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Praxis and theoria: Heidegger's "violent" interpretation

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Praxis and Theōria: Heidegger's "Violent" Interpretation

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
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Dedication

For my caring and supportive parents, Heather and Benjamin Altman.

For my courageous brother, Rudy Altman.

In loving memory of P. Altman.

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Megan E. Altman

ABSTRACT

This paper attempts to mark out new ground in the connections between the philosophical writings of Martin Heidegger and Aristotle by posing an interesting question that has never been addressed. Both writers devote much of their early thoughts to questions concerning human beings' practical ways of understanding. However, in their later thoughts Heidegger and Aristotle suddenly seem to completely change the subject to ideal or transcendental ways of understanding. At first glance these ideal modes of human apprehension seem to have nothing to do with each other. Yet, Heidegger and Aristotle seem to have similar motives for turning away from the practical realm and towards a transcendental realm, and they seem to have similar outcomes. My investigation of their respective motives and outcomes has led me to believe that although there are some similarities that are thought provoking, they are not strong enough to conclude that Heidegger's later writings are connected to his recovery of Aristotelian ideas. Given that the core of Heidegger's early questions of Being can be interpreted as a retrieval of Aristotle, to be able to demarcate the point at which

Heidegger ceases his attempts at this recovery may allow us to examine the differences in Heidegger's later thought concerning Being.

Preface

The title of this paper is intentionally vague and suggestive, and I would like to take this time to clarify a few aspects of Heidegger's method. The first aspect to be addressed pertains to what I mean by "violent" interpretations. Heidegger often says that authentic interpretation requires doing "violence" to the texts, which is mainly due to the fact that this kind of reading is attentive to what an author does *not* say.¹ Heidegger's writings are frequently referred to as "violent" or radical interpretations of the traditional philosophy, insofar as they consist of his attempt to return philosophical questions to their "proper" origin. Heidegger claims that the tradition is full of misunderstandings of what it means for being (e.g. a human being, a thing, theory, language) to be. These traditional misunderstandings, according to Heidegger, are perpetuated by the fact that Western philosophy is rooted in assumptions about human beings and the world that fail to fully account for the being of beings, but become sedimented through time as truth. For example, Plato assumes that there are underlying universal principles that govern the phenomena of all that is, and one may grasp these principles through a detached theoretical viewpoint. Plato's way of understanding human beings and the way they relate to things consists of seeing beings as independently existing entities. Heidegger's goal is to clear away these assumptions in order to return to or retrieve "what was already vigorously pursued in Western philosophy from the very beginning."²

¹ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, translated by John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1962) 359. Henceforth I will abbreviate this work as "BT."

² Martin Heidegger, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, translation, introduction, and lexicon by Albert Hofstadter, revised edition (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1982) 21. Henceforth this work will be abbreviated as "BP."

The second aspect of Heidegger's method has to do with his "appropriation" of philosophers. In his attempt to return philosophy to a primordial way of understanding beings, Heidegger appropriates the fundamental ideas that have formed our background of cultural understandings—"his thought weaves together many different historical strands."³ His writings call into question the thoughts of traditional philosophers such as, the pre-Socratics, Plato, Aristotle, Descartes, Kant, Kierkegaard, and Husserl. Heidegger goes to historical sources in order to "formulate an alternative to the assumptions that make up the tradition," that is, to appropriate the underlying thoughts that have formed the tradition (Guignon, *Introduction* 2). His appropriation may be described as a way of situating or setting philosophers' fundamental ideas into our current understanding of human being and the human lived-world.

The third aspect to be discussed pertains to Heidegger's tripartite method of "reduction, construction, and destruction." Generally, Heidegger's main concern with the tradition is how it breaks apart the phenomena of the ways things appear to us. The tradition begins with an ontological investigation of being, "but then, *in a precise way, it is lead away from that being and led back to its being*" (Heidegger, BP 21). In other words, the tradition assumes that we can never know things in themselves, or the being of entities, so an investigation of the being of entities turns out to be an investigation of what human beings can know about these entities. Heidegger suggests that in order to return to the phenomena of things we must begin with a "phenomenological reduction" of the traditional question of being, that is, we must reduce the question to how things are

³ Charles Guignon, "Introduction," in *The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger*, 2nd ed., edited by Charles Guignon (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006) 2. Henceforth I will be referring to this work as "Introduction."

intelligible to us. This reduction of the traditional mode of apprehension is simultaneously a “construction” and “destruction” of traditional concepts. Generally, Heidegger deconstructs or reformulates the questions embedded in the tradition and in human beings, as inheritors of this tradition, in an effort to reconstruct or recover the primordial way things enter into our intelligibility.

Heidegger believes that Aristotle was the last philosopher who had the “energy and tenacity to continue to force inquiry back to the phenomena” (BP 232). Heidegger’s early lectures (1921-24) were explicitly dedicated to a rigorous exegesis of the Aristotelian corpus. During the time of these lecture courses Heidegger was also working on publishing a manuscript for promotion to university chair. His publication proposal consisted of an introduction and overview of Aristotle, and this is commonly referred to as his first draft of *Being and Time* (1927). So it is no surprise that there are strong connections between Heidegger’s *Being and Time* and Aristotelian ideas. However, in Heidegger’s later writings (post 1935) he seems to veer away from his intensive recovery of Aristotle.

This paper attempts to mark out new ground in the connections between the philosophical writings of Martin Heidegger and Aristotle by posing an interesting question that has never been addressed. Both writers devote much of their early thoughts to questions concerning human beings’ practical ways of understanding. However, in their later thoughts Heidegger and Aristotle suddenly seem to completely change the subject to ideal or transcendental ways of understanding. At first glance these ideal modes of human apprehension seem to have nothing to do with each other. Yet, Heidegger and Aristotle seem to have similar motives for turning away from the practical

realm and towards a transcendental realm, and they seem to have similar outcomes. My investigation of their respective motives and outcomes has led me to believe that although there are some similarities that are thought provoking, they are not strong enough to conclude that Heidegger's later writings are connected to his recovery of Aristotelian ideas. Given that the core of Heidegger's early questions of Being can be interpreted as a retrieval of Aristotle, to be able to demarcate the point at which Heidegger ceases his attempts at this recovery may allow us to examine the differences in Heidegger's later thought concerning Being.

Chapter 1: An Introduction to the Hermeneutical Situation of Heidegger and Aristotle

Martin Heidegger's (1889-1976) phenomenological interpretation of Aristotle's (384 B.C.E.-322 B.C.E.) texts has been the focus of scholarly work for many years.

Heidegger's *Being and Time* is often considered a violent interpretation of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, that is, *Being and Time* may be understood as an appropriation (or "misappropriation"), of the Aristotelian idea that there is a distinction between *poiēsis*, production, and *praxis*, action. Heidegger refers to his appropriation of Aristotelian ideas as a significant part of his attempt at a "destruction" of the Western tradition of metaphysics and ontology. Basically Heidegger is suggesting that a destruction of the tradition is a way to get back to, or to recover, the origin of the tradition, and he recognizes Aristotle's thought as part of this origin. John Caputo discusses Heidegger's method of destruction when he says, "'destruction' of the tradition – which does not mean to level or raze but rather to break through the conceptual surface of traditional metaphysics in order to 'retrieve' or recover."⁴ According to Heidegger, the purpose of this destruction is to recover the "primordial experiences in which we achieved our first ways of determining the nature of Being—the ways which have guided us ever since" (BT 44).⁵ He goes on to say that this destruction is a way of "demonstrating the origin of our basic ontological concepts by an investigation in which their 'birth certificate' is displayed" (44). It seems that Heidegger recognizes the Aristotelian distinction between

⁴ John D. Caputo, "Heidegger and Theology," in *The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger*, 2nd ed., edited by Charles Guignon (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006) 328.

⁵ It seems important to mention that Heidegger regards this "destruction" as having a positive aim insofar as it is a rebuilding, and not a destroying, of the tradition (44).

poiēsis and *praxis* to be an original way of understanding one's different modes of existing in the world (48).

Before one can understand Heidegger's appropriation of Aristotelian ideas, it seems necessary to give a description of Aristotle's account of nature and existence. In the second chapter I will examine this account as it is laid out in his *Physics* and *Metaphysics*, and I will proceed to discuss his investigation of human being, which is found in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. According to Aristotle, of those things that exist some are able to be other than what they are while others are not able to be otherwise, and this ability is dependent on the originating source (the first principles) of the thing that exists. Aristotle discusses this when he states, "[there are] beings whose principles do not admit of being otherwise than they are, and [... there are] beings whose principles admit of being otherwise."⁶ In the second chapter I will discuss the kinds of knowledge that Aristotle associates with these abilities of being, but for now I am concerned only with introducing the latter. Aristotle suggests that all activities have a *telos*, which is understood here as an end or goal. In the *Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle says that the activity of *poiēsis* aims at a *telos* outside of or separate from the movement itself, but that the *telos* of the activity of *praxis* is always contained in the movement itself.

In "Book VI" of *Nicomachean Ethics*, *technē* is a form of knowledge ("intellectual excellence), or way of understanding that is traditionally translated as "craft knowledge," or "know-how," and *poiēsis* is the process that Aristotle associates with this knowledge (1140a10-17). *Technē* is concerned with knowing-how to make or produce

⁶ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Translated by Terence Irwin, 2nd edition (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1999). 1139a7-9. Throughout the rest of this paper Bekker numbers will be used when referring to Aristotle's works.

something, which may also be referred to as the know-how of the movement of *poiēsis*. Aristotle says that *technē* is a way for one to know how to produce beings (those things that exist) that “admit of being otherwise” (1140a1), and he describes the beings of *technē* in this way due to the fact that the originating principle of these beings “is in the producer and not in the product” (1140a14). Aristotle seems to suggest that this way of understanding beings that can be otherwise is limited to the coming-to-be of these beings. In other words, knowing how to build a house is not knowledge about the actual house, but is only knowledge of how to bring the house into existence. However, the end, or *telos*, of this process of *poiēsis* is being (existence) insofar as it is no longer coming to be, so the *telos* of *technē* may be understood as a product that is separate from the activity of production. Since this *telos* is separate from the know-how that is actually used in the production, the knowledge grasped by *poiēsis* is also separate from the *telos* itself, the product. Aristotle suggests that the movement of human life is quite different from that of production, because the structure of the movement of human life is such that the producer and the product of the activity are one and the same.

In the second chapter I will continue to show that *praxis* (action) is the distinctive activity that Aristotle associates with human being, and *phronēsis*, practical wisdom, is the knowledge that corresponds to this activity. The *telos* of this way of knowing is internal to the action of human being insofar as it concerns the human being itself. That is to say, when the understanding of human being is associated with practical wisdom, then human being is both the beginning (the first principle) and the end of its action. Aristotle describes *phronēsis* as a relation to human affairs when he says, “It seems proper to a prudent person to be able to deliberate finely about things that are good and beneficial for

himself, not about some restricted area—about what sorts of things promote health or strength, for instance—but about what sorts of things promote living well in general.” (1140a26). Furthermore, knowledge of living well in general is extremely different from knowing-how to build a house. Although, for example, I can follow step-by-step instructions on how to build a house and after many failed attempts I can eventually build a house, there are no instructions for me to follow in order to live well in general. Moreover, making a mistake during the production of a house is not the same as making mistakes in the actions of my life. Failing to build a house is not a reflection on me as a person but only speaks to my skills as a house builder. However, when I fail to act well in general such action is a commentary on the quality of my life as a human being.

In the third chapter I will focus on the features of the first division of *Being and Time* that bring forth the Aristotelian idea of *poiēsis*. Generally in “Division I” of *Being and Time* Heidegger devotes his time to interpreting the different ways a human being lives, or acts, in the world. Whereas Aristotle examines human being in terms of the nature, or first principles, of activity, Heidegger describes how human being understands itself in its world of activity. He shows how *Dasein* (being-there, or, roughly, human being) for the most part, understands itself as a “they-self.” The “they” determines the meaningful situation that *Dasein* finds itself in, and the “they” is the source of *Dasein*’s understanding of its world. “The they” is essential to determining *Dasein* as a “placeholder” in a social nexus. As Heidegger states, “The ‘they,’ which is nothing definite, and which all are, though not as the sum, prescribes the kind of Being of everydayness” (164). In other words, for me to be is for me to exist in my roles in day to day life, and in order for me to do this, I must do what one does: one goes to work, one

pays one's bills, one acts in particular ways (according to social norms) with others, and so on. The way human being lives most of the time dispersed, distracted and lost in the variety of its different social roles in which human being is simply drifting or falling into doing what one does. In the everyday world Dasein's understanding of itself is not its own, because its activities and language belong to an abstract everyone, the "they." This is not Dasein's most proper way of understanding itself, which will be characterized by Aristotle's *poiēsis* in the third chapter.

In the third chapter I will continue to examine Heidegger's destruction of Aristotelian ideas in regards to *praxis*. As Heidegger points out, in doing what one does, Dasein is falling into a kind of "busy-ness" of activity, which is basic to one's culture, but this falling can hide the fact that Dasein is an individual (167). Towards the end of "Division I" and for all of "Division II" Heidegger suggests that what is essential to Dasein's "Being," its identity, is the deep sense of "care" that Dasein has for its own Being. Charles Guignon says that the phenomenon of care, for Heidegger, shows that "Dasein is the entity whose Being is in question or at issue for it." Guignon continues to discuss Dasein as "care" when he says, "Dasein cares about what it is—it cares about where its life is going and how it will go right up to the end. Because it cares about its Being, it takes up possibilities of Being and enacts them in undertaking its life as a whole."⁷ Dasein is "care" and Heidegger's phenomenological understanding human being allows him to uncover the possibility for Dasein to confront itself as an authentic individual. Though the structure of "care" is essential to understanding the authenticity of Dasein's Being, in the third chapter I will examine this mode of Being in regards to

⁷ Charles Guignon, "Heidegger's 'Being and Time,'" in John Shand, ed., *Central Works in Philosophy*, Vol. 4, *The Twentieth Century: Moore to Popper* (Chesham, Bucks, UK: Acumen, 2006) 10.□

Heidegger's notion of "authentic temporality," and how he reconstructs this notion in terms of Aristotelian *praxis*.

Though Aristotelian ideas can be seen at the foundation of Heidegger's works, there seems to be a crucial yet unexamined similarity between Heidegger's later (after 1935) emphasis on *Gelassenheit*, releasement or letting-be-ness, and Aristotle's later (tenth book of *Nicomachean Ethics*) use of *theōria*, contemplation. Both activities seem to be described as higher ways of understanding that go beyond ordinary language and reveal human being's understanding of itself in terms of wholeness. In the fourth chapter I will suggest that though Heidegger and Aristotle turn to an idea of something close to the divine for different reasons, their uses or implications for this turn are similar insofar as they call for a distinctive understanding as ways to unify and simplify the life of human being.

In the fourth chapter I will provide an interpretation of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* that connects the kind of understanding that human beings are capable of and the kind of understanding that the gods are capable of. In Aristotelian terms, I will try to connect what he says in the sixth book about the practical *theōrein* (contemplative activity) of *dianoein* (discursive understanding) with what he says in the tenth book about the divine-like (*theion*), the pure *theōrein* of pure *nous* (non-discursive understanding).⁸ Some may disagree with this interpretation, because at first glance Aristotle does seem to

⁸ The connection I am trying to draw between the sixth and tenth books concerns the detachment between the practical way of understanding and the divine-like way of understanding. John Cooper suggests that in the tenth book Aristotle advocates a conception of human identity that is in accord with the contemplative activity of one's pure *nous*, and this has little to do with the virtuous actions that Aristotle discusses in the sixth book. Cooper explains this when he says, "The *nous* with which we are urged to identify ourselves in book X is the intellect [*nous*] in its theoretical [*theōrein*] aspect alone, carefully distinguished not only from the inclinations and desires [that are found in the second book] but even from the action-guiding activities [*dianoien*] of itself [that are found in the sixth book]." John M. Cooper, *Reason and Good in Aristotle* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1986) 174.

say that human beings are capable of practical *theōrein* and that only gods are capable of pure *theōrein* (1178b22, 1179a24).⁹ In other words, this latter interpretation seems to imply that humans can in no way participate in the activities of the gods. In the fourth chapter, I will suggest this interpretation flounders when one takes into account Aristotle's description of *eudaimonia* (human flourishing), which he examines as the ultimate goal, or overriding purpose, of all human actions (1176a32). The pinnacle of *eudaimonia*, particularly as seen in the tenth book, is the pure contemplative activity of non-discursive understanding, and this has little to do with the ends of one's practical life that are examined in the sixth book.

This conception of human identity is quite complicated and cannot be adequately explained at this moment; however, at this time two things should be mentioned. First, Aristotle does not explicitly say why he leaves the practical realm of understanding and turns to a transcendental realm of understanding. John Cooper says that at times Aristotle is too "abstract to be informative" (146). Cooper continues to give a plausible suggestion that perhaps Aristotle turns to divinity as a way to "make it appear both impious and stupid for anyone not to regard himself as a purely intellectual [*noien*] being: impious because in doing so one prefers to deny his kinship with the gods [...], and stupid because he willingly foregoes the quasi-divine bliss that could have been his" (177). I do not think that the uncertainty as to why Aristotle turns to divinity will be a hindrance to my explanation as to how he combines divinity with his conception of human identity. Second, Aristotle's god is simple in nature and one in form. That is to say, divinity is

⁹ I would like to note that whenever I refer to "pure *theōria*" I am will always be simultaneously referring to "pure *nous*," because it seems, for Aristotle, that the continuous activity of pure contemplation must always involve the non-discursive understanding that is characteristic of pure *nous*. In the proceeding chapters I will avoid using the word "understanding" when referring to pure *nous*, because the modern use of this word seems to imply a discursive function.

simple in that it “has a certain nature” (1072a34), and the nature of that which is most divine is moving without being moved. And though there may be many things that are considered to be divine, according to Aristotle, the many applies to things that have matter, but the divine is “the primary essence has not matter; for it is complete reality” (1074a36). Divinity, for Aristotle, is “that which cannot be otherwise but can exist only in a single way” (1072b13). In my fourth chapter I will suggest that the divine-like contemplation (*theōria*), which Aristotle advocates in the tenth book, may be a way of understanding the simplicity and solitary features of one’s life.

Similar to Aristotle’s pure *theōria*, Heidegger’s *Gelassenheit* is a way of understanding that is deeper than our ordinary notions of discursive thinking. Our ordinary notions of discursive, or reflective, thinking suggests that discourse is rational and controlled in such a way that it can be understood as something that human beings create. Caputo suggests that *Gelassenheit* does not reflect on data or sensory experience. Heidegger is interested in a primordial understanding of Being and “Being is not something that human thinking can conceive or ‘grasp’ (*be-greifen, con-cipere*) but something that thinking can only be ‘granted’” (Caputo 337). According to Heidegger, discourse, or language, is not human being’s possession, but rather, it grants, or it “distinguishes the human being as a human being.”¹⁰ In other words, the ability to think in a discursive way is not something that one comes up with on one’s own, but is more like a “gift” in that it is given to human being. This gift consists of the various ways in which humans understand Being. Generally, a life of *Gelassenheit* is a way of remaining

¹⁰ Martin Heidegger, “The Way to Language,” in *Martin Heidegger, Basic Writings*, edited by David Farrell Krell (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1993) 397. Henceforth this work will be abbreviated as “WL.”

open to receiving what is given; it is a way of “letting things be” so they can show up as what they are (Guignon, *Introduction* 35).

Gelassenheit, as a mode of comportment, or receptivity, is an ideal mode of human understanding that corresponds to Heidegger’s notion of divinity, which Hubert Dreyfus and Julian Young describe as something that is transcendental and unifying.¹¹ This transcendental quality captures Heidegger’s view that the divine is not something created by human beings, but is given to humans. Young discusses how the receptivity of *Gelassenheit* may open human being to the transcendent when he says, “The gods of later Heidegger [...], by being who they are, they give voice to that which is most sacred to us. As members of a given community, and whether we heed their inspiring example or not, we live our lives in light of our gods” (375). In a sense, *Gelassenheit*, for Heidegger, is a receptivity, or openness, to the changing manifestations of the way things show up for human being as mattering.

Dreyfus says that the transcendental quality of *Gelassenheit* pertains to the way human beings may return to a meaningful life of commitment. He states, “Heidegger comes to see the recent undermining of commitment as due not so much to a failure of the individual as to a lack of anything in the modern world that could solicit commitment from us and sustain us in it” (347). Dreyfus continues to suggest that according to Heidegger, only a “god” can save us from such a meaningless and uncommitted way of understanding (366). In the fourth chapter I will show how, in its connection to that which is given, *Gelassenheit* is similar to Aristotle’s *theōria*, because both are ways of

¹¹ Hubert Dreyfus, “Heidegger on the Connection Between Nihilism, Art, Technology, and Politics,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger*, 2nd ed., edited by Charles Guignon (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006) 345-372. Henceforth I will refer to this work as “Connection.” Julian Young, “The Fourfold,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger*, 2nd ed., edited by Charles Guignon (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006) 373-392.

tapping into that which gives, as a unifying, or simplifying, and transcendental event. Both are modes of receptivity that allow for a higher way of understanding human life that go beyond the ordinary, or everyday, understanding of human life.

Gelassenheit and *theōria* are non-discursive ways of understanding that make ordinary thinking and language possible, so I find it difficult to clearly and precisely examine the implications of *Gelassenheit* and *theōria* with this language. In Heidegger's later ways of thinking he turns away from ordinary language, because, everyday language is one-dimensional: it aspires to be *eindeutig* (unambiguous) (Young 376). Poetic language, on the other hand, does not point to, or represent, one particular meaning. Heidegger shifts to the language of poetry to express all that goes along with *Gelassenheit*, because this language uncovers or shows many meanings. Young discusses the multiplicity of meanings given through poetry when he says, "If I name my love poetically, I think of her as a foundation, a blessing, a grace, a rose, a summer's day, a . . . What is important here are the dots. [F]or Heidegger, they bring to experiential presence of the fact that many-faced Being transcends, infinitely, anything of which our language is capable" (377). In the fourth chapter I will examine how Heidegger uses poetic language, with an emphasis on metaphors, in an attempt to show how *Gelassenheit* uncovers the many meanings of Being, and how this phenomenon appears as a "binding" experience.¹² Moreover, in the fifth chapter I will ask whether Aristotle's *theōria* can be understood as an experience that is similar to that experience of *Gelassenheit*. By posing this question I may not come to a decisive answer, but hopefully it may serve as a

¹² Heidegger describes this experience as "binding" in Martin Heidegger, "The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking," in *Martin Heidegger, Basic Writings*, edited by David Farrell Krell (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1993) 427-459.

beginning question for more philosophical inquiry of the hermeneutical situations of
Heidegger and Aristotle.

Chapter 2: Aristotle's Ways of Understanding Essence and Existence

In this chapter I intend to discuss the Aristotelian ideas that will remain pertinent throughout the discussion of the hermeneutical situations of Aristotle and Heidegger. I will be looking into Aristotle's works on physics, metaphysics, and ethics in an effort to give a clear and consistent interpretation of his ideas. I will not be engaging with these works as a whole. I am proceeding in accord with the method of previous Aristotle scholarship that consists of an investigation of themes that are found in his works. In Terrence Irwin's "Introduction" to his translation of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, Irwin discusses the reason for a thematic, rather than historical, investigation when he says, "We cannot tell how many of his treatises Aristotle regarded as finished. We probably ought not to treat them as finished literary works. [...] We can follow the development of Aristotle's argument if we examine the main themes."¹³ Moreover, I have selected the particular themes based on Heidegger's emphasis on them, and I have interpreted them in a similar, but not exactly the same, fashion in an effort to eventually achieve a unified account of the connections between Aristotle and Heidegger.

I. *Kinetic Ontology: Phusis and Ousia*

Walter Brogan refers to Aristotle's understanding of being as "kinetic ontology," which, he says, accounts for the "centricity of motion in the meaning of being."¹⁴ In an effort to understand Brogan's interpretation of Aristotelian ontology, as being centered on

¹³ Terrence Irwin, introduction, *Nicomachean Ethics*, by Aristotle (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1999) xiv-xvi.

¹⁴ Walter A. Brogan, *Heidegger and Aristotle: The Twofoldness of Being* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2005) xi.

movement, I will begin by unraveling the meaning of the key terms that Aristotle uses in the *Physics* and *Metaphysics*, which are: *phusis*, *ousia*, and *kinēsis*. Brogan's claims can be understood only after such an inquiry has been complete, so I will return to Brogan's interpretation at the end of this section.

The Greek term "*phusis*" is usually translated as "nature," but this English translation does not carry with it the deep meaning that *phusis* has for the Greeks. The word "nature" comes from the Latin word "natura," which means birth, nature, or quality. The modern understanding of "nature" in the Western world is as something that is not "man-made," and it refers to the phenomena of the physical world collectively, which includes plants and animals, but is opposed to humans or human creation. However, for the Greeks, especially Aristotle, *phusis* accounts for the essence of all beings in general. I should mention that this way of "deconstructing" the Greek terms is something I borrow from Heidegger's method of interpreting Aristotle's works. Brogan discusses Heidegger's emphasis on returning to the original Greek meaning when he says, "One of Heidegger's great contributions is to return the reader constantly to a philosophical concern with the Greek words themselves, and to free the interpretation of Aristotle from its bondage to a translated vocabulary derived from the Latin" (xii). Following Heidegger's lead, I will now turn to Aristotle's works in order to give a richer interpretation of *phusis* and all the terms that follow.

Aristotle begins the *Physics* with an explanation of the kind of inquiry, and its corresponding knowledge, that science is concerned with. He says, "When the objects of an inquiry, in any department, have principles, conditions, or elements, it is through acquaintance with these that knowledge, that is to say, scientific knowledge, is

attained.”¹⁵ Aristotle continues to point out that the reason for grasping scientific knowledge (*epistēmē*) in this way is due to the common belief that “we do not think that we know a thing until we are acquainted with its primary conditions or first principles” (184a12-14). So far, Aristotle has shown that the study of *phusis* as a science is concerned with inquiring into the first principles (the *archai*) of the objects of *phusis*. But what are the objects of *phusis*?

In the second book of the *Physics* Aristotle distinguishes between natural things and non-natural things. He says, “Of things that exist, some exist by nature, some from other causes. [...] All the things [that exist by nature] present a feature in which they differ from things which are not constituted by nature. Each of them has within them a principle of motion and of stationariness” (192b1-15). Aristotle has not yet given a definition of *phusis*, but he has shown that what makes a thing an object of *phusis* is its causal feature or power. Aristotle’s definition of natural things is not yet complete, because when looking at products of art one notices that these objects have the ability to change. Aristotle refers to a coat and a bed as examples of products of artisanship (*technē*) that do change over time, but he emphasizes that this ability is not an “innate impulse to change.” Rather, the materials of the coat and bed that exist by nature are what contain the impulse to change. Aristotle now sees that *phusis* can be defined as “a source or cause of being moved and of being at rest in that to which it belongs primarily, in virtue of itself and not in virtue of a concomitant attribute” (192b22-24). *Phusis* may now be understood as the *archē* of motion, and its corresponding objects, insofar as they exist, are natural beings that have the *archē* of motion in themselves.

¹⁵ Aristotle, *Physics*, in *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, edited by Richard McKeon, introduction by C.D.C. Reeve, translated by R.P. Hardie and R.K. Gaye (New York: Random House, 2001), 184a9-11.

Since Aristotle has defined *phusis* as the cause of motion he proceeds to examine the causal principle of things, which is traditionally identified as his doctrine of the Four Causes. In the third chapter of the second book of the *Physics* Aristotle says that he must now turn to an investigation of the causes or *aitia*, because an *aition* answers the “why” question. He states, “Knowledge is the object of our inquiry, and men do not think they know a thing till they have grasped the ‘why’ of it (which is to grasp its primary cause)” (192b20). He continues to distinguish between the four types of *aitia*, which are: matter, form, the principle of motion, and the for-something. These are traditionally referred to as the material, formal, efficient, and final cause, respectively, but Aristotle himself does not use the last two labels.¹⁶

When posing different “why” questions about objects, specifically natural beings, Aristotle can uncover different explanations for or of these objects. According to Aristotle, the material cause explains “that out of which a thing comes to be and perishes to be” (194b25), and this must be something natural or of *phusis* because *phusis* has already been shown to be the only *archē* with this power. In Aristotle’s standard example of a bronze sphere the bronze is the material cause, because the sphere has been made out of this object of *phusis* and its physical change or decay is dependent on the bronze. The formal cause (the *eidos*) is what the “matter acquires in coming to be,” e.g., the bronze is a bust of Plato (Irwin and Fine 336).¹⁷ The for-something (the *telos*) is the “that for the sake of which a thing is done” (Aristotle 194b32), which for the statue would be to

¹⁶ See Terence Irwin and Gail Fine’s, glossary, *Aristotle: Introductory Readings*, by Aristotle (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1996) 330.

¹⁷ Also in this passage, Irwin and Fine explain the several different ways Aristotle uses *eidos* throughout his works. I am explaining the *eidos* in this way, because I am trying to give a unified account of Aristotle’s four causes in general. *Phusis* as the *archē* of motion is the focus of this section, so I will soon turn my attention to the principle of motion.

represent Plato. The principle of motion or movement describes “the primary source of the change or coming to rest” (194b30), and in the example of the bronze statue the craftsman is this efficient source of the statue. Each of the four causes is an *archē*. Since, by definition, *phusis* and its respective objects are the *archē* of motion I will now turn to an analysis of motion, or what Aristotle refers to as *kinēsis*.¹⁸

Aristotle devotes most of his time in the third book of the *Physics* to inquiring about the scientific elements of *kinēsis*. Rather than sifting through all of his investigations of *kinēsis*, I will proceed to examine *kinēsis* in terms of *energeia*—actuality, fulfillment, or activity—and *dunamis*—capacity or potentiality—because these features seem to be the basis for Aristotle’s understanding of motion (*kinēsis*) in accordance with the cause of motion (*phusis*). Aristotle defines motion (*kinēsis*) in terms of actuality (*energeia*) and potentiality (*dunamis*) in the three following ways: (1) “The fulfillment of what exists potentially, in so far as it exists potentially is motion,” (2) “It is the fulfillment of what is potential when it is already fully real and operates not as *itself* but as *movable*, that is motion,” and (3) “it is the fulfillment of what is potential as potential that is motion” (201a10-b5). Generally, it seems that, for Aristotle, whether it be (1) the actuality of potentiality, (2) actuality that functions as potentiality, or (3) pure potentiality, motion (*kinēsis*) is potentiality. In terms of natural beings, which are the causes of motion (the *archai* of *kinēsis*), Aristotle seems to be saying that the essence of motion is potentiality, because motion is no longer occurring when potentiality becomes pure actuality, that is, when it loses all potentiality.

¹⁸ In regards to this relationship between *phusis* and *kinēsis*, Aristotle says, “Nature has been defined as a ‘principle of motion and change,’ and it is the subject of our inquiry. We must therefore see that we understand the meaning of ‘motion;’ for if it were unknown, the meaning of ‘nature’ too would be unknown” 200b12.

For example, when an acorn is in the process of becoming an oak tree its movement is *kinēsis*, because its movement is characterized by its potentiality (*dunamis*) of becoming. However, when the *dunamis* is fulfilled, the acorn is no longer in the process of becoming. This pure actuality or activity, as *energeia*, is incomplete, according to Aristotle, because the fulfillment or actualization of the potentiality (*dunamis*) does imply a loss of the potentiality (*dunamis*). Irwin discusses the difference between an incomplete and a complete *energeia*—actuality, fulfillment, or activity—when he says,

[*Kinēsis*] is an incomplete activity. The degree of activity is consistent with the retention of the [*dunamis*] realized in the activity, where the completion of this activity implies the loss of the [*dunamis*]. A complete activity, however, does not imply the loss of the [*dunamis*] that is actualized in this activity.¹⁹

For example, the motion that characterizes artisanship, or what Aristotle refers to as the *kinēsis* of *technē*, is an incomplete activity due to the fact that when the object of artisanship has been made, the potentiality (*dunamis*) of the becoming of a statue no longer exists. In Aristotelian terms, *kinēsis* is an incomplete *energeia* due to the fact that it can only “be” as *dunamis*.

In the *Metaphysics* Aristotle continues to investigate the meaning of *phusis*, but here he is trying to understand it in terms of why *and* how what there is *is*, whereas he was previously only focused on answering the “why” question. In the *Physics* Aristotle establishes that the essence or “what it is” of *phusis* is motion (*kinēsis*), and it seems that he brings this fundamental meaning of *phusis* to the discussion of existence or “that it is” in the *Metaphysics*. He says that earlier thinkers have neglected the question of motion or movement (*kinēsis*), which is an inquiry that studies “whence or how it [*kinēsis*] is to

¹⁹ Terrence Irwin, glossary, *Nicomachean Ethics*, by Aristotle (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1999) 316.

belong to things.”²⁰ Not only has the question of *kinēsis* been neglected, but the “so-called special sciences” have also made the mistake of “cutting off a part of being and investigating the attribute of this part” (Aristotle 1003a25). For example, Aristotle says that mathematics studies being *qua* quantities and physics studies being *qua* moving (1061b20-35). Metaphysics, as the first philosophy, is concerned with wisdom or *sophia* of being as a whole and not just parts of it. The study of beings must be in regards to being, “beings *qua* being.” Moreover, due to Aristotle’s explicit incorporation of motion (*kinēsis*) in his ontological investigation, it seems that Brogan’s aforementioned assertion that Aristotle’s investigation of being may be understood as a “kinetic ontology,” is an appropriate way to describe the inquiry of the *Metaphysics* (Brogan xi).

For Aristotle, the study of “beings *qua* being” is just the study of *phusis* as *ousia* (beingness). I have already shown that *phusis* is the essence of all (natural) beings, beings as a whole. Moreover, Jonathan Barnes says that the word “*qua*” is used by Aristotle to “indicate the manner or mode in which [beings] are to be investigated. The word ‘*qua*’ means something like ‘insofar as they are’.”²¹ Accordingly, “beings *qua* being” may be interpreted as “*phusis* insofar as they are beingness.” Now there are two ways to interpret what Aristotle means by “beings *qua* beingness.” The first is as “*phusis* insofar as they are *ousia*,” and the second is as “what-it-is (essence) insofar as it *is* that-it-is (existence).” Aristotle examines “beings *qua* beingness” in the latter way when he says, “And similarly

²⁰ Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, in *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, edited by Richard McKeon and introduction by C.D.C. Reeve, translated by W.D. Ross (New York: Random House, 2001) 985b17-19. He specifically says, “The question of movement—whence or how it is to belong to things—these thinkers, like the others, lazily neglected.” Some thinkers that he explicitly mentions or seems to be referring to are: Plato, Thales, Anaximenes, Diogenes, Hippasus, Heraclitus, Anaxagoras, Parmenides, Empedocles, Democritus, and Leucippus (984a5-985b15).

²¹ Jonathan Barnes, “Metaphysics,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Aristotle*, edited by Jonathan Barnes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp.66-108) 70.

the [so-called special] sciences omit the question of whether the genus with which they deal exists or does not exist, because it belongs to the same kind of thinking to show what it is and that it is” (1025b15). Here Aristotle seems to be saying that metaphysics, as first philosophy, is concerned with understanding the world in terms of both *phusis*, which is “what it is,” and *ousia*, which is “that it is.” Thus far all that has been examined is beings in terms of the principle of motion, *kinēsis*. In the *Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle turns to practical philosophy to investigate the movements of *ousia* in terms of the *telos*, the for the sake of which.

II. *The Telos of Being Human: Logos, Ergon and Aretē*

Aristotle’s search for what constitutes the teleological movements of *ousia* begins with an inquiry into the particular capacities of *ousiai*. I have previously explained that *dunamis* is what is realized in *energeia*, and this relationship still holds when investigating *ousia*. However, in the *Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle’s concern with *ousia qua* human being leads him to distinguish between the different kinds of *ousiai* on the basis of their respective capacities or potentialities. For instance, a plant, as an *ousia*, has the capacity for growth and nutrition. Aristotle says that since the capacity (*dunamis*) of growth and nutrition is shared with plants, it is not particular to “the special function [*dunamis*] of a human being” (1098a1-3), and he sets this capacity aside. He continues to look into the capacity of *aisthēsis*, (sense) perception. Aristotle says that “this too is apparently shared with horse, ox, and every animal” (1098a3-4), and this capacity is then disregarded in his search for the *dunamis* that distinguishes *ousia* as human being. Aristotle concludes that reason and discourse (*logos*) is the distinctive capacity (*dunamis*) of human being when

he says, “The remaining possibility, then, is some sort of life of action of the [part of the soul] that has reason. [...] We have found, then, that the human function is activity of the soul in accord with reason or requiring reason” (1098a4-9).²² Leaving aside the part shared with plants, Aristotle refers to discourse (*logos*) as one part of the soul, and the other part, which is shared with every animal, does not contain discourse.

In an effort to understand *phusis* or beings as the causes of motion (the *aitia* of *kinēsis*), I previously examined *energeia*, as complete and incomplete activity, in terms of potentiality or capacity (*dunamis*). When Aristotle inquires into the movements of human being, he focuses on the *telos*, the for the sake of which, of the activity, and identifies human activity in terms of its corresponding end (*telos*). I think he examines them in this way because, whereas *phusis* is pure potentiality, *ousia* is a combination of potentiality and actuality. In other words, there is something that is already actualized in *ousia*, as being human, but there is nothing actualized in *phusis*, as a process or motion. For Aristotle, when action, or *praxis*, is in accord with discourse (*logos*), it is then considered a rational action, and Irwin suggests that rational action is its own *telos*, which is to say that “it is not done exclusively for the sake of some end beyond it” (315). When action is done for its own sake, which is to say that the *telos* is internal to the movement, this is what Aristotle calls a complete movement or *praxis*. Conversely, Irwin says that an

²² In *De Anima* Aristotle explains the soul (*psuchē*) as the first activity, *energeia*, of a living body. Accordingly, plants, animals, and humans have a soul. He then distinguishes the “powers” of the soul as phenomena, such as: “self-nutrition, sensation, thinking, and motivity.” In the *Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle divides the phenomena of the soul into nonrational and rational, and the latter part of the soul is what distinguishes being as human being. Aristotle, “De Anima,” in *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, edited by Richard McKeon and introduction by C.D.C. Reeve (New York: Random House, 2001) 413a20-413b15. There are numerous translations for the Greek *logos*, such as: account, argument, discussion, conversation, speech, words, and ratio. I have chosen to translate it as “reason,” because after Aristotle the tradition of metaphysics relies on human reason and rationality to understand beings. Moreover, Heidegger prefers to interpret *logos* as: speech, discourse, discussion, and sentence, and he shows how identifying *logos* as reason is one of the fundamental mistakes of the tradition. This specific translation of *logos* can be found in Martin Heidegger, *Plato’s Sophist*, translated by Richard Rojcewicz and André Schuwer (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1997) 472. Henceforth I will be using PS as an abbreviation for this work.

“action may also have some end beyond it” (315), and here the *telos* is external to the movement, which makes it an incomplete movement. Aristotle refers to this movement as *poiēsis* (producing or making). This teleological feature of the movements of human being will be discussed more thoroughly in the following explanation of the virtues. For the sake of clarity I will follow Aristotle in using *praxis* to describe human action when the *telos* is internal to the movement, and *poiēsis* to identify human action when the *telos* is external to the movement.

Before discussing the *praxis* of human being, it seems important to comment on the term “function” or “work” (*ergon*) that Aristotle uses when he distinguishes the human *ergon* as the activity of the soul in accord with *logos*.²³ Irwin suggests that the *ergon*, to which Aristotle is referring, “is connected with its essence [what it is] and its virtue [*aretē*], and in animate beings the *ergon* corresponds to the type of soul [*psuchē*]” (331). I have previously stated that the essence of *ousia* is *phusis*, and the particular feature of the *psuchē* of *ousia* that renders it being human is *logos*. In other words, the function or characteristic activity that shows beingness as human being, is reason or discourse. Aristotle discusses the connection between the function (*ergon*) and virtue (*aretē*) when he says, “Each function is completed well by being completed in accord with the virtue proper [to that kind of thing]” (1098a15). The *ergon* of human being is *logos*, and according to this passage, the *ergon* of human being is complete when it is in accord with its proper *aretē*. This understanding of the human being’s *ergon*, as *logos*, and the relationship of the *ergon* to its *aretē* allows for the *aretē* to be grasped as the *telos* of *ergon*, as *logos*. In other words, the human being’s function corresponds to the part of

²³ Please refer to the bottom of p. 14. *Ergon* may be interpreted as: function, product, result, and achievement (Irwin 331).

the soul that differentiates this being from other beings, which is discourse or reason, so in a sense the human being's function can be understood as reason. Moreover, a virtue is a reflection of the performance of the function. The intimate relationship between reason and its corresponding virtue(s), or excellence(s), allows for Aristotle to understand that one's reason is performing properly when it is done for the sake of virtue.

III. *The Telos of Human Being: Virtues of Discursive Awareness*

I previously mentioned that Aristotle distinguishes between two parts of the human *psuchē*: that which pertains to *logos* and that which does not. In attempting to understand the *praxis* and *poiēsis* of human being he investigates the *aretē* that correspond properly to both parts of the *psuchē*. The virtues of character pertain to both parts of the *psuchē*, whereas, the virtues of thought relate to only the *logos*. I will only be concerned with the virtues of thought and not the virtues of character for two reasons. First, in the next chapter I will be focusing on Heidegger's deconstruction of the former. Second, in the tenth book of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, which is a main focus of my inquiry and will be discussed in the fourth chapter, Aristotle dismisses the virtues of character from the discussion.²⁴

The Greek word for "thought," or "understanding," is *nous*, and can be understood as non-discursive, direct awareness. When *nous* is grasped by the *logos* of human being it is referred to as discursive awareness or *dianoein*. William McNeill discusses *nous* as *dianoein* when he says, "Human apprehending [awareness] is not a *pure nous*, but a *nous* that in order to disclose itself (whether to itself or to others), must

²⁴ John Cooper notes this when he says, "The 'intellectual life' discussed in the tenth book does not, then, involve the possession of any moral virtues" (165).

pass through the *logos*, that is, a *nous* that is a *dianoein*.²⁵ Its corresponding virtues are commonly referred to as *dianoetic* virtues, because *nous* (non-discursive awareness) is being actualized in them and they involve discourse or reason. Aristotle identifies these virtues as *technē*, the kind of know-how pertaining to artisanship, *epistēmē*, theoretical or ‘scientific’ knowledge, *phronēsis*, practical wisdom, *sophia*, wisdom in the highest sense or theoretical wisdom, and *nous*, immediate awareness (1139b15-1142a30).²⁶ For Aristotle there are two ways of understanding *logos* with respect to these virtues: *logos* concerning the virtues of the scientific or epistemic faculty (*epistēmē* and *sophia*) and *logos* concerning the virtues of the deliberative faculty (*technē* and *phronēsis*). McNeill suggests that the distinction between the two faculties is “made on the basis of the kind of knowledge that each provides” (32). McNeill continues to clarify the distinction when he says, “The epistemic faculty is concerned with the contemplation (*theōrein*) of those things whose *archai* are invariable, the deliberative faculty with those things that are variable” (32). I will proceed to examine the *dianoetic* virtues that correspond to the epistemic faculty, and will end with a discussion of the *dianoetic* virtues of the deliberative faculty.

According to Aristotle, the object that *epistēmē* is concerned with knowing “does not admit of being otherwise, is known by necessity, and is ingenerable and indestructible” (1139b20-24). I take this passage to mean that scientific knowledge is

²⁵ William McNeill, *The Glance of the Eye: Heidegger, Aristotle, and the Ends of Theory* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999) 38.

²⁶ I have adopted the English translations from McNeill (1). Aristotle does include *nous* in this list of the *dianoetic* virtues, and this *nous* is not *pure nous* insofar as it is part of the human capacity. Like all Greek words, *nous* has several different meanings, and Aristotle uses this word in both loose and strict senses. Irwin explains that Aristotle’s different uses can define *nous* as “*dianoia*” (*nous* applied generally to *logos*), “*noein*” (notice), “theoretical *nous*” (concerning the first principles and universals), and “practical *nous*” (a grasping of the particulars of things that can be otherwise) (351). For sake of clarity, when I am referring to *nous* as a *dianoetic* virtue it should be maintained that this is human *nous*, and if it is *nous* as *nous* itself then I will refer to it as *pure nous*.

about necessary and invariant truths of necessary and invariant beings.²⁷ The being that *epistēmē* inquires into, as McNeill says, “must remain constant even when the object is not being observed or contemplated” (32). Moreover, for Aristotle, *epistēmē* is teachable by deduction, but not through induction. Both ways of teaching “require previous knowledge,” due to the fact that “all teaching is from what is already known;” however, the former “proceeds from the universal” (1139b30), which is the principle or *archē*, whereas, the latter leads from particulars to the *archē*. Since *epistēmē* is teachable, and subsequently learnable, by deduction, the *archē* of its being is presupposed. For example, when I teach geometry, the student and I must assume that all triangles have three sides.

Furthermore, *epistēmē* does entail a kind of *theōrein* in that knowledge of the being is grasped only when the being is observed and attended to. One way Aristotle distinguishes *theōrein* from *pure theōria* is by identifying *pure theōria* as an ongoing, continuous activity of contemplating the particulars of being within the whole structure of being. McNeill says that the contemplation of theoretical or scientific knowledge (the *theōrein* of *epistēmē*) is deficient “due to the fact that it necessarily refers to objects that lie beyond immediate observation (*exō tou theōrein*).” For example, human being is a being that can be otherwise, so when I contemplate about beings that cannot be otherwise, I am separating my activity of contemplation from my own being. He continues to say that due to this deficiency the *theōrein* of *epistēmē* cannot be *pure theōria* (34).

²⁷ To clarify what Aristotle means by “necessity” he says, “Whenever what admits of being otherwise escapes observation, we do not notice whether it is or is not. Hence, what is known scientifically is by necessity” (1139b23). I take this passage to mean that when Aristotle is using the term “necessity” (*anankē*) he is simply indicating that the being cannot be otherwise.

In *epistēmē*, the *archai* are assumed and this knowledge is teachable by deduction. *Nous*, on the other hand, is immediate awareness of the *archai* and is knowable through induction. Aristotle says that the *archai* are given through the immediate awareness of *nous* (1139b29, 1141a4-9). Yet, as McNeill points out, these *archai* can only be demonstrated with *logos*, and what can be demonstrated can also be scientifically known (38).²⁸ Demonstration, or deduction, is the method of *epistēmē*. It seems that the *archai*, which are given through *nous*, lose their meaning, or are separated into particulars in an effort to identify them *as* something, when *logos* is involved.

Sophia, which is the other virtue that belongs to the epistemic faculty, is a combination of *epistēmē* and *nous*. Aristotle seems to suggest that since *sophia* is both *epistēmē* and *nous*, “[*sophia*] is the most exact form of scientific knowledge.” Accordingly, *sophia* is knowledge about all things that cannot be otherwise, the universals. This knowledge is “derived from the principles of a science,” and it “grasps the truth about the principles” (Aristotle 1141a15-20). In other words, *sophia* is a direct awareness of the *archai* and it consists of deduction, which means that it involves *logos* as well. *Sophia* is the combination of the direct awareness of being as a whole and the demonstration of being of particular beings, so it may be understood as knowledge of the particulars and the universals of beings that cannot be otherwise.

According to Aristotle, the *theōrein* of *sophia* is the human activity that is closest to *pure theōria*. Aristotle begins the *Metaphysics* by saying that “All men by nature desire to know” (980a1), and I have already shown that this knowledge is about the causes, the *archai*. In the previous analysis of the *Metaphysics*, I focused on the principle of motion, but at this point I am concerned with the *telos*, the for the sake of which. In

²⁸ Aristotle, 1140b30-1141a1.

regards to *sophia*, McNeill discusses the connection between *sophia* and the *aitia*, particularly the *telos*, when he says, “*Sophia* is to see the causes, and thereby able to see itself as self-caused, existing for the sake of itself and having no cause beyond itself” (28).²⁹ Insofar as *sophia* is for the sake of itself, the activity of this knowledge is a distinctive *theōrein*, which is contemplation, or observation, in the purest sense. The *theōrein* of *sophia* is not concerned with studying principles in order to find answers, nor with observing beings for the sake of *praxis* or *poiēsis*. The contemplative activity of *sophia*, which is contemplation for the sake of wisdom in the highest sense, is a deficient *theōrein* insofar as it involves epistemic knowledge. Since I have examined the *dianoetic* virtues of the epistemic faculty, I will now look into those of the deliberative faculty.

Technē and *phronēsis* are knowledge about beings that can be otherwise, and according to Aristotle, “what admits of being otherwise includes what is produced and what is achieved in action” (1140a1). *Technē* is the know-how knowledge that is for the sake of *poiēsis*. There is a certain *theōrein* involved in *technē*, because prior to *poiēsis* the artisan studies the form, or *eidos*, of the object in order to see how the finished product will look. For instance, I begin making a bookshelf by looking at a previously made bookshelf to learn the blueprint of the product. I then apply knowledge from this observation to my know-how of making, and proceed to build a bookshelf. McNeill says that the *theōrein* of *technē* is deficient, in just the same way as the *theōrein* of *epistēmē*, because “the end product may not accord in its being (*eidos*) with the *eidos* seen in advance” (34). This implies that the product, or being, of *technē* does not necessarily correspond to *technē* itself. In the example of the bookshelf, I may know how a bookshelf is supposed to look, but something goes wrong in the process of making it so that the

²⁹ See Aristotle, 982b5.

bookshelf ends up looking like a table.³⁰ Moreover, the *telos* of *poiēsis* is something other than *poiēsis* itself (Aristotle 1140b5-10). McNeill describes this when he says, “the finished work lies outside (*para*) the productive process” (34).³¹

The other discursive or *dianoetic* virtue of the deliberative faculty, *phronēsis* (practical wisdom), is not knowledge of the process of production, but rather is knowledge about action or *praxis*. Aristotle says that the *phronimos*, the person of practical wisdom, does not deliberate about how to make or produce something, but essentially deliberates about action in regards to itself. McNeill examines this when he states, “In *technē*, knowledge is directed toward the finished product as the end or *telos* of that knowledge. In *phronēsis*, on the other hand, knowledge is directed toward action itself as constitutive of the being of the *phronimos*” (35). In deliberation the person of practical wisdom is deliberating about her action in such a way that herself and her action are one and the same, so one may say that the origin and the end of this action are the human being.

In this sense, it seems that, through *dianoein* (discursive awareness), a human being is aware of itself as the *archē* (origin) and the *telos* (end) of *praxis* (Brogan 174). In other words, human being’s discursive awareness makes knowledge of human being as the origin and end of its action possible; discursive awareness makes practical wisdom possible. Aristotle says, “A human being would seem to be a principle of action. Deliberation is about the actions the human being can do, and actions are for the sake of other things; hence we deliberate about things that promote an end, not about the end”

³⁰ This example can also pertain to why Aristotle says that the object of *technē* corresponds to chance and luck (1140a20-25).

³¹ Aristotle, 1094a6.

(1112b35).³² As a person of practical wisdom, for instance, I am aware of myself as the originator of my action—there is a proper relationship between myself and my action—so I deliberate about myself and not about the effects that this action may produce. Generally stated, practical wisdom is not the result of deliberation, but rather the source, or principle, of practical wisdom is human being’s discursive awareness.

At first glance it may seem strange to say that I do not deliberate about action in terms of the effects of my action, because I can think of numerous times when I have done just this. However, for Aristotle, *phronēsis* is a special way of knowing due to the fact that the *archē* and *telos* are both contained in the activity of this knowledge. In other words, the *phronimos* is aware that her actions belong to her being, and this relationship is fundamental to understanding *phronēsis*. McNeill examines the intrinsic relationship of *phronēsis* and *praxis* when he states, “*Phronēsis* is a seeing (“knowing”) of oneself as an acting self, as the self that is acting in any particular situation, and not a seeing of oneself as an object whose very being is *other* than that of oneself” (35-36). It seems that the discursive awareness of *phronēsis* may be understood as knowledge of oneself as the origin (*archē*) and end (*telos*) of its own action (*praxis*). In other words, one is aware of oneself in terms of one’s actions in such a way that knowledge of these actions is really knowledge of oneself.

Insofar as *phronēsis* and *praxis* are internally related, which is to say that human being’s practical wisdom is about human being, the *theōrein* of *phronēsis*—the contemplative activity of practical wisdom—is distinctive as well. Human being with

³² In regards to the *nous* of *praxis* of the *phronimos*, Aristotle says, “There is *nous*, not a rational account [i.e., without *logos*], both about the first terms and the last. In demonstration *nous* is about the unchanging terms that are first. In [premises] about action *nous* is about the last term, the one that admits of being otherwise. These last terms are the beginnings of the [end] to be aimed at” (1143a35-1143b5).

practical wisdom contemplates about the actions or ends of human beings, and not about ends that are separate from human beings. Aristotle says, “the ones whom we regard as [*phronimos*] are able to study [*theōrein*] what is good for themselves and for human beings” (1140b10). Unlike the *theōrein* of *epistēmē* and the *theōrein* of *technē*, where there is a removal from human being’s contemplation and human beings, the *theōrein* of *phronēsis* is not a knowledge or contemplation independent of human being as *praxis*.

However, the *theōrein* of *phronēsis* does not seem to be what Aristotle describes as *pure theōria*. Brogan discusses the Aristotelian idea of *pure theōria* when he says, “It is this sense of staying with what one observes that Aristotle calls *theōria*, contemplation or pure observing of the being as such, for its own sake. Inasmuch as it is a freeing, a questioning, and a projecting beyond, this divine-like *theōria* is a pure movement and the highest movement” (177). In this passage Brogan seems to suggest that the *theōrein* of *phronēsis* is considered *pure* when the *phronimos* is contemplating about its own being as *praxis*. On the other hand, sometimes the *phronimos* is concerned with *praxis* as an end beyond its own being, and in this case the *theōrein* of *phronēsis* is not *pure*.

Chapter 3: What Heidegger Recovers From Aristotle

Heidegger's return to Aristotelian ideas is motivated by his overarching concern with the Western metaphysical tradition. According to Heidegger, philosophy has forgotten what the question of Being is all about, and this forgetfulness is due to numerous "presuppositions and prejudices, which are constantly reimplanting and fostering the belief that an inquiry into Being is unnecessary" (BT 22). One of these presuppositions is that the Being of what-is "must be a material substance that is continuously present in space throughout time" (Guignon 3).³³ In other words, reality is believed to be made up of physical objects that exist "out there" in the world. For instance, a plant or chair is real due to the fact that it is material and takes up space in time, but a flying pig is not real because it does not actually show up as a material object taking up space in time (Guignon 3). Another presupposition, according to Heidegger, stems from the fact that the Western tradition maintains that the "concept of 'Being' is indefinable" as something real (BT 23). So in an effort to avoid defining Being the tradition has reduced talking about Being to "talk about physical objects and their causal interactions" (Guignon 4). The last presupposition of the Western tradition holds, which Heidegger refers to, is "that 'Being' is of all concepts the one that is self-evident" (BT 23). According to Heidegger, these three presuppositions have allowed the tradition to discard the question of Being as unanswerable, and to turn its attention to a leveled-down, or average, mode of questioning.

³³ Guignon explains what Heidegger means by "being of what-is" when he says, "Heidegger constantly reminds us that Being is always the Being of what-is: it is not something different from beings, floating above them or underlying them, but is rather that in beings that determines *that* they are *what* they are" (2).

Heidegger's project is to get back to the original question of Being that was asked by the Greeks and to ask it in a more primordial way, which means that he must begin his investigation of Being in a "pre-theoretical" way. The traditional theoretical approach to the question of Being, according to Heidegger, regards the thinker and the object of its thought as being indifferently detached from one another.³⁴ Guignon examines this "detached standpoint of theoretical reflection" when he says, "when we step back and try to get an impartial, objective view of things, the world, so to speak, does dead for us – things lose the meaningfulness definitive of their being in the everyday life-world" (*Introduction 4*). "Pre-theoretical," then, is a manner of understanding "the way things show up in the flux of our everyday, prereflective activities" (Guignon, *Introduction 5*). When Heidegger posits the question of Being in a "pre-theoretical" way, he attempts to recover the original meaning of Being.

Heidegger turns to the Greeks because the question of Being "is one which provided a stimulus for the researches of Plato and Aristotle. And what they wrested with the utmost intellectual effort from the phenomena, fragmentary and incipient though it was, has long since been trivialized" (Heidegger, BT 21). The trivialization that Heidegger is referring to is largely due to viewing being as a substance, or an object, that is separate from the life of the human being, or subject. Dreyfus discusses Heidegger's concern with this traditional view of Being when he states,

From the Greeks we inherit not only our assumption that we can obtain theoretical knowledge of every domain, even human activities, but also our assumption that the detached theoretical viewpoint is superior to the involved practical viewpoint. According to the philosophical tradition,

³⁴ Please see Dorothea Frede, "The Question of Being: Heidegger's Project," in *The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger*, 2nd ed., edited by Charles Guignon (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006) 58.

whether rationalist or empiricist, it is only by means of detached contemplation that we discover reality.³⁵

When Dreyfus and Guignon speak of the “theoretical,” they are referring to a mode of understanding that “objectifies ontology;” the detached theoretical viewpoint is a way of seeing “the world as consisting of primary substances with accidents.”³⁶ In a sense, Heidegger’s project in *Being and Time* is to situate the question of Being, which was first asked by the Greeks, in a pre-theoretical understanding of what it means to talk about being. In an effort to do so, Heidegger turns to an inquiry into the being that has a relationship with its Being, and this being is Dasein (being-there). Heidegger identifies this relationship when he says, “Dasein is an entity which does not just occur among other entities. Rather it is ontically distinguished by the fact that, in its very Being, that Being is an issue for it” (BT 32).³⁷ Here Heidegger seems to be suggesting that Dasein is trying to understand Being because it wants to understand what its Being means for it. By posing the question of Dasein’s Being, Heidegger attempts to avoid questioning from a detached theoretical viewpoint.

Some Heidegger scholars, such as Franco Volpi and Dorothea Frede, think that Heidegger’s rejection of the theoretical perspective is also his way of discrediting Aristotle’s *theōria*, but it seems to me that this line of thought is not consistent with Heidegger’s interpretation of *theōria*. Frede suggests that according to Heidegger the theoretical stance leads to a splitting of the phenomena into two independently existing

³⁵ Hubert L. Dreyfus, *Being-in-the-World: A Commentary on Heidegger’s Being and Time, Division 1* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1991) 6. Henceforth I will refer to this work as “Commentary.”

³⁶ Charles Guignon, *Heidegger and the Problem of Knowledge* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1983) 156. Henceforth I will abbreviate this work as “HPK.”

³⁷ The translators of this edition of *Being and Time*, John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson, explain the difference, for Heidegger, between ontology and ontical when they state, “Ontological inquiry is concerned primarily with *Being*; ontical inquiry is concerned primarily with *entities* and the facts about them” (32, footnote 3).

realms of subject and object (61).³⁸ She continues to associate *theōria* with this splitting, or isolating, effect when she says, “Because in *theōria* we merely ‘gaze’ at what appears as an isolated object, we are led to take this ‘reification’ as the natural way of being of that ‘object.’ Such a dissociated perspective is quite justified for the ‘theoretical view.’” (61-62). However, Frede continues to say that this perspective, according to Heidegger, is not justified for a pre-theoretical view.

McNeill and Brogan, on the other hand, seem to suggest that this straightforward account of interpreting Heidegger’s use of *theōria*, as a theoretical view, may be misleading insofar as it seems to neglect Heidegger’s destruction of Aristotelian ideas. According to McNeill, “Heidegger’s impending project of a ‘destruction’ of the history of ontology” focuses on the devastating effects of the way the tradition has separated *theōria* from *praxis* (53). McNeill discusses Heidegger’s concern with this division when he says, “The emergence of *theōrein* as an independent *praxis* is, after all, precisely what happens in the subsequent history of philosophy and science. And it is this tendency toward separation that Heidegger is implicitly criticizing [...]” (53). Heidegger in *Plato’s Sophist* suggests that for Aristotle *pure theōrein* “is a simple onlooking and exposing, where it [understanding] is no longer a matter of [use]” (46).³⁹ I take this passage to mean that human being’s pre-theoretical understanding pertains to a mode of utility, and human being’s genuine understanding occurs when there is no longer a need for utility. In other

³⁸ Heidegger explains the effects of the theoretical viewpoint as splitting the phenomena in BT 170. Volpi’s explanation of *theōria* is similar to Frede’s account insofar as he characterizes *theōria* as present-at-hand (*vorhandenheit*). Franco Volpi, “*Being and Time: A ‘Translation’ of the Nicomachean Ethics?*,” translated by John Protevi, in *Reading Heidegger From the Start: Essays in His Earliest Thought*, edited by Theodore Kisiel and John van Buren (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994) 195-212.

³⁹ In the “Translator’s Forward” of *Plato’s Sophist* Richard Rojcewicz explains the connection of Heidegger’s *Plato’s Sophist* and *Being and Time* when he says, “The text [in *Plato’s Sophist*] is a reconstruction of the author’s lecture course delivered under the same title at the University of Marburg in the winter semester 1924-25. It is one of Heidegger’s major works, because of its intrinsic importance as an interpretation of ancient philosophy and also on account of its relation to *Being and Time*” (xxv).

words, on Heidegger's reading of Aristotle, Dasein's authentic understanding, as *pure theōria*, is not for the sake of its usefulness, but is for the sake of understanding itself, which is *praxis*. According to Heidegger, only in its relationship to *sophia*, which includes *epistēmē*, does *theōrein* turn into "a completely autonomous comportment of Dasein, not related to anything whatsoever" (PS 88). It seems that Heidegger is rejecting the *theōrein* of *sophia* and *epistēmē*, but not pure *theōria*, which is the continuous activity of *praxis*. In the following discussion of authenticity, as found in the second division of *Being and Time*, I will examine how Heidegger dissociates Aristotle's *theōria*, in its relation to *praxis*, from the Western tradition of a theoretical detachment from objects in the world.

As previously stated, Aristotle's inquiry into ontology consists of a theoretical grasping of Being (*phusis* or nature) in terms of the *archai*, or origins, of entities. Heidegger's investigation, when compared to the ontology of Aristotle, starts from the "pre-ontological." Heidegger explicitly distinguishes between ontology and pre-ontological when he states, "So if we should reserve the term 'ontology' for that theoretical inquiry which is explicitly devoted to the meaning of entities, then what we have had in mind in speaking of Dasein's 'Being-ontological' is to be designated as something 'pre-ontological'" (32). On Heidegger's account, the pre-ontological is that which precedes all inquiry; it is the tacit background of understanding that all human beings have. That is to say, when Heidegger inquires into the pre-ontological, he does not question the meaning of separate, or indifferent, entities but rather examines Dasein, as the entity within a nexus of "directly given and fundamental experience of involvement" (Dreyfus, *Commentary* 42).

Heidegger says that his inquiry of the pre-ontological questions the meaning of the Being of “an entity whose Being is defined as Being-in-the-world” (BT 116). The entity called Being-in-the-world that Heidegger is referring to in this passage is Dasein, and the existence that most properly belongs to Dasein is Being-in-the-world. Being-in-the-world is not nature due to the fact nature can exist without Dasein.⁴⁰ Whereas Aristotle, and the Western tradition thereafter, is looking at Being in an attempt to grasp the ontological structures of Being, Heidegger shifts to an investigation of the pre-ontological insofar as he is looking at the entity that is looking at Being. Guignon examines how Heidegger’s shift to the meaning of Being incorporates human being when he says, “What Heidegger has done is to shift the questioning from ontology per se to a question about how *we* encounter or gain access to entities in their Being. This shift in questioning indicates that we need to see how entities enter into our intelligibility—how they are accessed by us” (*Summary* 4).

According to Heidegger, in order for philosophy, as ontology, to be able to inquire into the Being of entities, philosophers must first have an understanding of what its Being means, or consists of. Heidegger discusses the importance for philosophy of a fundamental ontology of Being when he states, “Basically, all ontology, no matter how rich and firmly compacted a system of categories it has at its disposal, remains blind and perverted from its ownmost aim, if it has not first adequately clarified the meaning of Being, and conceived this clarification as its *fundamental* task” (BT 31). I have placed an emphasis on the word ‘fundamental’ in this passage to point out that, for Heidegger, a

⁴⁰ In *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology* Heidegger explains the difference between “nature” and “world” when he says, “World is only, if, and as long as Dasein exists. Nature can also be when no Dasein exists” (170). This book is based on Heidegger’s lecture course from 1927, which is the same year that *Being and Time* was published.

pre-ontological investigation is part of the task of “fundamental ontology.” In a sense, fundamental ontology, as Guignon says, “clarifies the meaning (i.e., conditions of intelligibility) of things in general” (*Introduction* 5). Generally, fundamental ontology, for Heidegger, is the preparatory investigation of what clarifies meaning.

Though Heidegger is struggling to release philosophy from the bonds of the Western tradition and Aristotle is part of this tradition, he maintains a great sense of admiration for and indebtedness to Aristotle. Heidegger expresses this gratitude when he says, “Aristotle was the last of the great philosophers who had eyes to see and, what is still more decisive, the energy and tenacity to continue to force inquiry back to the phenomena and to the seen and to mistrust from the ground up all wild and windy speculations, no matter how close to the heart of common sense” (BP 232). Before proceeding to discuss how Heidegger recovers some of the fundamental Aristotelian ideas in *Being and Time*, it seems helpful to mention why Heidegger admires Aristotle for continually forcing inquiry back to the phenomena.

I previously mentioned that Heidegger recognizes that the tradition is epistemologically breaking down Being into a subject-object relationship, and the tradition is also maintaining a detached theoretical perspective of Being. Dreyfus describes how Heidegger returns to the phenomenology of Being, which is what Heidegger considers Aristotle to be doing, as “a way of letting something shared that can never be totally articulated and for which there can be no indubitable evidence show itself” (*Commentary* 30). In an effort to combat the traditional tendency to “break apart” the phenomenon of Being, Heidegger begins with an interpretation of Dasein’s “facticity.” Dasein’s facticity is defined by its “thrownness,” which Guignon discusses

when he says, “Dasein always finds itself ‘thrown’ into a concrete situation and attuned to a cultural and historical context where things already count in determinate ways in a relation to a community’s practices” (*Introduction* 8).

This pre-theoretical and pre-reflective way in which Dasein understands itself is what Heidegger describes as the “hermeneutics of facticity.” Heidegger says, “The relationship here between hermeneutics and facticity is not a relation between the grasping of an object and the object grasped [...]. Rather, interpreting is itself a possible and distinctive how of the character of being of facticity.”⁴¹ Generally, hermeneutics may be understood as an attitude or a stance of openness and revise-ability. Heidegger’s analysis of the hermeneutics of facticity seems to develop into a method of sorts that is always open to change. Heidegger develops his hermeneutical “method” as a way to return to the phenomenon of Being. I will continue to show that in the first division of *Being and Time* Heidegger examines the shared phenomenon of Being in terms of *poiēsis*, and in the second division he then interprets the phenomenology of Dasein’s Being in terms of *praxis*.

I. *Poiēsis: The Inauthentic Way of Being*

For the most part Heidegger’s project of fundamental ontology has two steps. Heidegger refers to the first as the “existential analytic of Dasein” (BT 34), which Guignon discusses as “an analysis of human existence aimed at showing those essential structures of human existence that make it possible for us to grasp beings as what they are” (*Summary* 5). The second step, which follows from the analytic of Dasein, is to “confront

⁴¹ Martin Heidegger, *Ontology—The Hermeneutics of Facticity*, translated by John van Buren (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1999) 12.

the cardinal problem—the question of the meaning of Being in general” (Heidegger, BT 61). Fundamental ontology, for Heidegger, takes the being that has any understanding whatsoever of Being is involved in, which is Dasein, as the “ontical foundation of ontology” (BP 19). Since the meaning of Being, in a sense, originates in Dasein’s involvement in the world, Heidegger inquires into Dasein’s ways, or modes, of understanding Being. Heidegger suggests that authenticity and inauthenticity are two modes of Being that “are both grounded in the fact that any Dasein whatsoever is characterized by mineness [Jemeinigkeit],” i.e., mineness is always a given (BT 68). Jacques Taminiaux proposes that the analytic of Dasein is an investigation that is “structurally governed by the distinction between what properly belongs to Dasein, as [its] own [*Eigenlichkeit*], and what is not [its] own [*Uneigenlichkeit*].”⁴² It seems to me, following Taminiaux, that Heidegger’s distinction between these two modes “coincides with a specific retrieval of the Greek [specifically Aristotelian] *praxis-poiēsis* distinction” (140). In this section I will attempt to show how Heidegger brings forth *poiēsis* as the inauthentic way, or activity, of understanding the Being of Dasein.

Heidegger initially discovers the features of the meaning of Being by examining Dasein’s average, everyday understanding of the Being of entities. The pre-theoretical understanding of Being is what Heidegger describes as Dasein’s average “everydayness,” which Guignon describes as the “everyday practical lifeworld” (*Summary* 5), and according to Heidegger the phenomenon of everydayness indicates that Dasein always already has some average pre-understanding of Being. Dreyfus discusses why Heidegger begins by understanding Being on the basis of everydayness when he states, “[Heidegger]

⁴² Jacques Taminiaux, “Poiesis and Praxis in Fundamental Ontology,” in *Research in Phenomenology*, 17 (1987) 140.

introduces the idea that shared everyday skills, discriminations, and practices into which we are socialized provide the conditions necessary for people to pick out objects, to understand themselves as subjects, and generally, to make sense of the world and of their lives” (*Commentary* 4).

As a human being, my involvement in the world is not initially *mine*, because these everyday activities, or ways of understanding, are always already part of a shared way of going about everyday life. Entities show up for me as such and such because I have been socialized, or taught, to understand them as such and such. For example, a table shows up for me as a table, because I have been taught to use it as a table and not as a weapon. I understand the Being of entities from my everyday involvement of knowing-how (*technē*) to use them. Heidegger suggests that one’s most fundamental way of dealing with entities is by grasping them. He examines this grasping when he says:

In the domain of the present analysis, the entities we shall take as our preliminary theme are those which show themselves in our concern with the environment. Such entities are not thereby objects for knowing the ‘world’ theoretically; they are simply what gets used, what gets produced, and so forth (BT 95).

Heidegger seems to be suggesting that in one’s ordinary way of encountering entities one encounters them as equipment to be used for making or producing (*poiēsis*). Equipment is not to be understood as ‘object.’ Equipment is a holistic totality of functional interconnections, so it is not a collection of things but is an aggregate of relations (97).

Heidegger’s classic example of hammering with a hammer illustrates that the Being essential to the hammer is its possibility to be used as a hammer (to be set in motion as a hammer). He identifies this possibility that is particular to equipment as *Zuhandenheit* (readiness-to-hand). Heidegger discusses readiness-to-hand when he states,

“The kind of Being which equipment possess—in which it manifests itself in its own right—we call ‘*readiness-to-hand*’ [*Zuhandenheit*]. Only because equipment has *this* ‘Being-in-itself’ and does not merely occur, it is manipulable in the broadest sense and at our disposal” (98). In regards to this passage it seems that a hammer is a hammer insofar as it is usable for hammering. A hammer is most genuinely a hammer when one does not have to think about it (Heidegger, BT 99). When everything is functioning properly, when everything is going the way it ought to, one does not notice the hammer, but one does “see” through it to what one is aiming at. Dreyfus discusses the transparency of equipment when he says, “I am not aware of the determinate characteristics of the hammer or of the nail. All I am aware of is the task, or perhaps what I need to do when I finish” (*Commentary* 65). In other words, in everydayness I understand Being in terms of a means-ends relationship. This way of grasping Being is similar to Aristotle’s *poiēsis* due the fact that the Being of equipment is for the sake of something other than equipment.

It seems, for Heidegger that focusing on the use of equipment in everydayness is a way of grasping the self as a producer in relation to equipment, that is, if we think of ourselves at all in the mode of everydayness. The Being of Dasein’s everydayness is may be described as a mode of production and making (*poiēsis*) wherein Dasein “sees” through, or forgets, its own Being. Heidegger suggests that forgetting is an essential mode of Being when he says, “The Self must forget itself if, lost in the world of equipment, it is to be able ‘actually’ to go to work and manipulate something” (BT 405). In everydayness Dasein does not understand itself as its own Being, because its way of

understanding itself as its own is forgotten, or lost, in the busyness of everydayness.

Heidegger discusses Dasein's loss of self-understanding in everydayness when he states,

We understand ourselves in an everyday way or, as we can formulate it terminologically, *not authentically* in the strict sense of the word, not with constancy from the most proper and most extreme possibilities of our own existence, but *inauthentically*, our self indeed but as we are *not our own*, as we have lost our self in things and human while we exist in the everyday (BP 160).

Aforementioned was that any Dasein is characterized by mineness (Jemeinigkeit), so when Dasein's understanding of itself is not its own (uneigentlich) Heidegger seems to mean that its understanding is determined in its everyday activities of *poiēsis*. Dasein's everyday understanding of its Being takes the form of *poiēsis*, because its understanding is for the sake of something other than its Being. For example, my everyday activities of fulfilling my roles as a student, mentor, and lover are performed in regards to something other than my own understanding of myself, e.g., in regards to how my professor understands my performance as a student. Dreyfus says that Dasein's understanding of itself in these involved everyday activities consists of "awareness but no self-awareness" (*Commentary* 67). That is to say, inauthenticity is the mode of Being of the self, but it is a mode where we are not a self.

My everyday roles, on Heidegger's account, are inauthentic when I do not understand them as my own, but rather, as *anyone*, or "they," understands these roles. Dreyfus suggests that for Heidegger Dasein's everydayness, as a they-self, is an inauthentic mode of understanding that refers to the social nexus of cultural norms when he states, "Although norming activity [everyday activity] depends on the existence of human beings, it does not depend on the existence of any particular human being but rather produces particular human beings" (*Commentary* 162). Following from what

Dreyfus says, everyday activities, or productions, are not definitive of the Being of Dasein, because Dasein's understanding of itself, as a they-self, is an inauthentic mode of Being. Heidegger's description of the inauthenticity of Dasein's everydayness appears similar to Aristotle's understanding *poiēsis*, because in everydayness the end, which in this case is the Being of Dasein, is separate from Dasein's everyday mode of production.⁴³

According to Heidegger, a detached theoretical attitude may arise when there is a breakdown in the production process. In regards to the Being of equipment, Heidegger suggests that a breakdown occurs when the equipment being used, such as a hammer and a nail, is broken and no longer available for use. In this breakdown one does not understand the hammer as a tool, but instead encounters it as a thing that needs to be examined and fixed, as *Vorhandenheit* (present-at-hand). When a breakdown occurs there is a "change-over" in one's understanding of the Being of entities, which Guignon describes when he states, "When such a change-over occurs, things are momentarily frozen: they show up as mere things 'on-hand,' occurrent objects, with no inbuilt meanings or functions. Forced to step back from our activities, we look around to see how to fix the problem" (*Summary* 7). As present-at-hand the hammer is treated as an object for philosophical discussion or theoretical inspection. For Heidegger, the change-over from ready-to-hand to present-at-hand is an essential feature of Being that philosophy traditionally has forgotten. On Heidegger's account, it is only in this

⁴³ Another way to understand this similarity is that in everydayness the activity, or roles, I have chosen to produce are not my own choices, because these choices belong to anyone. In other words, in everydayness I am living the life of anyone. Heidegger's description of the "they-self" resembles Aristotle's claim that "Each person seems to be his [or her] understanding. It would be absurd, then, if [human being] were to choose not its own life, but something else's" (1178a5). However, Heidegger does not describe the "they-self" as an absurdity, but rather, as an essential way of Dasein's understanding.

breakdown that one encounters things as philosophy has long described them, which Guignon describes as “things that present themselves to us as meaningless, only contingently related objects in a space/time coordinate system” (7). In other words, the Western tradition has always discussed Being as a brute object with properties, which could then be invested with value (BT 79, 170).

Heidegger suggests that Western philosophy, understood as a detached theoretical science, is rooted in understanding Being as present-at-hand, and it has subsequently forgotten the Being of ready-to-hand. McNeill describes the implications of interpreting Dasein as a meaningless, physical object that is present-at-hand when he says, “When it comes to interpret itself [in terms of the presence of things], it tends to regard itself as yet another object of the theoretical contemplation that is indeed now extracted from its former embeddedness in *technē*” (96). When Western philosophy treats Being as an entity that is present-at-hand, according to Heidegger, it forgets the everyday involvements of Dasein and, consequently, Western philosophy takes the Being of Dasein as a mere thing that exists independently of its involvement in the world.

I previously stated that in everydayness Dasein inauthentically understands itself as ready-to-hand and in doing so “the self forgets itself” (BT 405). Heidegger suggests that when one treats itself as a meaningless object that is present-at-hand one “not only forgets the forgotten but forgets the forgetting itself” (BP 290). By forgetting the forgetting of itself, this form of inauthenticity, which treats human being as a mere thing, deprives human being of any understanding whatsoever, of its mineness, and depicts human being as a self-subsistent object that is capable of being acted upon, of being

fixed. Guignon suggests that in this extreme form of inauthenticity there is an “alienation from oneself, an inability to see anything as really mattering and feelings of futility.”⁴⁴

In a sense, the tradition of philosophy, as a theoretical science, has interpreted human being as an aggregate of objects, or substance, that can be defined and explained with mathematical formulas and scientific laws. As I mentioned in the introduction of this chapter, Volpi and Frede equate Heidegger’s understanding of theoretical science, which may now be referred to as the study of the present-at-hand, with *theōria*. According to Volpi, “*theōria* is the comportment of observing and describing knowing, [...] whose specific knowing is *sophia*,” so the *theōrien* of *sophia* is present-at-hand insofar as “it is not an originary comportment, but merely a derivative mode of *poiēsis* [ready-to-hand]” (201-202). I agree with Volpi that Heidegger does recognize a form of *theōria* in the traditional understanding of Being as present-at-hand, and that this is the *theōrien* of *sophia*, which includes *epistēmē*. However, it seems misleading when one interprets Heidegger’s project as associating these forms of *theōria* with pure *theōria*, because this interpretation could imply that in *Being and Time* Heidegger is rejecting the Aristotelian priority of *theōria*. In the following discussion of Heidegger’s description of *praxis*, which is Dasein’s authentic way of understanding Being, I will show how in the second division of *Being and Time* Heidegger preserves Aristotle’s *theōria* as “the most continuous activity” that humans, as beings of *praxis*, are capable of (1177a22).

⁴⁴ Charles Guignon, “Authenticity, Moral Values, and Psychotherapy,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger*, 2nd ed., edited by Charles Guignon (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006) 281. Henceforth this work will be abbreviated as “AMP.”

II. Praxis: Authentic Understanding of Dasein's Being

According to Heidegger, in everydayness Dasein's understanding is dispersed, distracted, and lost in the variety of its different social roles, and due to its absorption in the "they" Dasein is simply drifting or falling into doing what one does. For example, in my everydayness I am falling into an understanding of myself that is defined by the choices I make in the everyday practical lifeworld. However, Heidegger suggests that this movement of falling is intensified, and becomes a fleeing, when I am tranquilized in trusting and assuming that as a they-self I am "leading and sustaining a full and genuine life" (BT 222). Recall for a moment that Dasein's inauthenticity (*Uneigentlichkeit*) is characterized by the choices, or possibilities, of the "they," so the life of a they-self is made of up the possibilities of the "they." On Heidegger's account, Dasein's tendency to fall into the movement of the "they"—Dasein's tendency to be consumed by and entangled in the busyness of everydayness—constitutes Dasein's way of fleeing from its own Being. In other words, in everydayness I am "plunging into the turbulence of constant frenzied activity" (Guignon, *Summary* 11), and this intense movement of falling alienates me from my own understanding, from authenticity (*Eigentlichkeit*).

The experience of anxiety makes Dasein aware that it is a particular human being who is choosing its choices all the time. According to Heidegger, this individuality is carved out from a complete absorption in the "they." In Heidegger's description of anxiety, he proposes that the movement of fleeing, which is an intense form of the falling of everydayness, suggests that Dasein is "fleeing *in the face of itself* and in the face of its authenticity" (BT 229), but why is Dasein fleeing in the face of itself? Guignon says that Dasein's fleeing is "motivated by an unconscious desire to avoid facing up to something,

something we find deeply unsettling and threatening. We are using the demands of everydayness as an excuse to run away from something we find threatening and do not want to face” (*Summary* 12). Dasein is fleeing in the face of its authenticity because it is threatened by its own potentiality-for-Being, and this threatening is “so close that it is oppressive and stifles one’s breath, and yet is nowhere” (BT 231). In this passage, Heidegger is suggesting that Dasein is not threatened by definite entities within the world, but rather is threatened in the face of the indefiniteness of being-in-the-world. While fear flees from entities within the world, anxiety flees in the face of something that seems to be nowhere in the world.

In the experience of anxiety all the things that Dasein feels that it is accomplishing, it is producing, by doing what one does—all the things that it thinks justify and prove the Being of its life—will suddenly collapse. According to Heidegger, in this collapse, everything Dasein has produced—its relations with other people, its projects, and all these things that it holds onto—suddenly stand before Dasein as completely contingent. Of course these “products” were always contingent, but in everydayness they hold a weight of necessity for Dasein’s Being. Dasein’s trust and conviction that all these means-ends activities prove that it is a successful human being in the world no longer speaks to it, or as Heidegger states, “the ‘world’ [of the they] can offer nothing more” (BT 232). Guignon examines the experience of anxiety when he says, “What I encounter in anxiety is the fact that worldly things cannot provide a ground for my existence, and as a result, I am brought face-to-face with my own being-in-the-world as something I have to realize and ground by myself” (*Summary* 12). The result of

this experience is that Dasein is confronted with itself as “individualized, pure, and thrown” (BT 233).

Heidegger says that in the experience of anxiety, “Dasein finds itself *face to face* with the ‘nothing’ of the possible impossibility of existence” (310). In other words, in the experience of anxiety authentic Dasein recognizes its “being-towards-death,” and is “forced to confront [its] own finitude” (Guignon, AMP 282). Heidegger says, “Death is the possibility of the absolute impossibility of Dasein” (BT 294). Heidegger is not referring to the common, or *existentiell*, understanding of the event of death, which consists of the physical “demise” of human being, but rather, he is referring to death in the *existential* sense, which is really “a way to be” (291, 289). This is a complicated matter, which need not be gone into in great detail at this point, but basically grasping one’s Being as being-towards-death allows for an “understanding of the ontological structures of existence, that is, of what it is to be Dasein” (Dreyfus, *Commentary* 20). The ontological structures of existence are sheer possibilities without expectations of fulfillment. In other words, being-towards-death reveals that sheer possibilities, or existential possibilities, are what it is to be Dasein: as a being-towards-possibilities, Dasein is possibilities through and through. Richard Polt discusses Heidegger’s description of existential possibilities when he says, “My possibilities are not just alternative ways for me to be present; they direct my involvements in the world, making sense of who I am. They have everything to do with my being, even though they can never be reduced to a type of presence.”⁴⁵

⁴⁵ Richard Polt, *The Emergency of Being: On Heidegger’s Contributions to Philosophy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006) 208.

Aware of one's being as being-towards-death, authentic Dasein realizes the limitations of its own potentiality-for-Being, and avoids "the endless multiplicity of possibilities which offer themselves as closest to one—those of comfortableness, shirking, and taking things lightly—and brings Dasein into the simplicity of its [...] possibility which it has inherited and yet has chosen" (Heidegger, BT 435). In this description of being-towards-death, Heidegger seems to be suggesting that authentic Dasein does not rise above or live a life separate from the choices that it has inherited from the "they." Rather, authentic Dasein, as being-towards-death, "takes over" these possibilities—Dasein chooses to choose its choices—by way of its "resoluteness," which "means that in anticipating death it understands itself unambiguously in terms of its ownmost distinctive possibility" (Heidegger, BT 435). That is to say, in resoluteness Dasein takes over its possibilities by becoming the source of its possibilities, of its choices.

Guignon discusses how Dasein's anticipatory resoluteness, its confrontation with its own finitude as being-towards-death, can transform its understanding when he says, "Facing death, one is pulled back from the dispersal, distraction, and forgetfulness of everydayness. [...] Authentic self-focusing, understood as a resolute reaching forward into a finite range of possibilities, gives coherence, cohesiveness, and integrity to a life course" (AMP 282). The temporal structure of the inauthenticity of everydayness, according to Heidegger, is characterized by Dasein's disengaged and disjointed means-ends activities, and in this inauthentic temporality the Being of Dasein is regarded as "making-present." Heidegger suggests that the temporal structure of making-present indicates that irresolute Dasein "at times lacks a future" (BP 288). In other words, in

everyday existence I understand my identity in terms of an endless series of now-moments. Authentic temporality, on the other hand, makes me understand the wholeness of my identity. Guignon discusses Heidegger's description of the temporal structure of authentic Dasein when he states, "an authentic life is lived as a unified flow characterized by cumulativeness and direction" (AMP 282).

Another way to understand Heidegger's discussion of inauthentic and authentic temporality is to see its relation to Dasein's actions on the basis of the Aristotelian *poiēsis-praxis* distinction.⁴⁶ Authentic temporality, according to Guignon, "might become clearer if we contrast two different ways of understanding the relation of actions to the whole of life" (AMP 283). Inauthentic temporality occurs when Dasein sees the actions of its life in terms of *poiēsis* (making-present), then it treats the ends of its actions as being separate from its life. Guignon says, "This stance treats life as a matter of finding the means to achieving ends" (AMP 283). Heidegger says that since the end of the activity—the finished product—is a reference to something other than the activity itself—human being's life—the structure of this activity of *poiēsis* can then be viewed as a "for the sake of something" (PS 29). The activity of *poiēsis* is structured in such a way due to the fact that understanding one's actions as ends that are separate from one's own life is a mode of understanding that refers to something other than Dasein itself. Heidegger discusses the structure of *poiēsis* when he says, "it is 'for the sake of something,' it has a relation to something else. It is 'not an end pure and simple'" (PS 29). Heidegger seems to be suggesting that when Dasein understands itself in this way of *poiēsis* it sees, or identifies, itself as a reference to something other than itself. For

⁴⁶ Describing the differences between authentic and inauthentic temporality in this way was first brought to my attention by Guignon (AMP 283).

example, when a person understands herself as a student in this way, she identifies herself as a student for the sake of something other than her role, or herself, e.g., for the sake of receiving a degree. Guignon suggests that when treating one's life as a dispersal of means-ends activities, "life tends to be experienced as an episodic sequence of calculative strategies lacking any cumulative or over-riding purpose" (AMP 283).

On the other hand, when human being sees its actions in accord with the entirety of its life, its actions may be described as *praxis*, because the end is internal to the action and the action is done for the sake of itself. In other words, the actions in the structure of *praxis* are not for the sake of something, but are "*for the sake of being*" (Guignon, AMP 283). Heidegger says that authentic temporality consists in seeing one's actions in terms of *praxis*, which is to say that human being's identity, or Being, is "a Being which essentially can have no involvement, but which is rather that Being *for the sake of which* Dasein itself is as it is" (BT 160). It seems that in this passage Heidegger is saying that Dasein, as authentic temporality, understands its actions not in order to fulfill a "role," but for the sake of its own Being. For example, as authentic temporality, I am a friend for the sake of *being* a friend. Guignon says that *praxis*, for Heidegger, "reflects an experience of life in which one's actions are an integral part of *being* a person of a certain sort," which "makes us realize that what we are doing at this moment just *is* realizing the goals of living" (AMP 284).

In the previous chapter I discussed how the contemplative activity (*theōrien*) of theoretical knowledge (*epistēmē*) and knowledge of know-how (*technē*) are deficient due to the fact that both forms of knowledge refer to something other than the activity of knowing, or understanding, itself. It seems that for Heidegger a similar deficiency may be

applied to the contemplation (*theōria*) of inauthentic Dasein, which I just examined in terms of *poiēsis*. The *theōrien* of *poiēsis* can be described as a contemplation of human being identified as something other than human being itself. For example, I may contemplate my identity as a student in order to achieve something other than my ownmost understanding of my self as a student, e.g., to see how I compare to other students, or to see if I am meeting my professor's expectations of me as a student.

On Heidegger's account, when contemplating my life on the basis of *poiēsis*, I step back from my involvements and absorption in the world "in the sense of standing back and 'thinking about'" myself (McNeill 130). According to Aristotle, pure *theōria* is the most continuous and complete activity that does not require any sort of detachment from one's involvements and absorptions (1177a23-1177b5). Taking his cue from Aristotle, Heidegger seems to suggest that the *theōrien* of *poiēsis* is discontinuous insofar as this contemplative activity of means-ends living is an activity that is as dispersed and episodic as the life that it is contemplating.

Heidegger maintains that the contemplative activity of authentic Dasein, of the human being of *praxis*, is as continuous and as unified as the life of authentic Dasein. The *theōrien* of *praxis* is not deficient due to the fact that in this activity Dasein is not separate from its understanding, but rather Dasein *is* its understanding. This proper relation of Dasein and understanding may be seen in Heidegger's account of Aristotle's pure *theōria* and *praxis*. Heidegger's reading of Aristotle seems to suggest that there is no distinction between pure contemplation and *praxis*. Heidegger states, "Our human mode of Being entails that we are able to live more unbrokenly in the mode of pure onlooking

[...]” (PS 120).⁴⁷ Whereas the *theōrien* of *poiēsis* is concerned with Dasein for the sake of something other than Dasein, the *theōrien* of *praxis* is for the sake of Dasein itself.

McNeill suggests that Heidegger does not make an invidious contrast between *theōria* and *praxis*. McNeill says, “[...] pure *theōrien*, as one form of such seeing, is, as Heidegger’s reading suggests, nothing other than pure *praxis*, and the two cannot yet be distinguished” (130). It now seems plausible to endorse the view that throughout Heidegger’s reconstruction of traditional ontology he upholds the importance of Aristotle’s *theōria*.

⁴⁷ In *Plato’s Sophist*, Heidegger translates *theōria* as “pure onlooking.”

Chapter 4: Contemplating Contemplation

There are obvious similarities between Heidegger and Aristotle's thoughts. By now it is especially obvious that in *Being and Time* Heidegger devotes much of his early thought to reconstructing the tradition and recovering some important Aristotelian ideas. His attention to the Aristotelian distinction between *poiēsis* and *praxis*, we noted earlier, has been the subject of scholarly work for years. Some of the scholarly work dealing with the similarities between Heidegger and Aristotle suggests that Heidegger does not distinguish between *theōria* (contemplation) and *praxis* (action). According to Heidegger's account, authentic Dasein's understanding of itself does not "entail any explicit self-reflection [...] or theoretical contemplation" (McNeill 102). Theoretical contemplation, which McNeill is referring to, is quite different from *theōria* as contemplation: while the former involves a mode of human apprehension that is detached from human action, the latter is not detached from human action. In other words, on this view Dasein's ownmost understanding of itself is not detached from its activities, so when Dasein engages in contemplation, its thoughts or ways of understanding itself are not separate from its involvements. "As Heidegger later puts it, to represent beings in the manner of the outside spectator is like forgetting to include oneself in the being of the world" (McNeill 226).

I would like to suggest that there might be formal similarities, which have not been examined, between Heidegger's later (post 1935) use of *Gelassenheit* and *Besinnung* and Aristotle's conception of pure *theōria*, as presented in the tenth book of the *Nicomachean Ethics*. Though Heidegger does not recover the original meaning

Aristotle's pure *theōria* per se, his later writings turn to a way of thinking that is similar to Aristotle's contemplation. Guignon says that in Heidegger's later writings he uses the word *Gelassenheit* (releasement or letting-be-ness) to convey the ability of human being to "move toward an ideal mode of comportment," which is "a nonmanipulative, nonimposing way of 'letting things' be what they are" (*Introduction* 35). Heidegger states that letting something be should not be understood in the negative sense of "letting it alone, of renouncing it, of indifference and even neglect."⁴⁸ Letting something be or to be more exact, letting beings be, for Heidegger, is the opposite of the negative sense that may be associated with this activity. He says that the "first step toward" a mode of thinking (*Denken*) that lets beings be "is the step back from the thinking that merely represents—that is, explains—to the thinking that responds and recalls."⁴⁹ This subtle point will be clarified later, but for now I would like to use this passage to suggest that releasement is not a negative releasement-from, but is a positive releasement-for. It is a releasement for or first step towards "reflection," or what Heidegger refers to as *Besinnung*, which is a possible mode of comportment of receptivity that lets beings be what they are, and this mode of comportment goes beyond the ordinary modes of human apprehension and receptivity.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Martin Heidegger, "On the Essence of Truth," in *Martin Heidegger, Basic Writings*, edited by David Farrell Krell (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1993) 125. Henceforth I will abbreviate this work as "ET."

⁴⁹ Martin Heidegger, "The Thing," in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, translations and introduction by Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1971) 181. Henceforth I will abbreviate this work as "Thing."

⁵⁰ Heidegger's *Besinnung* is difficult to translate into English, and translating it as "reflection" seems to be inadequate. William Lovitt says, "'Reflection' is the translation of the noun *Besinnung*, which means recollection, reflection, consideration, deliberation. The corresponding reflexive verb, *sich besinnen*, means to recollect, to remember, to call to mind, to think on, to hit upon. Although 'reflection' serves the needs of translation best [...], the word has serious inadequacies. [...] The reader should endeavor to hear in 'reflection' fresh meaning. For Heidegger *Besinnung* is a recollecting thinking-on, that as though scenting it out, follows after what is thought." See Martin Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, translated with an introduction by William Lovitt (New York: Harper & Row Publishers,

Similar to contemplation (*theōria*), *Besinnung* is a mode of comportment that “has no result,” and “it has no effect,” but rather is performed for the sake of itself. Generally, *Besinnung* and *theōria* are ways of thinking that are performed for the sake of thinking.⁵¹ In this chapter I hope to show how *Besinnung* and *theōria* are formally similar insofar as they are both possible modes of comportment that go beyond our ordinary modes of human apprehension and receptivity. The questions in both cases are: why do both authors turn from the practical realm to the transcendental realm of action? Why do Heidegger and Aristotle introduce these modes of human apprehension that go beyond the practical, or ordinary, ways of human understanding? And are there any similarities between their conceptions of an alternative way of comportment?

In this chapter, when examining the similarities between Heidegger and Aristotle’s later turns, I will proceed with caution, because the formal and structural similarities that I just pointed out may be very weak. There are profound differences in their intimations of the divine, which will be made explicit in what follows.⁵² Another important difference lies in the fact that Aristotle may be using contemplation (*theōria*) as a mode of human receptivity to something eternal and unchanging, but Heidegger seems to be describing *Besinnung* as a mode of receptivity to changing manifestations of meaning. Despite all these differences, I hope that the proceeding examination of the

1977) 155. Henceforth I will abbreviate this work as “QCT.” I would also like to mention that whenever I discuss *Besinnung* I am simultaneously referring to *Gelassenheit*, which is due to the fact that *Gelassenheit* is the first step toward or enables *Besinnung*.

⁵¹ Martin Heidegger, “Letter on Humanism,” in *Martin Heidegger, Basic Writings*, edited by David Farrell Krell (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1993) 259. Henceforth I will abbreviate this work as “LH.”

⁵² It seems important to mention that Heidegger always discusses something divine or sacred in terms of the plural “gods,” and this is not a polytheistic use. Basically, the plurality refers to the immeasurability of existential possibilities (Polt, 207-208). The importance of the plural gods, for Heidegger, will be examined later in this chapter.

similarities between Heidegger's use of *Besinnung* and Aristotle's conception of *theōria* may serve as a basis for more philosophical inquiry into Heidegger and Aristotle.

I. Aristotle's Later Turn to *Theōria* in the *Nicomachean Ethics*

I will now present four aspects of Aristotle's later (the tenth book of the *Nicomachean Ethics*) writings, especially his conception of contemplation (*theōria*), which I will try to connect to Heidegger's later (post 1935) use of *Besinnung* in the following section. First, *theōria* is a non-discursive mode of comportment that is not limited to practical human action, or what Aristotle refers to as *praxis*. In the first book of the *Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle examines the end of human *praxis* as that which is "the good [*agathos*] that is achievable in action," and "if there are more ends than one," then the one that is most complete in and of itself is the ultimate end that constitutes the ultimate good (1097a22-27). He continues to identify the ultimate or highest good of human *praxis* as *eudaimonia*, which I translate as human flourishing, and it may be understood as human action (*praxis*) for the sake of living well.⁵³ John Cooper suggests that one should not "explain the idea of an ultimate end by giving examples of dominant-end conceptions of flourishing" due to the fact that Aristotle's account of human flourishing is not "dominated by a single end," but rather, is inclusive of a number of good ends (99). That

⁵³ *Eudaimonia* has traditionally been translated as "happiness," which, as John Cooper explains, is derived "from the medieval Latin translation, *felicitas*," but this rendering of *eudaimonia* "tends to be taken as referring exclusively to a subjective psychological state, and indeed one that is often temporary and recurrent" (89). Interpreting *eudaimonia* as "happiness" seems to neglect the importance, for Aristotle, of its complete and continuous features, or transcendental qualities, that allow it to be something that only gods and human beings are capable of (1099b15). I am following Cooper's interpretation of *eudaimonia*, as human flourishing, because I agree with his suggestion that "flourishing" captures the transcendental qualities that Aristotle subscribes to *eudaimonia*.

is to say, human flourishing, as the ultimate end of human action, includes, but is not limited to, practical action.

All practical virtues, for Aristotle, must contain discourse, or what Aristotle refers to as *logos*, in such a way that human being is able to dissect its particular situation in order to decide which end or action to pursue. That is to say, in its practical mode of apprehension, human being uses discourse to break apart the wholeness of its life—it sees its life as a series of particular situations and episodic events—in an effort to choose the right action for its life. On the other hand, non-discursive awareness, or what Aristotle refers to as *nous*, cannot be a practical virtue insofar as it is the non-discursive element in human being, which does not correspond to the end of human being’s practical life, but rather relates to the ultimate end of human flourishing (*eudaimonia*). Furthermore, Aristotle says that contemplation (*theōria*) is the activity of non-discursive awareness (*nous*), that is, contemplation may be described as a mode of comportment that corresponds to human being’s non-discursive awareness. In other words, *theōria* is not an ordinary way of seeing certain aspects of one’s life, but it is a “higher” way of grasping the oneness of one’s life.

The second aspect of Aristotle’s conception of *theōria* pertains to understanding contemplation as a “higher” mode comportment of receptivity that goes beyond our ordinary human modes of receptivity. Ordinary human modes of receptivity attempt to break apart the wholeness of what-is (Being) in efforts to explain or reproduce things. For example, the natural sciences investigate the phenomena of the weather in efforts to explain why the climate has dramatically increased and to predict future changes in the weather. Polt says, “The natural sciences embrace reproducibility as an essential part of

the correct method of knowing. If the relevant conditions of an experiment are reproduced, the same product must result—and this is the sign of a law” (118). Aristotle seems to suggest that a “higher” sort of contemplation gives us a non-discursive grasp of the wholeness of what-is (Being). According to Aristotle, this “higher” sort of contemplation (*theōria*) is not an ordinary human mode of receptivity that tries to explain and reproduce what is being contemplated. The contemplator is “no more interested in explaining” the wholeness of what-is than she is in providing “a set of rules or principles” from which specific features of the wholeness can be reproduced.⁵⁴

Aristotle suggests that contemplation “seems to be liked because of itself alone, since it has no result beyond having studied. But from the virtues concerned with action we try to a greater or lesser extent to gain something beyond the action itself” (1177b1-5). In this passage Aristotle seems to be saying that contemplation (*theōria*) is always an end in itself—it is complete and self-sufficient—due to the fact that nothing can be gained or lost from having contemplated, whereas the ordinary modes of human apprehension, which are concerned with practical action, may not always be ends in themselves. Amélie Rorty suggests that these qualities of contemplation indicate its demarcation from ordinary or practical modes of human receptivity when she says, “No one engages in *theōria* in order to perfect the practical life. It has to be done for its own sake to be done at all” (386). Rorty continues to say, “Not only is it [*theōria*] done for its own sake, but it is complete in its very exercise: there is no unfolding of stages, no development of consequences from premises. It is fully and perfectly achieved in the very act” (378).

⁵⁴ Amélie Oksenberg Rorty, “The Place of Contemplation in Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics*,” in *Essays on Aristotle’s Ethics*, edited by Amélie Oksenberg Rorty (Berkeley: University of California Press 1980) 378, 382.

The third aspect of Aristotle's conception of *theōria* pertains to why he advocates for this alternative mode of comportment. In the tenth book of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle gives six reasons to support his view that *theōria* is the most continuous activity, which humans are capable of, that corresponds to human being's non-discursive awareness of the whole of what-is (Being) (1177a18-b26).⁵⁵ On Aristotle's account, the wholeness of Being is something that is eternal and universal (1141b1), and contemplation (*theōria*), as the most continuous mode of human receptivity, enables human beings to live their life that is as "eternal" and unified as the wholeness of Being. That is to say, contemplation is a mode of comportment of receptivity that may "continue in the midst of political disaster and practical blindness;" it may extend beyond the limitations and dispersals of the human lived-world (Rorty 392). Aristotle says that the ordinary modes of human receptivity engage in apprehending contingent or mundane human affairs, such as war and politics, in their efforts to control or impose meaning on the wholeness of what-is (Being). For example, "no one chooses to fight a war, and no one continues in it, for the sake of fighting a war," but what seems to cause human beings to engage in war is their belief that there is value in fighting a war (1177b7-10).

Contemplation (*theōria*), on the other hand, is a mode of comportment of receptivity that "surpasses everything in power and value" (1178a2). Brogan suggests that Aristotle's *theōria* captures a sense of continuity and affinity to the wholeness of Being. Brogan says that *theōria* is a way of "staying with what one observes," that is, it is a "pure movement [...], a movement that stays with itself, as, for example, the tautological movement of thought and thinking itself" (177). When one is contemplating the wholeness of what-is, one may be able to see one's life as an "eternal and unified self-

⁵⁵ Cooper (156).

contained whole” (Rorty 388). In other words, when one is able to “receive” the wholeness of Being, one may “respond” to this wholeness in an essential and transformative way.

The fourth aspect of Aristotle’s conception of contemplation (*theōria*) to be examined is his vague intimations of the divine. Aristotle’s *theōria* (contemplation) is an activity of human thinking that goes beyond the ordinary mode of human apprehension insofar as it thinks about what is divine. According to Aristotle, something divine is immaterial and only exists in form. When divinity is the object of thought, the object and the thought are one and the same. Aristotle states, “Since, then, thought and the object of thought are no different in the case of things that have no matter, the divine thought and its object will be the same, i.e. the thinking will be one with the object of its thought” (1075a3-5). Moreover, Aristotle says that the structure of something divine is thought due to the fact that “divine thought thinks” (1074b33). Since the object of the activity of contemplation is something divine, and the structure of divinity is thought, the activity of contemplation and its object are one and the same. So one may grasp Aristotle’s *theōria* as “a thinking on thinking” (1074b34).

II. Heidegger’s Later Turn to *Besinnung*

I will now proceed to examine four aspects of Heidegger’s use of *Besinnung* (reflection) in conjunction with the four points of Aristotle’s conception of *theōria*. First, *Besinnung* is a non-discursive mode of comportment of receptivity that transcends or goes beyond practical human action. For Heidegger, *Besinnung* has “no result” and “it has no effect,” but rather its goal is internal to the action (Heidegger, LW 259). Similar to contemplation

(*theōria*), *Besinnung* does not effect our practical actions, that is, it is not a “directive that can be readily applied to our active lives” (Heidegger, LW 259). According to Heidegger, it seems that our ordinary modes of human apprehension attempt to impose a grid of intelligibility onto changing manifestations of the wholeness of what-is—Being as a totality—in order to categorize and reproduce features of these manifestations. As Polt says,

Normally we live in the realm of the reproducible. I ride the bus to work, just as anyone would ride it; I am one more reproducer of a widely shared pattern of practice. [...] Reproducibility is also central to everyday thought and language. We usually traffic in well-worn words and ideas, use them as anyone would use them, apply them in the same way we have applied them before (117).

Besinnung, on the other hand, is not a willful imposition of our ordinary ways of grasping things. *Besinnung* may be described as open reflection on the whole meaning (*Sinn*) of what-is; it is a mode of comportment of receptivity that remains open to the unfolding, changing nature of Being.

The second aspect of *Besinnung*, which seems similar to Aristotle’s conception of contemplation (*theōria*), pertains to Heidegger’s description of it as a “higher” mode of comportment that goes beyond our ordinary modes of human apprehension. Heidegger says that ordinary human thinking, which is discursive, is a mode of apprehending beings that attempts to explain. This ordinary discursive thinking that attempts to explain beings falls short of the ability to apprehend the whole of what is—the totality of Being.

Heidegger says, “As soon as human cognition here calls for an explanation, it fails to transcend the world’s nature, and falls short of it. The human will to explain just does not reach to the simpleness of the simple onefold of worlding” (*Thing* 180). Here Heidegger

seems to be suggesting that the limits of the ordinary modes of human apprehension correspond to the limits of the human will.

The human will, on Heidegger's account, consists of "all conceptual or 'representational' thinking," which are ways of human thinking that impose meanings onto things (Caputo 337). Representational thinking, Heidegger says, "brings something before us, *represents it*. [...] In representing, we think upon and think through what is represented by analyzing it, by laying it out and reassembling it."⁵⁶ Through representational thinking human being breaks apart the wholeness of Being in an effort to re-create the meaning of what-is, or to make it into something other than what it is. The ordinary modes of apprehension fall short of grasping the totality of Being due to the fact that these ways of thinking do not allow things to show up as what they are. That is to say, ordinary human thinking attempts to grasp Being as something that is represented or reproduced by human thinking. For instance, a jug may ordinarily appear as an "independent, self-supporting thing" that was created by humans and is used for holding and pouring wine (Heidegger, *Thing* 167). The human thinking that grasps the jug in this way, according to Heidegger, simultaneously covers over the possibility for the jug to show up as anything else. In a sense, the ordinary modes of human apprehension seem to cover over any future possibility of an original way of encountering things.

On Heidegger's account, ordinary human thinking cannot grasp the wholeness of Being, because Being is not something that is created by human thinking, but is "something that thinking can only be 'granted'" (Caputo 337). At this point Heidegger is concerned with human being's relation to language. When the ordinary modes of human

⁵⁶ Martin Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, translated by Gregory Fried and Richard Polt (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000) 125. Henceforth this work will be abbreviated as "IM."

apprehension see language as something that is created by humans, these modes of apprehension fail to grasp human being's deep relation of belonging to language. Heidegger says, "Our relation to language is defined by the mode according to which we belong to [the event], we who are needed and used by it" (WL 425).⁵⁷ In this passage, Heidegger seems to be suggesting that discursive thinking is not something that one creates or comes up with on one's own, but, rather, is made possible by one's belonging to a historical and cultural background.⁵⁸ The whole of Being is this historical and cultural background that one belongs to. Polt says, "We are primarily familiar with the whole; we inhabit it. It is our own in the sense that we are comfortable in it, as a fish is comfortable in the sea." (25).

According to Heidegger, language or discourse is not one's possession, but rather, it grants or it "distinguishes the human being as a human being" (WL 397). Discursive thinking is more like a "gift" that is given to human beings. Caputo discusses the gift of discursive thinking, saying, "Thoughts come to us; we do not think them up. Thinking is a gift, or a grace, an event that overtakes us, an address visited upon us" (337-338). In the sense that thinking is a gift, Heidegger turns to *Er-denken* (roughly translated as "thinking through" or "thoroughly thinking") as a way of thinking that is a thanking (WL

⁵⁷ Krell translates the German word *Ereignis* as "appropriation." I modified his translation, because I prefer to use Macquarrie and Robinson's translation of *Ereignis* as "event" (BT 509).

⁵⁸ It seems important to mention that later Heidegger may have introduced an ideal mode of human comportment that brings forth the importance of the historicity of human being, because this may have been lacking in his earlier account of modes of comportment. As Polt says, "If the hermeneutic phenomenology of *Being and Time* falls short, it is not because it falls prey to relativism but because it does not penetrate far enough into the historicity of being-there and be-ing. It does not fully live up to its claim that being-there is profoundly historical, and it runs the risk of objectifying be-ing. What Heidegger is now seeking is a way of thinking that is truly 'be-ing historical,' that not only speaks out of but participates in the event of appropriation" (108-109).

425).⁵⁹ *Er-denken* involves *Gelassenheit*—thinking through is a letting-be. *Gelassenheit* is a way of remaining open to the receiving of what is given; it is a way of “letting things be” so they can show up as what they are (Guignon, *Introduction* 35). As a mode of comportment of receptivity, *Besinnung* enables human being to remain open to the changing manifestations of Being (*Ereignis*) as they present themselves to us when we stop trying to re-create or reproduce them via discursive thinking.

The third aspect of Heidegger’s use of *Besinnung*, which is formally similar to Aristotle’s conception of contemplation (*theōria*), pertains to why Heidegger advocates for this alternative mode of comportment. Aforementioned was that Aristotle suggests a “higher” mode of comportment may give human beings a non-discursive grasp of the wholeness of what-is, that is, contemplation is a possible way for human receptivity to extend beyond the limitations and dispersals of the human lived-world. Similar to Aristotle, Heidegger seems to say that *Besinnung* is a possible way for human receptivity to “venture” out beyond the limitations of the ordinary and mundane level of innerworldly existence. *Besinnung* seems to be a way for human being to “receive” and “respond”—to “co-respond”—to changing manifestations of Being. For example, when creating a genuine work of art, such as a poem, the poet does not merely represent and render the meaning of something that was “there” before the work began. Rather, according to Heidegger, human being may only “create” a genuine work of art by letting

⁵⁹ Polt discusses Heidegger’s use of *Er-denken*, saying, “*Erdenken* ordinarily means to think something up, to invent it (*erfinden*). Heidegger seems to be daring us to raise some typical objections to his thought: it is fantastic, arbitrary, nonobjective. The conception of truth as correct representation looks inventiveness with suspicion: creativity must be subordinated to the way things are. The very word *Er-denken*, then, is part of Heidegger’s assault on representational thought” (109).

“something emerge as a thing that has been brought forth.”⁶⁰ *Besinnung*, as a “higher” mode of comportment of receptivity, may be described as poetic due to the fact that it “is not planning or willing, it is a venturesome openness to an experience in which the artist himself may be transformed” (Polt 111).

Besinnung, as an ideal mode of comportment of receptivity, is a “thinking that responds and recalls,” or what Heidegger refers to as “co-responds,” to the things that show up for us as things (*Thing* 181). With his use of *Besinnung*, Heidegger seems to suggest that when human being co-responds to the shared and historical meanings a community, human being is able to understand itself as a “receiver of understandings of being” (Dreyfus, *Connection* 365). As Polt says, *Besinnung* “is a process of mutual adjustment and simultaneous emergence—a matchmaking and a marriage, not a representational correspondence” (114). Heidegger often refers to *Besinnung* (reflection) as a mode of comportment that of receptivity is preparatory. He says, “reflection would have to be content only with preparing a readiness for the exhortation and consolation that our human race today needs” (QCT 182).

The fourth and final aspect of *Besinnung* to be discussed, which is formally similar to Aristotle’s conception of contemplation (*theōria*), is later Heidegger’s vague intimations of something divine or sacred. Young discusses Heidegger’s notion of the gods, saying, “By being who they are, they give voice to that which is most sacred to us. As members of a given community, and whether we heed their inspiring example or not, we live our lives in light of our gods” (375). That is to say, the gods, on Heidegger’s

⁶⁰ Martin Heidegger, “Origin of the Work of Art,” in *Martin Heidegger, Basic Writings*, edited by David Farrell Krell (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1993) 185. Henceforth I will abbreviate this work as “OWA.”

account, name what is important for a community. The gods are not something created by human beings, but rather they name that which matters to a community. Polt suggests that the gods are manifestations of meaning that “inform a people’s interpretation of itself and the world around it” (208). Polt continues to say that the gods, for Heidegger, “need not be dogmatic blinders that restrict us to one possible worldview; precisely as possibilities that illuminate the world, they must be open to” the changing manifestations of meaning or Being (208). It seems that Heidegger alludes to the gods and turns to human being’s relation to the gods as a way to name what is important for a community. According to Heidegger’s account, the gods “bind” the community together. As Polt says, “The gods would then serve as a vibrant center of our interests and interpretations, a re-ligion that would bind a community together and bind it back to the world at large. The gods would matter to us by enabling *everything* to matter to us” (208-209). The gods, for Heidegger, name the changing manifestations of meaning or Being, and *Besinnung* is open reflection on the whole meaning (*Sinn*) of Being.

III. *Theōria* vs. *Besinnung*

I will now turn to an examination of two profound differences between Aristotle and Heidegger’s ideal modes of human comportment. The first striking difference is that Aristotle has a notion of something eternal and universal, whereas Heidegger is always opposed to this idea. For Aristotle, the divine is something that endures; god is pure actuality. Heidegger’s intimation of the divine, on the other hand, is something that is always changing, that is pure possibilities. This first dissimilarity lies in Heidegger and Aristotle’s notion of the whole of what-is, or the totality of Being. For Aristotle, the

totality of Being seems to be something eternal and universal, that is, something that endures throughout the changing manifestations of what-is. On Aristotle's account, the totality of Being consists of something divine, and "the divine is unchanging, a permanent and essential feature of the universe" (Irwin 332). Aristotle says, "It does not matter if human beings are the best among the animals; for there are other beings of a far more divine nature than human beings—most evidently, for instance, the beings composing the universe" (1141b1).

Aristotle seems to suggest that the totality of Being consists of divine-like features, which are eternal and universal. By regarding the totality of Being as eternal universals, Aristotle might be thinking of something that gives lasting value to beings. Contemplation, or what Aristotle refers to as *theōria*, then, might be an ideal mode of human apprehension that enables human beings to transcend the changeable and particular features of their ordinary ways of understanding. Contemplation seems to be a way for human beings to go beyond their ordinary modes of apprehension and to be receptive to the eternal and universal features of the totality of Being.

For Heidegger, on the other hand, *Besinnung* is an ideal mode of comportment that opens human beings to the possibility of receiving the changing and unfolding manifestations of the totality of Being. *Besinnung* is a mode of comportment of receptivity to the changing manifestations of Being as they present themselves to human beings, that is, when human beings stop trying to impose their own eternal meanings unto things. In regards to the totality of Being, as something that is divine or sacred, Heidegger's intimations of the gods seems to be something that is also changing and unfolding. In other words, *Besinnung* is not a way for human beings to remain open to the

eternal universals. Rather, it is a way for human beings to receive the changing manifestations of the gods, but to do so in terms of an order of wholeness that is not just given in what-is. Whereas Aristotle connects the god to the essential element in all things that remains unchanged, Heidegger connects the gods to the sheer possibilities of things, which may never be reduced to something eternal and universal.

Another way to understand the differences between Heidegger and Aristotle's intimations of the divine is by speaking of them (the divine) in terms of actuality and possibilities. Aristotle uses the word "actuality" (*energeia*) to express the wholeness of what-is (1049b23). Something that is pure actuality will not transition from becoming to being, or from being to not being, because it is that which always *is*. In other words, something that is sheer actuality does not transition from possibility to actuality, but rather, always exists in actuality. For Aristotle, god—the whole of what-is—is the only thing that may be said to be pure actuality (1072b25). For Heidegger, the gods are sheer possibilities, which cannot be pure actuality. Polt says, "The possibilities [the gods] cannot be converted into pure actuality; they are *irreducibly* possible, so they remain open to question" (208). As I previously discussed, sheer possibilities are, for Heidegger, fundamental to the whole of what-is. The whole of what-is is continually changing and unfolding in such a way that it should never be reduced to something that always *is*. Polt continues to say, "[Sheer] possibilities become effective not by being converted into actualities, but by letting us respond creatively to our condition" (209). That is to say, the gods, as sheer possibilities, become effective by human beings' openness or receptivity to their changing manifestations. Though Aristotle and Heidegger present possible modes of

comportment of receptivity to the whole of what-is, their notions of this wholeness may appear to be profoundly different.

The second important difference that will be examined is the fact that, for Aristotle, the divine does not necessarily require human beings but, on Heidegger's account, the gods and human being require each other (Polt 211). This last difference pertains to the relation of the totality of Being to human beings. According to Aristotle, the totality of what-is, of Being, "is something which is eternal and immovable and separable" (1026a10); it is an eternal universal that may exist separate from beings. The totality of Being, or what Aristotle refers to as god, "produces" all movements in such a way that it is not independent of the world, but rather, is always "at work" in all the things that it "produces" (McNeill 257).⁶¹ Human beings, then, in so far as they are beings that are produced by the totality of Being, contain features of this totality or divinity. That is why in the *Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle refers to the divine element in human beings (1177a15-1178a5). However, something divine—the wholeness of Being—does not, on Aristotle's account, necessarily involve human beings. As Aristotle implies in the above quote, the wholeness of Being is separable from human existence (1026a10). Basically, for Aristotle, the whole of what-is does not necessarily include human beings; it would be "there" without human beings (1177b27-1178a1).

Conversely, the totality of Being, for Heidegger, is something that is essentially human; it is something that necessarily relates to human beings. According to Heidegger,

⁶¹ See Aristotle (1071b5-1072b10). At this point I would like to emphasize that the "possession" that Aristotle is referring to is simply a way of thinking, or understanding, which seems to be different than the modern use of "possession," as a way of holding or controlling. In a summary of the ninth chapter of the twelfth book of the *Metaphysics*, W.D. Ross, the translator, explains that the nature of divine thought is such that its thought and the object it "possesses" are one and the same. Ross states, "The divine thought [*nous*] must be concerned with the most divine object, which is itself. Thought and the object of thought are never different when the object is immaterial" (687).

the totality of Being and human being require each other. The totality of Being is “an indispensable source of meaning” that can only show up as such when human being “is taking place” (Polt 211). Heidegger says, “Man does not decide whether and how beings appear, whether and how God and the gods or history and nature come forward into the clearing of Being, come to presence and depart. The advent of beings lies in the destiny of Being” (LH 235). It seems that Heidegger is generally saying that the totality of Being produces a clearing in which things show up as what they are; that the totality of Being makes it possible for things to show up as meaningful (Dreyfus, *Connection* 352). Dreyfus states, “We do not produce the clearing. It produces us as the kind of human beings we are” (*Connection* 352). At the same time, the totality of Being needs human being as this clearing in order to give “sense to our acts and experiences;” this totality requires human being, “as the granting of the import of what-is” (Polt 211). For Heidegger, there is an essential relationship of belongingness between the totality of Being and human being, whereas, for Aristotle, the latter only contingently belongs with the former.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

After having acknowledged these differences between the later writings of Aristotle and Heidegger, I would like to conclude by suggesting that this examination reveals something about Heidegger's later method. In his early writings Heidegger is concerned with reconstructing the Western tradition of philosophy, and he aims at recovering fundamental Aristotelian ideas. Heidegger's earlier writings mainly consist of his appropriation of historical sources in an effort to authentically interpret what was left unsaid. His early writings could be characterized as an attempt to bring philosophy back to the original question of Being and to situate it within the lived-world of human beings. However, his later thoughts seem to turn away from these attempts to recover the traditional ways of understanding Being, and turn towards a unique and original way of understanding philosophy. His later writings seem to be governed by a look towards the future of philosophy. Rather than trying to recover the origin of the question of Being, Heidegger's later method seems to be concerned with how human beings can remain open to the possibility of an event that may "give a new meaningful direction to our lives" (Dreyfus, *Connection* 367).

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