

John Gould
Senior Project
Professor Kaplan

Heidegger's Philosophy of *Gewalt* : Annihilation and the Struggle for Existence

This project aims at clarifying Heidegger's term *Gewalt*¹ and arguing that it trivializes physical violence, and most notably, the annihilation of life by the atomic bomb. This will be done by showing how Heidegger presupposes that *Gewalt* is synonymous with misunderstanding the essence of things, most often through disguising it, what he terms 'semblance'. By making *Gewalt* exclusively concerned with the ontological, or the being of things, Heidegger removes the possibility of any meaningful discourse about flesh and blood violence.

Heidegger claims that the sole theme of philosophy is being², as opposed to 'world-views' [*Weltanschauung*] which are concerned with entities. In explicating being, the task of the thinker is to deconstruct texts so as to uncover the most basic philosophical meanings. In recovering the most basic meanings given to words, Heidegger then hopes the violence of misunderstanding through mistranslation can be countered by recultivating the meaning of being. Yet this task, I aim to show, is reserved for those with the proper language, the Germans, who have a more 'essential connection to being'. Heidegger makes German thinkers responsible for countering this invisible violence by another, albeit lesser violence, releasement.

¹ Translating the term *Gewalt* as violence requires some brief remarks. *Gewalt* can also mean 'force' or 'power'. For instance, As Robert Bernasconi notes, "...it is not an error that the English word 'violence' appears scarcely at all in translations of Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*, even though much of the discussion is about *Gewalt*. In that book *Gewalt* tends to mean something much more like 'force' or 'power'." This should be kept in mind throughout this investigation. However the term which Heidegger primarily uses is *Gewalt tagickeit* or *Gewalt sam* which have connotations similar to the English word 'violence' with the further implications of arbitrariness and brutality. Since the root word is constant *Gewalt* - I will be referring to that term.

² I am following Joan Stambaugh in translating *Sein* as 'being' and *Das Seiende* as 'entities'.

I hope to prove that the implication of this is that *Gewalt* becomes something beneath the appearance of things-it is constant and invisible. Through clarifying Heidegger's notion of *Gewalt* it will be seen how violence is widespread even though modernity claims to be the most peaceful epoch. Since violence is occurring due to misunderstanding and the only way to stop it is through a lesser violence, realignment, there appears to be an ongoing war being waged. An ongoing spiritual struggle described in Heidegger's texts which resembles that of Junger and Spengler.³ It's a fight for existence, not this or that nation's existence but existence itself. And in war all is permitted. Morals are suspended. What was once an atrocity now becomes a necessary step for survival. All depends on cultivating the question of existence before it is swallowed up by the abyss of the forgetfulness of Being [*Vergessenheit*].

This analysis will take the following form: 1.) Section one outlines Heidegger's conception of philosophy in contrast to world-views. Although he changes his analysis of world-views throughout his writings, he remains consistent in holding a distinction between them. This distinction is grounded in the difference between entities and being. He refers to this as the *ontological-difference*. The only theme for philosophy is explicating what it means to be, while avoiding falling into the confused and arbitrary world-views of the time. This will show that Heidegger believed philosophy is only ontology.⁴

2.) Section two argues that *Gewalt* is only focused on the ontological. It is understood as misunderstanding through semblance, then becomes an unavoidable and invisible part of everydayness for Dasein. This will be proved through an analysis of Das Man and its constitutive

³ Zimmerman, Michael E. *Heidegger's Confrontation with Modernity: Technology, Politics, and Art*. Indiana University Press, 1996., pp., 27.

⁴ This remains consistent if one takes 'ontology' to simply mean the 'study of being' as opposed to any traditional connotations the term may have. Heidegger himself avoids using the term for this reason after *die Kehre*

parts: idle talk, curiosity, and ambiguity. Das Man, as it will be seen, enacts *Gewalt* towards the thing.

3.) Section three then applies Heidegger's understanding of *Gewalt* to the modern world-view which is 'coming-to-pass'. Through mistranslating Aristotle's four causes, the modern world-view disguises the essence of things. This leads to a misunderstanding of being which claims that man is god of the earth and nature is raw material. The Earth suffers the ultimate violence when it itself becomes an utter impossibility in the modern world.

4.) Section four will present the reader with particular passages where Heidegger explicitly trivializes the annihilation of life because his definition of *Gewalt* forces him to only consider such events as misunderstandings of being, which do not do justice to such atrocities.

One disturbing passage in particular will be guiding us:

Science's knowledge, which is compelling within its own sphere, the sphere of objects, already had annihilated things as things long before the atom bomb exploded. The bomb's explosion is only the grossest of all gross confirmations of the long since accomplished annihilation of the thing: the confirmation that the thing as a thing remains nil. The thingness of the thing remains concealed, forgotten.⁵

Confusion such as this occurs when violence completely excludes any talk of physical entities in order to deal with their grounding in the ontological.

Lastly, conclusions and final thoughts on the possibility of holding a broader notion of violence which does not lead to moral confusion. I hold that it is possible and even desirable to hold a broader conception of violence which encompasses the notions implicit in Heidegger: misunderstanding, exclusion, and ambiguity. However, we must never lose sight of the physical, our bodies and the bodies of others.

⁵ Heidegger, Martin. "The Thing." *Poetry, Language, Thought*. Harper Row, 1975., pp., 168.

Lastly, it should be noted that any beginning is awkward and arbitrary. This is especially the case, I believe, with writing on Heidegger. There is no easy way to find an entrance into his work that does not seem to presuppose the whole. He, as he said about all great thinkers, had a single question which grabbed hold of him throughout his life., How can we use the word ‘being’ and ‘is’ without being able to conceptually explain it? This question encompasses the entire range of all metaphysical problems⁶ and brings us face to face with the most mysterious one: why is there something rather than nothing? Why do we exist? What is it ‘to exist’?

These are the problems Heidegger is focused on and, at least until the later turn [*die Kehre*] in his philosophy, demands a conceptual explanation to these mysterious questions; while at the same time preserving that very mystery. No matter how far adrift Heidegger seems to wander from this path in his writings he never forgets them. This is perhaps what is so seductive and frustrating about his philosophy, it remains loyal to explicating Being no matter the situation. From investigating how humans understandingly use tools to love and even genocide, everything goes back to the ontological. The reader who decides to follow this path eventually realizes Heidegger has no plans for finding his way out. They have now joined Heidegger’s universe. The task then for any commentator on Heidegger is to carve out this new path which he himself fails to do. To leave his path while at the same time being indebted to it. This amounts to making an escape by translating Heideggerian to an open and loving language

Section 1. Philosophy and Worldview

Part 1. Ontological Difference

⁶ Heidegger, Martin. Translated by William McNeill. What is Metaphysics (1929)., *Pathmarks*. Cambridge University Press, 2010., pp., 82.

Before fully beginning it is necessary to understand the *ontological difference*. That is, the difference between all the entities around us in the world, and what it is to be at all. The distinction between entities and being. The former refers to everything around us, while the latter refers to the understanding of those entities. Yet what exists apart from entities? Nothing. Being is not itself an entity. So there *is* nothing else besides entities but perhaps:

as in the German idiom for ‘there is’ *es gibt* [literally, it gives], still something else is *given*. Even more. In the end something is given which *must* be given if we are to be able to make entities accessible to us as entities and comport ourselves towards them, something which, to be sure, is not but which must be given if we are to experience and understand entities at all.⁷

There must be something else given, *es gibt*, to provide for the understanding of entities, a *pre-understanding of being* which allows for comportment and understanding. “If we did not understand what reality means, then the real would remain inaccessible....we must understand being so that we may be able to *given over* to a world that *is*.”⁸ There belong to humans some implicit a priori understanding of what it means to be, what is being, so that we may be able to engage with entities and be at all. Yet when this is recognized the difficulty has just begun, as “doesn’t our head start to swim?”⁹ when confronted with the idea that humans somehow understand a priori the meaning of being which is also nothing, that is, itself not a being¹⁰

2. Heidegger’s Early/Middle Account of Philosophy and World-views

Heidegger’s philosophy, he claimed, is a philosophy of life itself.¹¹ It is concerned with the real, concrete problems occurring in life. This may seem redundant, as what else could philosophy be

⁷ Heidegger, Martin. Translated by Albert Hofstadter. *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*. Indiana University Press, 2005., pp., 10.

⁸ Ibid., 14.

⁹ Ibid., 13.

¹⁰ As opposed to thinking of the grounding of entities as another being, ‘God’.

¹¹ Ibid.

about other than life? However, according to Heidegger, philosophy has forgotten this obvious fact. Philosophy had become detached from experience in thinking about the world purely from the vantage point of some theoretical observer. Philosophers, he thought, had come to conceive of entities as *present-to-hand*. This refers to a mode of theoretical understanding where we are ‘spectators’ or ‘subjects’ which are thinking about ‘external objects’. This created a non-existent problem: ‘how is it that humans have access to objects?’ Heidegger believed the primary mode of engagement with things is in *ready-to-handness*, a comportment where such distinctions as ‘subjects’ and ‘objects’ does not arise and I am engaging with things around me in a fluid way. In typing this project, I hit the keys on my keyboard without explicitly thinking about each key or ‘detaching’ myself from it and considering apart from the context I am in.

Life is ultimately passionate, it grabs hold of us and pulls us in and we often fail to ever ‘take a step back’ and observe it in such theoretical attitudes, as Heidegger says:

I go to the lecture, e.g. in the mornings, I work at home in the afternoons. One person occupies himself with this science, the other with that science...I sit down at the table; I feel tired, need something to liven me up, I go to a concert, I listen to Bach; another time I look at pictures, read poems; I *belong* to a religious community....at first this life is especially intensive, impulsive, in the various directions and sphere of activities, or in all of them. One gets wrapped up in something, is caught up [gefangen] in something (or en-snared) [be-fangen]. Then, once again, everything simply passes by; one is thus not actually involved. Or once again: one is happy about life, lives with great hopes, gives himself to others. Life is a passion. Then once again it’s agony. One suffers from life and its imperfections; one is overwhelmed by what it “brings” every day. Hours of despair come; one is repelled by everything obtrusive. This one must renounce, but the other falls into your lap. People to whom one is close, with whom one lived in a common direction, become alien...¹²

In such a passionate unreflective everydayness Heidegger wants to point out how we move *understandingly* through the world in such a way that theoretical/scientific understanding is derivative of a more basic absorption in the world. This basic absorption in the world,

¹² Heidegger, Martin. *Basic Problems of Phenomenology: Winter Semester 1919/1920*. Bloomsbury, 2013., pp., 26.

being-in-the-world, is guided by a pre-understanding of being. As mentioned earlier, we can not comport ourselves towards entities if we do not already have some understanding of what a being is, what it means for a thing to be.

Built upon this *a priori pre-ontological*¹³ understanding is the ontic understanding of what things are in our particular environment. This constitutes the *as-structure*, I always see things *as* things, I see the pen *as* a writing tool.¹⁴ The implication of this is that we are always in the act of interpretation, never seeing things from a speculative viewpoint detached from their context of significance. Even in the mode of present-to-handness we are not in any ‘objective’ standpoint apart from context and interpretation since this mode is grounded in ready-to-handness.

This ontic interpretation of things in their context constitutes one element of what Heidegger refers to as *world-view*. In the 1927 lecture *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, he states:

It becomes clear that what is meant by this term [world-view] is not only a conception of the contexture of natural things but at the same time an interpretation of the sense and purpose of the human Dasein and hence history. A world-view always includes a view of life. A world-view grows out of an all inclusive reflection on the world and the human Dasein, and this again happens in different ways, explicitly and consciously in individuals or by appropriating an already prevalent world-view. We grow up within such a world-view and gradually become accustomed to it...a world-view is related in its meaning to the particular contemporary Dasein at any given time. In this relationship to the Dasein the world-view is a guide to it and a source of strength under pressure.¹⁵

World-views are interpretations of life that guide any particular person towards certain possibilities and away from others. They are prescriptive and norm giving. Yet they also often

¹³ Heidegger, Martin. *Being and Time*. Translated by Joan Stambaugh, SUNY Press, 2010., pp., 20.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 145.

¹⁵ Heidegger, Martin. *Basic Problems of Phenomenology: Winter Semester 1919/1920*. Bloomsbury, 2013., pp., 28.

fail to be noticed explicitly, as Heidegger says, we ‘grow out of them’ and in doing so we become accustomed to them. We often only notice particular norms or ways of doing things explicitly when they become problematic, as in the case of being confronted by another culture's view of the world and their norms. But they are also completely natural, all people have a particular view of the world based upon their nation, language, culture, and so on.¹⁶

A world-view is a “positing knowledge of being and a positing attitude toward entities.”¹⁷ This means that a world-view offers up some positive theory/concept about entities which then allows for a new domain of entities to take a stand. This includes the sciences [Wissenschaft]¹⁸. For example, biology functions by positing a basic concept, that life is materialistic, and from this understanding of what life is arises a whole new domain based upon it. A field of intelligibility opens where entities can ‘spring forth’ into existence in a novel way. The scientist ‘sees’ entities differently than normal everyday engrossment in the world. As Heidegger writes in *Being and Time*:

The totality of entities can, with respect to its various domains, become the field where particular domains of knowledge are exposed and delimited. These domains—for example, history, nature, space, life, human being, language, and so on, can in their turn become thematized as objects of scientific knowledge.¹⁹

Yet from where do these fundamental/basic concepts which ground world-views, including the sciences, arise? Heidegger continues:

The elaboration of the domain in its fundamental structures is in a way already accomplished by prescientific experience and interpretation of the regions of being to which

¹⁶ Karilemla. “Heidegger's Contrasting Notion of Worldview in the Early, Middle, and Later Writings.” *The Humanistic Psychologist*, vol. 43, no. 3, 2015, pp. 250–266., doi:10.1080/08873267.2015.1047020.

¹⁷ Heidegger, Martin, and Albert Hofstadter. *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*. Indiana University Press, 2005., pp., 16.

¹⁸ *Wissenschaft* means any body of knowledge, and is a much more broad term than the english ‘science’. This is important to note to avoid confusion when early Heidegger refers to phenomenology as a rigorous ‘science’ which he later finds redundant.

¹⁹ Heidegger, Martin. *Being and Time*. Translated by Joan Stambaugh, Suny Press, 2010., pp., 8.

the domain of knowledge is itself confined. The resulting, “fundamental concepts” comprise the guidelines for the first concrete disclosure of the domain.²⁰

Just as theoretical understanding of entities in the world is derived from an engrossed being-in-the-world, the sciences stem from something nonscientific²¹. This ‘something nonscientific’ is philosophy, according to Heidegger, it grounds the sciences. Philosophy, as ontology, discloses entities for the first time and does so according to their being.²² This means that philosophy critically investigates entities so as to open them up in some way to positive ontic sciences. Philosophy is then always transcendental in the sense of investigating a new domain of entities in order to understand how such investigations are themselves possible. This amounts to attempting to discover *a priori principles* of Dasein, that being who already understands being in its everydayness. Heidegger states that this is what Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason* consists of, an ontological grounding of metaphysics as fundamental ontology, not, as usually thought, primarily an epistemological endeavour.²³

The sciences are all forms of regional ontologies then for Heidegger, in that they disclose a realm of entities in a new way. They form a new type of experience of what things are. The biologist sees plant life differently than the poet, but they both posit some basic concept which determines the type of access to those entities. The world-view one has determines the experience of entities, as Heidegger writes, “By believing in a personal God, by having pantheistic, biologicistic, ideological convictions; by having an aesthetic world-view, I see life in its fullness, I see life in a particular rhythm and coloring.”²⁴

²⁰ Ibid., pp., 9.

²¹ Here science is used in a more narrow sense than Wissenschaft, it is being used in the english sense of the word, referring to the academic sciences.

²² Heidegger, Martin. *Sein Und Zeit*. Neomarius Verl., 1949., pp., 10

²³ Heidegger, Martin, and Richard Taft. *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*. Indiana University Press, 1997., pp., 1.

²⁴ Heidegger, Martin. *Basic Problems of Phenomenology: Winter Semester 1919/1920*. Bloomsbury, 2013., pp., 30.

Philosophy then is fundamental ontology whereas world-views are ontic.²⁵ As Heidegger clearly states, “We assert now that *being is the proper and sole theme of philosophy*. Negatively, this means that philosophy is not a *science* of entities but of *being*, as the Greek expression goes, *ontology*.”²⁶ Philosophy can never be the formation of world-views because world-views must presuppose a meaning of being already, a world-view is:

uncritically accepted and not philosophically articulated; itself-rectifications are not philosophically and critically documented. Philosophical pursuit is not just about what is being; rather, the first task of philosophy is to arrive at a primary unshakable truth. This searching after the primordial truth is not something that constitutes a world-view, which is a given and not a critical engagement with the intellectual heritage like philosophy. Worldview involves the freezing of a life--world in terms of specific convictions and order of priorities.²⁷

According to what has been said, Heidegger’s conception of philosophy still buys into the traditional pursuit of Western philosophy of attaining some unshakable truth which will resist the contingencies and arbitrary features of everyday views. Rorty critiques Heidegger for just this, claiming he is translating “Platonism into a newer jargon” which is antithetical to the historicity Heidegger wishes to pursue.²⁸ How can philosophy attain anything ‘ahistorical’ when we are ‘always already’ in a world-view?

I believe Rorty’s criticism is misguided. Heidegger’s goal is not ahistorical truths which ‘stand outside’ of world-views, rather, he sees philosophy as an ‘opening up’ of world-views through constant questioning. By questioning being one is questioning our current understanding of what things are. This allows new possible interpretations to grab our attention, causing a crisis in the basic concepts in world-views. This crisis has the possibility to rupture a world-view that

²⁵ Heidegger, Martin. Translated by Albert Hofstadter. *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*. Indiana University Press, 2005., pp., 17.

²⁶ Ibid., pp., 11.

²⁷ Ibid., pp., 12.

²⁸ Rorty, Richard. *Consequences of Pragmatism : Essays, 1972-1980* . Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982. Print., pp., 54.

is holding sway in a particular nation/epoch and ultimately change our experience of what entities are.

Further, to follow phenomenology's motto, 'to the things themselves!'²⁹ requires, according to Heidegger, moving *beyond* appearances. To simply gaze at what a thing appears as and take that as the only possible experience of it is to be uncritical and, as we will see later on, be violent towards it. Getting at the 'entity itself' is a movement towards the transcendental conditions for the possibility of its appearing in the first place: the a priori existentials of Dasein which gesture towards our current understanding of what a thing is, the meaning of being.³⁰

To sum up, earlier/middle Heidegger believed that world-views posit a being and therefore are ontic, whereas philosophy is primary disclosure of things in the first place which allows basic concepts, therefore it is ontological.³¹ Philosophy can not become a world-view, because these are all contingent possibilities which rely upon a more basic ground, our *pre-comprehension of being*. By explicating this ground, through the existential analytic of Dasein, world-views will have more suitable basic concepts, existentiellen, by conforming more to the constitution of Dasein.

Section 2. *Gewalt* is only Ontological.

Part 1. Gewalt and Semblance

²⁹ Husserl, Edmund (1901). *Logische Untersuchungen, Teil 2*. Halle: Max Niemeyer. p. 7.

³⁰ Heidegger, Martin. Translated by Albert Hofstadter. *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*. Indiana University Press, 2005., pp., 21. Here Heidegger flips Husserl on his head by referring to it as his 'phenomenological reduction'.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 17.

Since it has been shown, for Heidegger, the “sole theme of philosophy is *being*” we can move towards understanding *Gewalt* as referring to the ontological, the *being of entities*. One passage in particular will be guiding this section:

Our reliance on the current interpretation of the thing is only seemingly well founded. But in addition to this thing-concept (the thing as bearer of its characteristics) holds not only the mere thing in its strictest sense, but also of any being whatsoever. Hence it cannot be used to set apart thingly entities from non-thingly entities. Yet even before all reflection, attentive dwelling within the sphere of things already tells us that this thing-concept does not hit upon the thingly element of thing thing, its independence and self-contained character. Occasionally we still have the feeling that violence has long been done to the thingly element of things and that thought has played a part in this violence, for which reason people disavow thought instead of taking pains to make it more thoughtful.³²

The question: in what way has the current interpretation of things, that is, the modern world-view, caused a ‘violence’ to things. This will require understanding late Heidegger’s conception of the ‘technological modern world-view’. The modern world-view came from older world-views, they all influenced each other. The Ancient Greek world began this process by first recognizing the ontological difference. They were the origin, according to Heidegger, of the history being.³³ Ever since this original distinction has been made each epoch has relied upon it. In other words, the Greeks began philosophy and they supplied the ‘basic concepts’ for it which have now become forgotten due to the passage of time.³⁴

Their original experience of what things are has determined all of Western history, Heidegger thinks. At the same time, since their world has died out, we have relied purely on their writings to preserve this experience.³⁵ And unfortunately, Heidegger believed, we have constantly been mistranslating their writings. This mistranslation of their writings is not a purely academic affair for Heidegger, instead, he believes language is the ‘house of being’ hence if

³² Heidegger, Martin. “The Origin of the Work of Art.” *Poetry, Language, Thought*. Harper Row, 1975., pp., 25.

³³ Heidegger, Martin. *Being and Time*. Translated by Joan Stambaugh, Suny Press, 2010., pp., 21.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, pp., 339.

³⁵ Heidegger, Martin. “The Origin of the Work of Art.” *Poetry, Language, Thought*. Harper Row, 1975., pp., 40.

terms have been mistranslated ‘being’ itself is misunderstood. And if ‘being’ is misunderstood then how entities appear to us is also, in some sense, wrong. Our current interpretation of being which rests upon mistranslations has caused a radical transformation of how things appear to us. Violence, misunderstanding the being of entities, rests upon mistranslation.

The modern world-view does ‘violence’ to things through mistranslating key Greek terms which gesture towards the most basic understanding of what things are, being. The essence of mistranslating is misunderstanding, which, for Heidegger, amounts to a form of semblance, concealing something by putting something else in front of it.³⁶ Translation is always interpretation and functions by, “interpretation, projection, transformation, reinterpretation” taking the thinking and experiencing contained in one term and ‘burying it’ in favor of another one which ‘stands in front of it’.³⁷ Therefore, all translations are always in some sense violent. Because of the nature of truth, which will be presented shortly, any uncovering is also a covering up. All understanding focuses upon one subject in favor of another, no text can fully explicate every feature of a thinker's writings. There is always something left outstanding. Yet, or so I will argue, Heidegger sees a lesser violence which aims at complete peace, whether or not such an outcome is actually possible.

Any outline of Heidegger’s translation of the history of Western philosophy, what he refers to as the history of ‘productionist metaphysics’, of such a brief length will of course be inadequate, or as he may say, violent. But there are already several books dedicated to this subject and so to repeat the same findings would be unnecessary.³⁸ I will focus then primarily on

³⁶ Heidegger, Martin. *Being and Time*. Translated by Joan Stambaugh, SUNY Press, 2010., pp., 27.

³⁷ Andrew Haas. “Gewalt and Metalēpsis: On Heidegger and the Greeks.” *Bulletin d’Analyse Phénoménologique* 4.2 (2008): n. pag. Print.

³⁸ See: *Heidegger’s Confrontation with Modernity*, and *Heidegger: Being and Acting, Principles and Anarchy*

the most basic meanings given to the Greek terms, ‘*aletheia*’, and ‘*causa*’ before seeing how their modern translations as ‘truth’ and ‘*causa efficiens*’ bury what is most basic through abstract construction which detaches itself from the thing itself

To understand Heidegger’s interpretation of the history of philosophy, which is at the same time history proper, we need to grasp the phenomenological method which has three basic components, ‘reduction, construction, destruction.’ “Construction in philosophy is necessarily destruction, that is to say, a de-constructing of traditional concepts carried out in a historical revision to the tradition. And this is not a negation of the tradition or a condemnation of it as worthless; quite the reverse, it signifies precisely a positive appropriation of tradition. Because destruction belongs to construction, philosophical cognition is essentially at the same time, in a certain sense, historical cognition.”³⁹ The task is to create a positive account of being by returning to the traditional texts of Western philosophy and finding the presupposed concepts, the concepts that go unquestioned by determining the entire text. Find these concepts and attempt to find the original and most basic interpretation given to them that have been forgotten. This is the text undermining itself.

Heidegger sums this up in *Being and Time* by stating that his task lies in the destruction of the history of philosophy which is at the same time, the destruction of philosophy itself.⁴⁰ Destruction, as de-construction, is not pure negation but rather amounts to a double reading. First by repeating the dominant interpretation of a text then leaving this and opening up the text to the blind spots within the traditional interpretation. This is to discover a contradictory moment which

³⁹ Heidegger, Martin. Translated by Albert Hofstadter. *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*. Indiana University Press, 2005., pp., 23.

⁴⁰ Heidegger, Martin. *Being and Time*. Translated by Joan Stambaugh, Suny Press, 2010., pp., 19

goes beyond the author's intent.⁴¹ Leaving the text in this way can only be done through saying the unsaid within the said:

“But the doctrines of a thinker is that which, within what is said remains unsaid, that to which we are exposed so that we might expend ourselves. In order to experience and to know for the future what a thinker left unsaid, whatever that may be, we have to consider what he said.”⁴²

Heidegger attempts to find what each thinker presupposes, what remains unsaid, through what they say. In the section which follows I will show how Heidegger says what remains unsaid in Plato's conception of *aletheia*. This will lead to how *aletheia* becomes translated as truth meaning *propositional truth*, which buries the most basic notion of *aletheia* as *ontological truth* by abstracting away from it and placing a new conceptual framework on top of it.

2. *The Violence of Mistranslation*

Mistranslation is at the root of most violence, according to Heidegger. He always places the term *Gewalt* in reference to some act of mistranslation, as he writes, “[referring to Plato's allegory of the cave]...By contrast, the interpretation of the ‘allegory’ that we are now going to attempt means to point out the Platonic ‘doctrine’ of truth. Are we not then burdening the ‘allegory’ with something foreign to it? The interpretation threatens to degenerate into a reinterpretation that does *violence [Gewalt sam]* to the text [my italics].”⁴³ There are several other cases where Heidegger directly links mistranslation to *Gewalt*.⁴⁴

⁴¹ Critchley, Simon. *The Ethics of Deconstruction: Derrida and Levinas*. Edinburgh University Press, 2014., pp., 27.

⁴² Heidegger, Martin, and William McNeill. Plato's Doctrine of Truth., *Pathmarks*. Cambridge University Press, 2010., pp., 155.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, pp., 167.

⁴⁴ See: *Sein und Zeit* pp., 152., 219, 287 [mit so *Gewalt samem und Gewalt samste*],

Further evidence for this link between mistranslation and *Gewalt* is provided by Andrew Haas who writes, “As a kind of violence then, translation must attempt to approach the thought and truth grounded in original Greek experience”⁴⁵. However, I believe Haas fails to take the next step by asking, ‘what is the meaning of mistranslation’, or in other words, ‘what is the essence of mistranslation?’. This answer, in Haas’s article, is vague and presupposed. He assumes that mistranslation means misunderstanding the Greek experience, which is correct, but he fails to explicate how this is done. This is the task here, to see the essential connection between mistranslation and misunderstanding which I believe is found in Heidegger’s concept of *truth* and *falsity* as *semblance*.

3. *Aletheia* to Propositional Truth

The modern understanding of truth means states, according to Heidegger, that truth is agreement between an external object and an internal idea.⁴⁶ Truth occurs as an agreement based on the relation between these two things, idea and material.⁴⁷ I say, “the picture on the wall is crooked” and this statement is true if the actual painting in front of me is crooked.⁴⁸ However, this fails to account for what the essence of truth is. Questioning the essence of truth does not deal with any particular truth, say the truth of economics, but rather, “the question of essence

⁴⁵ Andrew Haas. “Gewalt and Metalēpsis: On Heidegger and the Greeks.” *Bulletin d’Analyse Phénoménologique* 4.2 (2008): n. pag. Print.

⁴⁶ Heidegger writes this in several places. See: *Sein und Zeit.*, pp., 214. And *The Essence of Truth, Pathmarks*, pp., 136.

⁴⁷ Heidegger, Martin. Translated by William McNeill. *On the Essence of Truth., Pathmarks*. Cambridge University Press, 2010., pp., 138.

⁴⁸ Heidegger, Martin. *Being and Time*. Translated by Joan Stambaugh, Suny Press, 2010., pp., 209.

disregards all of this and attends to the one thing that in general distinguishes ever ‘truth’ as truth.”⁴⁹

To make this concrete, when one says, “the picture on the wall is hanging crookedly” with his back to the wall, the proposition is only demonstrated when the speaker turns around and perceives the picture. What does this show? According to Heidegger it proves that what is most basic to truth, what makes truth *true*, is the perception of a thing standing before us not representing it in the mind. There can be no proposition with something there in front of us.

Even more, Heidegger states that Dasein is *in truth*, because it is *in the midst of entities*, since Dasein perceives and reveals what and how entities are around it, “*Why must we presuppose that there is truth....*” “We” presuppose truth because, “we” existing in the kind of being of Dasein, *are*, “in the truth”⁵⁰ Truth is always presupposed because, as a being that is disclosive, we have no choice but to have entities constantly revealed to us. I can not close my eyes and shut my ears and hope nothing gets revealed to me, as long as *I am* there is *truth being made*.

Heidegger claims to have found this basic notion of truth presupposed in Plato and Aristotle who rendered truth as *unhiddenness*, or *unconcealment* [*Unverborgenheit*]. That things *present* themselves to us in *this* moment of time. Heidegger often refers to this as *ontological truth* or *the truth of being*. As he writes:

The sheer sensory perception of something, is ‘true’ in the Greek sense...pure (Greek needed) is the perception of the simplest determinate ways of Being which entities as such may possess, and it perceives them just by looking at them.” This (needed) s what is ‘true’ in the purest and most primordial sense; that is to say, it merely discovers, and it does so in such a way that it can never cover up.⁵¹

⁴⁹ Heidegger, Martin. Translated by William McNeill. *On the Essence of Truth., Pathmarks.* Cambridge University Press, 2010., pp., 136.

⁵⁰ Heidegger, Martin. *Being and Time.* Translated by Joan Stambaugh, Suny Press, 2010., pp., 218.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, pp., 31.

The Greeks thought of sense-perception as the most basic form of truth, all thinking and action requires that something is actually present before us and is able to be seen. Comportment, like intentionality is always comportment *towards something*, an entity must be there for us if we are to comport ourselves towards it at all. That an entity exists *as* something grounds everything else. What is disclosed in a world, *what* entities stand out to us and *how* they stand out constitute *ontological truth*. This concept can be clarified with reference to four terms, *disclosedness in general, thrownness, project, and falling prey*.

1.) Disclosedness always means the disclosure of a world. ‘World’ does not refer to, “an ontical concept, and signifies the totality of those entities which can be present-to-hand within the world”⁵² This is the scientific and traditional philosophical understanding of what a world is. It ignores the more basic ground of understanding which comes from grasping the possibilities of entities in the world through pre-reflective comportment. Instead world signifies, “that ‘*wherein*’ a factual Dasein as such can be said to ‘live’”. “World” here has a pre-ontological existentiell significance.”⁵³ Pre-ontological here means prior to a conceptual understanding, whereas ‘existentiell’ refers to an ontic determination of existence. An example of the latter would be fulfilling one's societal role such as being a student.⁵⁴

‘World’ then refers to ‘wherein’ or space⁵⁵ where Dasein understands⁵⁶ itself through the roles it plays in given situations, whether as a student, teacher, etc. World's are always

⁵² Ibid., pp., 64.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Dreyfus, Hubert L. *Being-in-the-World: a Commentary on Heidegger's Being and Time, Division I*. MIT Press, 2009., pp., 20.

⁵⁵ ‘Space’ is not to be taken in the scientific sense. For more on spatiality in Heidegger refer to *Sein und Zeit.*, pp., 102-113.

⁵⁶ ‘Understanding’ not in the sense of conceptual/cognitive but rather in the grasping of possibilities and disclosing entities within the world. See *Sein und Zeit.*, pp., 140.

experienced in their wholeness and only afterwards in their particularity. I see a classroom not isolated chairs and people, environments are experienced as a oneness. They are, in a way, *a priori* interpretations of entities and by entering into them Dasein gains a different way of access to them. “World refers to a “*how*” of *being* of entities, rather than to these entities themselves.”⁵⁷ As discussed before, the as-structure determines the interpretation given to entities, I see the pen *as* a tool for writing. But the as-structure is itself determined by a world, to the interpretation of a particular realm that dictates a particular *how* of being, what Heidegger refers to as *wie-sein* or mode-of-being.⁵⁸

Wie-sein and *was-sein* (what-being) constitutes the prior disclosure of entities in any given situation. I walk into the supermarket and things are already there for me filled with significance. I don’t stumble my way into alien environments and explicitly give meaning to them, rather, I find myself always at home in places ready for me. Only because things appear to me at all can I then reveal or conceal them. This prior manifestation is *the truth of Being*, or *ontological truth*. The *truth of being* then determines *was-sein* and *wie-sein* in worlds⁵⁹.

2.) “*Thrownness* belongs to the constitution of being of Dasein as a constitution of its disclosedness.”⁶⁰ Dasein is arbitrarily placed in a particular situation at a particular time. I did not choose to be born in New York in 1998, I was ‘thrown’ into the world and given over to it. Being thrown reveals, according to Heidegger, the historicity of being. I am given a definite range of possible ways of acting and thinking that determine who and what I am. This is what late

⁵⁷ Heidegger, Martin, and William McNeill. *On the Essence of Ground, Pathmarks*. Cambridge University Press, 2010., pp., 113-121.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, pp., 113.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, pp., 105.

⁶⁰ Heidegger, Martin. *Being and Time*. Translated by Joan Stambaugh, Suny Press, 2010., pp., 212.

Heidegger will use to discuss the problem of the ‘modern world-view’. Since we are unable to completely ‘step outside’ a world-view, as proved earlier, philosophy’s task amounts to an opening up of world-views as much as possible.⁶¹ This will be done, as will be seen, by deconstruction and fight violence with a lesser violence.

3.) “*Project* belongs to the constitution of being of Dasein: disclosive being towards its own potentiality-of-being.” Dasein always understands a world in its wholeness as a ‘how’. In the definite range of possibilities opened up for it in any particular situation Dasein has the possibility to return to itself and become an individual. It can *project* its own possibilities of the world through this prior understanding and thereby become authentic. That is, understanding possibilities latent in the actuality of being.⁶²

4.) Most important for the task at hand is *falling prey*. For the most part, Dasein is “lost in its ‘world’”.⁶³ This means that primarily the ‘who’ of Dasein is a ‘nobody’⁶⁴. This is the case because of Das Mann which is linked with authenticity. To make this concrete, Heidegger is saying that for the most part I am not an individual making my own decisions, rather, I am almost never explicitly aware of the world around me and simply go along with it. I rarely question the current interpretation of what things ‘are’. People tell me to act this way in the classroom and I do it. The majority of people, Heidegger believed, rarely think for themselves and instead mindlessly accept the possibilities handed over to them.

⁶¹ Karilemla. “Heidegger's Contrasting Notion of Worldview in the Early, Middle, and Later Writings.” *The Humanistic Psychologist*, vol. 43, no. 3, 2015, pp. 250–266., doi:10.1080/08873267.2015.1047020.

⁶² By ‘possibilities latent in the actual’ I am referring to Heidegger’s conception of freedom as discussed in *The World of Freedom: Heidegger, Foucault, and the Politics of Historical Ontology*. This goes to Heidegger’s concept of *Spielraum*.

⁶³ Heidegger, Martin. *Being and Time*. Translated by Joan Stambaugh, Suny Press, 2010., pp., 213.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

4. *The Violence of Das Man*

Das Mann, literally ‘the one’, is a “existential and belongs as a primordial phenomenon to the positive constitution of Dasein”⁶⁵. It refers to societal norms, others, and one's self. In *falling* into world-views the ‘I’ becomes dispersed, ‘I’ follow the opinions of others, ‘I’ act as one ought to act, and ‘I’ think the way one ought to think. Moreover, if I attempt to run away from the world-view which dominates me, I ‘flee like one flees’. There is no escape from Das Man.

As we saw before, life is passionate, most of the time I uncritically accept and follow the path that has been already laid out for me by Das Man. I am given a certain range of possibilities which go unquestioned; I go to school and am trained to think in certain ways and avoid others, and a plan has already been decided on what a profession ought to look like. This is not fatalism but rather a field of intelligibility which allows for choice at all, freedom consists in realizing one's unfreedom. As Heidegger stated:

It [concern] can, so to speak, take the other's ‘care’ away from him and put itself in his place in taking care, it can *leap in* for him. Concern takes over what is to be taken care of for the other. The other is thus displaced, he steps back so that afterwards, when the matter has been attended to, he can take it over as something finished and available or disburden himself of it completely. In this concern, the other can become someone who is dependent and *dominated [Herrschaft]* even if this *domination* is a tacit one and remains hidden from him.⁶⁶

This kind of concern is the most common, one takes over the care of the other and ends up dominating them. Teaching is a good example of this. Imagine a teacher asks a student a question in class. The student does not know the answer. What is more common, according to Heidegger, is the teacher simply telling the student what the right answer is and this causes the teacher to ‘take over’ or ‘leap in’ for the student. The student learns nothing and has their ‘concern’ for what the problem stripped.

⁶⁵ Ibid., pp.,125.

⁶⁶ Ibid., pp.,119.

This sort of domination is what Heidegger refers to as the dictatorship of ‘nobody’. As in, by being in a world-view which shapes thoughts and actions my concern is always being taken away from me. But there is no single person or even totality of people responsible for this, rather, I am controlled by no one and everyone. I can’t point to any group of people that are single handedly responsible for this. Further, I do this to myself as well.

Dasein is always concerned by the distance to others, how far or close we are to people. This does not mean physical spatial distance but existential spatiality. Being with others has “the character of distatality.”⁶⁷ Dasein always desires to do things as others do them, no one wishes to stand out but is rather always concerned with staying close to the way of being of others. This creates *averageness*, where one Dasein is just like the other. We completely disappear and lose ourselves by joining with this ‘great mass’, individuality dies. We do what the others do and how they do it. We “enjoy ourselves and have fun the way *they* enjoy themselves. We read, see, and judge literature and art the way *they* see and judge.” But perhaps more terrifying of all, “we also withdraw from the ‘great mass’ the way *they* withdraw, we find ‘shocking’ what *they* find shocking.”⁶⁸

Lastly, and this is critical for understanding the connection between Das Man and *Gewalt*, if truth is discoveredness which is a matter of ‘bringing things to light’, then Das Man ‘covers things over’ and ‘disguises’ them. This will be clearer in the section which follows, but Das Man functions by utilizing the ordinary conceptions of things that conceal the most basic concepts of being, such as ontological truth. Das Man never discovers the primordial experience of being but

⁶⁷ Ibid., pp., 122.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 123.

only makes it 'look like so and so' by reinforcing a conceptual framework on top of it, causing violence. Das Man is the guardian of semblance.

This means that to say "Dasein is in truth" is also to say "Dasein is in untruth" since Dasein discovers yet simultaneously covers over the being of entities. As stated in reference to the pre-understanding of being, "Only insofar as Dasein is disclosed is it also closed off; and insofar as innerworldly entities are always already discovered with Dasein, are such entities covered over (hidden) or disguised as possible innerworldly entities to be encountered."⁶⁹

'Untruth' refers to semblance, disguising things and making them appear as something they are not, an act of misunderstanding the essence of things. Since for the most part we have 'fallen' into Das Man by never explicitly questioning the norms which govern our thinking and action and it remains impossible to completely separate one from Das Mann, we are all misunderstanding what things 'actually are'. Two points need to be clarified then, what 'are things actually', that is to say, what is the 'proper essence' of things? Second, How does Das Mann understand things?

What entities 'are' *in themselves* is the original experience/understanding of them by the pre-socratics, that is, the moment when, for the first time, people realized the difference between entities and being. This original moment of discovery, according to Heidegger, is privileged because it was the most basic meaning of what it means to be. However, and this is important, Heidegger is not asking for a simple return to this understanding. This is because even the pre-socratic understanding of being contained the stamp of productionist metaphysics. Heidegger does not see 'absolute peace' as a possibility, that is, a completely non-violent language to

⁶⁹ Ibid., pp., 213.

describe being. Rather, and this will be shown later on, poetry⁷⁰ as releasement is the lesser violence that we must aim for.

There has been a historical withdrawal of being, according to Heidegger, meaning that since the origin of being, the discovery of the ontological-difference, thinkers have misunderstood this original experience by mistranslating key Ancient Greek terms.⁷¹ And since language is ‘the house of being’⁷², any translation transforms our essential connection to what is. Haas explains this as the “thing-structure and thought-structure are co-constituted by language, and we must therefore seek the arche that makes their translation possible.”⁷³ In less convoluted language, what constitutes entities as well as people is language, then the task becomes, for Heidegger, seeking the grounding for translation itself. What is prior to translation, which is necessarily a violence, is the origin of being.

In being indebted to the mistranslations of originary Greek terms, such as *aletheia*, Das Man ‘always already’ discloses entities to Dasein yet this ‘disclosing’ is a ‘covering over’ in the form of semblance⁷⁴ Das Mann is violent, that is, it misunderstands the essence of things by covering them up. This misunderstanding, which comes from mistranslations, in a way *enframes* [*befangen*] the thing. The original experience has a conceptual framework ‘placed’ on top of it so it becomes concealed but through disguising.

⁷⁰ Heidegger’s conception of *poiesis* is broad and therefore should not be taken to mean the particular field we think of now as poetry. It encompasses all art and language itself.

⁷¹ Heidegger, Martin. “The Origin of the Work of Art.” *Poetry, Language, Thought*. Harper Row, 1975., pp., 22..

⁷² Heidegger, Martin. Translated William McNeill. Letter on Humanism, *Pathmarks*. Cambridge University Press, 2010., pp., 263.

⁷³ Andrew Haas. “Gewalt and Metalēpsis: On Heidegger and the Greeks.” *Bulletin d’Analyse Phénoménologique* 4.2 (2008): n. pag. Print.

⁷⁴ Heidegger, Martin. *Being and Time*. Translated by Joan Stambaugh, Suny Press, 2010., pp., 213.

The origin of being contains within itself the whole of Western philosophy. It contains the basic concepts of philosophy which still control us today. In the case of truth, *ontological truth* is presupposed and grounds *propositional truth*, the origin still remains. What occurs is merely a disguising of it by means of some concepts which are ‘foreign to it’. What makes *truth* true is presupposed as presence and mistaken for propositions.

If phenomenology was not transcendental through superseding the particular in favor of the horizon of intelligibility, it would belong to the realm of semblance, which is guarded over by Das Mann. For the purpose of this investigation on *Gewalt* we need to focus on how Das Mann reinforces violence through its constitutions of *idle talk*, and *curiosity*. Ambiguity, the third constitution of Das Mann is implicit in the two sections which follow.

5. *The Violence of Idle Talk*

Idle talk...means a positive phenomenon which constitutes the mode of being of the understanding and interpretation of everyday Dasein. For the most part, discourse expresses itself and has always already expressed itself. It is language. But then understanding and interpretation are always already contained in what is expressed [*Ausgesprochenheit*]. As expression, language harbors in itself as interpretedness of the understanding of Dasein.⁷⁵

Language is already an interpretation of things in the world and Dasein. There is no ‘neutral’ language, rather languages always express perspectives on the way things are. Put language is always an interpretation of being. As we have seen, language is based upon misunderstanding the original experience of being. *Idle talk*, which permeates in everydayness, is one of the ways in which Das Mann prevents discovery, truth as authentic disclosure.

In everyday life we ‘do what one does and says what one says’, we are mouth pieces for others. We all watch the same shows which circulate a narrow range of opinions, and we recycle

⁷⁵ Ibid., 162.

those thoughts and pass them off as our own. In conversations with others we all already understand what is being said and so we fail to turn towards the speaker and really pay attention.

⁷⁶ In talking with a friend about global warming, we both already know the arguments which will be used, we have gotten our information from the same sources. So my friend will ‘listen’ but only, as Heidegger writes, ‘superficially’ because we both already understand not the actual matter of global warming but the talking points regarding it. In idle talk the relation towards the basic understanding of being is severed in such a way as to make the discourse only about *words* and not anything to do with entities themselves.

We all communicate primarily in the mode of gossiping, for Heidegger.⁷⁷ Idle talk passes from person to person until it becomes common sense and authoritative. Anyone is able to speak in this mode, it is accessible to everyone, speaking in cliches and ‘understanding’ that without actually understanding the matter itself. This is how violence is committed to the thing in idle talk: since we ‘know’ everything we become indifferent and genuine understanding of what things are never takes place. Misunderstanding is reinforced and there is no longer the possibility of grasping the thing itself.⁷⁸

Heidegger makes the connection between idle talk and semblance directly, “Discourse....has the possibility of becoming idle talk, and as such of not really keeping being-in-the-world open in an articulated understanding, but of closing it off and *covering over* innerworldly entities....[my italics]”⁷⁹ Idle talk covers over and disguises the essential understanding of being by ‘already understanding everything’ through gossip which never deals

⁷⁶ Ibid., 163.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 164.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 163.

with the thing itself. It leads to a world where ‘things’ disappear completely from discourse because all that is dealt with is superficial understanding that deals with words detached from what things actually are. It is *groundless*.

6. *The Violence of Curiosity*

“This futile curiosity masquerades under the name of science and learning, and since it derives from our thirst for knowledge and sight is the principle sense by which knowledge is acquired, in the Scriptures it is called *gratification of the eye*. . . . Yet who can tell how many times a day our curiosity is tempted by the most trivial and insignificant matters. . . . So often it happens that, when others tell foolish tales, at first we bear with them for fear of offending the weak, and then little by little we begin to listen willingly. . . . it is one thing to rise quickly from a fall, another not to fall at all.”⁸⁰

As Augustine notes, we take pleasure in seeing things purely for the sake of it. I take pleasure in seeing the ocean waves in front of me, and nothing, in terms of knowledge, is gained from this. I do not wish to understand how waves come about or anything of that sort, curiosity is satisfied with pure pleasure of sight free from understanding.⁸¹ I gaze at the outward appearances of things, the realm of semblance. The outward appearances of things yield no information for the understanding.

Further, what is the most destructive element of curiosity is the pleasure we take in watching spectacles. For Augustine this was, “[going] to watch a dog chase a hare at the games in the circus”⁸², whereas modern life is filled with reality T.V., and celebrity gossip. We take pleasure in observing the lives of others, idly receiving pleasure and allowing our minds to turn

⁸⁰ Augustine, and R. S. Pine-Coffin. Book X. *Confessions: Saint Augustine*. Penguin Classics, an Imprint of Penguin Books, 2015., pp., 242.

⁸¹ Heidegger, Martin. *Being and Time*. Translated by Joan Stambaugh, Suny Press, 2010., pp., 165.

⁸² Augustine, and R. S. Pine-Coffin. Book X. *Confessions: Saint Augustine*. Penguin Classics, an Imprint of Penguin Books, 2015., pp., 243.

off. As Heidegger writes, “When curiosity becomes free, it takes care to see not in order to understand what it sees, that is, to come to a being toward it, but *only* in order to see.”⁸³

Curiosity, as a mode of sight, is entrusted to idle talk. Idle talk directs what one ought to pay attention to, while curiosity is taking pleasure in such sight free from understanding.⁸⁴ Violence is perpetrated by curiosity since it removes the possibility of any understanding of the thing as a thing. Gazing blankly at the outward appearances of things prevents the necessary step towards transcendental understanding, that is, understanding what *grounds* a thing. And as we have seen, what *grounds* ‘is’ in a more proper sense than what *appears* on the surface.

Section 3. *Gewalt* in the Modern World.

Part 1. The Violence of the ‘Modern World-View’

To sum up so far: We are ‘always already’ in a world-view; a world-view posits a being and opens up a realm of entities. What is posited (the basic concepts) dictates *what* entities are seen and *how* they are engaged with. In analyzing the basic concept of truth, we saw that our modern world-view’s conception as the agreement between ‘internal ideas’ and ‘external objects’ actually presupposes a more basic notion of truth, *ontological truth*, that entities manifest themselves to us in their *wie-sein* and *was-sein*. Our basic concepts are mistranslations of Ancient Greek terms, and since language is the ‘house of being’ our misunderstanding has led to a change in the way entities appear to us and how we engage with them. We have ‘covered over’ and ‘disguised’ the most basic experience of being through our mistranslations and

⁸³ Heidegger, Martin. *Being and Time*. Translated by Joan Stambaugh, SUNY Press, 2010., pp., 166.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

misunderstandings, the essence of violence. This violence is reinforced and propagated by Das Mann, who in idle talk and curiosity prevents understanding things.

This section is now concerned with exactly how the modern world-view understands and engages with entities because of this violence as described in *Question Concerning Technology*; how the violent disclosure of entities has caused Dasein to see and engage with the world in a distorted way. This will focus on how Heidegger connects the violent mistranslation of *causality* as *causa efficiens* to man becoming god of the earth. Entities become disclosed purely as *standing-reserve*, which is violent insofar as it disguises the more basic ‘poetic’ way of revealing as understood by the Ancient Greeks.

2. Aristotle’s Four ‘Causes’

The task of *Question Concerning Technology* is to find the essence⁸⁵ of technology.⁸⁶ And as such Heidegger states what technology is not: the essence of technology is nothing technological. Just as, “When we are seeking the essence of a ‘tree’ we have to become aware that That which pervades every tree, as tree, is not itself a tree that can be encountered among all the other trees.”⁸⁷ The current interpretation of the essence of technology is what Heidegger refers to as the instrumental and anthropological account which: “belong together. To posit ends and procure and utilize the means to them is a human activity. The manufacture and utilization of

⁸⁵ *Wesen*, the German word here being translated as *Essence* means something more like ‘how something holds sway’ for Heidegger. Essence means both *was-sein* and *wie-sein*.

⁸⁶ Heidegger, Martin, and William Lovitt. *The Question Concerning Technology, and Other Essays*. Harper Perennial, 2013., 4.

⁸⁷ *Ibid*.

equipment, tools, and machines, the manufactured and used things themselves, and the needs and ends that they serve, all belong to what technology is”⁸⁸

The question then becomes, ‘what are means and ends’, which Heidegger seeks by tracing instrumentality back to Aristotle’s four causes:

“(1) The *causa materialis*, the material, the matter out of which , for example, a silver chalice is made; (2) the *causa formalis*, the form, the shape into which the material enters; (3) the *causa finalis*, the end, for example, the sacrificial rite in relation to which the chalice required is determined as to its form and matter; (4) the *causa efficiens*, which brings about the effect that is the finished, actual chalice, in this instance, the silversmith.”⁸⁹

Heidegger first points out the obvious, that the modern outlook currently only sees one of these as truly a ‘cause’, the *causa efficiens*. Richard Rojcewicz explains:

Only one of the four causes, the so-called efficient cause, would today be recognized as a cause. The common interpretation of Aristotle, then, is that he did include in his theory what we mean by cause, but that is to be found only in his concept of the efficient cause. Aristotle, however, also included other factors of change or motion (the matter, the form, and the end) under an expanded concept of cause. On this understanding, the concept of cause is therefore not a univocal one in Aristotle; the silversmith and the silver are not causes in the same sense.⁹⁰

The common interpretation of Aristotle gives priority to the efficient cause, the silversmith is active while the others are merely passive. I would not say that the chalice was caused by the silver or the sacrificial rite. Instead, I would say the craftsmen caused the chalice to be. It doesn’t even make sense for us moderns to see how the other three ‘causes’ are really causes at all, for we “have been accustomed to representing cause as that which brings something about”.⁹² Complete priority is given to the ‘subject’ as original creator.

⁸⁸ Ibid., pp., 5.

⁸⁹ Ibid., pp., 6.

⁹⁰ Rojcewicz, Richard. *The Gods and Technology: a Reading of Heidegger*. State University of New York Press, 2006., pp., 25.

⁹¹ Rojcewicz goes on to write, “Heidegger has been accused of *violence* in his interpretation of the ancients....” presupposing, along with many others, that we have a clear grasp of the meaning of ‘violence’ in this sense.

⁹² Heidegger, Martin, and William Lovitt. *The Question Concerning Technology, and Other Essays*. Harper Perennial, 2013., 4.

Yet Heidegger finds that this common interpretation is a misunderstanding. The Ancient Greek conception of cause does not mean ‘to bring something about’ but rather, what is called ‘cause’ by us, “is called *aition* by the Greeks, that to which something else is indebted”⁹³ [*das, was ein anderes verschuldet*].⁹⁴ Heidegger goes on to say that they are all unified, meaning that they are all causes in the same sense of indebtedness, “the causes are for Aristotle the conditions to which the produced thing is obliged.”⁹⁵ There is no Greek conception of an independent subject producing something which would align with the modern conception of cause as *causa efficiens*.

Rather, Heidegger states that the craftsman is *causa efficiens* in the sense of considering carefully and gathering the other three ways of being indebted together. The craftsman does not ‘bring the chalice about’ but rather brings it forward into appearance (*apophainesthai*).⁹⁶ There is not purely ‘active’ subject acting upon ‘passive’ matter. There is no imposer or imposed on:

The matter actively participates in the choice of its form; the matter suggests a form to the craftsman, and the craftsman takes direction from that proffered form. Accordingly, the matter is already pregnant with the form and the role of the craftsman is the role of the midwife assisting that form to come to birth...[this is a] partnership where the roles of activity and passivity are entirely intermingled.⁹⁷

This is important. What the *causa efficiens* actually meant for the Ancient Greeks was that the craftsman merely aids in the birth of the product, he helps it be what it truly is. Let’s make this concrete with an example of Heidegger’s: the craftsman is an artist looking at a block of marble. The marble already informs the artist what it can be, as in, it limits what can be

⁹³ Ibid., pp7.

⁹⁴ As William Lovitt points out, *das, was ein anderes verschuldet* is a German expression with a wide range of meaning: to be indebted, to owe, to be guilty, to be responsible for or to, to cause.

⁹⁵ Rojcewicz, Richard. *The Gods and Technology: a Reading of Heidegger*. State University of New York Press, 2006., pp., 16.

⁹⁶ Heidegger, Martin. Translated by William Lovitt. *The Question Concerning Technology, and Other Essays*. Harper Perennial, 2013., 8.

⁹⁷ Rojcewicz, Richard. *The Gods and Technology: a Reading of Heidegger*. State University of New York Press, 2006., pp., 27.

brought forth from it. This is fairly intuitive, the size, strength, durability, etc., of the material determines what it can be used for. I can not force the material to be what it is not. The artist looks at the marble with the future form in his mind, this form being itself determined by that material. If the marble is not large enough I can't see the form of a giant statue in it. Further, the telos, the sacredness of the statue, unites matter and form. The artist is not some original creative force imposing a form onto passive and blank matter, the artist simply allows the marble to be what it wants to be, a statue.⁹⁸

What does this mean for the mode of being of the chalice once it has been 'produced'?

Heidegger goes on to write:

According to our example [the chalice], they [the four ways of being indebted] are responsible for the silver chalice's lying ready before us as a sacrificial vessel. Lying before and lying ready (*hypokeisthai*) characterize the presencing of something that presences. The four ways of being responsible bring something into appearance. They let it come forth into presencing [An-wesen].⁹⁹¹⁰⁰

First, Heidegger is saying that *the four ways of being indebted*, that is, the four 'causes', are responsible for the chalice 'lying ready before us as a sacrificial vessel'. "Lying ready before us"¹⁰¹ does not mean ready for use by us. Rather, the *four ways of being indebted* prepare the ground for the appearing of the chalice: "the four causes have prepared the chalice for its own coming-forth, they have prepared the ground for the chalice, they are the chalices's *hypokeimenon*, 'substratum'. What the four causes accomplish is what lies underneath the

⁹⁸ Ibid., pp., 43.

⁹⁹ William Lovitt notes, "by writing An-wesen, Heidegger stresses the composition of the verb *anwesen*, translated as 'to presence'. The verb consists of *wesen* (literally, to continue or endure) with the prepositional prefix *an-* (at, to, toward). It is man who must receive presencing, man *to* whom it comes as enduring.

¹⁰⁰ Heidegger, Martin, and William Lovitt. *The Question Concerning Technology, and Other Essays*. Harper Perennial, 2013., 9.

¹⁰¹ The Greek, *hypokeisthai*, which Heidegger translates as *Vorliegen und Bereitliegen*

chalice, its ground.”¹⁰² The four ways are to allow the chalice to appear in the first place, the transcendental condition for the possibility of use.

The ‘as’ is important, he is telling us he is speaking of the ‘as-structure’ which was described earlier. This means he is talking about the experience the Greeks had when they took the chalice *as* something. They took the chalice *as* something more than an instrument because they conceive causality not as forcing or directing the chalice into existence, but as allowing its substratum to arise yet are not solely responsible for the chalice. It was taken ‘as’ mere presence.

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The Ancient Greeks understand a thing produced by the four ways of indebtedness in the sense of ‘freeing’ it and ‘allowing it to be on its way’.¹⁰⁴ The four ways did not force chalice to come into existence, as an isolated active subject would be imposing a form onto passive matter, rather since the craftsmen is a midwife, the Greeks saw themselves as simply allowing things to fulfill their purpose, letting them be what they really are. This further means that these produced things have an existence of their own, not completely depend upon the craftsman.

With these insights in mind we can come to understand what Heidegger believed is the essence of Greek causality, “as the Greeks thought it”:¹⁰⁵ “The principle characteristic of being responsible is this starting something on its way into arrival. It is in the sense of such a starting

¹⁰² Ibid., pp., 10.

¹⁰³ Ibid., pp., xxiv.

¹⁰⁴ Rojcewicz, Richard. *The Gods and Technology: a Reading of Heidegger*. State University of New York Press, 2006., pp., 45.

¹⁰⁵ Heidegger, Martin, and William Lovitt. *The Question Concerning Technology, and Other Essays*. Harper Perennial, 2013., 10.

something on its way into arrival that being responsible is an occasional or an inducing to go forward.”¹⁰⁶¹⁰⁷

Causality for the Greeks was always understood as a ‘letting’ not ‘effacing’. It was seen as allowing something to be by nurturing its ground. It was supplying nutrients to its substratum which can not be seen, the soil underneath, without which appearing could not be possible. This is in contrast to the modern notion of causality which is primarily seen as one thing hitting another hence setting it into motion. One thing ‘violently’ forcing another to move, “...it means collision: violence, force, overpowering, the imposing of motion from one thing to another, or in short, efficient causality.”¹⁰⁸

The essence of Greek causality, as a ‘letting’, Heidegger terms, ‘*Occasioning*’, which is something poetic, he quotes Plato as writing in the *Symposium*, “Every occasion for whatever pass over and goes forward into presencing from that which is not presencing is *poiesis*, is bringing-forth”.¹⁰⁹ The essence of causality, ‘letting’ as opposed to imposing (Occasioning), brings something that was nonexistent into existence, it lets something come from non being into being. It ‘brings it forth’ and anything which does so is understood as poetic, an artistic expression. The artist sees the not yet present form of the marble in his mind and lets the marble fulfill its essence through nurturing it to this form, say a statue. This carries further than simply making equipment for the Greeks. Again Heidegger says:

¹⁰⁶ Again as Lovitt states on the meaning of *Ver-an-lassen*, “*Veranlassen* ordinarily means to occasion, to cause, to bring about, to call forth. Its use here relates back to the use of *anlassen* (to leave [something] on, to let loose, to set going....one of the functions of the German prefix *ver-* is to intensify the force of a verb.”

¹⁰⁷ Heidegger, Martin. Translated by William Lovitt. *The Question Concerning Technology, and Other Essays*. Harper Perennial, 2013., 10.

¹⁰⁸ Rojcewicz, Richard. *The Gods and Technology: a Reading of Heidegger*. State University of New York Press, 2006., pp., 33.

¹⁰⁹ Heidegger, Martin. Translated by William Lovitt. *The Question Concerning Technology, and Other Essays*. Harper Perennial, 2013., 10.

It is of utmost importance that we think bringing-forth in its full scope and at the same time in the sense in which the Greeks thought of it. Not only handicraft manufacturing, not only artistic and poetical bringing into appearance and concrete imagery, is a bringing-forth, *poiesis*. *Physis* also, the arising of something out of itself, is a bringing-forth, *poiesis*. *Physis* is indeed *poiesis* in the highest sense. For what presences by means of *physis* has the bursting open belonging to bringing-forth, e.g., the bursting of a blossom into bloom, in itself (en heautoi). In contrast, what is brought forth by the artisan or the artist, e.g., the silver chalice, has the bursting open belonging to bringing-forth not in itself, but in another (en alloi), in the craftsmen or artist.¹¹⁰

The Ancient Greeks experienced *Physis*, nature, as artistic appearance, because nature contains, within itself, its own efficient cause.¹¹¹ All bringing something from non-existence to existence, nonbeing to being, was understood as poetic. Nature is the most true form of poetry, for the Ancient Greeks. Whereas the craftsmen are required to nurture the form and telos in matter. Nature is completely independent and owns itself, we are fortunate enough to witness its creative poetic expression. And further, human creation can never rival nature, for the Greeks, because nature will always have its own internal source of motion which ‘lets’ things be. Whereas in making artifacts, humans are required as the efficient cause to unite the other three, supplying nutrients to the ground which allows something to appear and take a life of its own.

3. *The Impossibility of the Earth*

When cause now means efficient causality which gives absolute priority to the subject as sole creator, nature is robbed of all value and man becomes god.¹¹² What ‘is’ as poetic revealment becomes concealed and disguised by a misunderstanding which places a new conceptual framework on it. Violence has been committed. Poetic relevement is disguised as a

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Aristotle. *Metaphysics V 2. The Basic Works of Aristotle*. Random House, 1941., pp., 752.

¹¹² Heidegger, Martin, and William Lovitt. *The Question Concerning Technology, and Other Essays*. Harper Perennial, 2013., 27.

challenging revealing.¹¹³ Nature was once something non-human, under the control of the gods, but now it is experienced merely as something awaiting human intervention. We own it. Difference has been eradicated for the sake of Self Sameness.¹¹⁴ The trees in the forest are now lumber yards, and the river is a source of energy. As Heidegger writes, “the earth now reveals itself as a coal mining district, the soil as a mineral deposit....Air is now set upon to yield nitrogen, the earth to yield ore, ore to yield uranium....”¹¹⁵

Gewalt then transforms the way Dasein engages with entities: misunderstanding entities leads to *mistreating* entities. Heidegger, in a way, gives us an ethics of being. Because we understand the earth as purely raw material it leads to a different mode of engagement. Nature becomes *standing-reserve*, that is, it is stored for future use and is experienced primarily as something *on hold*.¹¹⁶ For example, the hydroelectric dam built on the Rhine transforms the essence of the river, the once mysterious and spiritual river now is water transforming into energy which is stored up for a future purpose. The river is now an energy source.

The earth, according to Heidegger, is self-secluding and concealing. Whereas a world is the Openness which is filled with significance and meaning. A world is always grounded on the earth and as such the earth, “juts through world”.¹¹⁷ The opposition between earth as self-concealing and the world as openness is a striving where truth happens.¹¹⁸ Yet the modern world through its *Gewalt* has made the earth an impossibility.¹¹⁹

¹¹³ Ibid., pp.,14.

¹¹⁴ Han Pyōng-ch'ōl. *The Burnout Society*. Stanford Briefs, 2015., pp., 10.

¹¹⁵ Heidegger, Martin, and William Lovitt. *The Question Concerning Technology, and Other Essays*. Harper Perennial, 2013., 15.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., pp., 18.

¹¹⁷ Heidegger, Martin. “The Origin of the Work of Art.” *Poetry, Language, Thought*. Harper Row, 1975., pp., 45.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., pp., 48.

¹¹⁹ Han, Byung-Chul. *Topology of Violence*. Mit Pr, 2018.

To make sense of this, I will try to give a concrete example. A world, as discussed earlier, is the referential totality of possibilities set out by Dasein before our being here. In other words, worlds are just human environments of meaning that we designate, the classroom, the home, etc., but which existed before my particular life and which do not have a single origin. So worlds are ‘openings’ in the sense of a region where humans have let entities present themselves in particular ways. As discussed, world-views posit a being and open up a realm of entities.

Worlds, openings of meanings, are themselves always grounded on the earth. By ‘earth’ Heidegger means nature but not in any scientific sense. He refers to it as something poetic. It is the mysterious, spiritual ground which only is ‘seen’ in a world-view. Again, Dasein can only exist in a world-view, an interpretation which ‘fixes’ entities in a certain way and freezes them so as to allow human understanding. As such, the earth comes to presence in a world-view, as the modern world-view sees it as raw material.

How then is the ‘earth an impossibility’? The Earth is self-concealing, as in, it resists any investigations of it and withdraws itself at all times. It is mysterious.¹²⁰ Yet the modern world demands transparency for all and wrestles it out of self-concealment, it forces revealment. This revealing is not poetic but challenging. The earth can exist as an earth only if it remains something self-concealed, something which remains mysterious and apart from complete human control, as the Greeks understood it. Yet now, the modern world-view does not allow anything to be concealed, it demands complete transparency, which is antithetical to the essence of the earth, it is violent to the earth. Holderlin asks: “Is there a measure on earth?” and responds with, “there is none.” Why? Heidegger explains, “because what we signify when we say “on the earth” exists

¹²⁰ Heidegger, Martin. “The Origin of the Work of Art.” *Poetry, Language, Thought*. Harper Row, 1975., pp., 45.

only insofar as man dwells on the earth and in his dwelling *lets* the earth be as earth [my italics].”

¹²¹ We no longer let the earth be the earth because we *assault* its essence without something foreign to it, we are violent towards it.¹²²

Section 4. Neglecting Physical Violence

Part 1. Heidegger's Silence

We have hopefully grasped Heidegger's conception of *Gewalt* as ontological violence in the sense of: mistranslation, misunderstanding, and semblance. With this conception in mind, it is time to turn towards his trivialization of physical violence. Because Heidegger defined violence exclusively in terms of being as opposed to entities, he is unable to speak meaningfully in regards to physical violence, and specifically the annihilation of life. By 'annihilation of life' I mean something genocidal¹²³, as seen in the vaporization of thousands by the atomic bomb or the factory style killing of millions in extermination camps.

This would usually be the place to point out the obvious: Heidegger was a registered member of the Nazi party and did not leave until 1945.¹²⁴ His 'black notebooks' are filled with antisemitic ramblings which could be taken straight from Nazi propaganda posters, and he never renounced his political activities other than stating he was naive. This is all extremely important but also quite well documented, as there are volumes of scholarship on what connection exists between his personal life and his philosophy.¹²⁵ I would simply like to state my opinion that a

¹²¹ Heidegger, Martin. "...Poetically Man Dwells...." *Poetry, Language, Thought*. Harper Row, 1975., pp., 224.

¹²² Ibid. At the same time it should be noted that Heidegger writes that "the earth earths only in a world", so some form of revelation is always required for the earth to be an earth.

¹²³ I am following the Geniva Conventions definition of genocide as, "acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial or religious group, as such"

¹²⁴ Rockmore, Tom. *On Heidegger's Nazism and Philosophy*. University of California Press, 1997.

¹²⁵ See the above title as well as: Fariás Victor, et al. *Heidegger and Nazism*. Temple UP, 1990.

strict distinction between his involvement with Nazism and his philosophy can not be made. At the same time, this ought not lead someone to outright dismiss Heidegger as a Nazi thinker. Heidegger's German nationalism does not fit exactly with Nazi thought or any other form of nationalism. Heidegger's reactionary politics are a system of its own which moves biological racism to cultural racism.¹²⁶

In this section I only argue that his conception of *Gewalt* does not allow for a distinction between physical and ontological violence, and if we do wish to speak against such atrocities there needs to be a movement away from an obsession only with Being. As I will state later on, speaking of invisible violence/ontological violence should not be thrown out, but rather, there just needs to be an expansion of *Gewalt* which can include the physical as well as the ontological. To speak of being does not need to lead to the moral confusion which I will soon document, rather it is the obsession with being in favor of all else.

2. Atomic Bombs and Gas Chambers

Science's knowledge, which is compelling within its own sphere, the sphere of objects, already annihilate things as things long before the atom bomb exploded. The bomb's explosion is only the grossest of all gross confirmations of the long since-accomplished annihilation of the thing: the confirmation that the thing a thing remains nil. The thingness of the thing remains concealed, forgotten. The nature of the thing never comes to light, that is, it never gets a hearing. This is the meaning of our talk about the annihilation of the thing...in truth, however, the thing as thing remains proscribed, nil, and in that sense annihilated. This has happened and continues to happen so essentially that not only are things no longer admitted as things, but that have never yet at all been able to appear to thinking as things.¹²⁷

First, Heidegger begins with the physical explosion of the atomic bomb and quickly pivots to what grounds the bomb, the ontological. The bomb could only exist if scientific

¹²⁶ Heidegger even critiques the idea of 'Nationalism' as well as 'biological racism'. See: Heidegger, Martin, and William McNeill. *Letter on Humanism*, *Pathmarks*. Cambridge University Press, 2010., pp., 260.

¹²⁷ Heidegger, Martin. "The Thing." *Poetry, Language, Thought*. Harper Row, 1975., pp., 168.

understanding exists, the theoretical understanding of science which views things in a certain way is the bombs grounding. What grounds, as we have come to see, is the most essential as surface appearances are the domain of semblance, *Das Man*.

It should be pointed out that this is not a mere side comment which Heidegger makes in regards to the atomic bomb. In *Question Concerning Technology*, he mentions that the earth is made to “yield ore, ore to yield uranium” which is then made to yield atomic energy that “can be released either for destruction or for peaceful purposes.”¹²⁸ Again, later in the essay, he writes that “atomic technology is well under way”¹²⁹. And in the *Der Spiegel* interview, *Only a God Can Save Us*, he says, “I don't know if you were shocked, but [certainly] I was shocked when a short time ago I saw the pictures of the earth taken from the moon. We do not need atomic bombs at all [to uproot us] -- the uprooting of man is already here. All our relationships have become merely technical ones.”¹³⁰ Here he makes the same move to trivialize the physical annihilation of others. The point of these passages is to show that Heidegger's remarks regarding nuclear weapons were not lapses in thinking. Rather, he was thinking about atomic energy and bombs throughout much of his later writings and as such we ought to take his comments seriously rather than dismissing them.

Since the bomb owes its existence to scientific understanding, which reaches its height in the modern world-view, Heidegger states that things are already annihilated. As it has been shown, scientific understanding or as he refers to it, the history of *productionist metaphysics* since Plato, has already misunderstood, committed a violence, towards the essence or ‘thingness’

¹²⁸ Heidegger, Martin, and William Lovitt. *The Question Concerning Technology, and Other Essays*. Harper Perennial, 2013., 15.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, pp., 22.

¹³⁰ Heidegger, Martin. *Der Spiegel. Nur ein Gott kann retten*. 1976.

of things.¹³¹ Even though Heidegger will refer to the ancient Greek understandings of things as antithetical to the modern ones, such as *aletheia* as *poesis* and *the four ways of indebtedness* to *causa efficiens* as sole creator, the Greeks are also responsible for our technological understanding of things which have ‘annihilated’ them. In other words, the Greek understanding contains both the beginning of *Gewalt* and *poiesis*.

One last quote, Heidegger, in an interview with Richard Wisser says: “Greater than the danger of the atom bomb for humanity today is the Ge-setz of technology. Enframing, the essential feature of technology is to reveal the real in the mode of order as always-for-use: to make everything and anything at the push of a button.” What Heidegger is saying can not and should not be simply dismissed. Heidegger realized the essence of technology lies in its constant demand for increasing power, control, and willing for its own sake.¹³² Technology aims for increasing progress without any other end than its own growth, and if we fail to realize this humans will themselves to become products. This may have already occurred with the beginning of ‘designer babies’ as Heidegger makes reference to in the interview. Again, the criticism is not against Heidegger’s view of ontological violence but in its simply being too narrow and excluding the physical.

Heidegger sees himself as *saying* what the Greeks left *unsaid*, that *aletheia* is *poesis* and *causa* meaning indebtedness. Yet the Greeks also presupposed that all things are produced, and truth is something up to humans, which Heidegger believed were only expanded upon while the other terms mistranslated.¹³³ The Greeks then contain both the supreme danger: that being is

¹³¹ Zimmerman, Michael E. *Heidegger's Confrontation with Modernity: Technology, Politics, and Art*. Indiana University Press, 1996., pp., xv.

¹³² Ellul, Jacques, and John Wilkinson. *The Technological Society*. Vintage Books, 1964. This book deals with the same problem of technology but in a way that is both more approachable and open to criticism.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, pp., 157.

forgotten with things remaining ‘annihilated’, and the saving power: the question of being will be renewed which will allow for a ‘turning’ [*die kehre*] that could transform our understanding/engagement with entities through a lesser violence. As Holderlin states:

*“But where danger is, grows
The saving power also.”*¹³⁴

In the passage which perhaps best proves my claim that Heidegger is silent on physical annihilation, he writes: “farming is now a motorized food industry, in essence the same as the fabrication of corpses in gas chambers and extermination camps, the same as the blockade and starving of the peasantry, the same as the fabrication of the hydrogen bomb.”¹³⁵

This is what occurs when violence is only ontological, when physical mass murder must be spoken of only in terms of ‘grounding’ which made it possible. Heidegger can not make the distinction since *Gewalt* only means ontological violence. ‘Disguising being’ is the same in all the above cases and the possibility of speaking out against the specific atrocity of genocide remains impossible. Mass extermination is equated with factory farming because Heidegger sees both as mere final products of our technological understanding. In one sense Heidegger is obviously correct, genocide of millions is only possible through the same technologies which also provides us with life. Yet Heidegger is trying to make a different point.

If *techne* is primarily theoretical understanding than Heidegger is saying that the technological understanding beginning with Plato reaches its climax with exterminations camps, blockades, and atom bombs. It is the logical outcome of a historical process. Yet even in regards to this ontological claim Heidegger fails, as as Philippe Lacpoue-Labarthe states in *Heidegger*,

¹³⁴ Heidegger, Martin. Translated by William Lovitt. The Turning. *The Question Concerning Technology, and Other Essays*. Harper Perennial, 2013., 42.

¹³⁵ December 1949 Bremen lecture, “Das Ge-Stell” (the second lecture of a four-part series).

Art, and Politics, “the extermination of the Jews is a phenomenon which follows essentially no logic other than a spiritual one, degraded as it may be, and therefore a historical one. In the Auschwitz apocalypse, it was nothing less than the West, in its essence, that revealed itself - and that continues, ever since to reveal itself.”¹³⁶ Heidegger failed to reflect on this revealing, the abyss opened up by the apoclypse of the holocaust.¹³⁷

The last, and perhaps strangest, passage I would like to draw attention to is from *The Question Towards the Thing*. Here Heidegger is following the same theme as from *The Thing*, the question of what makes a thing a thing. He begins as he usually does, by running through the traditional and common sense ways of understanding what a thing is, until he gets to the modern scientific understanding. He claims that the modern scientific understanding negates the particular in favor of the universal, it ‘destroys’ this or that particular entities difference and uniqueness so as to classify it with other things that resemble it. At the same time, science then claims to bring us ‘closest’ to things, it proclaims it gives us the ‘truth’ about them, while Heidegger claims, actually destroying them and creating abstract classes which do things no justice.

Heidegger counters this with the existential way in which we encounter things as things, in their particularity. I don't see the things around me as conceptual and abstract things but rather I am faced with their uniqueness which forces me to see the differences among them. In my everydayness I save and protect the thing by confronting it as a thing. This stands in stark contrast to *Being and Time* where, from the perspective of totality, things are never particulars

¹³⁶ Lacoue-Labarthe, Philippe. *Heidegger, Art and Politics: the Fiction of the Political*. Basil Blackwell, 1990., pp., 35.

¹³⁷ I am referring to the holocaust specifictly due to his quote. Yet it seems like this critique can extend to mass murder more broadly. To what extent could one attempt to trace the mass starvation of Soviets to enlightenment rationality as Heidegger attempts? Does not mass murder fall outside such a ‘logic’ and even break it?

but always part of a referential-structure, this a priori totality actually engulfs it. Heidegger himself states that the task of phenomenology is the surpassing of the particular.

Yet in a contradictory passage, Heidegger writes about science doing that very thing. This is also one of the only times he writes about killing, but instead of talking about the killing or murder of Dasein he focuses on frogs and salamanders:

Unexpectedly, we meet with something which belongs to the thing as a thing. This is a determination that is disregarded by the sciences which, with their thrust to-ward facts, apparently come closest to things. For a botanist, when he examines the labiate flower, will never be concerned about the single flower as a single one : it always remains an exemplar only. That is also true of the animals, for example, the countless frogs and sala-manders which are killed in a labora tory. The "this one" (je dieses) which distinguishes everything, is passed over by science. Should we now consider the things in this way?¹³⁸

The strangeness lies in that it is very difficult to find any refrence to physical murder or killing in regards to Dasein but Heidegger speaks of the murder of frogs and salamnders. It seems like a pressing question, why does Heidegger speak on the murder of entities which are not Da-sein but is silent in regards to us? In this instance Heidegger connects physical murder with ontological violence but refuses to do the same for Dasein. Here he clealy states that science murders animals and this is because in its being what it is, science requires the surpassing of the individual and this surpassing allows it to commit murder. In abstracting from and removing the particular in theory, science kills the individual in practice.

Why in regards to people does Heidegger conflate ontological and physical violence whereas with animals the distinction is clearly made? Does not the same argument follow for Heidegger's own conception of Dasein? That individual people, flesh and blood particular bodies have been eradicated by the concept of *being-there* which removes the subject and simply makes

¹³⁸ Heidegger, Martin. *The Question Concerning the Thing: On Kant's Doctrine of the Transcendental Principles*. Rowman & Littlefield International Ltd, 2018

us 'world'? Is this the consequence of replacing the subject-object divide with just being-in-the-world, where the 'I' is primarily nobody?

Paradoxically, Heidegger himself states that phenomenology is not concerned with the particular qua particular either. The entire purpose of transcendental phenomenology is to supersede the particular for the background of intelligibility which makes it possible. As I have shown, to be concerned with the particular without referent to its ground is to mindlessly accept the current interpretation as the only one. It is to stay in the realm of Das Man.

3. The Supreme Danger and the Saving Power: Violence and Peace

First, it must be again noted that Heidegger explicitly states, "But man does not have control over unconcealment itself, in which at any given time the real shows itself or withdraws....the thinker only responded to what addressed itself to him"¹³⁹ What Heidegger means is that 'being' is, strictly speaking, nothing human. Humans merely open the curtains to the ongoing play of presence and absence. I am thrown into a world of meaning, a world that has already interpreted a meaning to being, and I have no direct control over it. I can not change my experience or understanding of being in such a radical way as to rupture my current world-view. I am stuck in it. Freedom consists in merely submitting to the call of being¹⁴⁰ That is, by realizing my own prejudices and common sense understanding that have been drilled into me by Das Man so as to attempt to avoid introducing anything alien to the understanding of things. This is why refutation is ahistorical, for Heidegger. To refute is to state that the truth can be established once

¹³⁹ Heidegger, Martin. Translated by William Lovitt. *The Turning. The Question Concerning Technology, and Other Essays*. Harper Perennial, 2013., pp., 42.

¹⁴⁰ Nichols, Robert. *The World of Freedom: Heidegger, Foucault, and the Politics of Historical Ontology*. Stanford University Press, 2014., pp., 15.

and for all, that the matter can be completely known. But truth and being are necessarily historical. Only approximate conceptions are in history. Heidegger does not refute but *deconstructs*.¹⁴¹

Yet-the modern world-view may have already come to an end according to Heidegger.¹⁴² This would then lead to an epistemologically privileged stand-point for thinkers today. We would not be completely suffocated by the world-view of our time, we would be able to see its principles that govern our thinking and action. As it has been shown, for Heidegger, this is the case since he traces the mistranslations of Greek words to the misunderstandings through semblance today. A change of being would amount to a change in the *constellations of being*.¹⁴³ The constellations of being refers to our pre-comprehension of being which opens a field of intelligibility in a particular time period.

For Heidegger, these principles remain invisible while they hold sway, they can never be questioned because they are the necessary presuppositions for intelligibility.¹⁴⁴ They are the stars in the sky which shine down on us, we can not ‘hold’ them, yet they control us, we are determined by them. However, as Heidegger has shown, these principles are now visible which means they are no longer completely holding sway over us. The modern epoch is coming to an end and something else is approaching. This is a time of epochal transition and we are in a stage of anarchy. As Reiner Schurman puts it:

It may be that in the divide between one era and the next anarchism appears, the absence of an ultimate reason in the succession of the many principles that have run their course in the West. It may be that as this absence becomes apparent, human practice, most notably

¹⁴¹ Derrida, Jacques, et al. *Heidegger: the Question of Being and History*. The University of Chicago Press, 2019., pp., 6. Also see Heidegger’s conception of ‘Story telling’: *Sein und Zeit*, pp., 6.

¹⁴² Schürmann Reiner. *Heidegger on Being and Acting: from Principles to Anarchy*. pp., 31.

¹⁴³ Heidegger, Martin. Translated by William Lovitt. *The Question Concerning Technology, and Other Essays*. Harper Perennial, 2013., 33.

¹⁴⁴ Schürmann Reiner. *Heidegger on Being and Acting: from Principles to Anarchy*. pp., 31.

political action, becomes thinkable in a way that it is not when life and thought obey the order made for them between the two reversals.¹⁴⁵

Heidegger's *kehre* is not a personal turning then, as he explains, but rather a turning in the history of being where one epoch has come to an end and another has not yet begun.¹⁴⁶ The constellation is beginning to move, it is turning and there are two possible destinations. The supreme danger or the saving power. As mentioned the supreme danger is entering into the abyss of forgetfulness [*Vergessenheit*] where 'is' goes silent and the question of being is completely forgotten. This means that the modern world-view would completely entrap Dasein and the world in such a way as to prevent it from ever being questioned again. Viewing the earth as raw material and *standing-reserve* would lead to Dasein itself becoming raw material if this has not already occurred.¹⁴⁷

Heidegger explains this as a violent capitalist utopia where "[the Rhine exists] in no other way than as an object on call for inception by a tour group ordered there by the vacation industry."¹⁴⁸ And where art placed in galleries "torn out of their own native sphere....placing them in a collection has withdrawn them from their own world."¹⁴⁹¹⁵⁰ The spiritual and sacred, that is, things concerned without reference to some utility or functionality, no longer exist, as he goes on to write, "Even this doom, of the god remaining absent, is a way in which world worlds."¹⁵¹ Our world is a god free one in the sense of the abandonment of the platonic realm, the supersensible can no longer be believed in. Yet our society still functions as if it did, the

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., pp., 15.

¹⁴⁶ Heidegger, Martin. Translated by William Lovitt. *The Turning. The Question Concerning Technology, and Other Essays*. Harper Perennial, 2013., pp., 46.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., pp., 27.

¹⁴⁸ Heidegger, Martin. *The Origin of the Work of Art. Poetry, Language, Thought*. Harper Row, 1975., pp., 46.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., pp., 39.

¹⁵⁰ The phrase 'their own world' deserves another analysis itself to investigate some questions such as 'to what extent is *Welt* and *-heim*, *unheimlichkeit* already filled with connotations of 'blood and soil' or other nationalist sentiments?' 'Does my *Heimwärts* always rely upon rootedness in a *Welt* and that *Welt* opening the *Erde*?'

¹⁵¹ Ibid., pp., 42.

spiritual has been devoid of spirit with nothing to replace it. As Marx said “all that is solid melts into air”.¹⁵²

Heidegger believed that the supreme danger consists in simply following the logic of western metaphysics. As Descartes misunderstood reality as merely existing *within* consciousness.¹⁵³ Reality suffered the ultimate violence of only existing in the mind of humans:

At this point human self-consciousness became subject *par excellence*, and everything that had the character of subject-of that-which-lies-before-came to find the locus and manner of its being precisely in that self-consciousness, ie., in the unity of thinking and being that was established by Descartes in his *ego cogito [ergo] sum....*¹⁵⁴

To turn into the supreme danger is to lose the war of being, it is complete surrender since the question would never arise again in Enframing. If the question of being dies so to does any possibility of changing our understanding and treatment of it. Theory and practice are no longer distinct. As Heidegger says: The other possible turning requires an intervention to attain, since the supreme danger is what will occur if the logic of western metaphysics fulfills its course. It is our destiny.¹⁵⁵ The other way is a lesser-violence in which entities are able to take a stand for themselves as existing apart from human understanding. Since the understanding of being is connected with the treatment of entities, that is, because philosophers have understood reality as ‘existing’ only *in* humans, Dasein has treated nature as something it owns, as raw material. Heidegger believed that to understand nature as something which exists apart from us would, lead to a different treatment of entities.

¹⁵² Marx, Karl, and Friedrich Engels. *The Communist Manifesto*. Origami Books, 2020. To quote Marx while writing on Heidegger may seem out of place but they are similar thinkers in that they both demand world change while critiquing modernity. Heidegger believes his investigation of being shows that ‘thinking’ is the first necessary action for a change in the world. Heidegger acknowledges this in the 1969 interview with Richard Wisser while discussing Marx’s quote: “The philosophers have hitherto only interpreted the world in various ways; the point, however, is to change it”.

¹⁵³ Heidegger, Martin, et al. *Being and Truth*. Indiana University Press, 2016., pp., 35.

¹⁵⁴ Heidegger, Martin. *Poetry, Language, Thought*. Harper Row, 1975., pp., xxvi.

¹⁵⁵ Heidegger, Martin. Translated by William Lovitt. *The Turning. The Question Concerning Technology, and Other Essays*. Harper Perennial, 2013., pp., 45.

The saving power is what Heidegger calls ‘*releasement*’, *letting entities be* which is revealing as *poiesis*, yet not in the sense of a return to Ancient Greek understanding.¹⁵⁶ to ‘release’ the thing requires deconstructing what stands between us and the thing, the semblant, while allowing the thing to appear in its mysterious and self-concealing way. It is to preserve being and its mystery, giving up ownership of it. Humans relinquish the power of the gods so as to await their return.¹⁵⁷

Subject would mean *what lies before*, while *objective* would be what is re-presented to mind. This is exactly opposite to our current understanding. But Heidegger explains that under the mathematical method¹⁵⁸:

“Descartes seeks something that lies at hand as indubitable and that cannot be doubted away. But this thing that lies at hand is the “I” of the doubter himself. *Thus the I is a subjectum in the old sense.* But now, because the I is not just any *subjectum*, but the fundamental thing that lies at hand, the *subjectum* receives the fundamental meaning of the ‘I’¹⁵⁹

Later Heidegger would see releasement as only possible through poetry and art. Philosophy has come to an end and has been replaced by cybernetics.¹⁶⁰ That is, philosophy, as understood as technological thinking beginning with Plato, has reached its height in the modern world-view with cybernetics and it has run out of inner possibilities. There is no region of entities left open for philosophy, all belongs to science. Art and poetry are the only ways left to let entities be so as to avoid the violence of utilizing the language of the said.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., pp., 48.

¹⁵⁷ Rojcewicz, Richard. *The Gods and Technology: a Reading of Heidegger*. State University of New York Press, 2006., pp., 68..

¹⁵⁸ Heidegger, Martin, et al. *Being and Truth*. Indiana University Press, 2016., pp., 35.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ Heidegger, Martin. Translated by David Farrell. Krell. *Basic Writings: from Being and Time (1927) to The Task of Thinking (1964)*. Routledge, 1993., pp., 434.

Releasement as a lesser-violence also requires deconstruction so as to keep our distance from all preconceptions which will hopefully “leave the thing to rest in its own self, for instance, in its thing-being”¹⁶¹ This is crucial, to prevent violence one needs to clearly see the enemy in this struggle. The enemy is misunderstanding through semblance, which ontically speaking, is reinforced and spread through *Das Man* which is part of the modern world-view that is making a turn towards the supreme danger. To fight *Das Man* and the world-view which acts violently towards things then requires a distance from them. Heidegger is clear about distance being a prerequisite for critical thinking.¹⁶²

4. *The Question of Being and Vernichtungskrieg*

The first section aims to: 1.) argue that Heidegger believed the Germans are the only ones suited to change the understanding of being through non-violent releasement. 2.) This is given further evidence in his *ontological politics* where German nationalism is given an ontological basis, and 3.) his rhetoric of a ‘war’ or ‘battle’ requires the *annihilation* of an enemy, that is, there is a connection between the question of being [*seinsfrage*] and *Vernichtungskrieg*¹⁶³.

Heidegger believed that language is the ‘house of being’ in that the question of being could only itself arise in a language. Further, language constitutes both *Dasein* and entities. Language is never neutral but is an interpretation of what things are.¹⁶⁴ In speaking a language one is *in* such an interpretive framework. And Heidegger thought that certain languages had a more ‘essential’ connection to being than others in terms of doing violence to being. Greek is

¹⁶¹ Heidegger, Martin. “The Origin of the Work of Art.” *Poetry, Language, Thought*. Harper Row, 1975., pp., 73.

¹⁶² This goes to multiple concepts in Heidegger, *authenticity, everydayness, ready-to-hand/present-to-hand*.

¹⁶³ *Vernichtungskrieg* is translated as ‘total-war’, however it has the implication of genocide since its reformulation in the late 1800’s in Germany. By saying that there is a connection between *seinsfrage* and *Vernichtungskrieg* means a rhetorical similarity which is owed to Heidegger himself belonging to a world-view.

¹⁶⁴ Heidegger, Martin. “Language.” *Poetry, Language, Thought*. Harper Row, 1975., pp., 204.

one such language since, according to him, it was the Ancient Greeks who first articulated ontological difference. Yet he then goes on to say that, “the Greek people, whose ethnicity and language have the same provenance as ours [the Germans]...”¹⁶⁵ as well as even more explicitly:

The Greek language is philosophical, i.e., not that Greek is loaded with philosophical terminology, but it philosophizes in its basic structure and formation. The same applies to every genuine language, to different degrees to be sure. *The extent to which this is so depends on the depth and power of the people and of the race who speak the language and exist within it.* Only our German language has a deep and creative philosophical character comparable to Greek.¹⁶⁶

Heidegger’s convoluted etymological reasoning for the ‘deep connection’ between Greek and German can not be dealt with here. For the sake of my argument, it is enough to point out this belief which makes ‘true thinking’ only within the sphere of those that speak German. Further, these are comments made throughout his writings, not just the infamous year as Rector of Freiburg in 1933. In *Only a God can Save us* the interviewer with *Der Spiegel* asks him if he believes Heidegger places a special task [*sonderweg*] in the Germans, he says yes and, “This is something that the French confirm for me again and again today. When they begin to think, they speak German. They assure [me] that they do not succeed with their own language.”¹⁶⁷ Based upon Heidegger’s lack of humor it is worth taking this comment seriously.

If the Germans hold an essential connection to Being due to their language, what is their task? Again in the interview with *Der Spiegel* Heidegger says:

My conviction is that only in the same place where the modern technical world took its origin can we also prepare a conversion (*Umkehr*) of it. In other words, this cannot happen by taking over Zen-Buddhism or other Eastern experiences of the world. [217] For this conversion of thought we need the help of the European tradition and a new appropriation of it. Thought will be transformed only through thought that has the same origin and determination.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁵ Heidegger, Martin, et al. *Being and Truth*. Indiana University Press, 2016., pp., 5.

¹⁶⁶ Cassin, Barbara, et al. *Nostalgia: When Are We Ever at Home?* Fordham University Press, 2016., pp., 52.

¹⁶⁷ Heidegger, Martin. *Der Spiegel. Nur ein Gott kann retten*. 1976.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

Since the origin of technicity lies in Ancient Greece and the Germans hold an essential connection through their language to the Greeks, the Germans are now tasked with transforming the current understanding of being and preventing the supreme danger: the coming to presence of Enframing. The only prevention for this is attaining a distance from the enemy so as to deconstruct the violent understanding of being so as to attain peace in releasement. Yet is violence required to attain peace? Can violence only be fought with violence? Heidegger may be inclined to say so, in *Being and Time* he asks, “Does not then the violence [*Gewalt sam*] of this project amount to a freeing the undisguised phenomenal content [*Bestand*] of *Dasein*? The ‘violent’ presentation of possibilities of existence may be required for our method....”¹⁶⁹ If peace is desired we must be ready to go to war. The (German) thinker may need to go to war with those preventing the new cultivation of being, the invisible enemy which is everyone and nobody. This counter violence would also amount to a form of semblance, as Heidegger states, all translation is reinterperatation and projection which always risks disguising what ‘is’ for something else.

To go to war first requires bringing the enemy far enough as as to see him for the first time:

“To catch sight of the enemy as such, to bring the enemy into the open, to harbor no illusions about the enemy, to keep oneself ready for attack, to cultivate and intensify a constant readiness and to prepare the attack looking far ahead with *the goal of total annihilation [der volligen Vernichtung]*¹⁷⁰

The enemy is brought out into the open not for conversation or a dialogue, but annihilation. We have long passed the time for talk, according to Heidegger. Talk is for Das Man, authentic *Dasein* takes action. In *The Concept of the Political*, Schmitt makes the distinction between friend and enemy the basis for politics. Heidegger aims to give this an

¹⁶⁹ Heidegger, Martin. *Being and Time*. Translated by Joan Stambaugh, Suny Press, 2010., pp., 299.

¹⁷⁰ Gurley, S. West. *Phenomenology and the Political*. Rowman & Littlefield International, 2016., pp., 68.

ontological grounding through his conception of *Mit-sein* in *Being and Time*. For Schmitt, the mark of great politics begins in those moments when the enemy is clearly seen as an enemy.¹⁷¹

As Byung-Chul Han writes:

It is not dialogue and compromise but war and strife that form the foundation of the political: ‘What always matters is only the possibility of conflict.’ The solution to conflicts is not political; rather, the enmity that lies at the heart of conflict establishes the political. The ‘They’ is everywhere, but in such a way that it has always already stolen away when Da-sein presses for a decision’...Sein, then is a battle. Thus it gains a political dimension. Das Man, or the ‘They’, discusses, authentic Dasein decides and acts.¹⁷²

We (German thinkers) must now come together for a spiritual struggle against the enemy and annihilate him, according to Heidegger. Ontic forms of genocide, nuclear weapons and gas chambers are allowed as the supreme danger, Enframing coming to presence, is a threat to existence itself. We are in a struggle for the preservation of existence. This is war. Morals are suspended.¹⁷³

Yet this enemy is so vague, as Heidegger describes him, the question again arises: *who must we annihilate* in this world of *kampf*? In *Phenomenology and the Political* West Gurley quotes Heidegger as follows: “And it can seem as if there were no enemy. There it is a fundamental requirement to find the enemy, to expose the enemy to the light, or even first to make the enemy, so that this standing against the enemy might occur and that Dasein not become blunt (*stumpf werde*)”¹⁷⁴Annihilation must occur, it is Germany’s special way [*sonderweg*], it is the destiny that must occur to save existence. Even if an enemy must be created or arbitrarily picked, we must do it for the sake of annihilation itself. The target of genocide is arbitrary, what matters is the act of annihilation. It is about bringing together a nation, uniting them under a

¹⁷¹ Han, Byung-Chul. *Topology of Violence*. Mit Pr, 2018., pp., 41.

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ Levinas, Emmanuel. *Totality and Infinity: an Essay on Exteriority*. Duquesne University Press, 2013., pp., 3.

¹⁷⁴ Gurley, S. West. *Phenomenology and the Political*. Rowman & Littlefield International, 2016., pp., 68.

single spirit [*Geist*], and partaking in annihilation so as to change the world. It is an oath the Germans took, to become complicit in deeds so horrible there could be no possibility of ‘dropping out’ and leaving the movement. To annihilate is to form *Geist*.¹⁷⁵

Conclusion

This project has aimed to prove that *Gewalt*, for Heidegger, is solely concerned with the ontological and thereby restricts any talk of physical violence. He is forced to remain silent on physical atrocities since the difference can no longer be seen according to the term. Such failure to make the obvious distinction is seen when he brings up nuclear weapons or genocide. He reaches the height of moral confusion, conflating misunderstanding the ‘thingness of things’ to the annihilation of hundreds of thousands by the bomb or millions by the gas chamber.

Further, *Gewalt* is something that becomes constant and unavoidable for Heidegger. It is reinforced through the enemy which always exists among us. The foundation of any political state, for Heidegger, is founded upon this distinction between friend and enemy. Complete peace is never a possibility, only fighting the enemy with a lesser violence, *releasement*. In doing so the goal is complete annihilation for the sake of forming a community *Geist*, according to Heidegger, it is a struggle for existence carried out by Germans.

Even though I believe these thoughts must be surpassed, I am in favor of some broader conception of violence than is normally used, one which does aim to capture invisible forces of oppression, exclusion, manipulation, and even misunderstanding. As I hoped to show, Heidegger’s conception of *Gewalt* is able to powerfully capture what I also believe is a major injustice and violence, our treatment of the Earth. Heidegger’s language offers us a new

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., pp., 70.

opportunity to critique the destruction of nature in a novel way. It is not just a critique about trees being cut down or animals dying for manufacturing products, rather, a critique at our such a thing could even occur at all. It is aimed against a new and superficial experience of things which robs life of its fullness.

The application of a broader notion of *Gewalt* which utilizes Heidegger's insights is especially pertinent to today's world in another way as well. In *What is Metaphysics* (1929), "another possibility of such manifestation [entities as a whole becoming manifest] is concealed in our joy in the presence of the Dasein-and not simply of the person-of a human being whom we love."¹⁷⁶ The profoundness of this statement must not be underestimated. Heidegger, by distinguishing between 'Dasein' and 'the person', is saying the world appears in its fullness in the joy we feel when the person we love is physically present with us. It is in them 'being' in *our* 'there' which causes us such joy, according to Heidegger. To see the one I love through a phone screen does not cause such a joy or manifestation because the digital medium is a radically different form of spatiality than *existential spatiality* as *being-in-the-world*.

Video chatting with someone I love brings them both 'close' and 'far', in one sense they are re-presented to me through the screen and this reproduction of them is 'close' to me as I hold the phone. Yet they are brought further away in a few different senses. The most obvious is that they are 'actually' far in terms of their physical location to me. In another sense, they are far from me by their becoming close in the reproduction. I hold my phone in my hand and so 'have' them 'at hand' as well. They become objectified just as I objectify my phone or another thing lying around. In being digitally re-produced on a screen, they lose their Da-sein. Da-sein literally

¹⁷⁶ Heidegger, Martin. Translated by William McNeill. *Pathmarks*. Cambridge University Press, 2010., pp., 87.

means being-there and while on a screen they are not 'being' anywhere at all. They are not Dasein, but a 'person', and this 'person', through objectification, is under my control, I own them. The one whom I love becomes at my disposal, I decide when they talk, how they talk, and when they stop. I control their eyes and ears. there is no difference or otherness in this form of 'communication'.¹⁷⁷ Talking to someone through a digital medium is actually talking to oneself.

This seems to be a form of *Gewalt*. I 'disguise' the proper being of the Dasein whom I love through reproduction where they lose their autonomy. In regards to the modern era being the so-called most peaceful time, Byung-Chul Han writes:

Modernity is not distinguished by an aversion to violence. Violence is simply protean. It varies its outward form according to the social constellation at hand. Today it is shifting from the visible to the invisible, from the front to the viral, from brute force to mediated force, from the real to the virtual, from the physical to the psychological, from the negative to the positive....it becomes completely invisible¹⁷⁸

The answer does not lie in simply being antithetical to Heidegger, to be in direct opposition is to concede the same framework. The task then must be in recognizing the need for an expansion of the term *Gewalt* as Heidegger does, but to insist that we must never lose sight of the physical annihilation of others which demands our attention.

¹⁷⁷ Han, Byung-Chul. *Topology of Violence*. Mit Pr, 2018., pp., 45.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., pp., 1.

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