it is poetry that *first* causes dwelling to be attained (2001: 213). How do we attain dwelling? Through building (which implies *poiesis* - poetry). Thus Heidegger writes that ‘poetic creation, which lets us dwell, is a kind of building’ (2001: 213). In this regard poetry is a form of *poiesis* – like all human creation (including *building*). However, poetry itself represents *the* distinctive kind of building for Heidegger (2001: 213) and it is through this building that man attains poetic dwelling.

Heidegger asks where man receives ‘information about the nature of dwelling and poetry?’ (2001: 213). The answer to this is language. Again Heidegger writes words that have appeared before:

Man acts as though he were the shaper and master of language, while in fact language remains the master of man (2001: 213).

It is language that speaks and we who are called upon to respond. However, without the memory of Being in us we cannot respond because we *still* imagine ourselves as the masters of language. The realisation that this is not the case means we must look to the poets who are the keepers of the mystery, and remember the trace of the fugitive gods. They are the ones who know intuitively that they must submit and respond to the call of language. This response is to be found in the *authentic* listening

of man to language ‘which speaks in the element of poetry’ (Heidegger 2001: 214). Heidegger writes that ‘the more poetic a poet is – the freer (that is, the more open and ready for the unforeseen) his saying’ (2001: 214). If one listens authentically to the language of the poem then, through this *dialogue*, possibilities of meaning emerge in the reader’s own life. The poetic quality of language, freed through the poem to reveal its possibilities, opens up the realm of possibilities for the person experiencing the poem. The poet, who already dwells poetically by his very nature, reveals his guardianship through the poem to enable other mortals to listen and respond to the call of Being. In this regard one can return to the opening passage of this chapter from Wallace Stevens: in the experience of poetry (either written or read) is life’s redemption to be found.

### The measure

Dwelling requires measure. Heidegger argues that through the fourfold dwelling can only take place through the *measuring* of man, in that man measures his own dwelling through the influence of the gods and his position between the sky and the earth. He writes:

Taking measure [*Maß-Nahme*] of the dimensions is the element within which human dwelling has its security, by which it securely endures. The taking of measure is what is poetic in dwelling. Poetry is measuring (2001: 219).

Man’s existence is measured by his time on earth, under the sky and before the gods. Hence he is conscious of the measure of things because of his own finitude before all things. His life is the measure of the seasons and the movement of the sun and stars. He builds dwellings and cultivates the earth, is born and dies and is buried before the gods, all according to the measure (and possibility) of being and time.

Although, only in poetry does the real measure-taking occur. Heidegger writes that: ‘To write poetry is measure-taking, understood in the strict sense of the word, by which man first receives the measure for the breadth of his being’ (2001: 219). The reason that Heidegger considers poetry to be the purest example of measure-taking is

linked to Hölderlin's poetry. According to the poet, man takes his measure from the unknown God or godhead - which is paradoxical if one asks how one can take measure from something unknown (Heidegger 2001: 220). Nevertheless, for both the thinker and the poet, this is the case: the god is unknown, yet is the measure nonetheless (Heidegger 2001: 220). How is this possible? According to Heidegger, following the interpretation of Hölderlin's poetry, the God/s appearance is manifest through the sky - the sky conceals the presence of the God/s' - yet also displays their presence without disclosing them.

For our modern rational scientific thought, this kind of thinking is absurd. Yet if one reflects on this idea historically it is perhaps not so peculiar. There are many ancient myths that revolve around the concealed presence of the gods in the sky, manifesting their presence through signs. Zeus's presence was indicated by lightning, Thor's hammer through thunder. Fertility gods indicated their presence through rain. Christ ascended into heaven and the disciples were given the knowledge of tongues through the Holy Spirit, which descended from heaven. One can expand this and include the presence of the gods on earth too, concealed in the form of natural phenomena. For Hindus the Ganges is considered to be a living god. In Eliot's *Four Quartets*, though he admits that he does not know much about gods, he considers the river a strong brown god (1963: 205). There are countless other examples from all mythologies that attribute natural phenomena with a spiritual, divine dimension.

In both the sky and on the earth we find a measure of the finitude and weakness of ourselves in contrast to the eternity and power of the gods. This sense of eternity and infinity, which, in themselves are not comprehensible, are revealed to us through the endlessness of the ocean and the depth of the sky. In this mystery is encapsulated the measure of our existence, and it is the poet who takes measure of all this. Heidegger writes that the poet 'calls, in the sight of the sky, that which in its very self-disclosure causes the appearance of that which conceals itself, and indeed *as* that which conceals itself' (2001: 223). The poets trace the path of the gods who have fled; they take a measure of both the familiar and the mysterious through poetic creation. Poetry takes

a measure of all measuring. This measure-taking is itself authentic measure-taking...  
poetry, as the authentic gauging of the dimension of dwelling, is the primal form of



building. Poetry first admits man's dwelling into its very nature, its presencing being. Poetry is the original admission of dwelling (Heidegger 2001: 224,225).

It is thus through the measure of the *language of poetry* that we can realise the *possibility of authentic dwelling*. Having established what it means to speak about the poetic dwelling of man Heidegger writes, 'Do we dwell poetically? Presumably we dwell altogether unpoetically' (2001: 225). In this answer is implicit the various factors of our homelessness, technology enframing, the forgetting of Being, coupled with a rampant materialism and postmodern, fragmentary nihilism. One may consider briefly what Heidegger (and Eliot) would have been exposed to, being born late into the 19<sup>th</sup> century of peasant stock, with a deep love for the black forests of Germany and the rural people and landscape, and dying just over three quarters into the 20<sup>th</sup> century: the World Wars, Nazism, the Holocaust, Hiroshima and the moon landing to name a few world altering events. And all of these were coupled to the rampant escalation of technology, whether it was to perfect the death camps or to allow man to walk on the moon. To ask if we dwell poetically now, after what has happened to the world in the last century, would mean having to acknowledge how badly we have betrayed our own humanity. Clearly, we do not dwell poetically, yet even in this truth resides the possibility of poetic dwelling, for 'dwelling can be unpoetic only because it is in *essence poetic* [my emphasis]. For man to be blind, he must remain a being by nature endowed with sight' (Heidegger 2001: 225).

Within poetry exists the possibility of re-appropriating this sight.

That we dwell unpoetically, and in what way, we can in any case learn only if we know the poetic. Whether, and when, we may come to a turning point in our unpoetic dwelling is something we may expect to happen only if we remain heedful of the poetic. How and to what extent our doings can share in this turn we alone can prove, if we take the poetic seriously.

The poetic is the basic capacity for human dwelling. But man is capable of poetry at any time only to the degree to which his being is appropriated to that which itself has a liking for man and therefore needs his presence. Poetry is authentic or inauthentic according to the degree of this appropriation (Heidegger 2001: 226).

## Conclusion

Heidegger's passion was asking questions, not providing answers. That which he asked questions about and that which he was seeking, he called Being. Throughout a philosophical life he continually asked this one question about Being. The meaning of this question is nothing more and nothing less than giving back to life the mystery that threatened to disappear in the modern world.

*Between Good and Evil* - Rüdiger Safranski (2002: ix)

This dissertation has dealt with the question of poetry, and its uses and advantages. I hope that the reader has perceived the essence of the argument. It strikes me now that each chapter, read on its own, will not suffice in allowing comprehension of the argument as a whole. Rather what this dissertation requires is that one begins at the beginning and ends at the end - so to speak. In this regard a conclusion is somewhat superfluous because the argument that I have developed culminates in the final chapter. The various themes of authenticity, language, poetry and poetic dwelling merge there. However, as is evident at this stage, each of these terms is rich with its own content, and yet each is also dependent on the other. Insight into the thought of Martin Heidegger requires an open approach to understanding the way he uses words, before one can appreciate the depth of his thought. Through exploring his definitions for individual words one can glimpse the sheer enormity of his creative imagination and the pattern that unifies and sustains his thinking as a whole.

The above passage from Safranski is one that concisely expresses the thought of Heidegger. It is a passage to consider, for it highlights that single word that has appeared often across the pages of this dissertation – Being. The clearing that Being provides for our existence is the space that allows us to be, and this is something that is too often taken for granted and forgotten. As Safranski writes, Heidegger's greatest achievement was restoring the mystery of this, not only by creating answers to the most important questions, but learning to re-ask those question in a more profound and penetrating sense. This questioning has allowed us to re-think the meaning of our being and the meaning of Being itself. Heidegger's insights into the realms of language, poetry, art, technology and human existence reveal a conception of human

being that is imbued with a mysterious potency, brimming with a holy, creative force. It is a vision that is invigorating and originary, when contrasted to the rampant technological materialism and spiritual degeneration that besets the post/modern world.

This is the reason why the poetry of T.S Eliot is so fruitful when placed alongside Heidegger's thought. Eliot's poetry reverberates with the same poetic impulses and sentiments that validates the thought of Heidegger. There is an uncanny similarity that can be perceived in comparing the development of the earlier and later Heidegger's thought and the earlier and later poems of Eliot. This similarity demonstrates the concern and disillusionment of a historical moment that was no longer satisfactory for these men, because it was no longer celebrating human ideals, but betraying them. The response of Eliot and Heidegger was to re-appropriate a past and look towards a future in which the values espoused by modernity were no longer regarded with reverence, but perceived as creating the possibility of the self-annihilation of the human race. Both men found another path, one that is mysterious, romantic and anti-modern and which holds a secret gift, which can never be entirely revealed or completely understood.

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## Summary

Title:	On the uses and advantages of poetry for life. Reading between Heidegger and Eliot.
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This dissertation addresses the ontological significance of poetry in the thought of Martin Heidegger (1889 – 1976). It gives an account of both his earlier and later thinking. The central argument of the dissertation is that poetry, as conceptualised by Heidegger, is beneficial and necessary for the living of an authentic life. The poetry of T. S. Eliot (1888 – 1965) features as a sustaining voice throughout the dissertation to validate Heidegger's ideas and also to demonstrate the uncanny similarity characterising the work of the two men.

Chapter one demonstrates how effectively certain concepts from Heidegger's *Being and Time* can be applied in an analysis of T.S. Eliot's celebrated poem *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*. The reading involves concepts such as *angst*, *authenticity*, *inauthenticity*, *the they* and *idle talk* as they appear in *Being and Time* and then relates these to aspects of T.S. Eliot's poem. The chapter also enables the reader to perceive the meaning of authenticity and what the authentic life is for Heidegger.

Chapter two is an exegesis of Heidegger's essay *The Origin of the Work of Art* in order to understand the meaning of poetry as he describes it. The essay centres on the interpretation of a painting by Vincent van Gogh, and what the experience of the painting reveals to someone authentically engaging with the artwork. Heidegger attempts to establish what the essence of a 'thing' is (the artwork is a thing), for the *origin* of the artwork resides in its *thingliness*. He creates an important distinction between equipment and the artwork as well as earth and the world in order to justify the unique, originary position that the artwork occupies. This leads Heidegger to

create a new understanding of poetry (which is expanded to encompass all art forms) and to emphasise the importance of the human agent in both the creation and preservation of the artwork.

Chapter three is an exploration of language in both the Heidegger of *Being and Time* and the later Heidegger's thought. The aim is to explore the ontological effect that Heidegger's conception of language has for our existence. He places language within a primordial role in that it is no longer we who speak language, but language that speaks us. This conception has important consequences for our relationship with Being, and the way in which we understand our existence. Another important component of this chapter is the discussion centred on what Heidegger refers to as 'technological enframing' (*Gestell*) and how this adversely restricts the possibilities of language. Language and thought are inextricable phenomena and if their potentiality and possibility are impaired then this will have a detrimental affect on our existence.

The final chapter deals with all the themes discussed and serves to unify the various elements of the dissertation into a cohesive argument. The chapter begins with a discussion on the meaning of our existence following the later Heidegger. This is nothing less than the guardianship of Being which can only be understood in its relation to our dwelling within the 'fourfold'. The terms *dwelling*, *the fourfold*, *possibility*, *authenticity* (the context of this term has altered somewhat from its initial conception in chapter one) and *measure* are given special attention, and these terms are unified through Heidegger's 'poetic dwelling' which comes to the fore and serves as the key concept for the chapter. Thus, it is through the measure of the language of poetry that we can realise the possibility of authentic dwelling.

#### Key words

Heidegger, M; Eliot, T S; poetry; authenticity; language; poetic dwelling; possibility; the fourfold; technological enframing; thinking; idle talk; the 'they'; angst; *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*; *The Waste Land*; *Four Quartets*.

## Opsomming

Titel:	Oor die nut en voordele wat die digkuns inhou vir die lewe. ’n Vertolking van Heidegger en Eliot.
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Hierdie verhandeling handel oor die ontologiese betekenis van die digkuns in die denke van Martin Heidegger (1889 – 1976). ’n Oorsig word van sy vroeë en latere denke gegee. Die hoofargument is dat die digkuns, soos opgevat deur Heidegger, voordelig en noodsaaklik is vir ons om outentiek te leef. Daar word herhaaldelik verwys na die digkuns van T. S. Eliot (1888 – 1965) om sodoende Heidegger se idees te bevestig en ook om die vele merkwaardige ooreenkomste tussen hierdie denkers uit te wys.

In hoofstuk een toon ek aan hoe doeltreffend ons sekere van Heidegger se begrippe in *Sein und Zeit* kan gebruik in ’n ontleding van T.S. Eliot se beroemde gedig *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*. Hierdie vertolking behels begrippe soos *angs*, *outentisiteit*, *die ‘hulle’* en *ydele geklets* wat in *Sein und Zeit* verskyn. Dié begrippe word dan in verband gebring met T.S. Eliot se gedig. In hierdie hoofstuk lê ek ook die grondslag om die betekenis van outentisiteit en die outentieke lewe volgens Heidegger aan die leser te verduidelik.

Hoofstuk twee is ’n uitleg van Heidegger se opstel *The Origin of the Work of Art* waarmee sy opvatting van die digkuns verduidelik word. Dié opstel bied ’n vertolking van een van Vincent van Gogh se skilderye en handel oor die betekenis wat die skildery onthul vir iemand wat op ’n outentieke wyse daarmee omgaan. Heidegger probeer vasstel wat die wese van ’n ‘ding’ is, omdat die oorsprong van ’n kunswerk lê in die ‘dinglikheid’ daarvan. Hy tref ’n belangrike onderskeid tussen toerusting (gereedskap) en ’n kunswerk, asook tussen ‘aarde’ en ‘wêreld’ om die unieke,

oorspronklike posisie van die kunswerk te begrond. Dít lei Heidegger tot 'n nuwe opvatting van die digkuns (wat hy uitbrei na alle kunsvorme) wat die belangrikheid van die mens in die skep en bewaring van kunswerke beklemtoon.

Hoofstuk drie is 'n ontleding van Heidegger se opvatting van taal in *Sein und Zeit* en in sy latere denke. Die doel is om die ontologiese effek van Heidegger se opvatting van taal op ons eksistensie te ondersoek. Hy plaas taal in 'n primordiale posisie en meen dat dit nie ons is wat taal gebruik om te praat nie, maar dat dit inderwaarheid taal is wat deur ons 'praat'. Hierdie opvatting van taal het belangrike implikasies vir ons opvatting van die Syn en ook die manier waarop ons ons eie bestaan verstaan. 'n Ander belangrike aspek van hierdie hoofstuk is die bespreking van die tegnologiese bestel (*Gestell*) en die manier waarop dit die betekenismoonlikhede van taal beperk. Taal en denke is ten nouste met mekaar verweef, en enigiets wat die moontlikhede of potensiaal daarvan belemmer of beperk, het 'n negatiewe impak op ons bestaan.

Die laaste hoofstuk bring al die temas van die vorige hoofstukke byeen in 'n samehangende argument. Die hoofstuk begin met 'n bespreking van die sin van ons menslike bestaan volgens die latere Heidegger. Dít bestaan vir Heidegger daarin dat ons enersyds die rentmeesters of 'hoeders' van die Syn sal wees, en andersyds die 'viervoud' (*das Geviert*) sal bewoon. Besondere aandag word gegee aan die begrippe *woon*, *viervoud*, *moontlikheid/potensiaal*, *outentisiteit* (die konteks van hierdie begrip het verander vanaf die oorspronklike opvatting daarvan in hoofstuk een) en *maat*. Uiteindelik word hierdie begrippe met mekaar verenig deur 'n verduideliking van Heidegger se opvatting van die mens se 'digterlike bewoning' van die aarde. Laasgenoemde maak dan ook die sluitsteen uit van hierdie verhandeling. Die slotsom is dat die digterlike omgaan met taal volgens Heidegger die grondvoorwaarde is vir 'n outentieke bewoning van die aarde en vir die herwinning van 'n sinvolle, e.g. menslike bestaan.

### Sleutelwoorde

Heidegger, M; Eliot, T S; digkuns; outentisiteit; taal; digterlike woon; moontlikheid; die viervoud; tegnologiese bestel; denke; ydele geklets; die 'hulle'; angs; *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*; *The Waste Land*; *Four Quartets*.