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Technology, Dwelling, and Nature as "Resource": A Reading of (and Some Reflections on) Themes from the Later Heidegger

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ABSTRACT
In his later work, such as "The Question Concerning Technology", Martin Heidegger puts forward a critique of modern technology. Alongside this critique, Heidegger presents a kind of positive alternative through his discussion of "dwelling". I put forward a reading of Heidegger's critique of modern technology and his embrace of "dwelling". On my reading, Heidegger's thinking centers on the idea that modern technology's form of "world-disclosure" prevents human beings from encountering (and then living in light of) our own essence. In contrast, he takes "dwelling" to allow us to do that. When humans dwell, they also live in such a way as to (purportedly) allow other things (e.g. rivers) to exist in accordance with their own essence. I argue that, for Heidegger, the (purported) truth that humans should live in accord with our own essence is explanatorily prior to the (purported) truth that humans should let other things exist in accordance with their own essence. Following this interpretative argument, I reflect on some of the promises of this position that I attribute to Heidegger, along with some of the most pressing challenges facing those who might want to further develop it.

Introduction

We engage with the natural world in a variety of ways throughout our lives. This includes everything from an individual taking a walk or eating a meal with her friends, to more ambitious group activities, such as building cities and roads, or running farms and mines. When we engage in these activities, what kind of relation do we have to nature? And what kind of relation *should* we have? An idea that runs through many parts of modern social/political thought is that nature either is –

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or *should* be made into – primarily a resource for human beings. To get a sense of what that ideal might amount to, consider the following passage from Johann Gottlieb Fichte: "nature shall become more and more intelligible and transparent; … human power … shall rule over her without difficulty, and the conquest, once made, shall be peacefully maintained."[1] One reason to take this kind of idea seriously is this: if we can make nature into a better resource for human beings (whatever exactly doing so consists in), then this should allow us to better promote human well-being, human freedom, or other things that matter for us.

There are important reasons, however, to be worried about this line of thinking. One of them concerns non-human animals. In short, if the well-being of non-human animals matters, and not just instrumentally for our own well-being, then why should nature be made into resource that is better solely for *humans* and not one that is also better for other animals as well? Another worry connects to the idea – which runs through many strands of broadly "environmentalist" thinking – that there is something amiss with how (at least many) humans relate to the natural world, especially in modern, industrialized societies, which contributes not only to environmental destruction but also prevents us from truly flourishing.[2] This kind of "environmentalist" thought obviously gets articulated in a myriad of different ways by different thinkers, who have different critiques of our ways of relating to nature in modern industrialized societies, and different views about what to do about it. But a common thought in many strands of broadly "environmentalist" writing is that some of our issues have to do with an overly instrumentalist relation to nature, which prevents us from correctly responding to a range of important values in the natural world, and which thereby inhibits our flourishing. Treating nature as a "resource" – either solely for humans, or for other non-human animals as well – might well be bound up with that sort of (purportedly impoverished) instrumentalist relationship to nature.[3]

This kind of thought about our relationship to nature – one on which there is something fundamentally amiss with our relationship to it in the modern world, tied to our interacting with nature primarily as a "resource"

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[1]As quoted in (Neuhouser 1990, 141).
[2]See, for example, (Thoreau 1854/2008), (Muir 1997), (Carson 1962/2002), (Berry 1977/2015), (Wilson 1984/2003), (Dillard 1974/2013), (Abbey 1991), (Leopold 1949/1987), (Naess 1973), (Devall and Sessions 1985), (Shiva 2000), (Turner 1996), and (Cronon 1995).
[3]In this paper, I use double quotes (e.g., "resource") for a mix of uses, including quoting passages from other people's work, mixes of use and mention, and scare quotes. I use single quotes (e.g., 'resource') to mention words.

– is at the center of the later work of Martin Heidegger. In his later work, including, centrally, the "The Question Concerning Technology", Heidegger puts forward a critique of modern technology.[4] In this critique, Heidegger condemns the world he associates with modern technology that (he claims) reveals nature as "a gigantic gasoline station, an energy source for modern technology and industry".[5] According to Heidegger, a key problem with this world is its (purportedly) totalizing character. He argues that it prevents us from understanding nature as anything *but* a resource, or set of resources. Alongside this critique of technology, Heidegger puts forward a positive vision of "dwelling", which he takes to be a way of countering some of the problems he associates with modern technology. For Heidegger, "dwelling" denotes both something that is part of the essence of human beings (and thus something we always do) as well as a particular way in which we can relate to this characteristic of our identity. Thus, as Julian Young puts it, Heidegger is concerned with both "essential dwelling" (a necessary part of being human, tied to our essence) and "existential dwelling" (a historically contingent way humans can be).[6] The later Heidegger's normative vision, an ethics of dwelling, involves an embrace of the latter (historically contingent) form of "dwelling" – a state whose "fundamental character" Heidegger describes as "sparing and preserving".[7]

For those interested in the sort of environmentalist ideas I glossed above, an obvious question is this: can Heidegger's work help provide a philosophical underpinning to some of those ideas, or in some other way help us to advance our thinking about them?[8] One reason to take this question seriously is that there are few other philosophers of Heidegger's historical importance who dedicate as much of their work to a critique of relating to nature as "resource" as he does, in a way that resonates as closely with core strands of "environmentalist" critique.

Another reason to be interested in this strand of Heidegger's later work concerns the account of human beings that his critique of technology

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[4](Heidegger 1954/1993).

[5](Heidegger 1959, 50).

[6]See (Young 2001, 74). To put it in Heidegger's language of *Being and Time* (Heidegger 1927/1962), the term 'dwelling' is used to describe both "ontological" (roughly, *essential*) and "ontic" (roughly, *historically contingent*) features of human being.

[7](Heidegger 1954/2001a, 147). As this sentence illustrates, I will usually attempt to explicitly state when I am discussing "essential" or "existential" dwelling. However, I will follow Young and sometimes drop the qualifiers 'essential' and 'existential' when, given the context of my argument, I take it to be apparent which one I am referring to.

[8]Many commentators on the later Heidegger have discussed this idea. See, for example, discussions in (Young 2001), (Zimmerman 1993), and (Foltz 1995).

(and his broader "ethics of dwelling") involves: namely, a broadly "anti-subjectivist" and "anti-humanist" one. This kind of account of human beings – which animates not only Heidegger's later work, but also other important strands of thought within post-Kantian French and German philosophy, such as in parts of the work of Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida – (at least appears) to differ in important ways from the accounts that are more prominent in contemporary ethics, such as Aristotelean and Kantian ones.[9] It's philosophically interesting, I think, to consider what kind of normative views in ethics and social/political philosophy one might be able to generate with such a view of human beings, and how.

With that background and motivation in mind, in this paper, I aim to put forward a reading of Heidegger's thinking about what is supposed to be bad about modern technology, and how this historically contingent form of "dwelling" is meant to help. A key part of my reading concerns how to best make sense of the explanatory structure of his normative views. In particular, I'm interested in how two strands of Heidegger's thinking about technology and dwelling relate to each other. One strand of his thinking is this: what's bad about modern technology is that it involves a form of "world-disclosure" – roughly, a way of constituting a world (in Heidegger's sense of 'world', which I discuss more below) – that prevents human beings from understanding (and in turn being) what we most fundamentally are. Another strand is this: what's bad about the world of modern technology is that it prevents a range of non-human entities – including, for example, rivers, wind, and non-human animals – from being what they most fundamentally are. An important interpretative question is how these two strands are related. For example: are they two different, rival understandings of what's wrong with modern technology (and what's good with dwelling)? Or are they dimensions of the same line of thought? I put forward a reading on which they fit together as part of a single philosophical view. I take this view to be a plausible reconstruction of the later Heidegger's thinking on this subject (around roughly the time of his "The Question Concerning Technology", which was published in 1954), though certainly not the view that he held consistently throughout all of his later work following the so-called "turning" ("Kehre") in his thought following *Being and Time*. Put roughly, the view that I put forward is this: Heidegger appeals to facts about what *both* we and

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[9]See (Heidegger 1947/1993) for a presentation of his views in (at least some sense) an "anti-humanist" one. For some of the many connected discussions in Foucault, see (Foucault 1966/2002), and for some of the many connected discussions in Derrida, see (Derrida 1969).

what other non-human entities (e.g. rivers, wind, and non-human animals) most fundamentally are to explain what's (purportedly) wrong with modern technology (and what's good about dwelling). However, on the view I attribute to him, the former facts – facts about *our* essence – are more explanatorily fundamental in his normative account.

My aim in putting forward this reading is to better understand an important dimension of Heidegger's later philosophy, which can then in turn aid us in thinking about what resources this philosophy can (or cannot) offer us in thinking through the sorts of "environmentalist" themes I introduced above. I should state up front, however, that I'm far from certain that the reconstruction I attribute to Heidegger is totally on target. This is partly because of the obvious difficulties with trying to make sense of his later writing (which is often metaphorical, unsystematic, and lacking anything like a clear argumentative structure) and (tied to this) partly because it's not clear how much there is a coherent line of argument or thought in these writings to reconstruct (as opposed to multiple different ones that are loosely connected to each other). If my reconstruction of Heidegger turns out to fail as a totally accurate historical account, I'm also satisfied with thinking of the philosophical position I reconstruct as one worth reflecting on that uses core material and ideas from Heidegger's later work. Even if that is all I end up with in the end, I think having this position in hand can help us think through what paths we might (and might not) want to take going forward in developing ideas that animate Heidegger's later thought.

I break up my work in this paper into four sections, followed by a conclusion. In §1, I present a reconstruction of Heidegger's critique of modern technology. On the view I attribute to Heidegger, the fundamental explanation of what's wrong with modern technology is the way in which it involves a form of "world-disclosure" that prevents humans from understanding what we most fundamentally are. In §2, I present a reconstruction of Heidegger's discussion of "dwelling", and of how, in particular, (a historically contingent form of) "dwelling" is meant to provide a positive alternative to the way of life he associates with modern technology. In short, if we are able to "dwell" in the "existential" sense that Heidegger identifies, this can allow us to understand what we most fundamentally are, and to live in light of that understanding. On this view, a component of doing so, which is not a component of the form of world-disclosure associated with modern technology, is that dwelling also allows other non-human things to "be what they are". In §3, I discuss some of the ways in which the view I put forward interacts with much-discussed

interpretative issues of how to understand Heidegger's views in (and about) metaphysics. These issues include his relationship to debates concerning realism and anti-realism in metaphysics and concerning how to unpack his use of seemingly metaphysically "heavyweight" language. I here briefly discuss some different ways interpreters have gone on these issues, and briefly explore what these issues mean for further developing the basic line of thinking from Heidegger that I've reconstructed in this paper. In §4, I turn away from the interpretative task of understanding the later Heidegger – or, at least, understanding one philosophically interesting strand of thinking that can be extracted from the writings of the later Heidegger – and turn to a preliminary philosophical evaluation of the view that I attribute to Heidegger. I here highlight some of the themes from Heidegger's later work on technology and dwelling that I think are worth further reflecting on and further developing. These include ideas about receptivity, place, and the limitations of how we tend to conceptualize our relationship to nature. At the same time, I raise a series of issues for the view I attribute to him. These issues include problems with the basic explanatory structure of his normative view, his account of the essence of humanity, as well as limitations of his discussion of technology with respect to important issues tied to class, race, gender, nationalism, and colonialism. In §5, I then conclude with some brief remarks on possible ways forward in further developing themes from his later work.

§1. Heidegger's critique of modern technology

In the first section of the paper, I reconstruct Heidegger's critique of modern (industrial) technology. I proceed in four steps. First, I introduce Heidegger's view of the essence of modern technology as a form of world-disclosure. Second, I discuss the form of world-disclosure that Heidegger thinks defines modern technology. Third, I consider how this form of world-disclosure relates to something that Heidegger criticizes as a (bad form of) "metaphysics". Fourth, I explain what Heidegger thinks is the main danger of modern technology, which, put roughly, has to do with the ways its "totalizing" character prevents human beings from grasping our essence, which is tied to world-disclosure. Fifth, I briefly explore themes about anxiety and "rootlessness" that show up in Heidegger's critique of modern technology, and how his thinking on these themes ties into his worry about our inability to encounter our own essence.

1.1. Technology and world-disclosure

In order to understand Heidegger's critique of modern (industrial) technology, we first need to get clear on *what* the object of his critique is. Heidegger claims at the start of "The Question Concerning Technology" that the object of his critique is the *essence* of technology, which he distinguishes from technology as such. He writes that "technology is not equivalent to the essence of technology. When we are seeking the essence of "tree," we have to become aware that what pervades every tree, as tree, is not itself a tree that can be encountered among all the other trees."[10] For Heidegger – as for many philosophers who invoke similar talk of "essence" – the essence of technology designates something about what technology most fundamentally is, or what "lies in its nature" and makes technology *technology* as such, as opposed to something else.[11] There are then, of course, many important further interpretative debates about how exactly to understand Heidegger's account of "essence", as well as related metaphysical notions he uses. These include, for example, debates about how metaphysically "heavyweight" this talk is as well as ones about what kind of metaphysical realism it does or does not commit him to.[12] In order to understand the core of Heidegger's critique of technology, and his defense of dwelling, we don't need to fully settle those debates here, though I will return to some of them later on in this paper. Instead, we can, I submit, begin to unpack Heidegger's critique of modern technology starting with the gloss of "essence" that I introduced above, on which the essence of X marks out what lies in the nature of X and what *explains* its being X (as opposed to something else). In turn, as I will explain later on, how one reads Heidegger's account of "essence" – and his views in (and about) metaphysics more generally – will have a significant impact on how one further develops the line of thought that I attribute to Heidegger.

Heidegger presents his reading of what the essence of technology is by way of a rejection of an alternative view about the essence of technology, which he labels "the instrumental and anthropological definition of

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[10](Heidegger 1954/1993, 311).
[11]See (Fine 1994) and (Rosen 2015) for contemporary discussions of "essence" that develop this basic idea.
[12]See (McDaniel 2016), (McDaniel 2013), and (McDaniel 2009) for a reading of Heidegger that takes his (prima facie) metaphysical themes as involving robust metaphysical commitments. For an alternate kind of reading, which pushes Heidegger in a direction where most of these themes really concern issues about our understanding of things, including questions about the grounds of what makes things intelligible to us, see (Dreyfus 1991) and (Carman 2003).

technology".[13] Heidegger describes this definition of technology as the combination of the two most common responses to the question of what technology is: that "technology is a means to an end"[14] and that "technology is a human activity".[15] On such a reading, the essence of technology is (according to Heidegger) itself "something technological": it is a neutral instrument for human activity. Yet, according to Heidegger, "the essence of technology is by no means anything technological."[16] Rather, he claims, it is "a way of revealing".[17]

We can understand Heidegger's claim that the essence of technology is "a way of revealing" in terms of the notion of *world* that is at the center of his earlier work in *Being and Time*. Put roughly, for Heidegger, a "world" is a set of background shared social practices, ideas, and social structures that (according to Heidegger) help structure our basic everyday activities, and make them intelligible to us as meaningful. A world also, according to Heidegger, enables our understanding of ourselves and the broader reality we are a part of. Indeed, in *Being and Time*, Heidegger (at least seemingly) argues for the strong claim that our ability to understand things at all, and to make sense of reality more generally, *requires* a "world". In short, he seems to think that a creature's being part of a world is necessary for its capacity for thinking more generally (or, at least, for the kind of thinking that allows creatures to raise the "question of Being", and thus, for Heidegger, think in a way that is akin to important distinctive kinds of thinking and intentionality human beings are capable of). This, I take it, is a core part of what Heidegger is driving at in his earlier work when he claims that the kind of being that we humans have is "being-in-the-world".[18] Heidegger uses the term 'Dasein' to refer to this kind of being that we human beings have.[19] Put roughly, for Heidegger, the essence

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[13](Heidegger 1954/1993, 312).
[14](Heidegger 1954/1993, 312).
[15](Heidegger 1954/1993, 312).
[16](Heidegger 1954/1993, 311).
[17](Heidegger 1954/1993, 318).
[18]The idea that our being in a *world* is part of our essence is reflected in a range of passages from Heidegger, including this one from the *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*: "Self and world belong together in the single entity, Dasein. Self and world are not two beings, like subject and object … but self and world are the basic determination of Dasein itself in the unity of the structure of being-in-the-world." (Heidegger 1927/1982, 297).
[19]It should be noted that, in *Being and Time,* Heidegger uses the term 'Dasein' not only to refer to the kind of being that belongs to creatures like us (and which might in theory be shared by other creatures), but also to refer to individual entities. He thus talks about, for example, Dasein as that being "which we are ourselves" (Heidegger 1927/1962, 72) and talks about Dasein as that which "we, the inquirers, are ourselves" (Heidegger 1927/1962, 27). Throughout *Being and Time*, Heidegger then sticks with always calling people "Dasein". Moreover, he insists that he is not being "terminologically arbitrary" when he avoids terms such as 'subject', 'life', and 'man' in "designating those entities which we are ourselves." (Heidegger 1927/1962, 72). His basic thinking seems to be twofold. First, Heidegger

of being "Dasein" is to be the kind of creature that can raise "the question of Being" (which he takes to be his guiding question in *Being and Time*) and for whom "in its very Being, that Being is an *issue* for it."[20] As he puts it, for him, this means that an "*[u]nderstanding of Being is itself a definite characteristic of Dasein's Being.*"[21] I'm not going to try to unpack all of what that means here. Among other things, this means that I'm not going to try to unravel what exactly Heidegger thinks the "the question of Being" really is, let alone how Heidegger thinks we should answer it.[22] Perhaps more importantly, nor am I going to here wade into the large interpretative debates about how to further flesh out the notion of "world" I've just sketched.[23] Instead, for my purposes in this paper, I'm just going to take the notion of "world" I've sketched to be sufficient for our having a rough grasp of what Heidegger is getting at, giving us (at least) something akin to core parts of a "job description" for what explanatory work "worlds" are meant to do and what roughly they are meant to be like. This rough grasp, I will argue, is enough to allow us

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is concerned with the fact that other terms have resonance or associations that he wants to avoid, even if those associations aren't strictly part of the literal meaning of the terms in question. There are multiple ways of thinking about this kind of idea. For example, Heidegger (or someone else) could be concerned both with pragmatic upshots of using certain words. For example, he might be concerned with the implicatures involved in choosing one word over another to discuss the issues at hand, including, perhaps, the implicature that the word in question is a good one to use in the context. (For connected discussion, see (Plunkett and Sundell 2021)). Or, perhaps even more on point, Heidegger can be seen as concerned with the kinds of things that Herman Cappelen calls "lexical effects", which Cappelen characterizes as "the non-cognitive, non-semantic, nonpragmatic effects of words" (Cappelen 2018, 54). To illustrate the kind of thing Capellen has in mind, consider the effects of using certain brand names (e.g., 'Coca-Cola') in marketing (see (Cappelen 2018, 124)). Tied to this, Heidegger's second thought seems to be as follows: he wants to emphasize that, when speaking about the creatures we are, he is often concerned with the kind of being that we have but which other creatures might in theory have too. Most commentators on *Being and Time* stick with Heidegger's terminological choice and use 'Dasein' to refer to us. I appreciate the reasons for that. But I also think it helps reinforce obscurantist aspects of Heidegger's work, and prevents the core claims he is making – often ones that might best be defended not as "transcendental" claims of a certain kind, but rather empirical ones in social psychology – from being clearly articulated. This is, in short, I think part of the problematic "lexical effects" involved in Heidegger's own use of 'Dasein', as well as the continued use (not just mentioning) of 'Dasein' throughout the secondary literature on Heidegger. It also raises the risk of philosophers using Heidegger's jargon in a way that gives the illusion of "deep" thoughts, but where there really isn't much insight at all. That charge is, for example, part of Theodor Adorno's argument against Heidegger's jargon, and related jargon used in the broadly "existentialist" tradition. (See (Adorno 1964/1997). See (Gordon 2016) for discussion). Indeed, it might also raise the risk of there being no real thoughts with actual content at all (as sometimes happens with the continued use of jargon). (For one take on how that can happen, see (Cappelen 2013)). Given these concerns, in this paper, I thus avoid using (rather than mentioning) 'Dasein', and instead stick with more familiar terminology, such as 'people' and 'human beings'.

[20](Heidegger 1927/1962, 32).

[21](Heidegger 1927/1962, 32).

[22]For some helpful recent discussion on this front, see (McDaniel 2009), (McDaniel 2013), and (McDaniel 2017).

[23]For some of the large amounts of further discussion on this issue, see (Carman 2003), (Dreyfus 1991), (Mulhall 2013), (Lafont 2000), (Wrathall 2005), and (Haugeland 2013).

to make headway in thinking through his critique of modern technology.[24]

Before moving on, I want to briefly flag something important about how Heidegger conceives of what a "world" is and the work it is meant to do. As I said, in *Being and Time*, Heidegger appears to embrace the idea that a creature being a part of a world is necessary in order for that creature to have a distinctive kind of cognition (where, roughly, the kind of cognition in question is the kind that humans have, which allows us to raise "the Question of Being"). I doubt that Heidegger (or anyone else) can really pull off this broadly "pragmatist" or "existentialist" development of the Kantian "transcendentalist" program, on which a creature being part of what Heidegger calls a "world" – keeping in mind all of the specific things that Heidegger thinks necessarily go along with being a part of a world (e.g. those things that are part of what he calls the "care structure" in *Being and Time*) – is strictly speaking *necessary* for a creature (whether a human being, a robot, or any other creature) to be capable of cognition that has the relevant distinctive features with which Heidegger is concerned.[25] To unpack the critique of technology, however, we don't need to buy into this ambitious transcendental idea. Instead, we can just take it that being part of a world is part of the essence of the particular kinds of creatures *we* are, even if some other kinds of creatures (e.g. certain kinds of robots, or other animals with a different evolutionary history) could have a cognition that is similar to ours in the relevant respects.[26]

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[24]My gloss of what a "world" is for Heidegger draws chiefly from his discussion of "worlds" in (Heidegger 1927/1962) and (Heidegger 1927/1982). On my reading, what a "world" is for Heidegger is something that is defined (at least in part) by the explanatory role it plays in his overall philosophy. As my way of putting things suggests, I don't think that there is *one* unified thing that does all of the explanatory work he needs "world" to do, but rather a collection of different things (including shared social practices, ideas, and social structures) which contribute to doing that work, and which do different parts of it. Thus, in my view, a more developed social theory (or psychological theory) that draws on Heidegger's discussion of "world" might in fact do better to focus on the different, more specific things that, put together, help fulfill (at least core parts of) his job description for "world".

[25]Put roughly, in opposition to Kant, Heidegger advances the position that it is not strictly cognitive categories that make our basic type of thinking (and the kind of experience that goes along with it) possible, but rather basic structures of the way in which we practically interact with the world – what he terms "existentials". These existentials form a unified totality that Heidegger refers to as Dasein's "care structure". This structure is what lends human experience its intelligibility and is thus universal to all individual cases of creatures who have the way of being of Dasein. For more on this aspect of Heidegger's "transcendental" ambitions in *Being and Time*, see (Dreyfus 1991) and (Carman 2003).

[26]In making this suggestion for the purposes of getting my interpretation of the later Heidegger's work on technology and dwelling off the ground, I should underscore that even this claim about essence might well be too philosophically ambitious to be defensible. Instead, it might well be that the early Heidegger in *Being and Time* had some important insights into social psychology – for example, anticipating (via somewhat dubious armchair methods) something like the modern psychological idea of "social scripts" in his discussion of *Das Man*, and the role of background "unchosen" conditions making possible certain kinds of agency – without any of that revealing the *essence* of

A key feature of Heidegger's discussion in *Being and Time* is that the "world" an individual person is a part of is not something she chooses. Rather, she finds herself "thrown" into a specific world, alongside other people, within a given social structure, and alongside a range of non-human entities.[27] The particular world a person finds herself "thrown" into helps determine the form and content of her thinking and activity. The later Heidegger takes this basic idea from *Being and Time* and emphasizes the way in which a world is "unchosen" as follows: he asserts that the world is something that is "given" to us. Worlds, for Heidegger, allow entities (ranging from hammers to rivers to other animals) to be experienced as *meaningful* to us, and help determine the particular *way* in which they are so experienced. They also, according to Heidegger, help provide something like our background, default "understanding of Being" and the space in which entities "reveal" themselves as part of what we experience (including what we experience as "actual"). Thus, the world being "unchosen" also means these things are unchosen as well. This, I take it, is one thing (among many) that he is getting at in "The Question Concerning Technology" when he writes that "man does not have control over unconcealment itself, in which at any given time the actual shows itself or withdraws."[28]

With all of this in hand, we are now in a better position to understand Heidegger's idea that the "instrumental and anthropological definition of technology"[29] misses something important about the essence of technology. In short, for Heidegger, this definition passes over an important (and purportedly essential feature) of technology: namely that, independent of the specific ends for which we might take ourselves to be using technological devices, technology discloses a particular world to us, which in turn allows particular objects to be disclosed to us in that world, in particular ways. Moreover, Heidegger argues, in so doing, the "instrumental and anthropological definition of technology" also misses an interconnected point: that not all types of technology disclose the same type of world or do so in the same way.

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the kinds of creatures we are. In fact, as I discuss briefly later on, I think something along this line of thinking is probably philosophically the best way of developing Heidegger's ideas, even though it significantly departs from Heidegger's own thinking. For discussion of connected issues, see (Haugeland 2013) and (Carman 2014).

[27]This, I take it, is part of what Heidegger is getting at in passages such as the following: "In thrownness is revealed that in each case Dasein, as my Dasein and this Dasein, is already in a definite world and alongside a definite range of definite entities within-the-world." (Heidegger 1927/1962, 264).

[28](Heidegger 1954/1993, 323).

[29](Heidegger 1954/1993, 312).

By treating the essence of technology as something that is (in his own words) "itself technological", the "instrumental and anthropological definition of technology"[30] positions successive forms of technological devices as nothing more than the improvement of past ones. Yet, for Heidegger, different kinds of technology have different "ways of revealing". Or to put it more precisely, he thinks that different technological devices (e.g. a given bridge or a given telephone), when used in certain ways, as part of certain worlds, have different "ways of revealing". That is, Heidegger thinks that different technological forms (artisanal, industrial, etc.) are part of different stages in what he thinks of as the "History of Being" – different phases in the history of how "Being" has been disclosed for us. This means that different types of technology (as used in different social/historical contexts) reveal different background understandings of Being and do so in different ways.[31] They also, and perhaps just as importantly, change the way a range of things – including other people, other animals our environment, and the objects that make up our everyday surroundings – are experienced as *meaningful* to us, and the particular *ways* in which they are so experienced.

1.2. Modern technology and the "standing-reserve"

With the idea in hand that technology essentially involves, according to Heidegger, a form of "world-disclosure", an obvious question arises: what form of world-disclosure belongs to the modern form of technology? According to Heidegger, modern technology's specific "way of revealing" is that of "das Gestell".[32] He explains that "Gestell means the way of revealing that holds sway in the essence of modern technology and that is itself nothing technological."[33] For Heidegger, what is distinctive about "Gestell" is that it discloses a world in which things do not appear as anything *but* resource: it reveals *everything* as some sort of resource for manipulation for human ends. Yet, according to Heidegger, this does not mean that this manipulation is consciously done by goal-

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[30](Heidegger 1954/1993, 312).

[31]However, it should be noted that, according to Heidegger, *all* forms of technology nonetheless contain a tendency towards important features of the specifically *modern* form of technology that Heidegger argues are only fully actualized in that specific form. See (Young 2001, 55–56).

[32]I follow Julian Young's practice in (Young 2001) of leaving 'Gestell' un-translated. William Lovitt, the translator of the version of (Heidegger 1954/1993) from which I am quoting, translates 'Gestell' as 'enframing'. As Young points out, this makes it "look like a human action (ensnaring, encoding, enveloping) whereas, in reality … it is not an action but rather a mode of disclosure which determines the character of action" (Young 2001, 44).

[33](Heidegger 1954/1993, 325).

directed human beings. Within Gestell, technological production happens as part of the sheer "will to will": as part of a system of production that has no goal outside of that production itself.[34] Things are revealed as "resource", but often not as a resource for a particular purpose.

Heidegger calls the totality of resources that Gestell reveals "the standing-reserve".[35] This choice of terminology is meant to express how, within the world of modern technology, "[e]verywhere everything is ordered to stand by, to be immediately on hand, indeed to stand there just so that it may be on call for a further ordering."[36] For example, within Gestell, "the earth now reveals itself as a coal mining district, the soil as mineral deposit … Agriculture is now the mechanized food industry. Air is now set upon to yield nitrogen".[37] As this passage shows, according to Heidegger, modern technology shouldn't be understood as something which seeks to use pre-existing "natural resources". Rather, it is something that "discloses" nature *in terms of* "natural resources", and, in particular, resources that should be made available for use at any given point in the future, for any range of possible ends that humans might have.

For Heidegger, this feature of what Hubert Dreyfus calls Gestell's "total mobilization of all beings"[38] exemplifies its violent nature. Heidegger writes that "the revealing that rules in modern technology is a challenging, which puts to nature the unreasonable demand that it supply energy which can be extracted and stored as such."[39] Heidegger clarifies this character of "setting-upon, in the sense of a challenging forth"[40] by means of a contrast between a pre-industrial windmill that merely uses the wind *for* energy, and those of modern technology that convert the wind *into* energy, that unlocks "energy from the air currents in order to store it."[41] According to Heidegger, the pre-industrial windmill (at least as used in the relevant, pre-industrial world) does not "challenge" the wind by making it become part of the "standing-reserve"[42]: the wind

[34]This feature of Gestell is emphasized by Michel Zimmerman throughout *Heidegger's Confrontation with Modernity* by contrasting "the will to will" with the "will to power". For instance, see (Zimmerman 1990, 191–204). Dreyfus also underscores this point about ordering *"for its own sake"* (Dreyfus 1993, 306).
[35](Heidegger 1954/1993, 322). Young argues that this translation of the German word "Bestand" into "standing-reserve" is misleading because it "does not accord with Heidegger's practice which is to take a familiar word and extend its meaning into unfamiliar territory." (Young 2001, 44). However, since I do not think the core of Heidegger's descriptive point is lost in the terminology of "standing-reserve", I will continue to use Lovitt's translation.
[36](Heidegger 1954/1993, 322).
[37](Heidegger 1954/1993, 320).
[38](Dreyfus 1992, 182).
[39](Heidegger 1954/1993, 320).
[40](Heidegger 1954/1993, 321).
[41](Heidegger 1954/1993, 320).
[42](Heidegger 1954/1993, 322).

remains something that is revealed only partly in terms of resource. Yet, in Gestell, the situation is (purportedly) different: the wind becomes completely transformed into resource in the form of energy. Thus, what differentiates Gestell, according to Heidegger, is that within Gestell wind *is* resource, whereas before, it was only *used* as resource, thereby allowing it to be other things as well.[43]

Heidegger furthers this argument about the specific character of Gestell by making a comparison between a hydroelectric dam and a wooden bridge. He writes, "the hydroelectric dam is not built into the Rhine River as was the old wooden bridge that joined bank with bank for hundreds of years. Rather, the river is dammed up into the power plant. What the river is now, namely, a water-power supplier, derives from the essence of the power station."[44] Heidegger's point in this passage is analogous to the point concerning the two types of windmills. The hydroelectric dam is (purportedly) different from the wooden bridge for the same reason that the industrial windmill is different from its precursor: because rather than just using the river as resource, it reveals it as *nothing but* resource.[45] Heidegger writes: "But, it will be replied, the Rhine is still a river in the landscape, is it not? Perhaps. But how? In no other way than as an object on call for inspection by a tour group ordered there by the vacation industry."[46] In other words, his thought is that even when it is not being used as a resource for natural energy, it's still being used in no other way than as a different *sort* of resource.

Heidegger highlights two different features of the kind of world-disclosure that (purportedly) is involved in Gestell. The first is that it fails to somehow let things (e.g. rivers) show up as what *they* truly are, and instead amalgamates them into an undifferentiated "standing-reserve".[47] For example, consider his claim that existential dwelling involves a kind of "sparing" and "preserving" and that "real sparing is something *positive* and takes place when we leave something beforehand in its own nature, when we return it specifically to its being, when we 'free' it in the real sense of the word into a preserve of peace."[48] Importantly, on Heidegger's view, Gestell threatens to turn *everything* into part of the "standing-reserve", including not just everything that

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[43]Here I draw on Dreyfus' work in (Dreyfus 1993) and (Dreyfus 1992).
[44](Heidegger 1954/1993, 321).
[45]Here I draw on the distinction that Dreyfus emphasizes in (Dreyfus 1992) between *using* a being and *defining* a being as nothing but that which is to be used.
[46](Heidegger 1954/1993, 321).
[47]This feature of Heidegger's discussion of Gestell is highlightedin (Young 2001).
[48](Heidegger 1954/2001a, 147).

is non-human, but human beings as well. It thus prevents humans from being what *we* truly are, and thus from engaging in a range of the kinds of activities that (purportedly) are tied to our essence. A second feature of the world-disclosure involved in Gestell is that it is totalizing. As he writes, "where this ordering holds sway, it drives out every other possibility of revealing."[49] His idea seems to be that while the "wind", "river", etc. disclosed by pre-industrial technology leave room for them to be revealed as things other than resource as well, this is not the case in Gestell. He writes that "where Gestell holds sway, regulating and securing of the standing-reserve mark all revealing."[50]

1.3. Technology and "metaphysics"

It is (at least partly) because of this totalizing character of modern technology's way of revealing that Heidegger argues that modern technology is equivalent to what he calls "metaphysics". It's far from clear how exactly to understand what Heidegger means by 'metaphysics' in his later work, since he uses the term in idiosyncratic ways (which depart not only from contemporary usage, but also from his previous usage in *Being and Time* and other philosophers of his era).[51] As a first stab, following Young, we can take him to think that "metaphysics" involves something along the lines of mistakenly elevating an "account of the being of beings into *the* (one and only) categorical account of reality itself."[52] For Heidegger, it is this "metaphysical" character of modern technology that makes it so dangerous and explains the "monstrousness that reigns"[53] in Gestell.

To understand why Heidegger understands the "metaphysical" character of modern technology as dangerous, one must first note that Heidegger also uses the term "metaphysics" to describe a particular *approach* to the broad set of topics that most contemporary philosophers associate with the subfield called "metaphysics", which (roughly) deals with questions about reality that (put abstractly) concern what there is, and what it is like. According to Heidegger, the dominant philosophical approach (the dominant approach ever since Plato, according to him) is flawed not because it is concerned with the "being of beings" (which is Heidegger's concern as well), but because "it does not think Being as such, does

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[49](Heidegger 1954/1993, 332).
[50](Heidegger 1954/1993, 332).
[51]For discussion, see (Carman 2020).
[52](Young 2001, 29).
[53](Heidegger 1954/1993, 321).

not think the difference between Being and beings. Metaphysics does not ask about the truth of Being itself. Nor does it therefore ask in what way the essence of man belongs to the truth of Being."[54] For my purposes here, the core point is that, according to Heidegger, the (problematic) approach to metaphysical questions about what there is, and what is like, (purportedly) fails at something: namely, understanding "the difference between Being and beings". What exactly does that distinction amount to? Put roughly, it's the difference between something *being* (or existing) at all and something being the particular thing (the particular "being") it is.[55] This, I take it, isn't about the word "being", nor about our understanding of being. Rather, the issue involves something about the *real definition* of being itself (or something closely akin to a real definition), where to give a real definition is (put roughly) to give an account of what lies in the nature of something and explains what it is.[56] In turn, part of early Heidegger's metaphysics, as I read him, involves the idea that there are fundamentally different *ways of being*, such that there isn't a single "way of being" that is shared by everything. Human beings, for example, have a different "way of being" than do the equipment we use in our everyday activity.[57]

According to Heidegger, the "way the essence of man belongs to the truth of Being"[58] occurs through the phenomenon of "disclosedness". Put roughly, this phenomenon is the way in which our world, one world amongst others, is "given" to us, thereby (purportedly) supplying the conditions of possibility for our having any understanding of Being at all. This is part of why, I take it, Heidegger characterizes the overcoming of the (purportedly problematic) "metaphysical" tradition in philosophy as

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[54](Heidegger 1947/1993, 226).

[55]This is what Heidegger sometimes discusses as the "ontological difference". (For discussion of different ways of unpacking what this distinction amounts to, see (Nicholson 1996)).

[56]For an account of "real definition" along these lines, see (Rosen 2015). As my gloss on "real definition" suggests, it is something that is often meant to do similar explanatory work to "essence". This is reflected in Rosen's account, which defines real definition partly in terms of essence, as developed in work such as (Fine 1994).

[57]I here follow Kris McDaniel's view that he develops in (McDaniel 2009), (McDaniel 2013), and (McDaniel 2017). McDaniel cashes this idea out with the following idea: there is no privileged, single "existential quantifier" for doing metaphysics (as there is, for example, on Sider's view in (Sider 2011)), but rather a number of equally fundamental ones, each of which is tied to different kinds of things that exist (e.g., humans vs. numbers vs. equipment we use). This reading of Heidegger is by no means uncontroversial. For a different line of interpretation on how to read what Heidegger is doing in asking "The Question of Being", and of the view that he develops in response to it, see (Carman 2003) and (Carman 2013). On Carman's reading (drawing on (Dreyfus 1991)), many of the issues that McDaniel reads as involving metaphysical commitments are really more about our understanding of things, and, in particular, the grounds of reality being "intelligible" to us. I return later in this paper to some of the interpretative issues here, and how they bear on the reconstruction of Heidegger that I develop in this paper.

[58](Heidegger 1947/1993, 226).

"the step back out of metaphysics"[59] – it is the step back to understanding the more "originary" relationship of human beings to Being that makes possible the project of metaphysics itself.[60] Without this "step back" the project of metaphysics is not able to understand itself for what it is: one "horizon of disclosure" amongst others. It thus (purportedly) "persists in the oblivion of Being".[61]

For Heidegger, "the essence of modern technology is … identical with the essence of modern metaphysics"[62] because it shares the above feature of the "metaphysical project"; that is, the feature of being something that "persists in the oblivion of Being".[63] Just as Heidegger thinks the metaphysical project of the dominant philosophical tradition covers over that it is *a* way of revealing, so too does modern technology. As Heidegger writes, "*the meaning pervading technology hides itself*"[64]: technology presents itself as nothing more than a series of instrumental devices for the manipulation of what already exists. This, according to Heidegger, covers over what technology is in its essence: namely, a way of revealing. He writes that where Gestell "holds sway, regulating and securing of the standing-reserve mark all revealing. They no longer even let their own fundamental characteristic appear, namely this revealing as such."[65]

On Heidegger's view, the self-concealment of modern technology's essence is bound up with its totalizing feature, which "crowds out" other forms of world-disclosure. In short, in order to be effectively totalizing in this way, it not only covers over its particular way of world-disclosure *as* a form of world-disclosure but also the phenomenon of "disclosedness" in general. This is part of what allows its particular form of world-disclosure to drive out all other modes of world-disclosure (which Heidegger claims it does, at least to a high degree). I take it his guiding thought in the background here is something like this: to acknowledge the phenomenon of "disclosedness" would be to acknowledge the contingent character of any world we experience, thus making at least *some* kind of opening for other forms of world-disclosure to be present as well, even if the dominance of one form of world-disclosure is fairly robust and hard to dislodge.

[59](Heidegger 1957/1969, 41).
[60]Here I draw on Young's reading of the overcoming of metaphysics as a "step back". See (Young 2001, 28).
[61](Heidegger 1947/1993, 247).
[62](Heidegger 1938/1977, 116).
[63](Heidegger 1947/1993, 247).
[64](Heidegger 1959, 55).
[65](Heidegger 1954/1993, 332–333).

Thus, like the form of metaphysics that Heidegger criticizes, the essence of modern technology (purportedly) leads to the "oblivion of Being"; to the forgetting of the phenomenon of world-disclosure (or "revealing"). Heidegger writes, "the essential unfolding of technology threatens revealing, threatens it with the possibility that all revealing will be consumed in ordering and that everything will present itself only in the unconcealment of standing-reserve."[66] This passage points to Heidegger's take on the "metaphysical" character of modern technology's way of revealing: how it threatens to obliterate the very occurrence of revealing and thereby help establish the dominance of its form of world-disclosure, in which everything is revealed as "resource" that is part of the "standing-reserve".

Another way in which Heidegger phrases the same point about modern technology's "metaphysical" character is by saying that Gestell shows no strife between earth and world. For the later Heidegger, "earth" is (roughly) the unshaped material that is taken up and disclosed as a meaningful world. For the later Heidegger, one only encounters what he terms "earth" *through* world. In the language of *Being and Time*, because "Dasein is its world existingly"[67], this means that there are no human beings that exist without a world, and thus no human beings that could encounter earth as such *independently* of how earth is "revealed" within a world. Yet, according to the later Heidegger, worlds can show themselves *as* worlds by somehow containing within them signs of the strife between earth and world. Such worlds are ones in which earth offers some form of "resistance": some form of barrier to the total revealing of earth in terms of one particular world. This is tantamount to saying that, in such worlds, earth shows itself in ways that indicate that it is earth even within world. The thought, I take it, is that such strife thereby helps underscore the phenomenon of world-disclosure as such.[68]

However, according to Heidegger, Gestell pushes against this kind of strife between earth and world. In this "totalizing" form of world-disclosure, the transformation of earth into world (purportedly) occurs in such a way as to push aside awareness of things that are "outside" of the

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[66](Heidegger 1954/1993, 339).
[67](Heidegger 1927/1962, 416).
[68]It should be underscored that the issues about the relationship between earth and world that I briefly glossed here tie into complicated interpretative debates about what kind of view Heidegger has about metaphysical realism, and related debates about his views on what kind of ability we have to learn about what reality is like independent of our interpretative relations to it. I briefly return to these questions later in this paper.

"standing-reserve". In such a state, "earth" is pushed aside and with it the process of world-disclosure to which its existence testifies. Insofar as there are flickers of things in Gestell that give people some limited awareness of such an "outside" of the standing-reserve – perhaps through "marginal" practices of various kinds, or various kinds of thinking – Gestell finds a way to accommodate these "anomalies", and thereby retain its "totalizing" character.[69]

1.4. The danger of modern industrial technology

If what I have said so far is on the right track, it raises an obvious question: what's so bad about modern technology preventing people from grasping the phenomenon of "world-disclosure"? For Heidegger, at least part of the answer seems to be this: this feature of modern technology prevents us from understanding an essential feature of who we are. According to Heidegger, this is what makes technology's concealment of the phenomenon of world-disclosure "the danger". He writes, "the destining of revealing is in itself not just any danger, but *the* danger."[70] It is *the* danger because it afflicts "man in his essence"[71]: it prevents us from recognizing our essence as "being-in-the-world". Put roughly, it blocks us from recognizing our interpretative activities that constitute a world *as* interpretative activities and thus from recognizing ourselves as the "self-interpreting" beings that we are.[72] As Heidegger puts it in the "Letter on Humanism", "metaphysics", which, for him, is intimately bound up with the essence of modern technology, "closes itself to the simple essential fact that man occurs only in his essence, where he is claimed by Being."[73]

I take it that this is part of what Heidegger means when he writes that "the rule of Gestell threatens man with the possibility that it could be denied to him to enter into a more original revealing and hence to experience the call of a more primal truth."[74] For Heidegger, the "more original revealing" is the basic fact of "disclosedness": that humans stand in a relationship to the rest of reality that always requires a particular "world" for that reality to be "disclosed" in any sort of meaningful way.

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[69]For further discussion of this dynamic of Gestell with respect to "anomalous" or "marginal" practices that push against its form of world-disclosure, see (Dreyfus 1993), (Wrathall 2019), and (Lambeth 2019).
[70](Heidegger 1954/1993, 331).
[71](Heidegger 1954/1993, 333).
[72]My phrasing here draws from (Taylor 1985)'s reading and development of Heidegger's ideas from (Heidegger 1927/1962).
[73](Heidegger 1947/1993, 227).
[74](Heidegger 1954/1993, 333).

Thus, insofar as humans are denied the possibility of entrance into a "more originary revealing", so too do we lose the possibility of understanding our own essence.

If this is right, then the "covering-over" that happens in Gestell is therefore not just one example amongst others of the "falling" that Heidegger discusses in *Being and Time* as constitutive of our way of being as persons. There, he takes a kind of "falling" – wherein human beings latch onto a historically specific way of thinking about ourselves and (falsely) claim it to be part of our essence – to be something people necessarily *always* do, given our essence. According to Heidegger in *Being and Time*, "*The 'essence' of Dasein lies in its existence*".[75] This kind of "existence" is a way of being that Heidegger attempts to illuminate as "being-in-the-world". That way of being, according to Heidegger, involves a tendency to take a particular way in which people exist, informed by a certain kind of self-interpretation, and to falsely treat it as definitive of our essence. This is part of what he means when he claims that "falling" is part of the "*essential* ontological structure of Dasein itself".[76] In contrast to this kind of "falling", the kind of "covering-over" that Heidegger identifies in Gestell may be thought of as a particularly virulent, historically specific kind of "falling"– one in which human beings do not just flee from (the purported) "inessentiality of the self"[77] to latch onto a (false) view of what our essential nature is, but do so in a way that threatens that the true essence of human being will be *completely* covered over. Or at least that it will be highly inaccessible to us, such that we are unlikely ever to grasp it, or to live in accordance with it.

Heidegger describes this phenomenon in a complicated passage from "The Question Concerning Technology" about what (purportedly) happens within Gestell. He writes:

> man, precisely as the one so threatened, exalts himself
> and postures as lord of the earth. In this way the
> illusion comes to prevail that everything man
> encounters exists only insofar as it is his construct.
> This illusion give rise in turn to one final delusion: it
> seems as though man everywhere and always
> encounters only himself … *In truth, however, precisely
> nowhere does man today any longer encounter himself,
> i.e., his essence*. Man stands so decisively in subservience

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[75](Heidegger 1927/1962, 67).
[76](Heidegger 1927/1962, 224). See also his claim that "Falling away is a kind of falling constitutive of Dasein itself." (Heidegger 1925/1985, 282).
[77](Heidegger 1984, 140).

> to on the challenging-forth of Gestell that he does not
> grasp Gestell as a claim, that he fails to see himself as
> the one spoken to, and hence also fails in every way to
> hear in what respect he ek-sists, in terms of his essence,
> in a realm where he is addressed, so that he *can never*
> encounter only himself.[78]

As I read him, in this passage, Heidegger advances a version of an argument that I sketched before: that the essence of modern technology threatens humans with the loss of our ability to encounter our own essence. As Heidegger puts it, the "anthropological" illusion of Gestell, in which everything is treated as something that human beings create or will, covers over the essence of human beings. In short, in Gestell, in which humans exalt ourselves as "master of the earth", we are (purportedly) in a position where we can't grasp our own essence.

Heidegger emphasizes this point by bringing out the way in which Gestell threatens to turn human beings themselves into part of the "standing-reserve". He writes that "the current talk about human resources, about the supply of patients for a clinic, gives evidence to this."[79] He explains the character of the human being that is disclosed as part of the standing-reserve by the example of the industrial forester. He writes, "the forester who measures felled timber in the woods … is made subordinate to the orderability of cellulose, which for its part is challenged forth by the need for paper, which is then delivered for newspapers and illustrated magazines."[80] Thus, in Gestell, human beings are not only blocked from grasping our own essence, but are ourselves threatened with our transformation into something other than *human beings*. In turn, if complete, this would ensure the actualization of "the danger" contained in the essence of technology: the inability of human beings to recognize ourselves as such.

Thus, according to Heidegger, the core danger with modern technology is not that it is associated with a particular feature of the modern technological world, such as the (purported) flattening of our general capacities of reasoning into instrumental planning of a certain kind, relative to a truncated set of ends.[81] While Heidegger does worry about this

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[78](Heidegger 1954/1993, 332).

[79](Heidegger 1954/1993, 323). In 1966, Heidegger extended this analysis and predicted that "some day factories will be built for the artificial breeding of human material". (As quoted in (Young 2001, 46)).

[80](Heidegger 1954/1993, 323).

[81]This kind of worry about the modern world runs through important strands of the Frankfurt School of Critical Theory, drawing on work from (Weber 1958), among others. For different articulations of it, see (Horkheimer and Adorno 1947/2002), (Horkheimer 1947/2013), and (Habermas 1984). For critical discussion of the relationship of Heidegger to this line of thought about technology, see (Young 2019).

phenomenon (and other phenomena in modernity), what he sees as the core danger of modern technology is more tightly bound up with its basic mode of world-disclosure, and, namely, it's (purportedly) totalizing character that (purportedly) blocks humans from understanding our own essence. As he puts it, "the danger consists in the threat that assaults man's nature in his relation to Being itself, and not in accidental perils. This danger is *the* danger."[82]

This feature of his thinking is part of why, I think, as Dreyfus and Charles Spinosa note in "Highway Bridges and Feasts", Heidegger became increasingly insistent about the distinction between his later criticisms of technology and those concerning the activity of human beings. Dreyfus and Spinosa maintain that "in his final analysis of technology, Heidegger was critical of all those who … thought that technology was dangerous because it embodied instrumental reason."[83] On their reading, such criticism gives the illusion that human beings are consciously manipulating reality for the satisfaction of their desires, whereas, according to Heidegger, in Gestell, the ever more efficient ordering of resources takes place simply for the sake of ordering itself, which is a dynamic that unfolds independently of explicit plans humans have. Heidegger's thought seems to be that promoting a picture of technology where human beings actively control it tends to prevent us from understanding the real character of the form of world-disclosure involved in modern technology. Thus, he states that "in keeping with this disguising of the danger through the ordering belonging to Gestell, it seems time and time again as though technology were a means in the hands of man. But, in truth, it is the coming to presence of man that is now being ordered forth to lend a hand to the coming to presence of technology."[84]

As Dreyfus and Spinosa's discussion suggests, Heidegger's fundamental critique of modern technology is not based on what ends humans do (or don't) pursue with the instruments of modern technology. Rather, for Heidegger, "the danger" with modern technology concerns the loss of our ability to see revealing as revealing, and thus the loss of our ability to understand our own essence. As he puts it, "the issue is the saving of man's essential nature."[85]

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[82](Heidegger 1954/2001b, 115).
[83](Dreyfus and Spinosa 2002, 177).
[84](Heidegger 1949/1977, 37).
[85](Heidegger 1959, 56).

1.5. Technology, anxiety, and rootlessness

In closing my reconstruction of Heidegger's critique of modern technology, I want to flag an important set of connections that Heidegger draws between technology, anxiety, and a sense of "rootlessness". These connections help provide a bridge to Heidegger's vision of "dwelling" as a kind of antidote to the form of world-disclosure involved with modern technology.

In *Being and Time*, anxiety functions as a sort of theoretical "limit-case" that throws into relief the totality of the way of being ("Dasein") that belongs to us human beings and thereby demonstrates fundamental features of the kinds of beings we are. As Heidegger writes in "What Is Metaphysics?", a short text published two years after *Being and Time*, in anxiety "all things and we ourselves sink into indifference … we can get no hold on things. In the slipping away of beings only 'no hold on things' comes over us and remains. Anxiety reveals the nothing."[86] This quality of getting "no hold on things" is a key feature of anxiety, according to Heidegger. Simultaneously everywhere and nowhere, people in anxiety lose themselves over to "the nothing" wherein their engagements with the world seem foreign and stripped of meaning.[87] According to Heidegger, things "mattering" to us at some level is essential to our being the kinds of creatures we are. This is why, I take it, he uses the term 'the care structure' to talk about the unified totality of the "existentials" that are universal to all creatures (including human beings) that have Dasein as their way of being.[88] In anxiety, the "care structure" falls away and *nothing* seems to matter to Dasein. Since a world is part of what discloses reality as meaningful for people, this statement is the equivalent to saying that, in anxiety, people lose their world. Thus, in *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, Heidegger writes that, "The world … is a determination of being-in-the-world, a moment in the structure of the Dasein's mode of being … it is *da*, there-here, like the *Dasein*, the being-da which we ourselves are."[89] Therefore, in anxiety, a human being (or any other creature that has

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[86](Heidegger 1929/1993, 101).

[87]As Dreyfus puts it, in anxiety, "the world collapses *away* from the anxious Dasein; it *withdraws*. No possibilities solicit Dasein". (Dreyfus 1991, 179).

[88]It is important to stress that, as Heidegger's discussion of anxiety underscores, 'care' designates something about the way in which human beings essentially are (or any entities whose way of being is Dasein). Thus, in referring to this phenomenon of "mattering" in terms of "care", Heidegger is *not* suggesting that we always relate to entities with the characteristics that one might normally associate with "care" in a regular, everyday, sense, such as thoughtfully attending to the needs of things that we commonly "care" about. See (Dreyfus 1991, 238–239) for connected discussion.

[89](Heidegger 1927/1982, 166).

Dasein as its way of being) loses the *da* of its Da-Sein – it loses its "there" of "being-there".[90]

A strand of thinking that runs through the later Heidegger seems to be this: in modernity, the loss of "a sense of place" that people have in anxiety (as described in *Being and Time*) becomes characteristic of the entirety of human life. As Dreyfus writes, the later Heidegger "interprets anxiety as a specific response to the rootlessness of the contemporary technological world."[91] In short, anxiety is the mood that defines the modern technological world itself because technology's mode of world-disclosure produces a situation in which human beings experience "root-lessness" in a way that is similar to how the early Heidegger describes the phenomenology of "placelessness" experienced in anxiety. As I read Heidegger, the basic connection between Gestell and a loss of a sense of "place" seems to be this: in Gestell, everything is revealed as some form of resource that is ordered to stand-by for use anytime and *anywhere*. This is to say that, in Gestell, "everything is equally far and equally near … everything gets lumped together into uniform distancelessness."[92] In Gestell, resources can be smoothly moved around to be on hand whenever, and wherever, they are needed.

This leads to a kind of anxiety and "homelessness". Heidegger describes this in "The Letter on Humanism" when he writes that this is a "homelessness in which not only man but the essence of man stumbles aimlessly about. Homelessness so understood consists in the abandon-ment of Being by beings. Homelessness is the symptom of oblivion of Being."[93] In Gestell, in which man is uprooted and "stumbles aimlessly about", homelessness, and thus anxiety, "is coming to be the destiny of the world."[94] In order to grasp our own essence, we need some way of *not* being fully overcome by anxiety. To do this, Heidegger's thought seems to be that we need some way of finding a "home" and a "sense of place" that preserves our ability to find meaning in our activities, and which will allow us, moreover, to grasp the process of world-disclosure as such as an essential feature of the kinds of beings we are. Or at least that is the sketch of a job description of what's needed, according to Heidegger, to "save man's essential nature"[95] from the (purported) threat of

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[90]The reading of the early Heidegger on anxiety that I am putting forward here draws heavily from (Dreyfus 1991). For an alternative reading, see (Thomson 2013).

[91](Dreyfus 1991, 337).

[92](Heidegger 2001b, 164).

[93](Heidegger 1947/1993, 242).

[94](Heidegger 1947/1993, 243).

[95](Heidegger 1959, 56).

modern technology. As I read Heidegger, he proposes (a historically contingent) form of "dwelling" to fill that role.

§2. Heidegger's proposed ethics of dwelling

Heidegger writes at the start of "The Question Concerning Technology" that "[e]verywhere we remain unfree and chained to technology, whether we passionately affirm or deny it."[96] As I argued in the last section, Heidegger thinks that this unfree condition of human beings stems from the essence of modern technology: its mode of world-disclosure that reveals everything as standing-reserve. According to Heidegger, this mode of world-disclosure covers over the phenomenon of revealing as such and thus threatens to strand human beings in the "oblivion of Being", where we are unable to understand our own essence. For Heidegger, this possibility is *the* main danger of modern technology. In this section, I will address both Heidegger's understanding of and normative argument for "dwelling": a mode of world-disclosure that (purportedly) avoids these (purported) problems with the form of world-disclosure that Heidegger associates with modern technology.

I proceed in three basic stages. First, I clarify Heidegger's view that part of the essence of human beings *is* to dwell. This is what, following Young, we can call Heidegger's account of "essential dwelling". Second, I address Heidegger's argument that what Young calls "existential" dwelling is a particular, historically contingent form of "essential dwelling" that, unlike the form of world-disclosure involved in Gestell, "saves" the essence of human being (which, as the first part of my discussion shows, includes "essential dwelling"). Third, I clarify how I understand Heidegger's thinking about why we *should* dwell – or at least one important argument for why we should that I think runs through his writing. As I explain, this argument crucially rests on the idea that human beings should understand – and be true to – our own essence.

2.1. Dwelling and the fourfold

Heidegger writes in "Building Dwelling Thinking" that "dwelling is the manner in which mortals are on the earth."[97] In this quote, Heidegger

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[96](Heidegger 1954/1993, 311).
[97](Heidegger 1954/2001a, 146).

uses the term 'dwelling' in what Young terms its "essential" sense: Heidegger deploys the word 'dwelling' to capture the way of being of "mortals" (which is one of the later Heidegger's phrases for human beings that is meant to capture our fundamental finitude).[98] When used in this way, 'dwelling', like 'care' in the "existential analytic of Dasein" in *Being and Time*, is a term that refers to the unified totality of the different structures that make key features of human existence (including the basic kind of cognition we have) possible, or at the very least intelligible and recognizable. It is in this sense that Heidegger states that "dwelling is the essence of 'being-in-the-world'."[99] And, as in his approach to analyzing the "care structure" in *Being and Time*, Heidegger approaches the analysis of dwelling by breaking up this totality into its separate elements.[100]

The different elements of "being-in-the-world" in *Being and Time* are called "existentials". In Heidegger's later writings, these elements are called "the fourfold". Yet, rather than writing about the fourfold as that which makes up dwelling, Heidegger uses a more "anti-subjectivist" language that states that dwelling is what brings human beings *into* the fourfold. For example, he writes that "mortals *are* in the fourfold by *dwelling*."[101] This claim reinforces a point that Heidegger also makes in *Being and Time*: that the basic way of being human beings is something that we find ourselves inhabiting rather than something we create.

Heidegger defines the fourfold as consisting of earth, sky, divinities and mortals. What these terms refer to and how they all fit together into the "*primal* oneness"[102] of the fourfold are complicated questions on which there is wide scholarly divergence.[103] It is beyond the scope of this paper to delve into a full account of the "fourfold" as such. However, precise clarity about the fourfold is not necessary to illustrate two of

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[98]Heidegger argues in *Being and Time* that "Dasein's Being is not to be deduced from an idea of man" (Heidegger 1927/1962, 226) and avoids using terms such as 'man' in *Being and Time* precisely because of this. Instead, he sticks with the practice of always referring to humans as "Dasein". As I read him, Heidegger does *not* mean to fundamentally abandon his earlier reservations about the terminology of 'man', 'human beings', etc. by using the term 'mortal' in his later work. As he writes in "Building Dwelling Thinking", "[t]hey are called mortals because they can die" (Heidegger 1954/2001a, 148). It's worth emphasizing that, although it's not built into the meaning of 'Dasein' in the same prominent way as it is with the meaning of 'mortal', Heidegger also clearly stresses the themes of our death and finitude in *Being and Time* as well.

[99](Heidegger 1947/1993, 260).

[100]As Young put it, "later, like earlier, Heidegger conceives of being-in-the-world (whether a dwelling or a 'homeless' mode of being) as a structural concept to be elucidated *via* the elements of the structure." (Young 2001, 93).

[101](Heidegger 1954/2001a, 148).

[102](Heidegger 1954/2001a, 147).

[103]For some different interpretations of the fourfold, see (Young 2001), (Dreyfus and Spinosa 2002), (Zimmerman 1990), (Stambaugh 1992), and (Braver 2009).

the most important points concerning Heidegger's account of human being in terms of "dwelling".

The first point is that Heidegger includes earth as an element in the fourfold. In the last section, I claimed that "earth" is a term that the later Heidegger uses to refer to the unshaped material that is constituted as meaningful via the process of world-disclosure. Therefore, by including "earth" as part of that which is essential to our way of being, Heidegger is claiming something I discussed in the last section: that human beings exist in worlds that *always* include earth, even if those worlds are ones that cover over this fact.

The second point is that by using the term 'dwelling', Heidegger positions the essence of human being as consisting of a type of "being-at-home" – the seeming opposite of his early conception of our essential "homelessness" captured in his statement that "Da-sein means: being held out into the nothing"[104] and in his discussion of Dasein's "uncanniness" in *Being in Time*.[105] As Young puts it, the later Heidegger's position seems to be that "the human essence is to be in the world as in a *Heimat* (homeland) or dwelling-place."[106] The very use of the term 'dwelling' is therefore meant to stress the importance of the human relationship to place for understanding who we are. More specifically, it signals that a certain *type* of relationship to place is constitutive of human being: a relationship of being-at-home in specific, local place(s).

In the last section, I discussed how Heidegger makes this point in his discussion of the limit-case of Gestell's *total* absolutization of its form of world-disclosure. Yet, the fact that Heidegger also includes this truth as part of his explicit definition of human being underscores one of the important features of existential dwelling that I discuss below: namely, that it is a way of being that is "true" to the relationship between human beings and place that is (purportedly) part of our essence.

2.2. Place and dwelling

In order to understand this feature of existential dwelling, a certain form of essential dwelling, we must first elucidate the spatial character of essential dwelling as such. Heidegger clarifies what the spatial character of dwelling consists in when he writes that "to say that mortals *are* is to say that *in dwelling* they persist through spaces by virtue of their stay

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[104](Heidegger 1929/1993, 103).
[105]See especially (Heidegger 1927/1962, 232–234) and (Heidegger 1927/1962, 320–323).
[106](Young 2001, 63).

among things and locations."[107] When he uses the word 'location', I take it Heidegger means to designate what we might think of as, put roughly, the specific place that is the "wherein" of dwelling. For Heidegger, this specificity is not the specificity of a particular coordinate in an "objective" account of space. Rather, the "locations" with which he is concerned are the local regions that we experience as already imbued with meaning and significance. We might call those things "places".[108]

In *Being and Time*, Heidegger argues that the human relationship to "space" occurs through our relationship to such local "places". Similarly, for the later Heidegger, our everyday relationship to "space" occurs through locations imbued with significance and meaning. To see this idea, consider the following passage: "the spaces through which we go daily are provided for by locations; their nature is grounded in things of the type of buildings. If we pay heed to these relations between locations and spaces, between spaces and space, we get a clue to help us in thinking of the relation of man and space."[109] This passage suggests that the relationship between human beings and space is one that is to be thought of by "paying heed" to the space disclosed by "locations". It thereby positions the "space" of objective measurement as (in some way) explanatorily parasitic on the lived space of human existence. Heidegger also suggests a similar explanatory structure when he writes that "space is in essence that for which room has been made, that which is let into its bounds ... *spaces receive their being from locations and not from 'space'*".[110] One way of reading this passage is this: Heidegger claims that our relationship to the places wherein we "dwell" is (somehow) explanatorily prior to the (more objective) kind of space as such.

This kind of idea is reinforced when Heidegger writes that "man's relations to locations, and through locations to spaces, inheres in his dwelling. The relationship between man and space is none other than dwelling, strictly thought and spoken."[111] Since dwelling consists of being in the fourfold, and the fourfold is the structural totality that makes possible (or at least intelligible) the human way of being, I take it this statement that the relationship between man and space *is* dwelling is equivalent to saying that this relationship between man and space consists of our being in the fourfold – the full totality of human activity. This

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[107](Heidegger 1954/2001a, 155).
[108]My use of 'place' in this way connects to discussion about "place" in (Tuan 1977/2001), (Relph 1976/2008), (Casey 1998), (Malpas 1999), and (Buell 1996).
[109](Heidegger 1954/2001a, 154).
[110](Heidegger 1954/2001a, 152).
[111](Heidegger 1954/2001a, 155).

means that, for Heidegger, an essential feature of our way of being is relating to spaces in a way that is imbued with significance, as in relating to specific "locations" or "places" tied to certain kinds of meaning and activities for us.

Moreover, since human being is *always* dwelling in the "essential" sense of 'dwelling', the above passage suggests a similar point to that which Heidegger makes in *Being and Time*: that human beings exist in such meaning-laden spaces and hence with a relationship to "place" as such. This is, I think, part of what Heidegger is getting at when he writes the following:

> When we speak of man and space, it sounds as though
> man stood on one side, space on the other. Yet space
> is not something that faces man. It is neither an external
> object nor an inner experience. It is not that there are
> men, and over and above them *space*; for when I say
> 'a man,' and in saying this word think of a being who
> exists in a human manner – that is, who dwells – then
> by the name 'man' I already name the stay within the
> fourfold among things.[112]

The upshot of this passage – in combination with the line of thought I've just been developing – is that for Heidegger, a relationship to space through meaning-laden "locations" is part of the essence of human being.

2.3. Existential dwelling as poetic

As I have discussed, Heidegger thinks that the modern technological world threatens to establish a kind of "rootlessness" wherein human beings lack sustained, meaningful relationships to "places". In contrast to this, the world of "existential" dwelling is one which not only has these kind of "places" as such. It's also one in which these places are central to the character of human activity. According to Heidegger, this difference between how the worlds of Gestell and dwelling are structurally related to *this* fact of essential dwelling is reflective of a broader difference between them: the difference in how they are related to essential dwelling overall. We can summarize this difference as follows: according to Heidegger, whereas the modern technological world blocks human beings from encountering the fact of essential dwelling as such (which, recall, for Heidegger, is part of our essence), existential dwelling brings

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[112](Heidegger 1954/2001a, 154).

it into illumination. As Heidegger puts it, dwelling gathers and unites the fourfold, allowing it to "shine forth"[113] as the "simple oneness"[114] that it is.

How is this possible? As I discussed in the last section, modern technology's form of world-disclosure prevents human beings from encountering our own essence because this form of world-disclosure, Gestell, is "totalizing" and thus "crowds out" other forms of world-disclosure, and, moreover, covers up the phenomenon of "disclosedness" in general. Therefore, if a way of being (dwelling, or some other kind) isn't going to have the same problems as the ones tied to modern technology, it must be that its "way of revealing" does not replicate these characteristics of Gestell. Moreover, since Heidegger holds that existential dwelling does not only not cover up our way of being but actively illuminates it, it must also be the case that its way of revealing does the *opposite* of Gestell: it must (somehow) foreground the phenomenon of disclosedness as such. This is, I think, precisely what Heidegger believes that existential dwelling's way of revealing does.

Borrowing from the writings of the poet Friedrich Hölderlin, Heidegger defines dwelling's way of revealing as "poetic". In so doing, I take it that Heidegger means to connect existential dwelling's character of world-disclosure to that which we find in poetry (or at least a certain kind of it). He writes that "poetry first causes dwelling to be dwelling. Poetry is what really lets us dwell."[115] This is because, according to Heidegger, the mode of world-disclosure that happens in poetry illuminates the process of world-disclosure as such. This is to say that, for Heidegger, poetry is a specific way of revealing, "a distinctive kind of measuring"[116], that not only does not hide its way of revealing a world (or meaningful parts of it), but (purportedly) encourages human beings to see the importance of the phenomenon of world-disclosure as such. In contrast to Gestell, poetic revealing highlights the fact that we operate with a (historically contingent) understanding of Being.

Moreover, for Heidegger, not only does poetic revealing "let Being be" in the sense of not covering over the phenomenon of world-disclosure, but it (somehow) illuminates Being as such: it lets Being "be" in the sense that it clarifies its way of being. This is what Heidegger is getting at when he writes that the "world worlds as a world"[117] in dwelling. By

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[113](Heidegger 2001b, 180).
[114](Heidegger 2001b, 177).
[115](Heidegger 2001a, 213).
[116](Heidegger 2001a, 222).
[117](Heidegger 2001b, 180).

this, Heidegger means that, in existential dwelling where poetic revealing "holds sway", the process of world-disclosure as such is evidenced. As he writes, "by dwelling"[118] human beings "attain to the world as world".[119] According to Heidegger, this happens because poetic revealing, in contrast to Gestell, does not make its form of world-disclosure appear to be the only possible one, but rather underscores itself as a contingent form of world-disclosure. It is thus not only different from the (purportedly) bad kind of "metaphysics" that Heidegger criticizes, but is (in at least certain respects) its opposite: it not only allows for the "worlding of world"[120] to be acknowledged, but emphasizes its happening.

Heidegger highlights this aspect of poetry's way of being when he writes that "poetry does not fly above and surmount the earth in order to escape it and hover over it. Poetry is what first brings man onto the earth, making him belong to it, and thus brings him into dwelling."[121] Given that it is a mode of world-disclosure, it follows on Heidegger's framework that poetry brings human being into *a* relationship with earth. However, in this passage, Heidegger argues something more: that poetry makes human being *belong* to earth. According to Heidegger, poetry makes human being belong to earth because its mode of world-disclosure illuminates the fact that its world itself "belongs" to earth in the sense of being dependent upon it for its being. This is to say that, unlike Gestell, poetry shows the strife between earth and world *within* its world and, in so doing, shows how world *belongs* to earth. Since, according to Heidegger, an individual human being *is* "its world existingly"[122], the above claim about poetry can be taken to illuminate how *human beings* as such belong to earth.

This is what we can take Heidegger to be getting at when he claims that when poetry makes man belong to earth, it thereby "brings him into dwelling."[123] In making human being "belong to earth", and thereby illuminating the phenomenon of disclosedness as such, poetry does what modern technology does not: it allows human beings to encounter our own essence and live in accordance with it. For Heidegger, "dwelling … is *the basic character* of Being in keeping with which mortals exist"[124], and poetry is that which discloses a world in which this ontological character

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[118](Heidegger 2001b, 180).
[119](Heidegger 2001b, 180).
[120](Heidegger 2001b, 178).
[121](Heidegger 2001a, 216).
[122](Heidegger 1927/1962, 416).
[123](Heidegger 2001a, 216).
[124](Heidegger 1954/2001a, 158).

of human being is illuminated *as* the character of human being. Poetry is thus the way of revealing that makes possible the most important characteristic of existential dwelling: its "saving" of human being. For Heidegger, this is why "poetry is what really lets us dwell."[125]

2.4. Poetry as building

Heidegger clarifies the character of poetic revealing when he writes that "poetic creation, which lets us dwell, is a kind of building."[126] As I discussed in §1, Heidegger also explains Gestell as a kind of "building". In both cases, the term "building" is used in both a metaphorical and literal sense. Since both poetry and Gestell are modes of world-disclosure, ways in which worlds are "built" for us out of the unshaped material that is earth, they can both be described with the metaphor of "building". Yet, Heidegger also means "building" in a more literal sense: he argues that Gestell and poetry both involve certain forms of actual buildings.

As I discussed in §1, the paradigmatic buildings Heidegger associates with Gestell, such as the industrial windmill and the hydroelectric dam, are ones that (as used within Gestell) make everything into part of the standing-reserve. In terms of our relationship to space, these buildings make everything "neither far nor near"[127] but rather part of a placeless set of malleable resources. In this way, the buildings of Gestell should be understood as part of the logic of the (purported) homelessness of modernity; part of how Gestell discloses a world in which the kind of meaning-laden "places" Heidegger focuses on are threatened, if not fully absent.

According to Heidegger, existential dwelling's poetic revealing works in the opposite manner: it discloses a world with distinct, local places. We have already seen why this needs to be the case, given the logic of Heidegger's thinking. If one who dwells in the "essential" sense necessarily exists in places (i.e. local meaning-laden regions), then it follows that existential dwelling, a mode of being that illuminates the truth of essential dwelling, illuminates places as such. Yet, in arguing that poetry reveals a world with distinct places, Heidegger also expresses something more than this idea that existential dwelling illuminates places as such. In short, I take it that he wants to show that this aspect

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[125](Heidegger 2001a, 213).
[126](Heidegger 2001a, 213).
[127](Heidegger 2001b, 164).

of existential dwelling is not merely a *consequence* of its mode of revealing, but is fundamental to the very *workings* of that mode of revealing.

We can see this idea in action by turning to one of Heidegger's specific examples of poetic revealing in "Building Dwelling Thinking": a footbridge over a stream. In contrast to the hydroelectric dam that Heidegger analyzes in "The Question Concerning Technology", the footbridge that he describes in "Building Dwelling Thinking" is one that "lets the stream run its course."[128] This does not mean that the footbridge simply leaves the stream as it was before it was built. Indeed, Heidegger stresses that this footbridge is crucial to constituting what the stream "is" for human beings when they encounter it. He writes that the bridge "does not just connect banks that are already there. The banks emerge as banks only as the bridge crosses the stream. The bridge designedly causes them to lie across from each other."[129] Without the footbridge, there are neither "banks" nor the "river" of *this particular world*: the footbridge constitutes the river into what it is for human beings *within that world*. And, according to Heidegger, it does so through a particular form of making the stream *useful* for us as human beings.

Yet, while the footbridge is a use of the stream, one that grants the "way to mortals so that they may come and go from shore to shore"[130], it is not one that makes its particular form of world-disclosure seem necessary and absolute, in the way that Gestell purportedly does. This is why, according to Heidegger, the way of revealing associated with the footbridge is a "*sparing and preserving*".[131] As I read Heidegger, this "sparing and preserving" does not consist in preserving the stream as it already was prior to the bridge. Rather, it consists in "preserving" it as a *stream* of some kind, and not just as part of the "standing-reserve". Heidegger claims it does so because, unlike the form of world-disclosure that belongs to modern technology, poetry's way of revealing involves a "*releasement toward things*"[132]. This involves human beings having a kind of *receptivity* to the things around

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[128](Heidegger 1954/2001a, 150).

[129](Heidegger 1954/2001a, 150). An interesting interpretative question in the background here is whether, on Heidegger's view, this means that there is some new object that we "discover" in this context, or else whether there are (only) the same things here all along, that we view in a different way. This ties into debates about Heidegger's views on metaphysics of material constitution. For discussion – and for a view that points in favor of (at least the early Heidegger) endorsing something akin to the former option – see (McDaniel 2013).

[130](Heidegger 1954/2001a, 150).

[131](Heidegger 1954/2001a, 147).

[132](Heidegger 1959, 54). The phrase "releasement toward things" is a translation of the German phrase "Gelassenheit" – a central term in the later Heidegger.

them, rather than one that involves making them into resources for human ends.

By involving this stance of "sparing and preserving", Heidegger argues that poetic revealing "frees" the stream. As I read him, this means that this kind of revealing discloses a world in which there is a "stream": a world in which the way of being of "stream" is allowed to be realized rather than the stream being "challenged-forth" into part of the "standing-reserve". Heidegger writes "to free really means to spare"[133] and clarifies that "real sparing is something *positive* and takes place when we leave something beforehand in its own nature, when we return it specifically to its being, when we 'free' it in the real sense of the word into a preserve of peace."[134]

It might well be that dwelling involves letting things be what they most fundamentally are – and, indeed, as I soon discuss, I think this is so. But, importantly, just as Heidegger does not appeal to a fact about what the Rhine river is outside of *all* human worlds to make his critique of modern technology, he doesn't directly appeal to what the stream is outside of our world in order to argue for why the footbridge "frees" it. Rather, he appeals to how it discloses this stream in opposition to other disclosures of it.[135]

According to Heidegger, the way by which the footbridge "frees" the stream involves the constitution of the stream as a particular place. As we have seen, Gestell's challenging-forth results in a pervasive anxiety-inducing placelessness. In contrast to this, the footbridge "gathers the fourfold in *such* a way that it allows a *site* for it."[136] As he puts it, the footbridge "brings stream and bank and land into each other's neighborhood"[137] such that this neighborhood constitutes a *distinctive* location instead of just yet another component of standing-reserve.

Heidegger describes this process of place-formation as a "gathering" at two discrete but interconnected levels. At the first level, it is a "gathering" of the elements around the bridge: a way of bringing them together such that they become part of a unified location, or meaningful place. This is what Heidegger is describing when he writes that "the bridge *gathers* the earth as landscape around the stream."[138] At the

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[133](Heidegger 1954/2001a, 147).
[134](Heidegger 1954/2001a, 147).
[135]However, his idea that there is an "essence" of things (streams, technology, etc.) still (at least prima facie) implies that there *is* a way that the stream is independent of both these "ways of revealing". I return to this point later in this paper.
[136](Heidegger 1954/2001a, 151).
[137](Heidegger 1954/2001a, 150).
[138](Heidegger 1954/2001a, 150).

second level, this "gathering" implies a "gathering" of the fourfold: a way of constituting the "way of being" of human beings such that it is unified in a particular place as such. Heidegger writes, "the bridge *gathers* in *its own* way earth and sky, divinities and mortals."[139] For Heidegger, the footbridge gathers the fourfold in such a way that it is unified into a "ring"[140] of "simple oneness"[141]: it illuminates the fourfold *as* the unified totality that it is.

2.5. The world of existential dwelling

In illuminating the fourfold as fourfold, the poetic mode of world-disclosure brings us into "existential" dwelling – a form of human life that involves a world where the phenomenon of disclosedness is underscored as such. According to Heidegger, in this world of existential dwelling, human being is "safe" or "cared-for" in the sense that it is "secure" in a "dwelling-place". This is to say that, rather than being stranded in the rootless anxiety of the modern technological world, human beings are grounded in particular places with the ability to connect to the "depth of Being" (which involves understanding the actual relationship between human being and Being). It is because of this that Heidegger writes that "to dwell" means to "be at peace, to be brought to peace, to remain in peace … [to be] preserved from harm and danger … safeguarded."[142] What human beings are "safeguarded" from is "the danger": the possibility of our becoming lost in the "oblivion of Being" such that we can no longer encounter our own essence.

At the same time, as much as human beings are "taken care *of*" in dwelling, Heidegger seems to think that, in dwelling, human beings "take care *for*" the dwelling-place itself, and the entities within it.[143] Indeed, Heidegger emphasizes that "sparing and preserving", the character of poetic revealing, is that which "safeguards each thing in its nature"[144], letting those things maintain and realize their own essence. He claims that this kind of safeguarding "pervades dwelling in its whole range."[145]

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[139](Heidegger 1954/2001a, 151).
[140](Heidegger 2001b, 179).
[141](Heidegger 2001b, 180).
[142](Heidegger 1954/2001a, 147).
[143]Young underscores this point throughout his discussions of "dwelling" in (Young 2001). See, for example, (Young 2001, 64).
[144](Heidegger 1954/2001a, 147).
[145](Heidegger 1954/2001a, 147).

In terms of the human relationship to nature, Heidegger explicitly states that this "caring" for the dwelling-place (and the entities within it) entails not only a rejection of understanding nature in terms of "standing-reserve", but also a rejection of understanding it as something that is (or should be) treated solely as any sort of instrument for human activity. He argues that dwelling involves a "caring" for nature based on its *own* way of being. As he puts it in "Building Dwelling Thinking":

> Mortals dwell in that they the save the earth … Saving
> does not only snatch something from a danger. To save
> really means to set something free into its own presencing.
> To save the earth is more than to exploit it or wear it out.
> Saving the earth does not master the earth and does not
> subjugate it, which is merely one step from spoliation.[146]

As this passage underscores, dwelling does not involve the more efficient use of limited "natural resources" through the improved deployment of instrumental reason in the service of genuinely important human ends. For Heidegger, such a relationship of control, even if it is for the supposed purpose of "saving" the earth, is "merely one step from spoliation"[147]; one step from Gestell's totalizing logic of control that reveals everything as "standing-reserve". Indeed, as he states in this passage, dwelling involves the treatment of the earth such that the drive to totally control it for *any* human purposes is rejected. This is, I take it, what Heidegger means when he argues that, in existential dwelling, the earth is cared-for such that it is safeguarded in its *own* way of being.[148]

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[146](Heidegger 1954/2001a, 148). In this passage, Albert Hofstadter (the translator of the edition of the version of "Building Dwelling Thinking" that I am quoting from) uses the term 'presencing' as a translation for the German 'Wesen'. This term is more typically translated as 'essence'. Hofstadter seems to be trying to ward off certain robust metaphysical ideas associated with 'essence' that Heidegger has (at best) an ambivalent relationship to by translating the term as a gerund (which emphasizes the temporal aspect of the earth's being that Heidegger means to capture: i.e. the "earth's 'earthing'" like the "world's 'worlding'" or Dasein's "Dasein-ing"). However, it should be noted that the term 'presencing' is also potentially misleading because it implies the metaphysical idea of "presence" ("Anwedenheit") that Heidegger argues is mistaken. In any case, I'm obviously not avoiding talk of "essence" in my reading of Heidegger. Indeed, it's central to my reconstruction of his thinking.

[147](Heidegger 1954/2001a, 148).

[148]However, it should be stressed that this does not mean that human beings do not *use* the earth in the worlds of existential dwelling where poetic revealing "holds sway". Indeed, as we have seen with the example of the footbridge, poetic revealing is a use of the earth (but not one that is characterized by *control* over it – a fact that stems from it not *defining* the earth as that which is to be used). Furthermore, it is important to remember that the crucial thing that Heidegger thinks is wrong with the world of modern technology is not the actual technological devices as such, but rather Gestell. Thus, for Heidegger, this non-controlling use of the earth will still be one that involves its alteration through the use of technological devices. This might well involve using some of the same technological devices of previous worlds in new ways – which, depending on how one individuates what those devices are, might well mean that they count as "new" devices in some sense. The continued use of technological devices by human beings within worlds of existential dwelling is emphasized by Heidegger's assertion at the

Suppose then, that Heidegger is right that dwelling provides a form of "world-disclosure" that is an antidote to the one he associates with modern technology, and which allows us to understand our own essence. We might then ask: in what way could existential dwelling then become our way of being? The basic shape of Heidegger's answer is that this form of world-disclosure will not be something that we consciously *choose* and then implement based on an evaluation of its merit. Rather, Heidegger maintains, it will be something that is *given* to us through the "saving power".

This position can in part be seen as following from the basic fact that existential dwelling constitutes a "world". As we have seen, Heidegger argues that we do not choose our worlds. Rather, he holds that they are given to us. As he puts it in the "Letter on Humanism", human being "unfolds essentially in the throw of Being as the fateful sending"[149]: it occurs in a world whose character is not determined by the will of human beings as such, but rather is something that is encountered as "sent". Thus, like *any* world, the one of existential dwelling must, by definition, be given or "granted"[150] to us. At the same time, however, part of what Heidegger is getting at here goes beyond this basic observation. In short, I take it, he thinks that "existential" dwelling isn't a "live option" for human beings in the social/historical context we are in, which we could simply choose to engage in if we want to. Rather, our ability to do this will depend on a change in "worlds" that we aren't going to be able to bring about ourselves, either through individual or collective action, but rather must "receive" through a kind of "saving power".

As I have discussed, according to Heidegger, in order to "overcome metaphysics", one must be able to recognize the phenomenon of world-disclosure as such. In turn, this means that one must be open to this process of being given or "sent" a world. Yet, in Heidegger's language, the essence of modern technology prevents this "openness to the mystery"[151] because of its form of world-disclosure. It thus blocks the way for our being "given" *any* world other than that of modern

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start of "The Question Concerning Technology" that, by questioning technology's essence, he would like to "prepare a free relationship to it" (Heidegger 1954/1993, 311) (i.e. not get rid of it all together). For more on this point concerning Heidegger's attitude towards the existence of technological devices as such see (Young 2001, 75–77) and (Dreyfus 1993, 303). For connected reflections, see (Borgmann 1984).

[149](Heidegger 1947/1993, 231).
[150](Heidegger 1954/1993, 337).
[151](Heidegger 1959, 55).

technology (let alone the specific one of existential dwelling). Furthermore, it encourages the idea that we can make these new worlds through the individual or collective assertion of human will. However, according to Heidegger, because the very conception of ourselves on which this idea of the assertion of the will rests is itself supplied by Gestell, this idea is an illusion that in fact helps to perpetuate the world of modern technology.[152]

Heidegger holds instead that, in contrast to how those in the world of modern technology think they might be able to overcome it, "[t]echnology, whose essence is Being itself [i.e. whose essence is a way of revealing], will never allow itself to be overcome by men."[153] This is because, as Heidegger puts it, "[t]hat would mean, after all, that man was the master of Being."[154] Yet, according to Heidegger, "[m]an is the shepherd of Being"[155], where, I take it, being a "shepherd" of something is meant to involve a sort of guiding, yet non-dominating and receptive relationship to it. This idea connects to why Heidegger writes that "freedom", which stems from our being "kept safe" in our own essence, "is *originally* not connected with the will or even with the causality of human willing."[156] By this, Heidegger means that becoming "free", which, for him, means becoming that which is "kept safe" *as* the kind of being we essentially are, cannot itself be accomplished as an act of willing as such. Rather, for Heidegger, it is accomplished by the "saving power": that which "lets man see and enter into the highest dignity of his own essence"[157] (i.e. that which reveals human being *as* the "shepherd of Being").

Following the logic of Hölderlin's phrase that "where danger is, grows / The saving power also"[158], Heidegger positions modern technology's mode of world-disclosure, which he has already defined as *the* danger, as the "saving power" as well. Heidegger argues that Gestell is the "saving power" because he holds that from within the position of passivity into which it orders human beings, the *actual* passivity of human beings (with respect to the process of world-disclosure as such) could potentially be recognized. This possibility rests on the idea that although Gestell has a "totalizing" character that "crowds" out other modes of

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[152]This idea underlies Heidegger's assertion that "[s]o long as we represent technology as an instrument, we remain transfixed in the will to master it" (Heidegger 1954/1993, 337).
[153](Heidegger 1949/1977, 38).
[154](Heidegger 1949/1977, 38).
[155](Heidegger 1947/1993, 244).
[156](Heidegger 1954/1993, 330).
[157](Heidegger 1954/1993, 337).
[158](Heidegger 1954/1993, 333).

world-disclosure, and prevents our ability to recognize the fact that it is one kind of world among many, it doesn't *completely* destroy our ability to recognize this, and the process of world-disclosure more generally. Instead, in certain circumstances, we might be able to recognize this. His thought seems to be that the world of modern technology in which "[m]an stands so decisively in subservience to on the challenging-forth of Gestell"[159] holds the key to its own destruction: the means by which human beings could come to recognize the fact that they are "granted" their understanding of Being and hence could recognize the phenomenon of world-disclosure as such. As Heidegger puts it, it is in Gestell "that the innermost indestructible belongingness of man within granting may come to light, provided that we, for our part, begin to pay heed to the essence of technology."[160]

Thus, Heidegger states that "man's essence must first open itself to the essence of technology"[161] in order for man to *overcome* the essence of technology. Heidegger calls this opening a "releasement toward things"[162] in contrast to the assertion of the will. Opening oneself up to things as *things* (and not resources of the standing-reserve) is part of openness to the process of world-disclosure as such. And, as I have discussed, it is openness to the process of world-disclosure as a "granting" that Heidegger takes to be necessary for the actualization of a world of existential dwelling.[163]

2.6. Heidegger's argument for dwelling

As Heidegger's use of terminology such as 'danger' and 'saving power' underscores, Heidegger is far from normatively neutral to the as-yet-

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[159](Heidegger 1954/1993, 332).
[160](Heidegger 1954/1993, 337). For an alternate reading of how Gestell is the "saving power" see (Dreyfus and Spinosa 2002).
[161](Heidegger 1949/1977, 39).
[162](Heidegger 1959, 55).
[163]An interesting question concerns how this line of thought that I've been reconstructing from the later Heidegger on technology and dwelling relates to Heidegger's earlier work from *Being and Time* about our relationship to things that are "ready-to-hand", such as a hammer used by a carpenter while engaging in carpentry. It is beyond the scope of this paper to address this at length. But I briefly want to mention a few thoughts here. First, when a person uses something (e.g., a hammer) that is "ready-to-hand", there is some minimal sense of 'resource' in which she is clearly relating to that hammer as a "resource". But saying this does not mean that her relating to a hammer in this way *exhausts* the possible ways she can relate to it in her world. Nor does it mean that she relates to it as the same kind of "resource" that it would be if it were part of the "standing-reserve". On this front, consider that the kind of meaningful local objects that are "ready-to-hand" might well be tied to the kinds of specific, local "places" that Heidegger takes to be threatened in Gestell. This suggests that whatever is (purportedly) wrong with our relationship to technology in Gestell cannot be fully explained solely using the idea that we relate to things in Gestell as "ready-to-hand".

unrealized world of existential dwelling. Instead, Heidegger seems to take existential dwelling to be our "fitting" way of being.[164] Moreover, because of this, Heidegger seems to think that we *should* dwell – that we should live in the way that is "fitting" or proper to our way of being. But why should this be the case?

It is readily apparent that Heidegger associates existential dwelling with qualities that he takes to be attractive, including the security of being-at-home, a simultaneous "freeing" of both human being and the earth, and the preservation of Being. So too does existential dwelling seem to involve letting things themselves – rivers, for example – be what *they* most fundamentally are, in accordance with their essence. Yet I don't think that Heidegger takes these (purportedly) attractive qualities to be the explanatory bedrock of the normative story of why dwelling is a good way of being. One way that one might argue for why we should dwell is to appeal to the (purported) merit of substantive features of existential dwelling. But Heidegger's main argument for why we should dwell is a different one. It is, in short, that we should correctly grasp (and live in accordance with) our own essence, and dwelling allows us to do that.

In order to unpack this idea, let's start with the following. As I've discussed, according to Heidegger, existential dwelling is a way of being that is "true" to what we are: a way of being that illuminates the structure of essential dwelling as such that is part of our essence as human beings. As Heidegger writes in "Building Dwelling Thinking", "[m]ortals dwell in the way they preserve the fourfold in its essential being, its presencing"[165]; they dwell *insofar as* they preserve the structure that is part of their essence. This definition *of* dwelling ties into Heidegger's argument *for* dwelling. In stating what dwelling is, Heidegger does not say that mortals dwell in the way they actualize a particular normative quality in their lives (i.e. "being-at-homeness", etc.), or insofar as they let other

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[164]This leaves open an important question: does Heidegger intend this as a corrective to his account in *Being and Time* of resolute authenticity as our "fitting" way of being? This question stems from a basic interpretative issue in the reading of Heidegger's later work. On the one hand, it could be the case that Heidegger's replacement of the ideal of "resoluteness" with that of "releasement" underscores the problems with Heidegger's early account of what sort of life is "truest" to the understanding of human being that he advances in *Being and Time*. On the other, it could be that the shift from "resoluteness" to "releasement" stems *only* from the changes in Heidegger's descriptive account of human being and has nothing to do with a rejection of "resolute authenticity" as the "fitting" way of being for Dasein as conceived of in *Being and Time*. Given the general kind of reading I've been working with in this paper – one on which there are important underlying continuities between Heidegger's early and late conceptions of human beings – it is my inclination to read the introduction of the theme of "releasement" as at least in part a corrective to the ideal of "resoluteness" put forward in *Being and Time*. However, it is beyond the scope of this paper to argue in full for this hypothesis. For more on this issue, see (Zimmerman 1986).

[165](Heidegger 1954/2001a, 148).

entities be what they most fundamentally are, in accord with their essence. Those might well be features of dwelling. But, for Heidegger, the key part of dwelling is that, insofar as human beings dwell, they are "true" to what *they* essentially are, through the preservation of the four-fold. According to Heidegger, the consequence of this is that human beings achieve a life with particular characteristics such as "being-at-home", and that entities (and other animals, etc.) can exist in a way that is in accord with their own essence. Why dwell? Heidegger's answer, as I read him, bottoms out with this: because human beings should recognize and live in accord with our own essence, and "existential" dwelling allows us to do that.

This kind of normative explanation is reflected in Heidegger's assertion in "The Letter on Humanism" that "thinking which thinks the truth of Being as the primordial element of man, as one who ek-sists, is in itself the original ethics."[166] This quote reflects that Heidegger's ethics, in its most "original" or basic form, consists in "*understanding* one's essential dwelling and living in the light of that understanding"[167] – i.e. not in the actualization of a substantive feature such as "being-at-homeness".[168] This emphasizes that for Heidegger, what it means to be ethical, and also the reason to *be* ethical, has to do with the fit between existential and essential dwelling, wherein human beings can (purportedly) exist in a way that is true to our own essence.

Before I move on, I want to briefly note something important about the character of Heidegger's "ethics" of dwelling that I have been discussing. A key part of the area of normative inquiry that philosophers standardly discuss as "ethics" concerns how individual human beings should act when faced with a particular situation, as well as how they should live more generally. However, Heidegger's later work that I have been focusing on (such as "The Question Concerning Technology") rarely, if ever, explicitly addresses these questions as such. As his critique of technology exemplifies, what Heidegger ultimately targets as normatively objectionable is not really the actions of individual human beings. Strictly speaking, what he opposes in "The Question Concerning Technology" is a mode of *world-disclosure*. Furthermore, as he repeatedly emphasizes (often in over-the-top ways), a mode of world-disclosure is not something human

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[166](Heidegger 1947/1993, 258).
[167](Young 2001, 74).
[168]Moreover, in this statement, Heidegger plausibly can also be read as holding that "thinking the truth of Being" is "original ethics" in a different sense as well – that since being ethical, as Heidegger defines it, is not possible without knowledge of what we are, the project of "thinking the truth of Being" is necessary to the actualization of an ethical life.

beings have control over.[169] If this is the case, then in what way can Heidegger's work be said to constitute an "ethics"?

I think that Heidegger's later writings can be understood to constitute an "ethics" in at least one broad sense of the word 'ethics'. While Heidegger's later writings do not formulate anything as specific as a universal principle by which to make decisions, or anything as comprehensive a normative framework as (say) ambitious forms of consequentialism, what they do provide us with is a rich picture about how we should and should not disclose a world. And, despite the fact that Heidegger is explicit that we ourselves do not have control over the process of world-disclosure, he nonetheless underscores that the process of world-disclosure is still something that we are *involved with* insofar as our activity is bound up with its happening. It is in this sense that Heidegger's writings can be said to formulate what he terms an "ethos" in "The Letter on Humanism": an account of the general texture of how human beings should live and inhabit the "dwelling place" in which we live.[170] His account is not constitutive of anything like a fully systematic ethics akin to utilitarianism, for example, which (at least in certain forms) aspires to provide a systematic answer to the full range of (intelligible) normative questions about how individuals should live, and why. In this way, it also differs from more ambitious forms of Kantianism and Aristotelianism that seek to explain (at least) *many* normative facts in ethics by citing (purported) facts about either the nature of either agency or human beings. Nonetheless, Heidegger's work on dwelling constitutes *an* ethics of sorts, dealing with (at least) a subset of important normative questions about how people should live and why, including issues concerning the most basic fabric of our everyday lives, as well as our basic relationship to nature.[171]

As I said at the start of this paper, one of the things that makes Heidegger's work on technology and dwelling interesting is how it underwrites a kind of environmental ethics that rests on a rejection of the idea that nature is (or should be) solely a resource for human ends. If I am right, Heidegger *gets* to that position by thinking through what it would be for

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[169]This is part of what is going on in passages such as the following: "In keeping with this disguising of the danger through the ordering belonging to Gestell, it seems time and time again as though technology were a means in the hands of man. But, in truth, it is the coming to presence of man that is now being ordered forth to lend a hand to the coming to presence of technology." (Heidegger 1949/1977, 37).

[170](Heidegger 1947/1993, 256).

[171]See (Young 2001, 74) for a similar reading here of Heidegger's work on "dwelling", which also takes Heidegger to put forward an "ethos" that can aptly be understood as a kind of "ethics".

human beings to be true to our own essence. But the way of being (namely, existential dwelling) that allows us to do that is hardly solely focused on our relationship to our own essence. Instead, on Heidegger's view, dwelling necessitates taking into account a different set of relationships: those between human being and the environment as such. Moreover, as we have seen, Heidegger thinks we should do this irrespective of how this set of relationships is bound up with inter-human ones. This is to say that although Heidegger argues that the reason we need to care for the environment has to do with being "true" to our essence as human beings, we go about dwelling in part by having certain kinds of relations to the non-human world, wherein the creatures and things in it get to be true to their own essences. As he puts it in his *Contributions to Philosophy*, the "caring" that marks existential dwelling is "*"for the sake of be-ing"* – not of the be-ing of man but of the be-ing of beings in the whole."[172] Heidegger's later work thus yields a kind of ethics that not only does not relegate the non-human environment to a secondary status, but which positions it as an overriding concern of ethical thought.

§3. Essence, realism, and meta-metaphysics

In the previous two sections, I've reconstructed an argument that I think runs through Heidegger's later work. This argument consists of two main parts: a critique of modern technology, followed by a positive argument in favor of dwelling.

The first part of the argument, the critique of modern technology, can be summed up as follows. Heidegger argues that part of the essence of modern technology involves a kind of world-disclosure. According to Heidegger, this kind of world-disclosure, which he calls "Gestell", reveals everything as part of the "standing-reserve" of resources, to be used for human ends. He also argues that despite the fact that the resources are (in some sense) for human ends, there is also a deep sense in which humans are subservient to the dictates of modern technology, and these resources fail to serve our ends. As he puts it, "[e]verywhere we remain unfree and chained to technology, whether we passionately affirm or deny it."[173] The mode of world-disclosure tied to modern technology, he argues, prevents both humans and non-humans (including entities like rivers) from being what they truly are, or, put another way, living in

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[172](Heidegger 2012, 15).
[173](Heidegger 1954/1993, 311).

accord with their essences. Indeed, at the core of his critique of modern technology is the claim that it prevents humans from understanding (and then living in light of) our own essence. This is in part due to the fact that, according to Heidegger, this mode of world-disclosure is a totalizing one that "crowds out" other forms of world-disclosure, and which, partly through so doing, prevents us from grasping it *as* a mode of world-disclosure at all. In so doing, he thinks, it prevents humans from understanding our own essence, which is tied to a certain, constitutive relationship with world-disclosure, and tied to a form of "dwelling".

Heidegger thinks that a particular, historically specific form of "dwelling" (which, following Young, I call "existential" as opposed to "essential" dwelling) involves a form of world-disclosure that avoids the key problems with the world of modern technology. Within existential dwelling, human beings don't relate to everything else either as a resource or as something to be turned into a resource. Instead, they relate to things in a (at least partly) receptive and "sparing" way, where (according to Heidegger) those things are allowed to come into their own essence, and are thus "freed" in some sense. As Heidegger puts it, "[r]eal sparing is something *positive* and takes place when we leave something beforehand in its own nature, when we return it specifically to its being, when we 'free' it in the real sense of the word into a preserve of peace."[174] Furthermore, Heidegger argues that this mode of world-disclosure, unlike that of modern technology, is not a totalizing one, nor is it one that conceals itself *as* a mode of world-disclosure. Instead, via a "poetic" mode of world-disclosure, it makes visible the fact that it is a form of world-disclosure. In so doing – and due to the content of the kind of world it discloses – it (purportedly) allows human beings to understand (and live in light of) our own essence. Heidegger thus contends that it avoids what he takes to be *the* key danger of modern technology – that we will lose a grasp on our own essence as bound up with world-disclosure – and brings human beings into a kind of "freedom" where we get to understand (and live in light of) our own essence. At the end of the day, as I read him, it is this feature – living in accord with our own essence – that is not only a key feature of what existential dwelling is, but is foundational in his proposed normative explanation for why we should dwell (and for what is wrong with modern technology).

There are, obviously, many different moving parts in this argument that call out for further explanation, and are worth pushing on. In the next

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[174](Heidegger 1954/2001a, 147).

section (§4), I will briefly reflect on some of the things that I think are (potentially) worth saving from the argument, and also raise a series of objections to it. However, before I turn to a more squarely philosophical engagement with the argument I've reconstructed, I first want to briefly address an important cluster of interpretative issues that bear on my proposed reading of the later Heidegger.

As an entry point into this cluster of issues, recall that, at the start of this paper, I flagged an important issue for Heidegger's argument: namely, how exactly to understand his talk of "essence". As I underscored, this question is intimately bound up with broader interpretative questions about how to read Heidegger's use of (at least prima facie) metaphysical notions, as well as his broader commitments in (and about) metaphysics, including where he stands with respect to various stripes of "realism" in metaphysics. I am not going to try and fully settle any of these complicated (and highly controversial) interpretative debates here.[175] Rather, what I want to do is briefly explain some of the ways in which these debates bear on further development of the argument that I've reconstructed, while providing some sense of the complicated interpretative and philosophical issues at play in these debates.

The basic interpretative issue at stake here is this: there appear to be multiple strands of Heidegger's thinking with respect to the cluster of metaphysical (and meta-metaphysical) issues I've introduced above, which are not easily reconciled into a coherent single position. Moreover, his discussion of the relevant issues involves many passages that are highly enigmatic (even relative to the generally enigmatic nature of his work). These include, for example, claims like this one: "Being (not entities) is dependent upon the understanding of Being; that is to say, Reality (not the Real) is dependent upon care."[176] Moreover, Heidegger's statements about metaphysical (and meta-metaphysical) issues often seem to pull in opposite directions.[177] For example, consider that, as Kris McDaniel argues in "Heidegger and the 'There Is' of Being", Heidegger seems to embrace an inconsistent triad of theses in *Being and Time* with respect to basic issues concerning metaphysical realism.[178] First, Heidegger seems to embrace the thesis that some entities are "modally

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[175] For discussion of some of the interpretative issues about how to best read the later Heidegger on "essence", see (Dahlstrom 2019).

[176] (Heidegger 1927/1962, 255).

[177] For example, consider that, as Kris McDaniel argues in (McDaniel 2016), Heidegger seems to introduce an inconsistent triad of theses in *Being and Time* with respect to basic issues concerning metaphysical realism. These theses are also tied to highly enigmatic passages.

[178] (McDaniel 2016, 307).

independent" of human beings, insofar as they can exist in some way even if no human beings exist.[179] Second, Heidegger seems to embrace the thesis that, as McDaniel puts it, "Being itself is modally dependent on Dasein, so Being would not, in some sense, *be* unless Dasein also were".[180] Third, Heidegger seems to embrace the view that "nothing can be unless Being in some sense is".[181] These three claims are inconsistent. And, so, a question is this: if one wants to interpret Heidegger as holding a consistent view, what should one do?

This basic challenge is a way into long-standing debates over where Heidegger stands with respect to questions about metaphysical realism and anti-realism.[182] There are a wide range of interpretative views that have been advanced in these debates. For example, some read Heidegger as embracing a kind of realism, according to which (put roughly) key parts of reality exist modally independently of human beings and our thinking, and whose existence is not in some way metaphysically explained by human beings and our thinking.[183] And, within this general view, there are a range of different stripes of realism that commentators attribute to Heidegger.[184] Others read Heidegger as embracing a kind of idealism (or anti-realism), which denies the kind of realist claims I glossed above.[185] Finally, there are passages that suggest that Heidegger is perhaps (in some sense) trying to sidestep, undercut, or "dissolve" the whole debate over realism.[186]

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[179](McDaniel 2016, 307). This idea iscaptured in statements such as the following: "Entities *are*, quite independently of the experience by which they are disclosed, the acquaintance in which they are discovered, and the grasping in which their nature is ascertained" (Heidegger 1927/1962, 228) and "[Nature] is even when we do not uncover it, without our encountering it within our world." (Heidegger 1927/1982, 169).

[180](McDaniel 2016, 307). This is suggested in statements such as the following: "Of course only as long as Dasein *is* (that is, only as long as an understanding of Being is ontically possible), 'is there' Being. When Dasein does not exist, 'independence' 'is' not either, nor 'is' the 'in-itself'." (Heidegger 1927/1962, 255).

[181](McDaniel 2016, 307). This third claim, although not explicitly stated by Heidegger, seems (at least prima facie) to follow from the basic work Heidegger wants "Being" to do in his philosophy. As McDaniel puts it, the claim seems at least prima facie plausible for the following kind of reason: "Consider by way of comparison: if redness exists *only* in possible situations in which human persons exist, then things are red only if human persons exist. (If redness exists *only* in our comprehension of redness, then things are not red independently of our comprehension of redness)." (McDaniel 2016, 307).

[182]For some of the vast secondary literature here on this issue, see (Schatzki 1992), (Carman 2003), (Blattner 1999), (Lafont 2000), (McDaniel 2016), (Dahlstrom 2000), (Gordon 2013), (Dreyfus 1991/2017), (Cerbone 1995), and (Wrathall 2010).

[183]For example, see (Carman 2003) and (Schatzki 1992).

[184]Compare, for example, (Dreyfus 2001/2017) to (Schatzki 1992) and (Cerbone 1995).

[185]For example, see (Blattner 1999) and (Lafont 2000).

[186]Consider, for example, the following statement from Heidegger in *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*: "I am unaware of any infallible decision according to which idealism is false, just as little as I am aware of one that makes realism true … It is not an already settled matter whether idealism does not in the end pose the problems of philosophy more fundamentally, more radically than any realism ever can. But perhaps also it is not tenable in the form in which it has obtained up to now, whereas of realism it cannot even be said that it is untenable, because it has not yet even pressed forward at

Bound up with these debates over Heidegger's relationship to realism is a question of just how seriously to take the (at least seemingly) metaphysically-loaded talk that runs through his work, or, put more broadly, what kind of interpretation we should give of such talk. For example, one kind of view – which McDaniel and others call the "intelligibility interpretation" – takes a rather deflationary view with respect to Heidegger's seemingly metaphysical commitments, and instead reads them as commitments about us and our understanding of things. As McDaniel puts it, according to the intelligibility interpretation, "what Heidegger means by 'being' just is intelligibility"[187] and, thus, "Heidegger's question 'what is the meaning of Being?' really just is the question, 'What makes entities intelligible to us as entities?'."[188] This kind of interpretation fits with a general approach to Heidegger's work, advanced by Dreyfus and Taylor Carman (among others), that reads much of his work (including, crucially *Being and Time*) as fundamentally about our understanding or experience of things, and not nearly as much about metaphysics (which, put roughly, concerns issues about what there is and what it is like).[189] Others, however, such as McDaniel and William Blattner, think this kind of view is seriously mistaken.[190] In short, they think this reading – while it does have support from certain (rather enigmatic) passages, and fits well with aspects of Heidegger's emphasis on the centrality of "phenomenology" to philosophy – contradicts Heidegger's explicitly stated metaphysical ambitions in many places. McDaniel sums up his critique this way: "I think the central interpretative error that has led to the intelligibility interpretation is the failure to take on their own terms the metaphysical and ontological themes that dominate *Being and Time*, the central task of which is to determine the meaning of 'being'."[191] In turn, unsurprisingly, those who take Heidegger to be more squarely advancing views in metaphysics then put forward a range of views about what those views *are*.[192]

These kinds of debates obviously bear heavily on how best to understand the line of argument from the later Heidegger that I've reconstructed here – and, in turn, what it would take to vindicate or refute that argument. For example, if one denies that Heidegger embraces a kind of realism, this

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all into the dimension of philosophical problems, the level where tenability and untenability are decidable." (Heidegger 1927/1982, 167).
[187](McDaniel 2016).
[188](McDaniel 2016).
[189]See, for example, the views defended in (Dreyfus 1991), (Carman 2003), and (Sembera 2008).
[190]See (Blattner 1999) and (McDaniel 2016).
[191](McDaniel 2016, 309).
[192]For two rival views, see (Blattner 1999) and (McDaniel 2016).

will impact how one understands what the entities *are* that are being "revealed" in different worlds, and thus what kind of essence they would have. Furthermore, suppose one adopts the "intelligibility" interpretation. Then it seems that all of the talk of "essence" that Heidegger deploys needs to somehow be interpreted as fundamentally concerning issues about our understanding of things, or other issues tied to intelligibility. For example, perhaps rather than being about "what lies in the nature of" various things (rivers, human beings, etc.), Heidegger's talk of "essence" should be understood as involving claims about what *we take* to "lie in the nature of things" or, in a related vein, what is central to a given kind of intelligibility that is bound up with a specific kind of "world-disclosure". Such a view would face a number of challenges within the argument I've reconstructed. For example, if it's *all* about our intelligibility (including claims about the essence of human beings), then what exactly are we supposed to be true to, and why, when we dwell? And what are we *not* correctly understanding (and living in light of) in the era of modern technology? If the standard that is invoked here to judge these different forms of world-disclosure (invoked by talking about "essence") is somehow one internal to a particular historical form of intelligibility, tied to a particular world (in Heidegger's sense of "world"), why is *that* world being privileged over others? After all, if it's just about meeting a standard within a world, there might be other worlds, with other standards, which might then give rise to very different norms and values to use for reflecting on technology and dwelling. So some story would need to be told about why the particular standards Heidegger embraces – tied to particular worlds – are normatively privileged, in the way they seem to need to be for his line of thinking to work. On the other hand, if one rejects the intelligibility interpretation, there are also difficult questions that arise. For example, given Heidegger's continued emphasis on the importance of world for disclosing anything as meaningful to us, how exactly does he understand the epistemology for discovering (purported) metaphysical truths about "essence" (either about human beings or entities they encounter), that are not meant to be world-relative? And how, exactly, does attributing to Heidegger a more "heavyweight" metaphysical view (rather than the more metaphysically deflationary "intelligibility interpretation") square with Heidegger's various attacks on "metaphysics", including "the metaphysics of presence"?[193]

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[193]It should also be noted that going for a more "heavyweight" metaphysical reading of Heidegger's discussion here, as opposed to the "intelligibility interpretation", doesn't by itself solve the question of why the normative standards he employs have the normative status they do. For one reason, this is

Tied to these complexities is the question of how much continuity there is in Heidegger's views in (and about) metaphysics over time. For example, perhaps Heidegger embraced some kind of anti-realism in *Being and Time* but turned to a more realist view in his later work? Or perhaps the intelligibility interpretation is correct for *Being and Time* but not for the later work? With these thoughts in mind, one might think the way forward is to focus more on the later work, and less on *Being and Time*, when trying to understand later Heidegger's metaphysical and meta-metaphysical views. That might well be so. But, in short, it's not as if the interpretative issues get that much easier even if one brackets the (plausible) connections to his earlier work. After all, the later work is less systematic, and full of metaphors that are difficult to unpack.

Moreover, the later work too is full of enigmatic passages tied to issues about realism. On the one hand, many passages suggest a more anti-realist reading. For example, consider this claim that Heidegger makes about the elements of the "fourfold": "None of the four insists on its own separate particularity. Rather, each is expropriated, within their mutual appropriation into its own being."[194] Heidegger terms this "expropriative appropriating"[195] the "mirror-play of the fourfold"[196] and equates this with his idea of "world". He writes that "this appropriating mirror-play of the simple onefold of earth and sky, divinities and mortals, we call the world."[197] This suggests that in stating that the "mirror-play" of the fourfold is what allows each of the elements of the fourfold, including earth, to come into its "own being", Heidegger is asserting that world as such is what allows earth to come into its own being. This thus suggests a kind of metaphysical anti-realism about "earth", which, given its overall explanatory role in his later thought, can be taken to suggest a fairly broad-ranging metaphysical anti-realism.

On the other hand, Heidegger's discussion of different modes of revealing, as in the example of the windmill versus the hydroelectric dam, rests on the position that they are all revealing *something* that is shared – i.e. something (such as rivers, or wind) that is not just unique to their world, but which is revealed in different ways in different worlds. At

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because, at least prima facie, metaphysical importance is distinct from normative importance, and so one would need an argument linking the two. (See (Eklund 2017) for emphasis of this point). There are other issues here as well, which I return to later in this paper.

[194](Heidegger 2001b, 177).
[195](Heidegger 2001b, 177).
[196](Heidegger 2001b, 177).
[197](Heidegger 2001b, 177).

least on one way of reading Heidegger, his claims seem to imply some form of realism – some form of a thesis that at least some things that exist do so independent of human beings.[198] So too does Heidegger's discussion of the strife between earth and world. If all that exists does so in virtue of worlds, then it's not clear how there could *be* any strife between earth and world as such. Finally, following a pattern that also shows up in *Being and Time*, Heidegger also sometimes writes in his later work in ways that seem to suggest that his (prima facie) anti-realist statements really have more to do with what we can meaningfully think or talk about – or at least in certain ways – than what in fact exists or not independently of us. For example, consider the following statement: "what we signify when say 'on the earth' exists only insofar as man dwells on the earth."[199] That statement directly concerns what we "signify" using a bit of language, rather than one directly about the reality itself that such language is about.

As evidenced by the fact that I didn't *start* with an interpretation of Heidegger's "essence" talk that rested on the "intelligibility interpretation", my own take on these issues is broadly in line with McDaniel's thought that we should take many of Heidegger's stated metaphysical ambitions seriously, and, thus, that we should not read everything that Heidegger says as somehow covertly about issues concerning understanding or intelligibility. But, as I said above, my aim here isn't to fully settle any of these interpretative issues here. Trying to do so would take me well beyond the confines of this paper. By flagging these interpretative issues, however, I hope to underscore just how much more interpretative work there is to be done in unpacking the line of thought that I've reconstructed from the later Heidegger. In short, even if I am right in my basic reconstruction, there are still *many* important interpretative issues that are left unanswered, including the ones about essence, realism, and meta-metaphysics that I've briefly discussed here. Furthermore, how one reads Heidegger on these issues has the potential to push the schematic argument I've attributed to Heidegger in quite different directions, involving quite different philosophical commitments. Thus, the question of how to best read Heidegger on these issues will have a significant

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[198]Another, option here would be to suggest that there isn't anything in common that we can identify in a "realist" way that is being revealed, but rather just various kinds of "topic continuity" that we can mark between things that are revealed in different worlds, using some other, less realist, account of what explains "topic continuity". For recent work on "topic continuity" that might be helpful in developing such a line, see (Cappelen 2018).

[199](Heidegger 2001a, 224).

impact on how we should evaluate his overall views on technology and dwelling that I have been discussing in this paper.

§4. Some reflections on Heidegger's critique of technology and his embrace of dwelling

In this section, I turn from my reconstruction of Heidegger's critique of modern technology and his ethics of "dwelling" to some brief reflections on this line of thought. In so doing, I do not aim for anything like a fully systematic, comprehensive evaluation of the views that I have attributed to Heidegger – either in terms of their merits or their problems. Instead, my aim here is to put some of the core issues on the table that, I think, should matter for further, more detailed reflection on Heidegger's thinking that I have been discussing. I proceed in two steps. I begin with a few key themes from Heidegger's work that I think have some merit to them, which I think are well worth further reflecting on and attempting to better develop. I then turn to some of the central problems I see with his views, as I have reconstructed them in this paper. In so doing, I focus on issues tied to the central line of thinking I've reconstructed from the later Heidegger, or issues closely adjacent to them. I thus don't focus on *all* of his views on ethics or social/political philosophy, let alone those focused on other parts of philosophy, such as the philosophy of language, epistemology, philosophical methodology, or philosophy of time.

4.1. Nature, receptivity, place, and non-human entities

One of the central themes that runs through Heidegger's later work that I have been discussing is that there is something valuable about relating to things – including things such as rivers, and other parts of nature – in a way that doesn't treat them as just "resources". The idea that there are important problems with relating to nature exclusively in terms of the "resources" it provides strikes me as onto something important: not only for the parts of nature that we interact with, or for other non-human animals (such as those that humans kill in factory farms), but for humans as well. This idea, as I said at the start of this paper, runs through a lot of environmentalist thought (as well as in ethics about our treatment of non-human animals). Of course, it's far from clear what exactly it means to treat something (whether an ecosystem, a river, or a non-human animal) merely as a "resource", let alone clear what exactly is wrong with doing so. But, nonetheless, I think this idea

is onto something normatively important, and that Heidegger is right that issues surrounding this way of seeing nature (and indeed things in general) is bound up with deep normative issues with the way in which modernity has unfolded.

Second, I think Heidegger is right to draw our attention to the importance of certain kinds of responses having to do with "receptivity" when relating to nature (and other things as well). In short, this is because I think that properly responding to certain kinds of values – for example, values instantiated in (at least relatively) "wild" parts of nature – requires us to refuse a fully controlling attitude toward the things that instantiate those values, and to be receptive to "receiving" them as they are. I think that responding to those values (and doing so with attitudes that are fitting to them) can contribute to a flourishing human life.

Third, I think Heidegger is onto something important about the way in which our relationship to individual "places" in our life helps shape who we are, and how we understand our lives, our activity, and reality more generally. The psychological and sociological importance of such kinds of relations, it seems to me, matters for normative questions concerning how we relate to the natural environment, and to how we think about communities that have developed in specific places. How it matters is, of course, a further, complicated normative question. But I suspect that part of how it matters bears on our understanding of the limitations of certain centralized, top-down, typically "modern" patterns of attempted "resource maximization" – of the kind criticized, for example, by James C. Scott in *Seeing Like a State*, which fail to respond in thoughtful ways to localized knowledge.[200] Those patterns, at least in broad outline, share something with Heidegger's discussion of "Gestell" and the "standing-reserve".

Fourth, I think that Heidegger identifies at least part of what's wrong with how we relate to the non-human world in general in modernity. This is that too few parts of it – whether non-human animals, or parts of nature – are able to operate according (at least to a large degree) to their own independent patterns of life. In short, I think that, on the one hand, we've got way too many things like turkeys designed for factory farms that are biologically incapable of reproducing on their own, and who are chronically sick (given how they've been bred, and the miserable conditions they live in), and, on the other hand, too few wild birds that are able to live a life that allows them to flourish, and

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[200](Scott 1997).

to do so *as birds*.[201] I suspect that whatever is wrong with this situation (insofar as something is) has something to do with what it means for the *birds* in question, and their ability to flourish as birds, as well as for us, and our ability to fully flourish as humans. Heidegger's later thinking seems attuned to some of these same concerns, especially the latter ones about what we need to fully flourish as humans.

Fifth, another important thing that Heidegger's later work brings up are concerns about our conceptual repertoire for thinking about nature. As I've discussed, Heidegger is concerned with how certain ways of responding to nature (or other things) as something other than "as resource" are pushed to the margins (if not entirely eradicated) in modern life. As I read Heidegger, this happens, in part, because of certain default ways of thinking we have in modern life. Those ways of thinking involve not only certain substantive beliefs we have, but also the use of certain concepts rather than others – concepts which (as I take Heidegger to emphasize in his discussion about modern technology) can vary significantly over different social/historical contexts. As I read him, a crucial element of Heidegger's work (in general) involves a kind of critique of our conceptual repertoire, and part of what his later work brings out is the potential significance of problems with the concepts we use for thinking about the natural environment. This raises questions in what we might think of as issues in "conceptual ethics", about which concepts we should use, and why.[202] So too does it raise related questions about the prospects of "conceptual engineering" projects about our concepts concerning the environment; by which I mean, put roughly, projects that (guided by normative work in conceptual ethics) aim at replacing (or reforming) our existing concepts.[203] Heidegger might well be wrong about many of the views he endorses in conceptual ethics and conceptual engineering (as indeed I think he is). But I think an important feature of his later work is that it helps bring out the potential importance of such issues for our thinking about nature – and, moreover, brings out a number of ideas and concerns worth wrestling with in thinking through the relevant terrain in conceptual ethics and conceptual engineering that concerns our thinking about nature.

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[201]For further discussion of the conditions of turkeys and chickens in contemporary factory farms, see (Foer 2010).

[202]My use of the term 'conceptual ethics' here draws from (Burgess and Plunkett 2013a), (Burgess and Plunkett 2013b), and (Cappelen and Plunkett 2020).

[203]My use of the term 'conceptual engineering' here draws from (Cappelen 2018), (Scharp 2020), and (Eklund 2015). For discussion of the relationship between conceptual ethics and conceptual engineering, see (Burgess and Plunkett 2020) and (Cappelen and Plunkett 2020).

4.2. Challenges for later Heidegger's thinking on technology and dwelling

I've just glossed five themes that run through the later Heidegger – or at least that resonate with ideas that do – which I think are onto something, and worth developing further. That being said, I'm skeptical about how much either descriptive or normative insight Heidegger – or the general philosophical framework his later work develops – actually provides us with respect to things I've just mentioned. In particular, and perhaps most importantly, given my main line of discussion in this paper, I'm skeptical of how much his work really illuminates the normative issues at hand with respect to modern technology, or other related issues. I'm also critical of many of the normative ideas that are bound up with his thinking. In what follows, I lay out some of my main concerns. In so doing, I hope to help make clear what issues confront those who want to further explore or develop the line of thought from Heidegger that I've reconstructed in this paper.

First, consider the explanatory structure of the normative views that I've attributed to Heidegger on modern technology and dwelling. If I am right, then Heidegger's views rely centrally on the idea that human beings should be true to our own essence. A central philosophical challenge here is to explain what our essence could be such that we could both a) be defined by it and b) fail to be true to it. There are, of course, well-known ways of responding to this kind of issue, including, for example, those that run through various strands of the Aristotelean tradition in ethical theory.[204] So too are there resources here in parts of Georg Friedrich Wilhelm Hegel's work, themes from Karl Marx's early work (such as in his discussion of "alienation" and "species-being" in his 1844 manuscripts) and the broadly "humanist" tradition of Marxism that draws on ideas from the early Marx.[205] There are also resources in other traditions in ethical theory – including, for example, discussions surrounding recent forms of "constitutivism", such as those advanced by Christine Korsgaard and David Velleman, about how someone can both be an agent and fail to live up to the standards internal to agency – that provide potential assistance here as well.[206] But, whatever resources there are here to potentially exploit, it's not as if we have anything like

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[204]See, for example, (Foot 1978) and (Thompson 2008).
[205]See, for example, ideas that run through (Hegel 1807/1977), (Marx 1844/1978), (Lukács 1923/1971), and (Marcuse 1964/1991).
[206]See (Korsgaard 2009) and (Velleman 2000).

a fully worked out (let alone compelling) philosophical view from the later Heidegger that tackles the central challenges on this issue.

Second, suppose Heidegger (or someone on his behalf) could effectively deal with the above issue. We are still left with versions of well-known challenges in ethical theory for views that attempt to derive substantive normative conclusions from facts about what we "truly are". For example, another issue that looms here is the question of why we should *keep being* what we are, as opposed to being something else.[207] Once we have this question on the table, it's not enough for Heidegger to claim that the essence of being human requires us to do X (or to live in X way, etc.). He also needs to defend the additional premise that we should *continue to be human*, as opposed to changing ourselves into other kind of beings (with different essences). Furthermore, even if he can defend this premise, there is going to be the further question of how this premise normatively relates to other things we should do, which might well be established on other grounds.

Third, another important question is whether his account of essence, when plugged into the basic normative explanatory structure I've been discussing, delivers results that we (on critical reflection) think are correct. In short, we will need to ask whether it really gives us the right normative conclusions about how we should relate to other human beings, other non-human animals, the environment, and to ourselves. Significant challenges loom here. For example, at least prima facie, it would be surprising if facts about what it takes for human beings to be true to *our* own essence deliver the normatively correct results about how we should relate to non-human animals, given what is good for *them* given the kinds of beings *they* are.[208] In a world where different creatures compete for limited resources, and where those creatures evolved through the process of natural selection, it would be surprising (to put it mildly) to assume there will be total harmony between what is in the interests of human beings and other animals (whose well-being, I am assuming, ethically matters in significant ways). While our interests and the interests of many non-human animals might significantly overlap on many issues (for example, not having ecosystems totally collapse due to climate change), it would be naïve to think there aren't going to

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[207]For connected discussion, see (Enoch 2006).
[208]It should be noted here that this ties into another topic: Heidegger's views about the kind of being that belongs to non-human animals, and his general thinking about them (such as his claim in his lectures from 1929–1930 that animals are "world poor" (Heidegger 1983/1995, 197).

be significant tradeoffs here that loom in thinking about how to distribute the limited resources the earth provides.

Fourth, consider Heidegger's account of what the "essence" of human beings is. How convinced should we be by this account? One obvious worry here is that perhaps the whole idea that human beings have an "essence" is mistaken, even if (for example) one adopts any number of deflationary readings of what this "essence" talk amounts to. But even if we settle that humans do have an essence, does Heidegger really give us a convincing account (even partially) of what that is? An initial (and I think real) worry is that his presentation of our (purported) essence is given in impressionistic terminology, which is hard to unpack and to then rigorously evaluate. But the deeper worry is with the content of the account itself. Many of the more distinctive things that Heidegger says about what human beings are in his later writings – for example, the things built into his account of "essential dwelling" – seem more compelling as when read as claims about *contingent* ways of being human that are tied to specific social-historical circumstances, rather than claims about necessary features of being human that, more-over, identify and explain what *being human* consists in. For example: does Heidegger really give us a good account of the essence of human beings that are hunter-gatherers (which most humans have been throughout history), the kinds of German farmers that Heidegger has deep affection for, and contemporary citizens of Hong Kong? The worry, in short, is that Heidegger's account fails to illuminate something truly universal here, and is instead tied more to a particular social/histori-cal context.[209] It should be underscored here that even if Heidegger is able to give us an insightful account of psychological and sociological fea-tures that are generally common throughout human life – which might be much of what we get in the end from the account of "Dasein" in *Being and Time* – that won't suffice to show that these features are necessarily ones that all human beings have, or are part of the *essence* of being a human being. Insofar as the features are meant to capture the *essence* of human beings, we need to know that they play the role that essences are meant to play – which, for example, might involve capturing "what lies in the

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[209]For connected discussion, see example, see (Habermas 1985/1987). It should be noted that my worry here is the same kind of worry that, in his later work on the "History of Being", Heidegger himself raises about the status of his earlier account in *Being and Time*. See (Dreyfus 1992) for discussion of this idea. So too is it the same *kind* of worry that Heidegger raises against a range of other accounts of human beings in *Being and Time*. For example, this is part of what runs through his critique in *Being and Time* of the "Cartesian" view of subjectivity, and his worries (which I discussed earlier in this paper) about what can happen with the kind of "falling" that is part of our way of being.

nature of" human beings and which explains what their *being human* consists in (or, relatedly, what *being Dasein* consists in, being *a person* consists in, etc.).

Fifth, there are normative worries we should have about *what* Heidegger builds into his account of human essence, as well as about associated discussions of "fitting" ways of being human that he embraces in his discussion of "dwelling". In short, many of Heidegger's views here seem bound up with his reactionary politics and conservative cultural views, which are tied to a romanticized vision of German rural life (of a certain time period). These views involve a truncated (and distorted) vision of what human life both consists in and what it could (or should) consist in, which (among other things) is insufficiently sensitive to values embodied in ways of life other than the narrow set that Heidegger seems to prize.

Moreover, these social and cultural views are also bound up with his embrace of Nazism. Consider, to start with, his embrace of farming (or, really, a certain form of it) in the essays in *Building Dwelling Thinking*. It's telling not only that he embraces farming, but also that he doesn't similarly embrace the forms of hunter-gathering that have been the historically dominant way humans have gotten food, or forms of cosmopolitan, urban life (many aspects of which he had clear disdain for). Similarly, consider his descriptions of the ways that humans are (or at least should be) "rooted", given what they (purportedly) most fundamentally are. For example, he writes that in Gestell, "the *rootedness,* the *autochthony*, of man is threatened today at its core"[210], and quotes from Johann Peter Hebel that "we are plants which – whether we like to admit it to ourselves or not – must with our roots rise out of the earth in order to bloom in the ether and to bear fruit."[211] These claims, advanced as part of his critique of technology and the fundamental "homelessness" of modernity, might well contain philosophical insights worth developing – for example, perhaps ones tied to the particular kinds of alienation and nihilism that afflict the modern age. But, even if so, they also clearly resonate with the kind of reactionary, nativist outlook that connects to a dismissive attitude toward immigrants and refugees, and to his embrace of Nazism, especially when one considers long-standing anti-Semitic tropes against "wandering Jews", who lack roots in the places (such as Germany) where they have made their homes (or at least before being forced out

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[210](Heidegger 1959, 48–49).
[211](Heidegger 1959, 57).

or killed, as during the Holocaust). Anyone seeking to develop Heidegger's ethical and political views in a responsible, mature way shouldn't paper over these ideological connections here.

Furthermore, what I've said about Heidegger's reactionary politics and embrace of Nazism thus far is just about what's in his well-known, major philosophical works. Things obviously get much worse once one seriously delves into his other statements, whether his famous speech as rector of the University of Freiburg (wherein he mobilizes his philosophical ideas in support of Nazism)[212], or his claim (which, in 1953, he secretly added to a lecture course that was being published that year) that the "inner truth and greatness" of the Nazi movement lay in "the encounter between global technology and modern humanity".[213] So too do they get much worse when we consider the more recently published "Black notebooks" (private notebooks that Heidegger kept from the 1930s through the 1970s). These notebooks show Heidegger continuing to weave together his philosophical views with fascist ideas long after his short-lived stint as rector at Freiburg, as well as embracing anti-Semitism, such as when (in his notebooks from 1938 to 1939) he blames Jews for the "empty rationality" of the modern technological age.[214]

It might well be that Heidegger's views in the philosophical works that I have been discussing can be developed in ways that shed the objectionable parts of his political and cultural outlook that inform them, shed his own interpretation of those views, including his development of them in the service of some of the worst moral atrocities and racist views of the twentieth century, and then embed them in a more plausible overall ethical/political framework. All of that, of course, might be possible: after all, a philosopher might well have certain insights that she misinterprets, and which can be separated out from other objectionable (even atrocious) views that she has. The point is just that – given how saturated Heidegger's later philosophical work is with themes that ideologically resonate with (and which he took to connect to) the worst parts of his ethical, political, and cultural views – such work needs to be done, if Heidegger's philosophical views on technology and dwelling are to have a promising future.

Sixth, whatever downsides modern technology has, it's also something that has delivered obvious benefits to great numbers of people. It has, for example, played a role in helping lift billions of people out of poverty,

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[212](Heidegger 1933/1985).
[213]As quoted in (Gordon 2014b).
[214](Heidegger 2017). For helpful discussion, see (Gordon 2014a) and (Gordon 2014b).

extended average human life spans, and contributed in numerous other ways to improving human well-being (e.g. by opening up new forms of worthwhile activity).[215] It's also something that has obvious potential to help in important ways going forward: ranging from (potentially) helping us develop medicine to respond to such diseases as AIDS and malaria, to (potentially) warding off some of the worst aspects of anthropogenic climate change. Heidegger's later work fails to really take seriously such actual (or potential) benefits of modern technology, as evidenced by the basic total lack of discussion of them in his work. This is, to put it mildly, a serious shortcoming.

Seventh, another serious shortcoming in Heidegger's later work is the absence of any serious reckoning with the various forms of inequality, oppression, and exploitation that are features of modern life, or, in a connected vein, how any of those problems tie into the unjust distribution of the benefits and burdens of modern technology. We don't have, for instance, even the outlines of any thoughtful discussion of various forms of injustice tied to class, race, or gender, or the injustices tied to nationalism or colonialism, all of which are key parts of the history of "modernity" that Heidegger discusses, and all of which are linked to the development and use of modern technology. Nor does his work show any serious recognition of the myriad *positive* features of liberal democracy as a general form of government, or, really, of any other positive developments that are hallmarks of modernity. The lack of discussion of any of these things can't just be chalked up to other further issues that Heidegger *might* have addressed, but didn't, as if they were just further, totally separate issues. Instead, the lack of discussion of these things makes his account of modernity and its (purported) ills tied to modern technology not only incomplete, but seriously impoverished and off the mark in many ways. Furthermore, the lack of discussion of these issues can hardly be seen as an accidental or surprising feature of Heidegger's thought, given his general reactionary ethical and political views tied to his embrace of Nazism that I talked about above. His lack of discussion here, in short, can't just be seen as tied to accidental oversight or surprising negligence from a thinker who has otherwise good normative insight. Instead, it is bound up with (often terribly) mistaken ethical and political views, which either involve mistaken views about many important forms of inequality, oppression, and exploitation or else other mistaken views that result in not taking these issues seriously.

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[215]For some of the relevant discussion here, see (Deaton 2013) and (Pinker 2018).

Eighth, the general problem above – a problem having to do with Heidegger's inability to acknowledge either key benefits or key problems with social phenomena he discussed – is bound up with another issue: Heidegger's overall inability to deal with important normative distinctions that matter for issues he addresses. For example, perhaps Heidegger is right that a wide range of social problems we face in the modern world have *something* in common, which has something to do with the modern form of "world-disclosure" tied to modern technology. Even if this is so, it's ethically bankrupt to consistently do what Heidegger does: state commonalities without *also* noting the *quite different* ways in which the (purportedly) common problem of the form of "world-disclosure" of modern technology impacts different things, some of which involve obviously worse kinds of wronging, injustice, or moral failings than others.

Consider, for example, his infamous claim (in a 1949 lecture) that "farming is now a motorized food industry, in essence the same as the fabrication of corpses in gas chambers and extermination camps, the same as the blockade and starving of the peasantry, the same as the fabrication of the hydrogen bomb."[216] As Peter Gordon underscores, in this passage, Heidegger a) fails to call the Holocaust by name, b) discusses a genocide in term of "the fabrication of corpses" rather than in terms of "murder", c) not only claims there is something troubling in common between the "motorized food industry" and the Holocaust, but claims they are "in essence the same", and d) fails to mention any of the benefits of modern agriculture (such as how it helped feed billions of people, whatever its environmental or other shortcomings, such as those tied to factory farming that I mentioned earlier).[217] As Gordon succinctly puts it, "a philosopher should draw clear distinctions".[218] And, here, Heidegger utterly fails to do so. Gordon puts it well when he writes the following: "The comparison to industrial farming is morally obtuse not least because scientifically managed agricultural production keeps alive millions of individuals across the globe who would otherwise have died of starvation. The passage erases this distinction; it equates technologies of sustenance with technologies of murder."[219]

Importantly, as my discussion of issues about oppression, exploitation, and injustice above underscores, it's not as if this quote about modern

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[216]As quoted in (Gordon 2014a) (from Heidegger's "Bremen Lecture").
[217](Gordon 2014a).
[218](Gordon 2014a).
[219](Gordon 2014a).

agriculture is the only place Heidegger fails to make ethically important distinctions, even if it's one of the most egregious places. Rather, a failure to draw normatively important distinctions runs throughout his work (as evidenced by, as I've discussed, his lack of attention to the unjust ways the benefits and burdens of modernity are distributed among different groups of people). This kind of failure isn't just tied to blind spots in his thinking. It's also, as I've argued above, and as Gordon's discussion underscores, tied to mistaken, and often terribly mistaken, normative views.

Finally, I'll close with a brief remark on Heidegger's views of agency in his later work, which he draws on in his discussion of technology and dwelling. One feature of his later work is a consistent dismissal of the ability of humans to consciously direct the world in which we live in positive ways, as evidenced in his discussion of how the "saving power" of technology could work, his discussions of the ways in which our worlds are "given" to us, and his insistence that humans aren't in control of modern technology. Part of what is missing from these discussions is any serious engagement with the positive forms of agency human beings do have with respect to our own lives, cultures, and social/political institutions. So too is this missing from his account of the way in which the form of world-disclosure bound up with modern technology is "totalizing". In short, even if Heidegger was right in his later work to distance himself from certain aspects of his earlier views on agency in *Being and Time* (such as those associated with his account of "resoluteness" and "authenticity" in Division II), his later work seriously underestimates the forms of agency that individual human beings have – and regularly exercise – with respect to our own lives, cultures, and social/political institutions.[220] So too does Heidegger's discussion seriously underestimate the ability of self-conscious forms of *collective* action to change the world for the better, for example, through collective political action. As I see it, this underestimation isn't an "antihumanist" insight, as might be suggested by one way of reading his "Letter on Humanism".[221] Rather, it's a mistake. Whatever "antihumanist" insights there are that are tied to his account of agency (and there may well be some), Heidegger

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[220]Compare, for example, Heidegger's later work to Kwame Anthony Appiah's (much more plausible I think) discussion in (Appiah 2006) of how people around the world respond to and shape the cultures they live in, including in the age of "globalization". Appiah emphasizes the importance of something akin to Heideggerian "worlds" (or aspects of them) in helping form human lives, but also does much more to (I think correctly) emphasize the forms of agency and creativity individual human beings exercise with respect to those worlds, and to their lives more generally.

[221](Heidegger 1947/1993).

overstates his case with respect to the powerlessness humans have with respect to our own lives, cultures, and social/political institutions.

In sum, as I think my discussion above should make clear, whatever philosophical insights Heidegger's later work on technology and dwelling includes, the work also has many philosophical shortcomings.[222] A key philosophical question is how to best develop the views at hand in light of the issues I've discussed in this section. This will, I think, include not only answering certain objections, but also changing the views in key ways and developing them within the context of a more thoughtful normative perspective which is attuned to a wider range of normatively important phenomena. As I see it, a necessary first step in the right direction is to openly acknowledge these issues at hand, especially the massive holes in Heidegger's normative thinking, along with the outright normatively mistaken parts of it. My hope is that my brief remarks in this section prove useful for philosophically and ethically serious further engagement with his later work on technology and dwelling.

§5. Conclusion

In this paper, I've done two main things. First, I reconstructed a line of thinking that (I claim) runs through Heidegger's later writings, including work such as "The Question Concerning Technology", "The Letter on Humanism", and "Building Dwelling Thinking". In short, on this line of thinking, Heidegger develops a critique of the form of "world-disclosure" he associates with modern technology, and a positive account of an alternative form of "world-disclosure" he associates with "dwelling". On this line of thinking, a key part of what's bad about the former form of world-disclosure is that it prevents human beings from understanding (and then living in light of) facts about our own essence. In contrast, a key part of what's good about the latter form is that it allows us to do so. Second, following this, I briefly reflected on some of the merits of this line of thinking, and also some of its many problems. As I stated at the end of the last section, one of the core philosophical challenges for

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[222]And note that the shortcomings I've stressed are ones that concern the substance of Heidegger's views. There are also issues with his obscurantist rhetorical style, which tends to encourage a sense of his having gained special, esoteric insight that he can't fully share, thereby giving his ideas an allure on irrational grounds. (It should be noted here that I fully understand that Heidegger thinks he has good reasons for writing the way he does, which are bound up with his meta-philosophical, epistemological, and metaphysical commitments. I just think those are bad reasons, which rest on mistaken philosophical ideas, and that the way he writes (in both the early and later work) is overall detrimental to philosophical inquiry and progress.)

anyone wanting to further develop Heidegger's work on technology and dwelling is this: to figure out how to best develop the worthwhile ideas or themes that run through his later work in a way that answers core objections to his views, without also taking on all of the (I think many) mistaken or misguided parts of Heidegger's thinking. Clearly, there are lots of possible different ways of going about this, even if one agrees with me on what some of the things worth keeping are, and what some of the deep challenges for and problems with his views are. It's thus obviously beyond the scope of this paper to conclude with anything detailed here about the best philosophical way forward on this front. However, in conclusion, I want to briefly sketch a few ideas about how this task might be approached, at least with respect to a few themes that run through Heidegger's work which (as I discussed in the last section) I think are onto something, and worth developing further.

The first thing I want to consider is a possible way of thinking about how to develop the idea that there is something missing when we relate to nature (or certain parts of it) solely as a "resource", and that, instead, we should sometimes take up an attitude of "receptivity" toward it. The line of thinking that Heidegger develops within which these ideas are expressed, is, as I have discussed, one that ties these normative ideas to claims that the essence of human beings is bound up with "world-disclosure", and to the idea that we should (somehow) live in accordance with that essence. It might well be that this kind of philosophical explanation – one which gives pride of place to an account of what human beings essentially are (even if not Heidegger's specific account) – is, at least in broad outline, one promising way of developing these ideas about what's wrong with treating nature (or other things) exclusively as a "resource", or why we should often take up a "receptive" attitude toward nature (or other things). But I also want to flag another route through which one might develop these themes. Rather than running through an account of what we need in order to be true to our own essence, this alternative account works through direct appeal to what is valuable. In short, the basic idea here is that there are certain things in the world that instantiate values of a kind that, if one is to correctly respond to and appreciate these values, one needs to have certain attitudes that are "fitting" or "warranted".[223] Importantly, on this kind of picture, there can be different values that call for different "fitting"

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[223]See (Anderson 1993), (Gibbard 1990), and (Darwall 2006) for some ways of developing this kind of idea.

attitudes.[224] If this idea is right, then one way to defend the idea that there is something wrong with treating nature (or anything else) solely as a "resource" – and instead that there is something right about (at least sometimes) taking up a "receptive" attitude toward it – is to claim that nature (or whatever the thing in question is) has the relevant sort of values that warrant certain attitudes, as opposed to others. In turn, one might then argue that there is a link between having the relevant "warranted" attitudes and further certain actions (or, more generally, ways of living) that flow from those attitudes.[225] This is, obviously, only the broad outline of how such an account might go. But it is, I hope, enough of a sketch to show one potentially fruitful way of developing the ideas at hand, which, moreover, might well sidestep some of the problems I've put forward for Heidegger's way of developing those ideas.

Notice that, in the sort of "fitting attitude" view I've just sketched, I said that, in order to appreciate *some* of the values that are instantiated in nature (or other things) we *sometimes* need to take up a broadly "receptive" attitude toward it, and not view it *solely* as a resource. As my emphasis on the qualifiers here underscores, I think it's crucial that the view that I just floated isn't one on which we never view nature as a resource, or take up a "non-receptive" attitude toward it. That, I think, would be a seriously mistaken view. After all, to put it in terms of the "fitting attitude" account I've just sketched, nature involves *many* different values that, in order to be properly appreciated, require different attitudes. For example, as my discussion in the previous section underscores, one kind of value involved in nature is that it can provide certain resources for human beings (as well as non-human animals) that have the potential to improve our (or their) well-being. A crucial question in distributive justice is how those resources should be distributed in light of this. To ask that question in an ethically and politically mature way we *need* to see nature in terms of the resources it provides, and to see individual parts of it (rivers, trees, wind, etc.) *as* resources. We need a way of thinking, then, that is flexible enough to allow us to see nature (or other things) in multiple ways. That will, I think, need to include our having certain substantive beliefs about nature (and other things) as well as a conceptual repertoire flexible enough to allow us to have those thoughts, such that we can

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[224]For emphasis on this point, see (Anderson 1993).

[225]One possible way to do this would be to buildhaving certain behavioral dispositions (or perhaps taking certain actions) into what it is to have the relevant attitudes. Another possible way would be to defend principles that link having warranted attitudes with normative reasons for action (or, in a related vein) with certain ways of living. For an instance of the former kind of strategy, see (Srinivasan 2018). For an instance of the latter kind of strategy, see (Nye, Plunkett, and Ku 2015).

properly respond to the values at stake. Concerns about treating nature solely in terms of "resources" it provides are important ones that, if the line of thought I've floated above is correct, we need to take into account if we are to respond to the full range of values instantiated in nature. At the same time, for the reasons I've just given, we will also need to push back on any take on nature (or other things) that fails to appreciate the importance of relating to nature "as resource" in some contexts.

The views that I've just sketched are, obviously, only highly schematic. But they provide some sense of how we might further develop (at least some of the themes) that run through the later Heidegger in philosophically productive ways going forward. The ways I've just sketched are, no doubt, ones that will be objectionable to many philosophers drawn to other parts of Heidegger's thought that I'm not emphasizing. For example, it's far from clear that the best way of thinking about value and fitting attitudes (whatever that is) would both vindicate the line of thinking I've just sketched, as well as sit well with various metaphysical, epistemological, and normative views that (at least appear to) animate Heidegger's thinking. The relevant *philosophical* task going forward, though, isn't about preserving a thoroughly "Heideggerian" view on the topics at hand, which is somehow composed purely of ideas that Heidegger endorsed. Instead, it's about developing ideas that can help us better understand the relevant issues at hand. If I am right, then doing that might well draw on some ideas we develop from Heidegger's writings. But it is also going to need to involve many departures from that work.

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Disclosure statement

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